Colonial and Postcolonial Histories:
comparative reflections on the legacies of empire

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I. Introduction.

Now, well after the first flushes of excitement in the immediate aftermath of decolonization -- when it seemed possible that movements of national liberation might overthrow colonial regimes along with their pervasive legacies -- it is generally accepted that colonialism did not die so quick a death after all. Instead, it has become increasingly clear that colonialism lived (and lives) on in many forms and ways. Most obviously, colonial rule had political and economic effects that have been captured, at least in part, by the terms "neo-colonialism" and "neo-imperialism." The political instability of many new nations was clearly the result of a multitude of infrastructural problems, ranging from the enormous chasms separating colonial elites from the populace to the myriad divisions that had often been carefully engineered by colonial regimes precisely to retard the political development of nationalism. Similarly, economic underdevelopment was widely seen as the result of limited colonial investment and the continuation of marked disparities in access both to capital and markets between the formerly colonized and their colonizers. But even in the most scathing of early critiques, the depth of the disparities, and the continued commitment of new (and old) "colonial" institutions to political and economic dominance on a global scale, was hardly anticipated. And, perhaps as significantly, the extent to which the impact of colonialism was social and cultural as well as political and economic obscured both the prospective durability of colonial forms of dominance and the many ways in which colonialism lived on in the categories and procedures of knowledge itself.

Colonial policies varied as extravagantly as colonial history itself. To suggest that colonialism was (or is) a single entity is not just analytically problematic but another form of colonial mystification.[2] I will argue in this paper that we can learn a great deal

[1] This is an effort at comparative history on the part of an historian of South Asia; as a result, South Asian examples will play an especially critical role in what follows. However, given the foundational role imperial efforts in South Asia constituted for the British, this is not merely an arbitrary choice, as I shall hope to demonstrate in the paper, especially in relation to the unfolding of British colonial policy in Africa. For some of my earlier efforts to engage in such comparative exercises, see my edited volume, *Colonialism and Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.
[2] For some basic texts, see: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994; Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997; Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed Books, 1986; Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial*

about the problems confronted by the postcolonial world when we think about colonial history in comparative terms and frames. However, what makes the comparative enterprise most fruitful is the strange and ironic way in which colonialism is united far more by its legacies than by its various causes or characteristics. When seeking to understand colonial history, it matters a great deal whether we examine colonial empires established in the eighteenth or the nineteenth centuries. There were extraordinary differences between colonial policies in Asia and Africa, as well as on the part of the major colonial powers: England and France, but also Holland, Belgium, and Portugal. And in each case, the responses – both the accommodations and the resistances – to colonial power on the part of colonized groups shaped the nature of the colonial regime as well as its subsequent histories. Nevertheless, despite these differences, colonialism made a mark on a huge swath of the globe that shares many features of colonial and postcolonial history. Although we urgently confront the need to translate the historical condemnation of past imperium -- now that we are confronted with a newly shameless resurgence of imperial aspiration -- into more contemporary registers of critique and judgment, there is much to be gained by remembering the horrific consequences of colonialism for the ways in which the modern world has been formed. Indeed, there are extraordinary similarities between empire then and now, so much so that it is difficult to believe the West has really learnt any of the manifold lessons that colonial history and its aftermath in decolonization should have taught it.

II. Colonialism: the category

Colonialism is a general term signifying domination and hegemony, classically in the form of political rule and economic control on the part of a European state over territories and peoples outside Europe. The earliest forms of colonialism in this sense (not all empires were colonial empires) were exhibited in the New World by Spain and Portugal, although classical colonialism only flowered later in conjunction with the rise of global capitalism, manifested in the rule by European states over various polities in Asia and Africa. There were exceptions to these rules, as in the case of Japanese colonial domination over Manchukuo, Korea and parts of Southeast Asia in the mid-twentieth century, but even here European colonial power played a critical, if rather more invisible, role.[3] To be a powerful nation-state, in the European mold, Japan had also to be an empire.

Imperialism is sometimes seen as an interchangeable term with colonialism, even as it has often been used to focus on the economic, and specifically capitalist, character of colonial rule. Colonialism itself has sometimes been reserved for cases of settler colonialism, where segments of the dominant population not only rule over but settle in colonial territories. However, most scholars agree that colonialism was in fact a form of rule that was most often not accompanied by European settlement, and that the term

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Histories. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; Gyan Prakash, ed., *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

[3] See Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern.* Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003; Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932.* Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2001.

colonialism entails sustained control over a local population by states that were neither interested in settlement nor in assimilation. As a term of comparative scholarship, colonialism in all cases directs attention towards the colonies themselves, whereas the rubric of imperialism typically directs attention to the metropole and the global system, in which political and economic imperatives worked to make empire a constitutive condition of the West's global dominance during modern times.

The terminological tensions within and between terms help us identify some of the key conditions of colonialism. First, to think about colonialism is to think about the relationship between Europe and other parts of the world. Spanish colonialism might have preceded formal capitalism, and it might have been, like early Portuguese colonialism, conducted in the name of the church rather than the crown, the conversion of souls the first front for colonization.[4] However, church and crown appeared indistinguishable in colonial settings for the same reasons that many other metropolitan distinctions blurred in the blinding light of colonial power. Europe achieved both a large measure of its unique, and uniform, identity and its seemingly insurmountable world position through its claim to mastery over subject peoples in colonial settings. As Fanon once put it, "Europe is literally the creation of the third world."

Already we run into conceptual as well as historical difficulties. Many of the categories used by colonizers and colonized alike to understand colonialism were themselves produced through colonial encounters. Although colonial conquest was predicated on the power of superior arms, military organization, political centralization, and economic wealth, it also produced the conditions for all of these to take on greater significance than could ever have been imagined before. At the same time, military, economic, and political forms of power were inexorably based on a host of cultural technologies; indeed, colonialism was largely a cultural project of control. Colonial knowledge both enabled colonial conquest and was produced by it. Cultural forms in newly classified "traditional" societies were reconstructed and transformed by and through colonial interventions, creating new categories and oppositions between colonizers and colonized, European and other, modern and traditional, West and East, even male and female. If, then, Europe is fundamental to the history of colonialism, Europe is also part of a larger set of opposed terms that were in turn produced by colonialism.

Colonialism is also critically linked to the idea of enlightenment, the age of discovery and reason. Reason gave discovery a justification and a new meaning, but it also took its expanding global laboratory for granted. Science flourished in the eighteenth century not merely because of the intense curiosity of individuals working in Europe, but because colonial expansion both necessitated and facilitated the active exercise of the scientific imagination. It was through discovery – the siting, surveying, mapping, naming, and ultimately possessing – of new regions that science itself could open new territories of conquest, among them cartography, geography, botany, philology, and anthropology. As the world was literally shaped for Europe through cartography – which, writ large, encompassed the narration of ship logs and route maps, the drawing of boundaries, the extermination of "natives," the settling of peoples, the appropriation of property, the assessment of revenue, the raising of flags, and the writing of new histories

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[4] See Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

– it was also parceled into clusters of colonized territories to be controlled by increasingly powerful European nations, the Dutch, French, and English/British in particular. Marking land and marking bodies turned out to be two sides of the same coin.

And coin was important too. Bullion procured from the New World made the purchase of Asian commodities, from spices to tea, possible.[5] Even as Asian spices made the European diet palatable, sugar had to be imported to make tea potable. The exploding trade in these and other commodities drove the establishment of the first stock markets in the late seventeenth century, in Amsterdam and then London. The most prominent stocks traded on Exchange Alley after the glorious revolution of 1688 were shares of East India Company stock. And if empire and capitalism were born hand in hand, they grew up in the same neighborhoods as well. By the middle of the eighteenth century, markets in interior India had been significantly penetrated by a wily alliance of trading activity and merchant political power; by the early nineteenth century, the China trade not only began to determine mercantile as well as agricultural decisions in the Indian subcontinent but to recalibrate trade across the entire Indian ocean. Indeed, whereas certain key commodities had circulated on a global scale from the 15th century, the late 18th century was the time when certain European powers began to control markets both of raw materials and various manufactured products. Colonialism and global capitalism enabled each other as much as they were the political and economic realizations of a new form of global power. In India itself, the nascent colonial state began to develop complex institutions of revenue administration and collection in response to the growing recognition that local states had always depended primarily on relations around agrarian production rather than trade.

Indeed, by the nineteenth century, colonialism was as much about the establishment of new political orders as it was about controlling global economic ones. Early experiments in colonial forms of government were initially dominated by the British in India. The loss of the American colonies in the late eighteenth century led Britain to be extremely cautious about encouraging, even allowing, European settlement, while the growing reliance on land revenue to fund overseas political and military operations led to a deepening involvement in local political and agrarian affairs. Settlements with large landholders were initially introduced as new modes of private property but soon led to a variety of customized land settlements with village communities and cultivators. Meanwhile, the East India Company worked inexorably to fold more and more territory under its direct rule, only to be stopped by the aggressive expansionist policies of Lord Dalhousie in 1856. The great mutiny was put down, but the even greater revolt it occasioned led to significant changes in colonial policy. Unconquered territories were now to be ruled indirectly, and increasingly the British crown, which assumed rule from the East India Company in 1858, used a variety of barely disguised indirect means to lessen resistance and justify its own extractive and dominant presence.[6]

New indirect modes of colonial rule became increasingly attractive for European powers as the late nineteenth century witnessed yet another world push for colonial domination. The Dutch vied with the French to control both peninsular and archipelagic Southeast Asia. And then came the scramble for Africa, in which the British and French

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[5] See Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History.* New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

[6] See my *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.

were the main players, joined now by the Belgians and Germans, and for that matter the Portuguese, who renewed their imperial interests despite their loss of gravitas in the European order of states. In most of these new colonial territories, European powers made clear that they had "learned" from earlier colonial history, fashioning new kinds of indirect rule, using local institutions and personnel to ensure loyalty and at the same time mask the European interests and agendas that pushed for more intense global control over trade, production, and markets. More than ever, traditions were produced and the idea of tradition promoted to justify indirect rule. Tribes and tribal authorities were used to control territories and their constituent populations, even when the authorities were clearly colonial puppets and the tribes themselves ossified almost beyond pre-colonial recognition.

Tradition could be used to justify the most draconian forms of colonial rule on the grounds of the civilizing and modernizing mission, and traditions could be used to implement both the mirage of colonial autonomy and the rationale for colonial modernity. Tradition could also be used to explain why nationalism was as foreign to colonial soil as self-rule would be to colonized politics. Thus the colonial investments in ideas of caste, village, chief-ship, and kin based communities. And thus the colonial astonishment when it turned out that all of these institutions could play a significant role in the growing demand for independence.

Colonialism often justified itself on the grounds that traditional institutions stood in the way of the development of ideas of nationality and the growth of national unity. In fact, colonialism both introduced European notions of national self-determination and hastened the growth of nationalist sentiment.[7] Much of the sentiment behind colonial nationalism was based on a massive reaction to the indignity of European rule, and the growing recognition of the racial prejudice and economic interest that predicated the rationalizations of colonial ideology. Decolonization was a term that disguised the extent to which colonial independence was usually the outcome of militant mobilization and sometimes violent resistance to colonial rule on the part of new nations first in Asia and then in Africa. In fact, colonial nationalism was both the antithesis of colonial rule and the vehicle for the development of the first sustained critiques of colonial modernity, liberalism, and the uses of ideas of culture to disguise economic and political interests.[8] However, the unity and commitment of nationalist movements could hardly be sustained with independence in the face of the myriad challenges and infrastructural weaknesses that remained after formal colonial rule was dismantled. Indeed, the effects and legacies of colonialism were ironically obscured precisely during the moments of nationalist triumph and the exuberance around independence. I will now turn to examine some of these challenges and weaknesses, and attempt to assess the ways in which colonial rule both produced them, and created institutions and epistemological assumptions that worked to shift responsibility away from the colonizers and onto the colonized: in short, colonialism by other means.

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[7] Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*
[8] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories.*

III.   Direct Rule

         When in the late eighteenth century the British began to establish their dominance over key coastal regions in the South Asian subcontinent, there was a great deal of debate about whether the East India Company should aspire to assume direct rule. Despite the reluctance of parliament and the concerns of the Board of Directors, the Company sought to attain direct control over local administration, first in Bengal, then in Madras, and soon thereafter in Bombay. Although there was dual sovereignty in a *de jure* sense until the Mughal emperor was formally deposed in 1858, early imperial rule in India was characterized by systematic efforts to centralize control over revenue collection, judicial administration, and political relations more generally. Imperial centralization entailed efforts to systematize and codify each of these activities. The beneficent introduction of new and secure property rights was heralded as the signature of a progressive colonial regime. In Bengal, Lord Cornwallis established a "permanent settlement" in 1793, making a revenue settlement in perpetuity with large landlords, or zamindars, who were in effect provided with proprietary rights over their sometimes vast estates. In Madras a few years later, Thomas Munro revised efforts to extend the zamindari settlement, devising instead a system of settlements, subject to periodic reassessment, with local cultivators. Munro's system was accepted not just because it appeared to maintain better financial control over agrarian production, but also because to establish direct relations with peasants rather than have these relations mediated by landlords who came increasingly to represent the elite of the old regime. Munro represented a colonial effort to involve itself as closely as possible with local administration at every level, including revenue collection, the administration of justice, and the maintenance of local order. Nevertheless, in other parts of India settlements were subsequently made with different units, from village based clans to village communities themselves. In each settlement, the British attempted to balance their need for revenue with their concern to create new institutional forms of control that had the sanction of some version of tradition.
         If, strictly speaking, the period up to 1858 must be designated as a time of "indirect rule"-- since the Company gave lip service to the ultimate sovereign authority of the Mughals -- it was nevertheless a period when Company rule sought to expand its political as well as its bureaucratic control over a steadily expanding set of territories in South Asia. Zamindars, individual cultivators, and village communities were variably constituted – after long debates over Indian history and colonial policy – as the authentic heirs of pre-colonial society and as primary agents of a new regime of colonial rule, at the same time as local and regional political lords – from Tipu Sultan and the Nawab of Arcot to the Marathas and the Nawab of Awadh – were successively reduced to become either pensioners or prisoners of the new colonial establishment. Between 1757 and 1857 the East India Company absorbed roughly two thirds of the land mass of South Asia into its regime of rule, in what was an extraordinary period of imperial expansion and consolidation. Although the British claimed to have been taken by surprise when a military mutiny turned into a large scale agrarian and political rebellion in 1857, the revolt was at one level a last ditch effort to resist what had already become the reality of British *imperium* in South Asia. And, instead of throwing the British out, the rebellion succeeded in providing an excuse for the British to throw the Mughals out instead, and assume direct sovereignty for their own crown at the same time. The irony was that by

the time the British succeeded in establishing what in formal terms was "direct rule," they began to realize the extent to which forms of indirect rule were in fact much better suited to the interests and capacities of colonial power. Although India is contrasted with much of colonial Africa along the classificatory axis of direct versus indirect rule, the historical reality is in fact considerably more complex.

Still, during the period of early rule in India, Britain learned a good deal about the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of colonial governance. On the one hand, the ambiguities inherent in what came to be called "dual sovereignty" grew from being embarrassments to major impediments of rule. On the other hand, providing ultimate sovereignty could be reserved for the colonial power, and it was frequently the case that indirect rule was both cheaper and easier than ruling by direct means. It was not only more efficient to conquer territory when rulers were allowed to maintain local control, it was also less likely to provoke serious resistance down the line. And yet, in early years of British expansion, the siren of full and direct control was hard to resist; it was only after years of learning the difficulties of imperial rule that Britain began to devise new strategies of indirect rule. Even in India, the assumption of direct rule in 1858 only applied to territories that had already been conquered. The rest of India was allowed to remain under the nominal control of chiefs and princes who were progressively folded into a ceremonial economy of honors and privileges. Princely India provided both the legitimation of traditional forms of rule and the security of loyalty and steady, if not always hugely substantial, taxes as "tribute."

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the colonial state in India was in any case about to undergo several major transformations. Land, and the revenue and authority that accrued from the relationship between it and the state, had been fundamental to the formation of the early colonial state, eclipsing the formation of Company rule in that ineluctable combination of formal and private trade that itself masked the formidable state-like functions of the Company. But the fact that the rebellions of 1857 so quickly led to general agrarian revolt, and the steadily increasing economic investment in imperial power (as for example in the joint stock funding of railway and telegraph infrastructural expansion) made it clear that things had to change. Land tax was still an important source of revenue through the century, as was much of the trade that had been fundamental to the mercantile origins of empire. However, the extractive colonial state increasingly faced other kinds of challenges requiring a new basis for imperium; accordingly, imperial ambition, and anxiety, moved to new levels and concerns. The steady absorption of new lands through the aggressive policies of Lord Dalhousie, that in the taking of Awadh in 1856 had led to such trouble, were brought abruptly to a halt, and policies of indirect rule were mobilized to accommodate, and ultimately appropriate, the incomplete project of colonial conquest. At the same time, the rebellion made it clear that some communities in India could be counted as loyal, as others became doomed to perpetual suspicion. These latter groups were to be substituted by the "martial" races, as Macaulay's hyperbolic denunciations of effeminate Bengalis were transmuted into state policy. In the new rhetorical economy of colonial rule, political loyalty replaced landed status. And the form of knowledge and argument that seemed most appropriate to assess matters of loyalty rather than revenue was of course knowledge of peoples and cultures. To put the matter in bold relief, after 1857 anthropology supplanted history as the principal colonial modality of knowledge and

rule. In even bolder terms, I have called the late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial state in India as the ethnographic state.[9]

After the great rebellion, the Company's ambitions of complete conquest were not only halted, but colonial interest in culture, custom, and tradition escalated dramatically. Missionary activity was curtailed and controlled, even as missionary knowledge was used to generate the first gazetteers and manuals of the new British state. These administrative texts began to devote whole chapters to the ethnography of caste and custom; even as imperial surveys were transformed into the all India census with caste made into the central object of investigation. By the time of the first decennial census of 1872, caste had become the primary subject of imperial classification and social knowledge. Although the village – so important for early investigations into revenue systems and local control – continued to be seen as the dominant site of Indian social life, it became understood more as a setting for caste relations than the primary building block of Indian society. By 1901, when the census commissioner H.H. Risley announced his ambition for an ethnographic survey of India, it was clear that caste had attained its colonial apotheosis. And in this apotheosis, not only was race the basic category of caste difference, religion was the basic source of values that was seen to support the caste system. The Census was ultimately used for a variety of purposes, from being the site where caste groups mobilized to assert their superior status and community strength, to providing data to support the use of quotas and reservations for various non Brahman, scheduled caste and tribe, and Muslim constituencies, both in relation to electoral representation and in appointments to government jobs and entry to educational institutions.

Religious differences between Hindus and Muslims were seen to have importance of a fundamental kind from the late eighteenth century, but as in the exacerbation of notions of difference between caste groups, the great rebellion played a critical transitional role, leading as it did to the rapid escalation of colonial efforts to identify, classify, and enumerate different communities. If Risley's racial vision gave the Census an especially significant role in the production of modern caste identities in India, it also provided the ideological basis for an even more dramatic contribution to the modern rise of communalism. As Home Secretary to the Indian Government, a position he assumed after his stint as Director of Ethnography, Risley played a key role in the 1903 proposal that Bengal be partitioned into two provinces, in large part because of the political benefits thought to attend the separation of the politically threatened Hindu minority from the majority Muslim population.[10] A few years later, Risley argued strongly against the view of John Morley, Secretary of State for India, that serious political reforms were necessary in the wake of the agitation over the 1905 partition, in particular the Swadeshi movement of 1905-07. Risley was against territorial representation and parliamentary government for India, and used the demand of the newly formed Muslim League for separate electorates to make his case. In the end, the award of separate electorates for Muslims in the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 was in large part the result of the energetic role played by Risley, who used his ethnological view of India to make one of the most

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[9] See my *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*.

[10] See, for example, Sumit Sarkar's thorough discussion of this in his, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973.

influential, and deadly, decisions of Britain's colonial era.[11] It was this award of separate electorates in 1909 that set the stage for major political conflict between Muslims and Hindus, leading to the demand for Pakistan and the eventual partition of the subcontinent.[12] Risley's anthropology had extraordinary repercussions across the subcontinent to the present day.

IV.   Indirect Rule

If in the British experience of colonizing India indirect rule was initially seen as a transitional phase of colonial duplicity, leading necessarily and inexorably to the establishment of direct political control, by the late nineteenth century it became clear that direct rule had its own problems. Demands for political consultation and representation on the part of the nascent nationalist movement were enabled by the inauguration of direct rule, even as the ideology of direct rule was effectively continuous with the early nineteenth century liberal traditions of Mill and Macaulay. Macaulay's efforts to establish a single legal code, for example, came undone precisely because the English in India did not wish to be subjected to the possibility that they would be judged by Indians. And Macaulay's expectation that Indian subjects would be capable of self-rule once properly civilized was the basis of an early colonial educational policy that ran up against the same colonial racism that rejected the civilizing mission and sought instead to find ways to make imperial rule permanent. Macaulay had devised a proposal for a uniform civil code that in fact became enacted only thirty years later, in 1861, but it was short-lived. A uniform code could not accommodate the fundamental contradictions of race in a colonial situation, where a large segment of the European population in India reacted violently to the prospect, however unlikely, of being judged by an Indian magistrate. The agitation over the Ilbert Bill in 1883 made clear that even Macaulay's provisional optimism was to be checked by a concerted effort to compartmentalize Indian society and restrict the possible growth of Indian political development. And just as it happened to coincide with the emergence of a formal nationalist organization, it also provided an informal charter for the conviction that law in colonial situations, rather than being universalized, had to be constrained by racial and cultural boundaries.

Meanwhile, indirect rule was developing as the colonial strategy of choice in British ruled Africa, and not coincidentally legal policy was closely tied to political policy. The creation of a separate though subordinate state structure in colonial Africa was first developed in southern Africa, rather than West Africa as more commonly believed.[13] Natal had been annexed by Great Britain in 1843, and although it was soon announced that both political rule and legal authority had been decisively superceded by British power, Britain soon realized the attractiveness of devising mechanisms that would administer natives according to their own laws and customs. In Natal, this early commitment to the development of customary law was accompanied by the desire to aggregate the natives as much as possible in their traditional, separate, locations.

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[11] See Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India*. New York: Routledge Press, 1986, 271-72.

[12] See Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

[13] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Administered by the Natal Native Trust, customary law developed to the point of being codified, in 1891, as the Natal Code of Native Law. As time went on, native law became the means by which the tribe, and the tribal chief, became inscribed as the principal institutional sites of mediation and control for colonial rule throughout southern Africa. Although indirect rule thus developed first in southern Africa, it was given its formal definition by Lord Lugard, in large part on the basis of his own work as a colonial administrator in Nigeria. For Lugard, indirect rule required three fundamental institutions: a native court, a native administration, and a native treasury. But as Lugard explained in one of his famous minutes, in 1919, these institutions had simultaneously to appear to be autonomous but in fact never be independent of British control. As he noted, "The policy of the Government was that these chiefs should govern their people, not as independent but as dependent Rulers. The orders of Government are not conveyed to the people through them, but emanate from them in accordance where necessary with instructions received through the Resident."[14] The courts, in Lugard's scheme, were to administer "native law" and be presided over by "native judges," though the courts were never to violate the ordinances of government which were to operate everywhere. At the same time, while the taxes were to be collected in the name of the native ruler and by his agents, they were not only to fund a fixed amount for the colonial government, but to be administered under the ultimate control of the British Governor.

Although the British presumed that a native state apparatus existed before being assumed by this structure of indirect rule, it was deemed possible by Lugard and others to build such an apparatus if it did not already exist. In fact, it often became necessary to invent tribes, tribal authorities, and systems of political authority according to a traditional template based on the role and position of the tribal chief. For example, John Iliffe has demonstrated that in Tanganyika the British Governors frequently provided chiefless peoples with chiefs, even as they demarcated tribal units and boundaries with administrative precision and efficiency.[15] Sir Donald Cameron, who was appointed as the governor of Tanganyika in 1925, made clear what was at stake when he wrote, "It is our duty to do everything in our power to develop the native on lines which will not Westernize him and turn him into a bad imitation of a European," the point being rather to "make him a good African." Thus it was deemed necessary to protect native tribal organizations, and create them (or, as many colonial administrators increasingly believed, recreate them) where they didn't (or had ceased to) exist. Cameron was clear about the colonial landscape: "If we set up merely a European form of administration, the day will come when the people of the Territory will demand that the British form of administration shall pass into their hands – we have India at our door as an object lesson. If we aim at indirect administration through the appropriate Native Authority—Chief or Council—founded on the people's own traditions and preserving their own tribal organization, their own laws and customs purged of anything that is "repugnant to justice and morality" we shall be building an edifice with some foundation to it, capable of standing the shock which will inevitably come when the educated native seeks to gain the possession of the machinery of Government and to run it on Western lines… If we treat them properly, moreover, we shall have the members of the Native Administration on our

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[14] Ibid., 78.

[15] John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 323-24.

side." [16] In other words, if the natives did not live up to their anthropological reputations, they would be anthropologized, fashioned into the appropriate image of cultural otherness, in acts of extraordinary colonial hubris. The British certainly did not wish to see the repetition of their experience in India, where the civilizing project of Mill and Macaulay had led, so they thought, to what even in 1925 was seen as an unconscionable transfer of political authority.

But the invention of native Africa was more easily imagined than done, precisely because the pre-colonial realities were so much more complicated than colonial anthropological desire would have it. The colonial politics of recognition worked through an elaborately constructed anthropological grid, in which colonized societies only appeared in the form of designated traditions, such as caste, village, ethnicity, tribe, and so on, and in which these traditions could only be represented by appropriate elders and chiefs. In colonial situations, neither civil society nor modern political institutions could be granted any real condition of possibility. Instead, caste as a single all-encompassing structure of other-worldly social order, or tribe as an all-embracing social identity, were substituted for civil society, and a complex network of native political authorities and legal procedures – all under the benevolent protection and guidance of the colonial authority – was installed as the relevant intermediary colonial political structure. It was understood that things could not change. That is, it became a mandate of colonial rule that tradition should be nurtured in the name of protection and toleration than for modernity and civilization to be introduced in such a way as to create the political conditions of a nationalist movement, as became the colonial alarm bell of twentieth century Indian politics.

British colonial rule in Africa led to the exacerbation both of ethnic and religious identities, as can be seen clearly in the introduction of indirect rule in the Sudan in 1921 with the creation of administrative units based on the putative existence of discrete tribes and ethnic groups. Indirect rule was mapped onto the colonial constituted "Africans" of the South and the "Muslim-Arabs" of the North, creating two completely separate identities as time went on. Indeed, the policy of separate government was aimed less at creating a non-Islamic southern culture than it was in stemming the tide of Islamic expansion. The south was cut off from the north through such measures as the promulgation of the Closed District Ordinance of 1922, which led to further efforts to develop the south along what were seen as "indigenous and African lines." The association of slavery with Islamization also aided the elaboration of an oppositional southern identity. The rise of the Mahdi after 1885 had served to link slaveholding with the religious transformation of slaves, and was used in the south to encourage conversion, and English education, as a supplementary cultural means to resist Arabism, Islam, and the perceived threat of slavery. The colonial backdrop does much to explain why the Sudanese civil war became the longest running conflict in Africa, and why Sudan became one of the sites for the development of a colonially inspired anti-Islamist ideology throughout British Africa. The postcolonial rule of Nimieri, who used a national program of Islamization to buttress his regime between 1977 and 1985, followed direct colonial precedent, especially when in 1983 he divided the southern region into three autonomous

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[16] Ibid., 330-32.

provinces and tried to set them against each other at the same time he sought to spread the influence of northern elites.[17]

The British conduct of colonial rule was immensely influential for other colonial powers as well. The Belgians introduced institutions of indirect rule into the Congo in the 1920s. A special legal category for natives, who were placed under customary law and exempted from the provisions of the Code Napoleon, was created early on, and from 1921 Africans were required to return to the rural areas where they were deemed to be natives. Between 1931 and 1933 a series of decrees mandated that natives were permanently to be seen as peasants, only temporarily allowed to serve as workers under specific, colonially sanctioned, conditions. This of course hardly meant that peasants did not frequently serve as colonial workers; from early colonial days it had been one of the principal duties of chiefs to enforce such measures as "forced labor, compulsory cultivation, conscription, labor recruitment and other state requirements."[18] Well before Joseph Conrad brought attention to the horrors of Belgian colonialism in the Congo, Mark Twain had decried the, "organized system of plunder and outrage" built on the "the most diverse imposts in labor or in kind," in King Leopold's Congo. And Belgium's assumption of state control over its colonial holdings after the termination of King Leopold's personal overrule only made these labor practices more systematic and draconian -- institutionalized in the very practice of law -- than they had been before.

The Portuguese, who had begun their colonial adventures in earlier centuries, were initially committed to a policy of colonial assimilation, under the larger project of Christian conversion. The profession of Christianity was seen as, "sufficient qualification for equal political and judicial rights." But when, for example, the Portuguese conquered the Ovimbundu kingdoms in the central highland region of Angola during the nineteenth century, they neglected the immense social and political changes that had been brought about by such events as the end of the Atlantic slave trade and sought to reconstitute the system of village leadership under "sekulas."[19] Village sekulas were selected from among the descendents of village founders, and recruited these leaders to assist them in supplying manpower, collecting tax, and enforcing order. The establishment of the Department of Native Affairs in 1914 was intended to extend and coordinate native policy, but reliance on the system of local sekulas continued, as the colonial government could avoid the costs of codifying and administering African law and employing local Portuguese civil servants. As in other colonial contexts, the local population was divided between the civilized (*assimilado*) and non-civilized (*nao-assimilado*), enabling not only a distinction between collaborators and converts on the one hand and a subordinate labor force on the other. As labor became a greater concern of the colonial state, it was increasingly held that work, rather than simply conversion, could be the means of becoming civilized. Under Salazar in 1933, a circular was sent out to administrators stating that if, "the black man wishes to have equal rights with the white man… he must work." Between 1950 and 1959, however, only 5,000 Africans qualified as assimilados. As with all colonial promises of assimilation, efforts were made to

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[17] Abdelwahab El-Affendi, "Discovering the South: Sudanese Dilemma for Islam in Africa," *African Affairs*, 89, 1990, pp. 371-389.

[18] Quoted in Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism,* 53.

[19] Linda Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2000.

contain the possible realization of any of the cultural bribes that were used to recruit collaboration and labor. In the case of Portuguese Angola, not only did colonial laws prevent non-assimilados from adopting Portuguese culture, the colonial state effectively created a system of state slavery to provide for necessary plantation labor in the coffee, sisal, sugar, and palm oil industries. By the late 1950s, nearly four out of every five Ovimbundu males were migrant laborers, none of whom received any of the benefits promised by civilization.

Similarly, in Mozambique, the institutions of the *indigenato* defined colonized peoples by common language and culture and made possible the bifurcation of the colonial state into civil and customary spheres of citizens and subjects, of *indigena* (native) and *nao-indigena* (non-native). Bridget O'Laughlin has drawn attention to the way in which this classification was more a response to the labor question than to political issues,[20] but, as in Angola, political and economic effects went hand in hand. The colonial state needed to organize labor and a new regime of compulsions following the abolition of slavery, and the distinction between citizen and indigene was also one between free and forced labor. Mediated through institutions such as the Office for Native Affairs and Emigration, it was intended to give the state greater control over the allocation of labor. Native chiefs and sub-chiefs – the *regulos* and the *cabos* – were supported by the state precisely so that they would be responsible for the procurement of labor. Colonial reforms during the 1960s had little effect, in part because of the extent to which local government had been reorganized around colonial economic needs, but also because colonial officials used their older lines of command to secure loyalty in the face of international pressure and the rise of a powerful anti-colonial movement.

Before considering the effects of different forms of indirect rule, however, it is necessary to go back to look at the origins of the colonial logic of assimilation, and to examine what led to the early rhetoric of colonialism as a civilizing mission. If the British in twentieth century India attributed many of their political problems to the policies of anglicist educational and legal reformers of the early nineteenth century, it was certainly the case that other colonial powers also felt the need to represent their rule as bringing civilization to the dark continents of the globe. And since the French claimed to have invented the idea of civilization itself, it stands to reason that the civilizing mission attained its highest expression under early French colonial rule.

V.   The Civilizing Mission: Assimilation as Colonial Strategy

The unhappy fate of the short-lived Haitian revolution made clear the differences between metropolitan and colonial France, despite the post revolutionary rhetoric of equality, fraternity, and liberty. Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1799 marked the explicit recommencement of French imperial ambition, which had lost considerable momentum first because of repeated losses to the British in India in the mid eighteenth century and then because of the revolution itself. But the revolution was not without any consequence, and might be traced as the direct cause for the birth of the ideology of the civilizing mission, born on the banks of the river Nile in the wake of the Napoleonic conquest. Of course, Napoleon himself did not take it all that seriously, as when he

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[20] Bridget O'Laughlin, "Class and the Customary: the Ambiguous Legacy of the Indigenato in Mozambique," *African Affairs*, 22, 2000, pp. 5-42.

reintroduced slavery in Martinique and Guadalupe after recapturing the islands from the British in 1802. But the belief that the French owed something to its colonized others, most of all the opportunity to benefit from the civilizing character of being and speaking French, emerged nevertheless as the signal ideology of French colonial discourse at the dawn of the nineteenth century itself.

More important than the short lived empire in Egypt for this development, however, was the conquest of Algeria in the 1820s, which raised challenges for the French that had not arisen in its relations with the *outré mer* islands of the Caribbean. It was in Algeria in the middle decades of the nineteenth century that the French developed their conviction that colonial rule required the extension of civilization through the cultivation of education and new systems of justice, however adapted to African conditions. But while some French leaders spoke of the fusion of the French and Algerian people, and intermarriage was on occasion encouraged in the early years of the colonial relationship, the limits of colonial exchange became clear very soon. By the 1870s intermarriage was actively discouraged, and the level of colonial distrust, heightened by years of significant resistance to French rule, had already begun to change the contours of colonial *mentalite*. Indeed, the colonial conviction that the French were spreading civilization along with empire developed its most distinctive form in the wake of the long and uneven conquest of French West Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the French finally realized that their objectives of territorial acquisition and economic expansion through imperial strategies required significant cultural consolidation, both in the colony and at home.

From 1895, then, French colonial officials in western Africa established significant initiatives in public works and public health, education and the law, all in the name of what was dubbed the doctrine of moral progress. As in other colonial situations, public works were frequently justified by the claim that they were designed solely for the good of the colonized, while they were in fact built to aid in the extraction of raw materials, the movement of the colonial army and police, and the development of infrastructures that would ensure economic benefit for the imperial mother country. At the same time, the French put more emphasis on establishing schools, teaching French culture, and designing new legal codes than other European colonial powers engaged in during the same decades in other parts of Africa. There were limits, of course. Only a few Africans were expected to become French citizens, and even they were imagined to maintain their primary commitments to Africa. And, the French felt as duty-bound as other colonial powers to respect what they saw as "traditional" West African customs, as long as these customs did not contradict the universal moral dictates of the principles of civilization as defined by the Third Republic.[21] Once again, the logic of colonial rule required both the cultivation of tradition and the careful introduction of universal values with the principal aim of bettering and even perfecting the traditional – that is to say the colonial – order of things. However, tradition was incompatible with assimilation, and assimilation itself was far more the rhetoric of colonial benevolence than it was the basis of actual policy.

World War I had important consequences for colonial policy and practice in Africa. The recruitment of large numbers of African soldiers led the French to worry that

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[21] See Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

these soldiers would be among those requesting French citizenship on the basis of their service, an outcome that did, later, come to play an important role in revealing the contradictions of French rhetoric.[22] At the same time, the French developed a greater interest in cultivating the West African aristocracy, the usual colonial response in times when political loyalty and military pressure made colonial occupation appear more precarious. After the war, the French also began to systematize their enforcement of coercive labor practices, insisting like other colonial powers on the regular, periodic, use of African labor for European services, as long as agricultural production was seen as unharmed, at the same time funneling increasing labor power into the growing plantation economy. Coerced labor was justified both by the notion of *mise en valeur* – the development of the natural and human resources of West Africa – and in relation to new racial beliefs that gave increasing significance to the project of race regeneration. Racism was often cast in the service of scientific progress, in which public hygiene was seen as related to the preservation of race, while it also justified a growing commitment to "traditional" institutions and values. As before, the idea of the civilizing mission was adapted to justify newly separatist social policies and increasingly draconian labor practices, and the recognition of contradiction awaited the emergence of political dissent and resistance. Doubtless the proximity of Portuguese and Belgian colonies sustained the French belief in their own superior colonial policy, but the disparities between republican values and actual colonial policy were vastly exacerbated by the French experience in West Africa in the years after the first world war.

In the end, French adjustments of their civilizing mission and ambitions of assimilation produced a mode of statecraft very similar to that implemented by the British in Africa, where indirect rule and the use of native authorities and customary law were used to deflect much of the direct force of colonial power.[23] While the British outlawed the use of force in every British colony in the aftermath of the WWI, they did not in fact prohibit force when applied by native authorities, for that would have been to interfere with custom. The French followed suit after WWII, using what in fact was a parallel structure of native institutions and legal procedures to implement development measures – and now oversee earlier systems of forced labor – on reluctant peasants. As Mahmood Mamdani has argued, custom was both "the name of force," and the "halo around the regime of decentralized despotism."[24] Mamdani suggests that these colonial procedures of indirect rule/force were as despotic as any direct rule/force could have been, but were "decentralized" in a range of so-called traditional institutional forms that began to take on a life of their own, continuing to destabilize state and society in postcolonial Africa. Much has been made of the weakness of the colonial state, but in the colonial situation weakness – and the refusal to invest significant resources despite the promises of colonial development – became the basis of deliberate colonial strategy. It was not the weakness of the colonial state that led to uneven development and marked disparities between the small elite centers and the rest, but the accommodations made to allow colonialism to be

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[22] See Gregory Mann, "Immigrants and Arguments in France and West Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (April 2003).

[23] Frederick Cooper, "Provincializing France," unpublished paper. The argument here is very different than the conventional one, made for example in Tony Smith, "Patterns in the Transfer of Power: A Comparative Study of French and British Decolonization," in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization 1940-1960,* Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, eds. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, 82-155.

[24] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism,* 287.

done on the cheap. We will evaluate this argument in relation to other colonial legacies in a later section. First, we need to look at the way in which the colonial state used discourses and policies of protection around threatened "minorities" to divide colonial societies, sustaining both their rule, and its destabilizing effects for postcolonial polities as well.

VI.　　Minority Rights and the Colonial Logic of Protection

　　The propensity of colonial states to rule through strategies of division is well known, though scholars are steadily demonstrating the extraordinary extent to which the very communities or entities that were set against each other for colonial purposes were themselves products of colonial rule. This is not to credit Europe, already seen as the sole author of enlightenment values and modern institutions even by the most critical voices, with yet more global authorship, even of genuinely distinct values and institutions of importance to the non-European world. For one thing, the imperial encounter played a constitutive role in the birth of European nationalism, capitalist development, and the attainment of many of the core components of modernity.[25] For another, colonial rule has served to disguise if not erase the histories of pre-colonial states and societies, exchanging these histories for colonial anthropological accounts of places that were viewed as outside of history until colonial rulers came to rescue them from historical oblivion. It is only in this context that it is meaningful to assert that Europe served to reconfigure, and on occasions manufacture outright, many of the examples of tradition that are routinely used to explain the underdevelopment of the so-called third world.

　　We have already noted examples when European rulers, failing to find tribes or traditional tribal chiefs in African colonies, set about the produce them, justifying their interventions on the grounds that they were preserving rather than destroying the traditional fabric of the societies they were colonizing and exploiting. That being said, the concept of the invention of tradition requires considerable rethinking. As Mamdani has asserted in his own argument about the colonial constitution of tribes, ethnicities, and customs, tribalism was in some ways less an effect of colonialism than it was the very form of colonial rule. Mamdani speaks instead of the "making" of ethnicities, tribes, customs, and so on.[26] In South Asia, the British were no less draconian in their social interventions and cultural justifications, but the process of colonial invention was in some ways even more complex – and less visible – than in other colonial domains. When devising systems of property and revenue collection, the colonial state worked to "fix" and "secure" a variety of notional identities, creating newly reified groups of proprietary landlords, landed peasants, landless laborers, all of them newly linked by titles and revenue obligations rather than multiple social and political relations to a fundamentally different kind of state structure. Since no colonial system worked perfectly to secure both a regular revenue payment and sustained political loyalty, the state often found itself seeking to undo what it had just done, but even here, the logic of constructing a new kind of social system, with single and unitary identities and functions, had a kind of colonial

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[25] See, for example, Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1995; also see my forthcoming book, *The Scandal of Empire: Colonialism and the making of the modern world.*

[26] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism,* 1985.

brutality that was unrecognized through the fog of British assertion that the new state was simply ordering and organizing what had pre-existed it, with a few new improvements such as the security of property and the sentiments of managerial propriety. And, as the state was transformed from a revenue state into an ethnographic state, the emergent social and cultural landscape of the subcontinent – understood increasingly, as the nineteenth century wore on, through anthropological understandings of religion, caste, and region – was irrevocably changed. Ironically, the most significant moments of transformation were shaped by efforts to resist colonial rule, whether in the great rebellion, the social reform movements and early nationalism, as well as the efforts on the part of newly constituted caste groups to seek different forms of recognition in the census.

In this complex stew of colonial constitutions in India, two developments came to have more importance than all the others. The first was the constitution of religious communities as bounded, unitary, confessional, distinct, and fundamentally opposed groups sanctioned by inclusion in the small group, however hierarchically conceived, of major world religions. In particular, it is widely accepted among scholars that Hinduism as a single faith, linking all castes, classes, regions (and formerly caste-less groups such as Dalits, or scheduled castes and tribes) was the gradual product of colonial forms of knowledge and rule[27]. It is not that Hinduism as a generic descriptive term was altogether new, but rather that Hinduism as a single identity only developed as a potent force under the conditions of colonial modernity. By colonial modernity, we refer generally to the specific conditions under which modernity was introduced in colonial situations, where the modern was used to justify colonial rule, both to signify colonizer superiority and colonized lack. Inasmuch as various aspects of "modernity" were heartily embraced by early colonial elites, as in the extraordinary efflorescence of social reform movements in nineteenth century India, the various humiliations of modernity's uses for colonial purposes could never move far from the surface, eliciting contradictory responses at best, and outright hostility at worst. Thus not only did social reform movements engender neo-traditionalist responses from an early stage, they also led to an inevitable clash between those who gave priority to political nationalism and those who felt that social and political reform could not be separated.

If Hinduism emerged as an identitarian community under conditions of colonial modernity, it not only used Christian models – as in for example the privileging of certain specific texts as scriptural authorities, the increasing emphasis on belief over practice, the association of communitarian movements with institutions such as temples and monasteries, and the erosion of internal differences and boundaries in the face of putative outside threats – to establish its new identity, it also used modern technologies of mobilization and community formation.[28] It also emerged in relation to Islam, but again under specifically colonial conditions. After the great rebellion of 1857, Muslims in India felt on the defensive with the British, having been cast in the position where their fundamental loyalty to the colonial rulers had been rendered suspect by the call to restore the political centrality of the Mughal emperor in Delhi. This exceptionalist burden only intensified under the conditions of emergent nationalism and various colonial

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[27] See Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
[28] See Gauri Viswanathan*, Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998

responses.[29] Ironically, this same stigma has continued through postcolonial times, as Muslims in India, now more than ever, are suspected of disloyalty to the Indian state solely because of their religious identity. Less well recognized, however, is the extent to which the Hindu claim to loyalty after the rebellion, and then to recognition as the dominant social and cultural identity across the subcontinent in late colonial times, was itself part of the contradictory logic of colonial rule. Hinduism was transformed into the language of tradition – a source simultaneously of civilizational embarrassment, cultural pride and political assertion – that during the early twentieth century became increasingly the primary cultural referent of nationalist mobilization.

The political background to the partition of India and Pakistan is far too complicated to rehearse in any detail here. Suffice it to note that British policies of divide and rule were nowhere more carefully enacted than in the Indian subcontinent in reaction to the emergence of nationalist opposition to colonial rule.[30] Despite the concern that Muslims might be inherently disloyal in the aftermath of the great rebellion, the British quickly learned that Muslims in India could be cultivated as a minority group that would come to see itself as in need of protection by the colonial power. The fact that elite Hindus were at the forefront of early nationalist activity during the late nineteenth century only hastened British resolve to take on the mandate of protectionism, and the decision to partition Bengal in 1905 was a clear indication of an effort to provide the grounds for greater Muslim political power, and colonial collaboration. The communal award of 1909 became in some ways the pretext for partition, in clearly conveying the political benefits that were to be accorded Muslim groups if they acted the part of a loyal minority. Britain's slow and reluctant response to growing nationalist pressure – a response that only led to decolonization because of the crises produced by the second world war -- ultimately made possible what was hardly thinkable before 1940, namely the efflorescence of the political and cultural separatism that set the stage for the creation of Pakistan at the moment of India's independence. Jinnah's political bargaining worked in the end to betray his own strategic and secular politics, and while Pakistan's early history has demonstrated in ample proportion the continuing contradictions of minoritarian status in the subcontinent, India's Nehruvian commitment to pluralism and secularism has been eroded by the steady acceleration of communal forces that have used both Muslims at home and in Pakistan to predicate cultural mobilization of an increasingly dangerous and hostile nature.

If one of the most dramatic effects of colonial history in India has been the denomination of Hindus as a majority community made up of the adherents of a uniform religious system, this history has been neither straightforward nor uncontested. Even as upper-caste Hindus only came to relax the exclusionary concerns of ritual propriety in the face of demographic pressures and the onset of democratic institutions, the troubling character of the homogeneous monolith was apparent both for designated "minorities" and for a host of other groups. The phantasmatic nature of the Hindu whole worked ironically to constitute its reality even as it made contestation and critique more urgent than ever. New voices emerged as representatives of sociopolitical constituencies that

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[29] Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1850*. New York: Routledge Press, 2000.

[30] Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.

saw the Hindu whole as hierarchical, oppressive, and graded, the precipitate of a politics of exclusion that endangered groups "within" as much as outside. And in this respect, the majority was an effect of the idea of the minority, even as the exemplary minority of Muslims created the terms of and models for other minority groups. Minority languages of dissent emerged as a consequence of the general discourse of the minority, even as they were necessarily tied to and dependent on the majority languages of national, religious, regional, and ethnic unity. In short, the constitution of minorities in colonial India served both to justify the colonial state, which legitimated itself in part through its claim to offer protection to minority groups that were seen as endangered, and to fashion the majority as a homogeneous group.

With the emergence under British colonial rule of the modern caste system, the idea of minority was configured in similar terms, even if the minority was often in fact the majority group. In western and southern India in particular, the early twentieth century saw a number of caste movements that sought not just recognition, but also representation, in areas ranging from jobs to university admissions and political inclusion in local and municipal elections. These caste movements were mobilized around categories of "non-Brahmans" who complained about the disproportionate power and educational position of the small caste elite who had secured as much secular privilege as they had long enjoyed sacred prestige. The non-Brahman movement was based in part on the claim for proportional representation and in part on anti-Brahman sentiment. Although these two trajectories were synergistic in early years, they soon began to diverge, creating the background on which leaders such as B.R. Ambedkar in western India and E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker in southern India came to be seen as inherently anti-nationalist, especially as non-Brahmans began to play an increasingly important role in the Congress and the nationalist movement more generally. The depressed classes were a more classic example of the minority, dominated by the upper castes (including non-Brahmans) in every sense, even as they were always doomed to numerical minority with no natural social or political allies. Even the depressed classes, however, were not a minority in the same sense as Muslims were, despite the efforts of B.R. Ambedkar, for example, to model untouchable politics on the strategies of the Muslim League. In the initial stages of political mobilization, the depressed classes sought both protection and inclusion, the latter through the extension of rights to political representation, economic benefits, and religious participation. However, protection and inclusion turned out to be contradictory aims, since the development of minoritarian politics in India around the Muslim question led to the expectation that protection was necessary only when communities were committed to the maintenance of difference and separation.

Gandhi's desire to protect untouchables was predicated on his own commitment to incorporate them into the Hindu fold. Whatever Gandhi's own political motives, his social reform program was acceptable to some in the nationalist movement because it provided the social means to create an expanded Hindu political base that would prevail in any electoral form of politics, a concern that only intensified with the growing success of the Muslim League. For Gandhi and most nationalists, untouchables and Muslims were thus fundamentally different; on the one hand, the possible conversion of untouchables into Muslims was to be protected against at all costs, and on the other Muslims were never offered the option of conversion. Ambedkar, however, opted for difference, never trusting the benevolent offers of protection from the majority. Indeed,

Ambedkar's ultimate conviction that he needed to convert to another religion was a tacit acceptance of the minority model of the Muslim, a tragic sign of the limited conditions for recognition in a nation that had been constituted around a peculiar form of secular majoritarianism. Under colonial conditions, protection was either the ideology that accompanied paternalist claims to informal modes of social welfare and political incorporation, or the sign of the ineradicable nature of religious difference. Minorities could only claim recognition if they were ready to accept the unchanging character of their difference, and they could only negotiate the meaning of protectionism if they were ready not just to congeal forms of difference but use difference to threaten the political survival of the majority. In either case, the minority was both an effect of the majority and the means for its consolidation as a majority. And in either case, endangered communities had to face impossible choices for survival, either "converting" to majoritarianism as a new kind of sacred faith or asserting recognizeable forms of difference with enough political force to sustain some semblance of bargaining power at the negotiating table.

For South Asia, the postcolonial legacies of all this were at some level clear from the start. The partition of India and Pakistan left the majority and the minority communities with nations of their own, equal in their possible representation in the United Nations but decidedly unequal in terms of the geo-politics of the subcontinent. And the inequalities between India and Pakistan were not just the obvious ones of size, population, scale, non-contiguous borders, and so on, but also the way in which the minority nation could increasingly not contain the minority, whereas the majority nation could continue to house, and protect, its various minorities. Pakistan became especially useful as the potential safety valve for Muslims whose commitment to minority status was often seen by the Indian state to exceed a commitment to new claims made on citizens. Within India, the new state not only derived considerable authority from its maintenance of religious pluralism, it could also point with pride to its progressive position on questions concerning other minorities. The constitution of India, drafted in large part by none other than B.R. Ambedkar, simultaneously abolished untouchability and provided for reservations to protect untouchables from their history of oppression and exclusion. Nevertheless, the contradictions in both cases became increasingly difficult to contain as the political consensus inherited by Nehru from his leadership in the anti-colonial nationalist struggle began to come up against the many other – social, economic, political – legacies of British colonial rule.

VII.   Postcolonial Legacies: religious, ethnic, and communal politics in postcolonial nations.

It was no accident that despite the pervasive concerns of poverty and underdevelopment, the major political challenges of the first half century of postcolonial politics in South Asia concerned festering communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims, the growing significance of caste for political mobilization and claims for recognition and inclusion, and, of course, the escalating tensions between the two dominant nation-states of the subcontinent. The pervasive tensions between India and Pakistan, erupting in periodic warfare and regularly demanding extraordinary investment in military preparedness and weaponry, have provided a grim reminder that the hastily

conceived and even more hastily drawn plan to partition the subcontinent left colonial legacies of major consequence for postcolonial society and governance. Less obvious has been the way communal tensions have been inflected by partition as well. Muslims were granted Indian citizenship, but not only was the original idea of an open border closed down so quickly that choices about citizenship were in fact artifacts of momentary conditions rather than openly considered deliberations about affiliation and settlement, Hindus were often forced to leave cities such as Karachi to provide housing and jobs for migrants fleeing temporary chaos in Indian homes they never imagined they were leaving behind forever. The logic of the nation-state quickly overtook the multiple connections of families and locales and the patchwork settlement of communities across the Indian subcontinent over the centuries preceding 1947. By the mid 1950s the borders between India and Pakistan were as heavily policed as any, and movement across them became increasingly difficult, even as the multiple identities that were part of lived reality crashed up against the reality of a permanent and total partition.[31]

In this larger context of nations and states, Hindus in Pakistan seemed an increasingly impossible idea, and Muslims in India became signs of India's commitment to secularism and pluralism, even while Muslims were made to feel grateful to occupy the position of the postcolonial minority under the protectionist regime of the new independent state. Hindu nationalism has used various tactics over the years to put pressure on Muslims to acquiesce to the sentiment that India is to Hinduism as Pakistan is to Islam, but the tactics have always sought to use the relative openness of India to render it in fact the mirror image of Pakistan. The historical character of Muslims as "foreign conquerors" or "settlers" rather than "natives" has been proclaimed in many different contexts, most dramatically of course in the destruction of Babur's mosque in Ayodhya. The recent pograms in Gujarat, using as justification the burning of the train in Godra in what quickly became a concerted state led effort to punish Muslims across the board, were motivated in part by the xenophobic and fascist sentiment that Muslims were in India only on sufferance, that if they caused any disruption or disturbance deserved either deportation or death. Even as Muslims continue to occupy the position of minority, the attribution of a single identity (political as well as cultural) to all Muslims (throughout South Asia, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia too) has worked to reverse the image, making Hindus, and India, the real minority in need of protection (and, in this example, violent self-defense). At the same time, any apparent interest on the part of Dalit groups to convert to Islam is seen as a Muslim conspiracy to diminish the numerical position of Hindus in India, and recent efforts on the part of Hindu nationalist groups to recruit scheduled castes and tribes to Hinduism has been part of this terrifying binary logic of fundamentalist ideology.

Fortunately, the rising significance of "caste politics," by which I refer in particular to the mobilization of lower caste groups to form political parties and movements to press for fundamental shifts in the nature and distribution of political position and resources, has worked against the rising tide of communalism at least in

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[31] See the recent Ph.D. dissertation by Vazira Zamindar, "Divided Families and the Making of Nationhood in India and Pakistan, 1947-65." Department of Anthropology, Columbia University, 2002; also see Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism, and History in India.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

some areas and in some respects.[32] Some of these movements emerged out of the Mandal agitation, in which the 1990 decision to implement reservation policies for "backward castes" engendered extraordinary paranoia and resistance on the part of upper caste elites. Nevertheless, there has been concern raised both in the aftermath of Mandal and in relation to caste based politics that caste is being consolidated and strengthened in these new movements, working against the formation of broad cross-cutting political alliances that could lead to coalitions that might actually be able to threaten the all India hold of the BJP and its constituent fundamentalist support. At the same time, lower or backward caste movements have rarely been able to develop lasting alliances with emergent Dalit political movements, which have all too frequently found themselves oppressed even more violently and virulently by middle level social groups than was the situation under the upper caste dominated Congress party in earlier years. That caste groups have become important vehicles for democratic claims for recognition and representation is hardly new or surprising, but the extent to which caste mobilization has worked against the fundamentalist cause of uniting Hindus against the presumed outside threat of Muslims was largely unanticipated, for the cultural call to Hindu unity was often directly in the service of underplaying caste and class inequality and oppression within the so-called majority community. Herein lies a major difference between colonial and postcolonial times. Although non-Brahman movements were often branded as anti-nationalist during colonial times, it was initially far more difficult to make this claim in independent India. It is here, of course, that Hindu nationalism has sought to conjure Pakistan – and the Islamic world more generally – as the structural equivalent of British colonial rule, the ground for suppressing postcolonial movements on the part of lower caste or class groups.

If India's postcolonial present has multiple genealogical links to a colonial past characterized by a unique combination of direct and indirect rule, one issue raises especially interesting comparative issues. For some years, Hindu nationalists have complained about the fact that Muslims had their own personal law, inherited directly from colonial rule. As a result, there have been many advocates for a uniform civil code, ironically linking concerns of some secular feminist groups with polemical calls from Hindu nationalist groups about the continued use of "customary law" for the minority rather than the majority community. In Africa, as we discussed earlier, one of the major differences between direct and indirect rule emerged in relation to the relative significance of customary law, which was used to govern tribes and ethnic groups under the banner of tradition, save only for the ultimate protection of universal (colonial) values. Civil law was reserved for colonial elites and those "settler" groups who often served as the collaborators for colonial rule, making customary law a form of control over majorities. Whereas the equivalent of customary law in the Indian context was used as a way to secure traditional valorization for colonial protectionism vis a vis a minority group, customary law in Africa was used to partition majority groups securely away from the perquisites of civil society and order.

In the African case, customary law was associated in particular with the fragmentation of "native" communities into ethnicized groups that were each governed by their own distinct authorities and institutions. While the pitting of "natives" and.

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[32] See Christophe Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

"settlers" against each other took place with unsettling effects both in South Asia and in Africa, this polarization was exacerbated by the weakness of civil spheres in Africa and the extent to which particular ethnic groups could claim new states as their exclusive properties, depending on which particular faction could maintain power over the state apparatus. In colonial India, Muslims – hardly an elite group under colonial rule -- were the settlers and Hindus the natives, whereas, say, in a country such as Rwanda, the Tutsi – who were the elite under colonial rule – were settlers and the Hutu natives. Under most colonial conditions in Africa, the categories of "native" and "settler" came to be rearticulated especially explosively, the most tragic case of all coming to crisis in Rwanda in 1994. Under Belgian colonial rule, the Hutu had been seen as indigenous Bantu and the Tutsi as alien but civilizationally (and racially) superior. In this regime, the Hutu were ethnicized and the Tutsi racialized, the first relegated to the rural hinterland outside the fragile but despotic centers of postcolonial power, the second recruited to the colonial and then the postcolonial civil and governmental service. In the post-independent period, growing Hutu fear of Tutsi domination led to the recycling of the colonial language of indigeneity, with the Tutsi marked as foreigners, and Hutu power equated with the originary right of the native who had been oppressed by outsiders for centuries.

The genocide itself has to be historicized to be properly understood, and there were many events from 1959 that provided the background of the crisis, many of them related to other crises in Uganda on the one side and the Congo on the other. However, the categories that turned so deadly were decidedly exacerbated by colonial rule, which in the African case had put such major emphasis on categories of the indigenous and the non-indigenous, disfranchising the indigenous "ethnic" groups as "natives" who were to be ruled by their own laws and institutions as carefully constructed by colonial power. While not dissimilar from other colonial classificatory rubrics in South Asia, where religion, ethnicity, language, and indigeneity were used to divide and rule local populations and establish relations with compradore elites, the weakness of state and civil institutions in African conditions – with Belgian colonies in the worst shape – made matters worse. In Rwanda, the incapacity of state and civil society to insulate itself at all from the hostile takeover of Hutu power in its worst possible manifestation made the genocide possible.

Resentment of the Tutsis on the part of Hutus was not dissimilar from the resentment of Tamils in post-colonial Sri Lanka by the Sinhalese, where Tamils were seen as essentially foreign, the beneficiaries of colonial collaboration with the British. In the Sri Lankan case, the Tamils were resented for their position in the civil service as well as in the domestic economy, language issues became divisive and religious differences between Buddhists and Hindus became further grounds of disputation in the years leading up to the deadly Colombo riots of 1983. Here too, the colonial background was critical. In the late 1920s, the British colonial government appointed the Donoughmore Commission to report on the working and difficulties of the existing 1923-4 Constitution in Ceylon and consider proposals for its revision. The earlier constitution had instituted a form of representative government with a Legislative Council consisting of a number of officially appointed members along with a few others elected by a combination of territorial constituencies and communal electorates, all elaborately fashioned to provide a measure of representation at the same time deterring unified

nationalist resistance to the colonial government. The Commission was seen as important moment in the devolution of colonial power, though it was nominally convened as a gesture to the Ceylonese in the absence of the grant of dominion status or responsible government, in part in response to escalating nationalist demands in India, and in part because of worries surrounding the upsurge of labor and trade union activities in Ceylon. The Commission concluded that the current Constitution had proved to be an unqualified failure and that radical changes were required, recommending a form of semi-responsible government in combination with a franchise similar to that of Great Britain. However, full responsible government was denied on the grounds that the external presence of a British administration was still necessary to protect minorities in absence of a British-type party system, further creating the impression that Tamils were the favored group of colonial rule. The creation of a largely universal franchise was announced as the beginning of a new democratic era, but initially it was justified within the colonial administration by the fact that it gave larger minority groups enough power to counteract the Sinhalese majority.

The recommendations had the immediate effect of correlating numerical strength with political influence, but in its rapid introduction, and in its explicit concern for communal and territorial representation, it encouraged the identification and mobilization of a majority community united by the three basic features: Sinhala language, Buddhist religion, and Sinhalese race. The emergence of these elements as the ground both of electoral politics and civilizational rhetoric built on the colonially driven Buddhist revival of the nineteenth century and meant that the lasting legacy of the Donoughmore Constitutions's initiation of democracy was the political calculus of electoral majorities and minorities. The Tamil minority felt itself confined to the representation of grievances and the call for protection, first from the colonial administration and afterwards the independent government, at the same time the majority reacted to populist possibilities by becoming increasingly chauvinistic. The political result was that neither of the majority parties that emerged after 1956 felt inclined to include or attend to the concerns of the substantial Tamil minority. Despite the fact that civil institutions were far better developed than in Rwanda, Sri Lanka has witnessed a similar cycle of resentment, discrimination, fear, and repression, ending with an unprecedented upsurge of ethnic hatred and violence. In Sri Lanka, the very civil institutions that were held up by the British as their gift to the colonized became sources of growing grievance and now have been eroded in fundamental respects by a history of twenty years of "civil war," in a context where suicide bombing was developed for the first time as a concerted political strategy of terror. On occasion, the state was threatened from a fundamentalist ethno-national movement from militant Sinhalese on the one side and multiple Tamil separatist groups on the other. The JVP uprising was successfully managed, if with much oppression and bloodshed, though the Tamil issue has proved virtually intractable. The Tamil LTTE, under the neo-fascist leadership of Prabhakaran, managed to make itself the only significant movement representing Tamils by violent though largely successful methods. The Sri Lankan state – itself a party in the escalation of pressure on and violence against Tamils in the late seventies and early eighties – has consistently resisted the separatist claims of the Tamils, risking mutiny in its military forces and failure in its social and economic policies time after time. However, even when "moderate" voices proposed various schemes for devolution that held some promise of genuinely addressing

the Tamil issue, Prabhakaran has been reluctant to entertain possible settlements that would in any way diminish his local position and power base. The current cease fire has given hope that the last twenty years of horrendous violence and stalemate might finally permit the formulation of a lasting political solution, but even temporary accommodations are welcome under the circumstances.

VIII. Empire after decolonization.

As Hannah Arendt has noted, "it is characteristic of imperialism that national institutions remain separate from the colonial administration although they are allowed to exercise control. The actual motivation for this separation was a curious mixture of arrogance and respect: the new arrogance of the administrators abroad who faced "backward populations" or "lower breeds" found its correlative in the respect of old fashioned statesmen at home who felt that no nation had the right to impose its law upon a foreign people. It was in the very nature of things that the arrogance turned out to be a device for rule, while the respect, which remained entirely negative, did not produce a new way for peoples to live together, but managed only to keep the ruthless imperialist rule by decree within bounds."[33] But even Arendt did not understand the extent to which these bounds only worked to serve imperial power, substituting culture for civil society, tradition for politics, and total domination for any expectation of a democratic relationship to the exercise of power. This symbiosis was expressed in the development of ethnographic states across the colonial world, in which colonial ethnography became both the history of the colonized and the basis for policies of colonial rule. Knowledge about colonial societies was largely produced by or in terms of the logic of colonial rule, the imperatives and institutions of the colonial state. And, tragically, these imperatives and institutions have been inherited by postcolonial states, in a larger context in which the failures of these states have either been blamed directly on them or their societies, or seen as the result of the failure of colonial regimes to complete the transformations and reforms they set in motion. At a time when empire has come back into fashion, it is especially imperative to demonstrate the falsehoods in these propositions.

My review of different colonial cultural policies and modalities of rule suggests the broad similarities of colonial situations across Asia and Africa. In thinking through the ways ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, tribal, and caste divisions were systematically exacerbated by colonial rule, it seems increasingly beside the point to suggest that some colonial powers ruled better than others. It also seems rather pointless to call for a clear assessment of what is genuinely traditional, and what might be seen as the hybrid by-product of colonial manipulation and control. Even as the consequences of colonial rule have been rooted in and shaped by historical events and processes, the effects of this rule, and the fact that colonial rule was the context in which so-called modern values, beliefs, and institutions were "introduced" to the colonial world, have a reality that can hardly be disavowed. On the one hand, culture and tradition frequently became the means by which anti-colonial struggles were mobilized and fought, and many hybrid forms in the postcolonial world are in fact testaments to the extraordinary creativity and resourcefulness of colonized peoples rather than mere artifacts of the structures of

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[33] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979.

colonial power.[34] But even when new configurations of culture and tradition appear less progressive, or begin to turn from their relationship to anti-colonial struggles into the basis for what commentators such as Samuel Huntington have labeled a clash of civilization, it is necessary to remember the historical conditions that have given rise to current appropriations. Indeed, the history told here reminds us all of the extent to which "Europe" needs to learn better how to understand and accept the extent of its implication in the production of the current predicaments confronted by the postcolonial world – even in the cultural and social domains that have so often been used to shift the responsibility for disparities in access to global resources, proclivities for catastrophic violence and political instability, and even resort to political methods branded as terrorism. At the same time, "Europe" must take this responsibility in registers that also recognize the political and cultural consequences of its continuing imperial role and aspiration, whether "empire" has achieved the post-national articulations of the global argued by Hardt and Negri[35] or has merely resurfaced in a vaguely disguised form under the global stewardship of American power, in particular after 9/11.

It is especially alarming that the civilizational diatribes of writers such as Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis are now being used, by other writers as various as Michael Ignatieff, Dinesh DeSouza, and Christopher Hitchens to justify the global strategic and economic ambitions of the United States to the point that empire has been recuperated as a legitimate political form. Michael Ignatieff has written that America must depart from the models of previous imperial regimes by taking the civilizing mission more seriously: "The old European imperialism justified itself as a mission to civilize, to prepare tribes and so-called lesser breeds in the habits of self-discipline necessary for the exercise of self-rule. Self-rule did not have to happen soon – the imperial administrators hoped to enjoy the sunset as long as possible – but it was still held out as a distant incentive… In the new imperialism, this promise of self-rule cannot be kept so distant… This is imperialism in a hurry: to spend money, to get results, to turn the place back to the locals and get out. But it is similar to the old imperialism in the sense that real power in these zones – Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and soon, perhaps, Iraq – will remain in Washington."[36] Ignatieff – like many in the corridors of power in contemporary Washington – is pragmatically skeptical about what is widely held as the core belief of our time, that national sovereignty is an ultimate value. And the reason he gives is that, "however right these principles may be, the political form in which they are realized – the nationalist nation-building project – so often delivers liberated colonies straight to tyranny, as in the case of Baath Party rule in Iraq, or straight to chaos, as in Bosnia or Afghanistan. For every nationalist struggle that succeeds in giving its people self-determination and dignity, there are more that deliver their people only to slaughter or terror or both." While he concedes that Vietnamese nationalism was a good example of self-determination and dignity, he argues that the Palestinian struggle is "trapped in a downward spiral of terror and military oppression." His concerns go well beyond the need to find reasons for multilateral intervention in situations of genocide or other forms of horror, for his formulation makes third world nationalism itself the problem, and

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[34] Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

[35] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

[36] Michael Ignatieff, "The American Empire: The Burden," *New York Times Magazine*, 5 January 2003, 22.

American empire the answer. This has long been the view of conservative policy makers and academics in the United States; that members of the old left – veterans of the era in which the war in Vietnam sensitized an entire generation to the political integrity, and fundamental autonomy, of anti and post-colonial nationalist movements – signals the extent to which empire has returned to occupy a new kind of legitimacy in the opening years of the new century.

The current invocation of imperial pasts as something potentially different from, say, cognate histories of European fascism – that is as examples of historical excess best remembered only to keep them from repeating themselves in the present or future – make the kind of historical exercise constituted by this paper appear additionally relevant for us today. Accounts of the problems of third world states (which are in effect the reasons America should shoulder not only general post-imperial burdens but engage in pre-emptive war and military occupation) that ignore the role of the imperial past clearly serve to justify the imperial present, even when the point is not made explicit. The resurgence of interest in imperial history has been accompanied by a kinder and gentler view of the European role in empire, on occasion scripted with specific lessons for the present that emphasize the lessons of empires past for empires present and future. Nevertheless, even the most uncritical imperial histories hardly prepare us for the recent publication by Oxford/Harvard historian Niall Ferguson,[37] a coffee table book that has received considerable attention and alarming acclaim. For Ferguson, who takes great pains to mention a few of the most foul examples of imperial atrocity to alert his reader to the objectivity of his account, British empire provided the only available means for the modernization of the world, both in political terms – especially in the extension of the rule of law and the belief in the primacy of democratic political systems – and in cultural terms – the Anglicization of the world having been a most excellent thing, though, as he suggests without the whiff of an opposing view, it was this forced induction of traditional peoples to cultural modernity a la Anglaise that "provoked the most violent nineteenth-century revolt against imperial rule."[38] Imperial rule not only meant good rule (even as Ferguson never thinks to doubt imperial accounts of regimes it conquered or overthrew as examples of bad rule) but also ushered in an era of economic progress. As he writes, "Without the spread of British rule around the world, it is hard to believe that the structures of liberal capitalism would have been so successfully established in so many different economies around the world… the nineteenth century Empire undeniably pioneered free trade, free capital movements, and, with the abolition of slavery, free labour."[39] He defends indentured labor, despite the great hardships suffered by laborers, on the grounds that the "mobilization of cheap and probably underemployed Asian labor" had significant "economic value."[40] In short, imperialism inaugurated global capitalism, something far better than its alternatives. The burden the U.S. has inherited from the U.K. is to continue to spread the benefits of capitalism and democracy "overseas." And, happily, "just like the British Empire before it, the American Empire unfailingly acts in the name of liberty, even when its own self-interest is manifestly uppermost."[41]

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[37] *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power.* New York: Basic Books, 2002.

[38] Ibid., 27.

[39] Ibid., 358.

[40] Ibid., 360.

[41] Ibid., 370.

Leaving aside the bad history purveyed by Ferguson, what seems most extraordinary is the extent to which the imperial view of the world has been dressed up and resuscitated. Lands and peoples that had been conquered and absorbed into imperial regimes are likened unproblematically to rogue states and terrorist groups. The political and economic difficulties of nations as various as Bangladesh and Pakistan or Rwanda and Congo are blamed solely on a pre-colonial past, the only problem with colonial rule having been its failure to complete its civilizing mission. Despite the crudeness of the account, it taps into a contemporary malaise with the critique both of the West in general and of the imperial past more specifically. As time has passed since decolonization, empire has seemed to many increasingly insufficient either to explain the present or to imagine the future. What, indeed, might the rehearsal of the cultural and social effects of colonialism mean for the task of building inclusive societies in new postcolonial orders, and what might we learn more generally about the need to rethink the politics of recognition, representation, and participation? The question becomes more intractable precisely because there is no going back to a time before colonialism, when identities were less fixed, various forms of modernity less implicated in the violence of colonialism, and possibilities for cultural reinvention less mystified by the idea that political liberty and individual freedom only really mean the unrestricted movement of capital and labor in a global marketplace. But it is precisely this historical background that must predicate any significant rethinking of how to respond to the claims of some cultural traditionalists that colonialism and Western power justify exceptionalist and fundamentalist reactions to the universal rhetoric of human rights, democracy, and individual freedom. Indeed, it is my argument that only by directly engaging the distortions created by the imperial past can we confront the difficulties, but also the possibilities, for imagining new kinds of futures, and new kinds of justifications for universal values, standards, and institutions, both nationally and internationally.

IX; Culture in the Postcolonial World: Recognition, representation, participation, and transformation.

Sadly, it is now clear that critiques of colonial history can be mobilized not just to argue against the powerful role of the West but ironically to reinstate reactionary responses to contemporary conditions that would be worse than returning us to some notional pre-colonial world, even if such a thing were thinkable. It is therefore necessary to use the lessons of critical history not just to demonstrate the role of colonialism in irrevocably changing the character of the pre-colonial world but also to challenge the very colonialization of modernity by the West. As we have just seen, uncritical versions of imperial history confer far too much credit onto a West that has justified itself – and its colonial ventures – precisely by claiming a monopoly on modernity, public virtue, secularism, tolerance, liberty, democracy, and so on. Even as Britain, France, and other European powers sustained their colonial empires by declaring both their civilizational superiority and their commitment to improving the colonies (through education, social and moral reform, infrastructural investment, and political development), colonized peoples were able to use the contradictions of colonial rule to argue for self-rule. As a consequence, it would be both wrong and misleading to infer from the above account that postcolonial cultures are either somehow irrevocably flawed or autonomous in significant

ways from the problematic histories and effects of cultural forms in the West itself. Additionally, we must remember that the colonized often adapted their own hybrid colonial institutions not just to force decolonization but to develop new forms of recognition, representation, and participation.

One especially salutary example of this concerns the role of caste in political development in India. Despite (and in part because of) the continuing horrors associated with caste privilege and oppression, caste has been used as a political vehicle for charting new ways of engaging Indian modernity, secularism, and democracy.[42] Caste has the dubious advantage of calling attention to largely hidden forms of social privilege, highlighting socio-historically determined modes of access to and exclusion from resources and opportunities, and marking the differentiated and particularistic forms of relationship to other social collectivities and religious beliefs and practices. In many ways like the category of gender, caste both interrogates and acknowledges difference. Caste based discourses have insisted that cultural forms of exclusion and oppression can not be simply wished away, but instead need to be engaged directly through cultural (as well as social and economic) means. Caste movements have sought representation through reservations and quotas, producing in their very opposition the recognition of the role of class in the organization of economic, political, and social power.[43] Caste movements have identified religious fundamentalism as the kind of political mystification used to obscure the significance of class and to mobilize compliant populist support for elite policies and programs. Caste, in other words, has become the form of communitarian discourse and organization that has most effectively occupied the space of political society as recently proposed by Partha Chatterjee.[44] Caste, like other forms of tradition that have been irrevocably marked by their association with and use by colonial rule, can be seen as an example of the positive role culture can exert in the work that must be done to build the basis for genuinely inclusive postcolonial societies.

Given the recent wresting of control over caste discourses by "lower" caste political and social movements, including the extraordinary mobilizations by Dalit groups both in India and outside,[45] it may seem that caste is too easy an example of the need to take culture seriously – and as a potentially positive force – in the postcolonial world. What can we say about the ethnic and religious identities that occupy so problematic a role in many formerly colonized nations? To begin with, we can point to the fact that

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[42] For an early recognition of this possibility, see Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967. For my own, rather different, approach, see my *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*.

[43] I refer here for example to the way in which critiques of the use of caste reservations have typically taken two forms, one far more progressive than the other. The first is the argument, made by figures as various as M.N. Srinivas and Jawaharlal Nehru, that class is a more meaningful index for social and economic redistribution than caste, even though it is much more difficult to implement. The second, exposed as conservative in part through its juxtaposition to the former, is the argument about the need to maintain national unity (sometimes further justified, however contradictorily, by worries about the stigmatization of caste when used for affirmative action). See Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

[44] See Partha Chatterjee, "Two Poets and Death: On Civil and Political Society in the Non Christian World," in Timothy Mitchell, ed., *Questions of Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

[45] I refer here to the mobilization of Dalit groups to put untouchability on the global agenda in association with the World Conference against Racism, in Durban, 2001.

colonially "produced" identities often became the mobilizational force that led to decolonization and the successful delineation of postcolonial claims to sovereignty. Today, the universal rhetoric of national sovereignty that enables the constitutional charter of the United Nations constitutes one of the most powerful checks on the imperial ambitions of the United States. If the universal rhetoric of human rights could be implemented more systematically and successfully in relation to the representative claims of the multiple nation states -- most of which are postcolonial states -- in the UN, it would be far more difficult to link the use of human rights discourses to the particularistic political purposes of the U.S. and other Western powers. Indeed, the only way to counter the critical interrogation of the ways universal rights are proclaimed through international institutions is to build into the political process the essential role that must be played by nations and representative institutions that have experienced the coercive and distorting influences of colonial power. The point here is not to forget too quickly either the accomplishments of postcolonial nations or the continuing challenges that past colonial rule still exerts on them. Additionally, it must be said that histories of colonization vary enormously between the formerly colonizing and colonized worlds.[46]

At the same time, the very power of postcolonial identities in their national contexts has invariably been linked to claims for greater recognition and access in respect to the rights of immigrant groups in former colonial nations. Ethnic and religious community identities have been creatively used to expose some of the limits and contradictions of postcolonial rhetoric in nations such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands. Calls for religious freedom, and the separation of church and state, have been significantly advanced by religious, ethnic, and national interests. Even as, for example, the French antipathy to the practice of veiling has betrayed the ordinary prejudices of the postcolonial French state, the accusations of the British government about the lack of toleration within the Muslim community about, say, the Rushdie affair ironically made it possible for the representations of various "immigrant" communities about systematic discrimination and exclusion to be articulated more clearly.[47] Immigration policies, as well as the general treatment of immigrant communities, have revealed the extent to which the universal norms of the West have been used to mask the fundamentally chauvinist and Christian parameters of national life in Europe and North America.[48] And yet, despite the continuation of many colonial policies through the contradictions inherent in immigration practices, there is little doubt that immigrant groups have exerted important, and occasionally productive, pressure on the insular and uncritical self-representations of Western neutrality and superiority.

As importantly, perhaps, the very rhetorics that proclaimed national self-determination as the ultimate value driving anti-colonial movements have also made available both the best of universalizing languages (commitments to social and economic redistribution, the development of legal values and practices that would work against barriers of race, poverty, and illiteracy, and political collaboration with other postcolonial

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[46] For an interesting recognition of this systematic difference, see C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

[47] See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

[48] See, as an another example, Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

nations through the Bandung conference and the emergence of the non-alignment movement during the cold war, as examples) and efforts to find new kinds of solutions to the intractable exclusions and contradictions of liberal political theory (as witnessed both in the early socialist commitments of many "third world" leaders as well as in the alternative visions of leaders such as Gandhi).[49] Despite the difficulties encountered by the postcolonial world, it is necessary not to lose sight of the enormous accomplishment not just of decolonization but of nation building during the second half of the twentieth century. And it is important to keep in mind the ways in which postcolonial national politics have often successfully negotiated particularistic and exclusionary demands on behalf of dominating groups, communities, and interests, even as nations such as India have demonstrated the extraordinary hold democratic conventions and institutions have come to exert, as for example when they were so severely threatened under the emergency regime of Indira Gandhi.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to minimize the ways in which the divide and rule policies of European colonial powers have created religious and ethnic divisions that continue to inhere in the body politic of ex-colonies. To appreciate the power of the colonial rule of difference it may be helpful to consider the contemporary position of "Islam" in the cultural politics of world struggle today. Thirty years ago, the eminent anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who had studied Muslim societies in Indonesia and Morocco, noted that while all Muslims bowed towards the same place, they did so in opposite directions.[50] Indeed, the internal differences, disputes, and divisions within the so-called Islamic world have been as large as the successful mobilization of fundamentalist Islamist forces in places ranging from Pakistan and Afghanistan to Nigeria and Indonesia appeared unlikely. And yet, under a barrage that has seen the further spread and entrenchment of American military and corporate interests across the Middle East, the identification of Islam by political leaders and public intellectuals such as Paul Wolfewitz, Donald Rumsfeld, Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington as the major civilizational threat for the West in the post-communist world, and the rise of new kinds of pressures in postcolonial states that have often experienced the worst of colonial rule, things have changed. The cultural language of generalized disparagement has both served to distract from the geo-political issues at stake and to exacerbate the reality of cultural reaction and retreat.[51]

Any serious effort to recommend national as well as international strategies for the building of more inclusive societies (and more generally, a more inclusive world) must therefore contend not just with the long history of western/colonial rule and its associated misperceptions and misrepresentations but also with the historical depth and force and its social and cultural effects. The evident attractiveness of Islamist political and cultural movements must be evaluated in light of the reasons the West has generated such distrust and disregard as well as in terms that recognize the power of cultural and

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[49] See David A. Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism After Postcoloniality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999; also Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse.*

[50] Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*: *Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

[51] For two of many recent analyses that take up the geo-political issues at stake, see David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003; and David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch; The Roots of Violence in the Middle East.* New York: Nation Books, 2003.

religious vocabularies to address centuries of abuse and oppression.[52] Cultural phenomena can not be evaluated in terms of the old (or even the new) civilizational hierarchies, even as these same forms must be recognized – and confronted – in order to allow them to play a significant role in the translation and transformation of universal values and claims. Human rights, social justice, economic equality, individual freedom, political participation, and religious autonomy are, in my view, universal values. But universal values only appear in historical forms and ways, and as such, my argument here is that we begin to advocate an historically conceived postcolonial approach to the articulation and advocacy of these values. What exactly a postcolonial approach will come to advocate is beyond the scope of my present contribution to this report. However, that a postcolonial approach – replete with a robust understanding of the colonial historical conditions that have so influenced the contemporaneous present – must be seen as critical to the development of visions and strategies for building a better and more inclusive future seems beyond debate. Or, rather, I argue here that any consideration of the task of thinking through the cultural conditions and social possibilities of global inclusion and justice requires taking this part of the debate very seriously indeed.

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[52] Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1850.*