

## Impacts of Colonialism – A Research Survey<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract**

*The impacts of colonialism in Africa and Asia have never been compared in a systematic manner for a large sample of countries. This research survey presents the results of a new and thorough assessment of the highly diverse phenomenon – including length of domination, violence, partition, proselytization, instrumentalization of ethno-linguistic and religious cleavages, trade, direct investment, settlements, plantations, and migration – organized through a dimensional analysis (political, social, and economic impacts). It is shown that while in some areas, colonial domination has triggered profound changes in economy and social structure, others have remained almost untouched.*

**Keywords:** Colonialism, political, economic and social impacts, Africa, Asia

There is a strong tradition of empirical-quantitative research from a world systems-perspective (see, among others, Bornschier and Chase-Dunn 1985). This research, however, has until recently been confined to indirect measuring of historically earlier factors, although it stresses theoretically the importance of long-term historical factors. According to Sanderson, world-systems analysis “tends to ignore the precapitalist history of these societies [...] this history often turns out to be of critical importance in conditioning the way in which any given society will be incorporated into the capitalist system and the effects of that incorporation” (Sanderson 2005: 188). For Kerbo (2005a: 430), scholarship has “yet to consider that East and Southeast Asian countries more generally are somehow different from Latin American and African nations when it comes to important aspects of political economy that might interact with the affects of outside multinational corporate investment.” In this regard, the article by Lenski and Nolan (1984) had opened up a new avenue of research: the long-term effects of social-evolutionary development levels on the modern/postcolonial economy and society. This research, however, suffered from a rather small sample and a rudimentary classification of countries into two categories of “industrializing horticultural” and “agricultural.”

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<sup>1</sup> The research on which this article is based has been funded by a grant by the Swiss National Science Foundation (*Statecraft in the non-Western World: A Multifactorial Model to Explain Persisting Differentiation*, No. 101512112495). The authors would also like to thank Harold Kerbo for a critical review of this paper as well as two anonymous JWSR reviewers for their comments.

In the framework of a cooperative project between the departments of Social Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Zurich, we replicated and further developed the Lenski and Nolan models with data from the *Atlas of Precolonial Societies* (Mueller et al. 1999). On the basis of a sample of 83 countries in Africa and Asia, we found that the intensity of traditional agriculture ('technology'), as stressed by Lenski and Nolan, indeed has an impact on socio-economic development from 1965 to 1995, but the pre-colonial level of socio-political differentiation ('hierarchy') has even more of an impact (Ziltener and Mueller 2007). However, that article has met severe criticism on the ground that the omission of colonialism and its effects leads to incomplete model specifications and distorted results. Kerbo (2005a, 2005b), for example, has argued that the colonial experiences did negate the evolutionary advantages of some Asian countries, stressing specifically the importance of the presence or lack of infrastructure development during colonialism, the construction of national boundaries by colonial powers, and the far-reaching effects of how the colonial power left the country. The authors, however, admitted in that article that the problem of colonization as "intervening variable" remained unsolved and that it should be "addressed by future quantitative-empirical research. New indicators to measure length, depth, and different impacts of colonization have to be developed." (Ziltener and Mueller 2007: 400). A sociological research project at the University of Zurich addressed that issue. First, we conducted a survey on the existing research – quantitative as well as qualitative – on the impacts of colonialism. This paper presents the findings, systematized by a simple dimensional analysis: the political dimension (section 2.1), the economic (2.2), and the social (2.3). In the following section we take up the question of how to define the temporal boundaries of colonialism, because variables like "number of years colonized" or "time spent under colonial rule" are quite prominent in recent research. We argue that, from a sociological perspective, formal criteria such as political declarations by colonizing powers and legal status should give way to a more careful factual definition of the "onset of colonial impact" and the regaining of political sovereignty ("end of colonialism"). Second, based on this survey, the project aimed at developing a new dataset measuring the impact of colonialism in Asia and Africa (Ziltener and Künzler forthcoming).

Colonialism is a form of temporally extended domination by people over other people and as such part of the historical universe of forms of intergroup domination, subjugation, oppression, and exploitation (cf. Horvath 1972). From a world-systems perspective, much of the history of the capitalist world-economy is a history of colonialism, consisting of repeated and more or less successful attempts by the core to create a periphery, to control it politically in order to exploit it economically (cf. Sanderson 2005: 186f). Both the capitalist and precapitalist world-systems have had colonial empires (Chase-Dunn/Hall 1997: 210). However, we are more specifically interested in the impact of European, American, and Japanese colonialism in its heyday between mid-19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, what Bergesen and Schoenberg (1980) have identified as the second wave of colonial expansion and contraction (1826-1969).<sup>2</sup> This is the period of extension and intensification of colonial domination during which "colonial economic development took a new direction. The extensive penetration of Western commodities, organization, and control ushered in the era of the export economy, during which colonialism reached its peak" (Birnberg and Resnick 1975: 3). Our sample is broadly defined as the parts of the modern world-system which were under colonial control in the 19th/20th century. It consists, as in the previous research mentioned above, of 83 countries of Africa and Asia, which contained around 90% of the population under colonial rule in 1920.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See also the discussion in *Review* (McGowan 1985; Bergesen 1985).

<sup>3</sup> According to French economist Girault (1921: 17), more than 600 Mio people stood under colonial rule after World War I – 440 Mio in Asia, 120 in Africa, 60 in Oceania, and 14 in the Americas.

We are aware of the fact that there is no clear borderline between traditional empire-building, as it has taken place on all continents for thousands (or at least hundreds) of years, and European colonialism. The Mughal empire in Northern/Central India, the Ottoman in Western Asia and Northern Africa, the Chinese in Central and Southern Asia all used methods of domination and exploitation that were only slightly different from colonialism. The Omanis competed with the Portuguese in the control of the East African coast and used typical colonial methods (export-oriented plantations based on slave work) on the island of Zanzibar (Sheriff 1987). However, we focus on ‘modern’ colonialism, as developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by European powers, because of its clearly stronger economic and social transformatory power, its broader impact, and its role in shaping the world before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

We follow established definitions of colonialism insofar as we define *political domination* as crucial: without a significant reduction of the level of political sovereignty, we would not speak of colonialism. This definition implies that not all forms of political, economic, and social asymmetry and dependence fall under colonialism. We suggest a concept in which the level of intensification of political domination increases, the first one defined as semi-colonialism, indirect rule with little interference in internal affairs, with strong interference in internal affairs, and the fourth as direct rule. From a sociological viewpoint, the legal status of the colony or the degree of formalization of political domination (“formal”/“informal”) is not crucial.

### Measuring the Length of Colonial Domination

It is common to declare the year of the formal declaration of a colony or protectorate as starting point of colonialism. We think this legalistic approach is not adequate. If political domination by a foreign power over a significant part of the territory and/or population is crucial to colonialism, then its onset should be the point in time when political sovereignty was *de facto* exercised by that foreign power. . This is more often than not before any *de jure* declaration, and by contrast in certain cases even significantly after this point. As Lange et al. (2006: 1418) point out, “India was clearly under the grip of the English East India Company by the 1750s, but it was not proclaimed a colony under control from London until 1857.” Because Muscat/Oman has never been a *de jure* colony, Price (2003: 481f) and others consider the country “without colonial heritage,” although there was a Portuguese occupation from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and *de facto* British control from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century on. As colonialism can be a gradual and informal process, its onset might be an unequal treaty called a “treaty of amity and trade,” with a more or less subtle loss of sovereignty (including, for example, extraterritoriality of foreign citizens or loss of control over foreign policy), the creation of a major settlement against the will of the local population and/or rulers, or the gradual gain of control over government institutions. In Egypt, the United Kingdom and France initiated in 1876 a stewardship of the public finances that should be considered as a joint form of colonization, even before the country was militarily occupied in 1882. The Ottoman Empire is widely considered as historically non-colonized, although it lost considerable sovereignty through the gradual extension of the “capitulations” system, the Anglo-Ottoman commercial treaty of Balta Liman in 1838, and, from 1881 on, through the foreign-run Public Debts Administration; this body controlled major portions of Ottoman revenue, thereby constituting “an enormous incursion on Ottoman sovereignty” (Horowitz 2004). A similar strategy was followed by the British in the case of Persia. Persia and Turkey are discussed in Cain and Hopkins *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688–1914* (1999) under the title “management without development” (419ff) – we would rather

speak of semi-colonialism in the political sphere and of financial colonialism as the mechanism of taking over government functions in order to ensure (and to maximize) debt payment (“debt trap”).

For political domination, a certain degree of enduring control over significant parts of the autochthonous population is important. Single military attacks with plundering and retreat without the erection of permanent fortresses are thus not coded as the beginning of colonialism. Likewise, a simple trading station or the colonization of an isolated area such as an offshore or river island is not considered as onset. The occupation of James Island in present-day Gambia by the Baltic Duchy of Courland and later by the British (who even declared in 1760 a British Province of the Senegambia) did not lead to any political domination of a significant inland population and is thus not coded as onset of colonialism. The arrival of the Portuguese in the now Indonesian archipelago in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century cannot be considered as onset of colonialism because they did not manage to establish political control over the “spice islands.” In contrast, on the Malay Peninsula, the Portuguese conquest of the great emporium of Malacca in 1511 clearly signified the onset of colonialism, since the city remained, despite many wars, uninterruptedly under European control well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and this control had a lasting impact on trade flows. Similarly, in Indonesia, colonialism began with the founding of Dutch-Batavia in 1619, which became the colonial center of trade and administration until independence of the country in 1949. In our sample, colonialism had already started in eleven countries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; nine followed in the next two centuries, and most countries followed only in the 19<sup>th</sup> and some even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, in most of the latter there were earlier contacts with European powers.

Similar to our variable ONSET, we define the end of colonialism (COLEND) as the point in time where the vast majority of the autochthonous population regained full sovereignty over internal and foreign affairs, with or without the participation of foreign settlers. At that moment, it should in principle be possible for a country to form alliances with whatever foreign power it wants. Of course, sovereignty does not automatically mean the end of all political and/or economic dependencies, such as in foreign trade and direct investment. It is not important whether foreign administrators are present or not, but rather whether this presence is decided by the colonial power or by a sovereign government. Foreign military bases, semi-autonomous oil fields, or other foreign enclaves tolerated by a sovereign government are for our purposes not considered a constraint of sovereignty. Egypt, again, is a special case. With British troops controlling the most important shipping infrastructure, the Suez Canal, independence came only with the final withdrawal of all troops and Egyptian takeover in 1956. The cases where the anti-colonial struggle developed into a war of independence against a post-WWII superpower are more difficult to assess. Vietnam’s colonial period ended in 1956, although complete independence and the restoration of sovereignty came only in 1975. All countries in our sample acquired full sovereignty in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With this improved measurement of the length of colonial domination we can reassess the interrelations with other variables. There is no significant correlation between the colonizing country (British vs. French) and the length of domination for the countries of our sample. Also, there is no significant difference between the length of colonialism in sub-Saharan African and Asian or North African countries (cf. graph 1). But, as we find later, the length of colonial domination is related to some economic and social indicators of colonial transformation: the level of colonial violence, investment in infrastructure, employment migration, the significance of plantations, and the success of missionary activities (see Ziltener and Künzler forthcoming). In short, a longer colonial period means more colonial violence, more investment in infrastructure, more plantations, more work immigration, and more religious conversions.

**Table 1. Onset and end of colonial domination in Africa and Asia**

Code World Bank	Country	Main colonial power(s)	Onset of colonial domination (ONSET)	End of colonial domination (COLEND)	Years of colonial domination (COLYEARS)
AFG	Afghanistan	UK	1880	1919	39
DZA	Algeria	F	1830	1962	132
AGO	Angola	P	1573	1975	402
BHR	Bahrain	UK	1860	1971	111
BGD	Bangladesh	UK	1757	1947	190
BEN	Benin	F	1878	1960	82
BTN	Bhutan	UK	1866	1949	83
BWA	Botswana	UK	1885	1966	81
BFA	Burkina Faso	F	1895	1960	65
BDI	Burundi	G/B	1897	1962	65
CMR	Cameroon	G/F/UK	1845	1960	115
CAF	Central Afr. Rep	F	1890	1960	70
TCD	Chad	F	1900	1960	60
CHN	China	semicol.	1842	1949	107
COG	Congo, Rep.	F	1880	1960	80
DJI	Djibouti	F	1862	1977	115
EGY	Egypt	F/UK	1876	1956	80
GNQ	Equatorial Guinea	P/NL/UK/S	1507	1968	461
ETH	Ethiopia	semicol./I/UK	1908	1954	46
FJI	Fiji	UK/AUS	1874	1970	96
GAB	Gabon	F	1852	1960	108
GMB	Gambia	UK	1816	1965	149
GHA	Ghana	UK	1756	1957	201
GIN	Guinea	F	1865	1958	93
GNB	Guinea-Bissau	P	1616	1974	358
IND	India	UK	1757	1947	190
IDN	Indonesia	NL	1619	1962	343
IRN	Iran	UK/R	1828	1921	93
IRQ	Iraq	UK	1914	1958	44
CIV	Ivory Coast	F	1839	1960	121
JPN	Japan	semicol.	1854	1911	57
JOR	Jordan	UK	1918	1956	38
KHM	Cambodia	F	1863	1955	92
KEN	Kenya	P/UK	1505	1963	315*
PRK	Korea, North	JP	1876	1945	69
KOR	Korea, South	JP	1876	1945	69
KWT	Kuwait	UK	1899	1961	62
LAO	Laos	F	1893	1955	62
LBN	Lebanon	F	1860	1944	81
LSO	Lesotho	UK	1845	1966	121
LBR	Liberia	USA/settler	1821	1976	155
LBY	Libya	I	1911	1951	40
MDG	Malagasy Rep.	F	1642	1960	104*

**Table 1. Onset and end of colonial domination in Africa and Asia**

MWI	Malawi	UK	1885	1964	79
MYS	Malaysia	P/NL/UK	1511	1963	452
MLI	Mali	F	1880	1960	80
MRT	Mauritania	F	1858	1960	102
MNG	Mongolia				0

MAR	Morocco	F/SP	1903	1956	53
MOZ	Mozambique	P	1505	1975	470
MMR	Myanmar/Burma	UK	1826	1948	122
NPL	Nepal	UK	1816	1947	131
NER	Niger	F	1897	1960	63
NGA	Nigeria	UK	1851	1960	109
OMN	Oman	P/UK	1507	1971	264*
PAK	Pakistan	UK	1843	1947	104
PNG	Papua N. Guinea	G/UK/AUS	1884	1975	91
PHL	Philippines	SP/USA	1565	1946	381
QAT	Qatar	UK	1916	1971	55
RWA	Rwanda	G/B	1899	1961	62
SAU	Saudi Arabia	UK	1915	1927	12
SEN	Senegal	F	1816	1906	90
SLE	Sierra Leone	UK	1787	1961	174
SLB	Solomon Islands	UK/G	1885	1978	93
SOM	Somalia	P/I/UK	1506	1960	357*
ZAF	South Africa	NL/UK/Settler	1652	1994	342
LKA	Sri Lanka	UK	1597	1948	351
SDN	Sudan	UK	1882	1956	74
SWZ	Swaziland	Settler/UK	1880	1968	88
SYR	Syria	F	1918	1946	28
TWN	Taiwan	NL/JP	1624	1945	87*
TZA	Tanzania	P/UK/G	1502	1963	339*
THA	Thailand	semicol.	1855	1938	83
TGO	Togo	G/F	1884	1960	76
TUN	Tunisia	F	1869	1956	87
TUR	Turkey	semicol.	1838	1929	91
UGA	Uganda	UK	1890	1962	72
ARE	United Arab Emirates	UK	1850	1971	121
VUT	Vanuatu	UK/F	1887	1980	93
VNM	Vietnam	F	1859	1956	97
ZAR	Zaire (Congo, Dem. Republic)	B	1879	1960	81
ZMB	Zambia	UK	1889	1964	75
ZWE	Zimbabwe	P/UK/Settler	1560	1980	225*

Notes: AUS: Australia; B: Belgium; F: France; G: Germany; I: Italy; JP: Japan; NL: Netherlands; P: Portugal; semicol.: semi-colonial with two or more colonial powers; settler: political domination by foreign settlers (and not by foreign companies or governments); SP: Spain; UK: United Kingdom. In some areas interruption(s) of colonial domination took place. In these cases (marked by \*), there are fewer “years of colonial domination” than the subtraction of the year of onset from the year of end of colonialism. Data source: Ziltener and Künzler 2008.



## **The Impact of Colonialism**

In recent years, colonialism has been included in a number of empirical studies, often from an economic perspective. While many of these studies discuss the effects of colonialism on long-term *post-colonial* developments, there has been less effort to measure the impact of colonialism *during* the colonial period. More often, the impact of colonialism is described rather than measured. A literature overview nevertheless offered a broad variety of suggestions for important variables. We hereafter present just the most central facts and arguments, differentiating between political, economic, and social impacts of colonialism.

We organize our empirical analysis through the differentiations between the impacts of colonialism in the political, economic, and social spheres; we do not have any hypothesis about the preponderance of one of them. There are no convincing theoretical arguments why the impact of colonialism in one sphere should be more significant than in the others.

### **The Political Impact of Colonialism**

In the political sphere, colonialism affects first of all the pre-colonial elites, although domination took different forms. One impact of colonialism was the political centralization of territories having no central government or, where centralization already existed, the foreign take-over or domination of pre-colonial central government (Bockstette, Chanda, and Putterman 2002: 352). The extent of political control varied from colony to colony, and often within colony from region to region (Bergesen and Schoenberg 1980: 232). Many authors differentiate between an allegedly British style of indirect rule and an allegedly French style of direct administration. According to Herbst, British adherence to indirect rule is overstated and “the notion of a single-minded colonial approach to ruling Africa is therefore unsupported by the evidence” (2000: 82). Coleman draws these styles as polar extremes of a continuum rather than as dichotomy and puts them in perspective: “in practice these forms have not been applied consistently either over time or to the different traditional authority systems within single territories” (1960: 265). Where there was the most effective indirect rule, the political integration was more difficult, and the tension between old and new elites more evident. In contrary, where direct rule was most effective, the political integration has been easier and less obstructed by old elites. Lange (2004), analyzing the variation in British colonialism, argues that direct rule provided an administrative structure based on formal rules and had a centralized legal-administrative structure with a formal chain of command that linked the diverse state actors throughout the colony to the central colonial administration in the metropole; indirect rule promoted local despotism by allowing traditional rulers to be “rent-seekers extraordinaire.” As a result, “the colonial state in indirectly ruled colonies lacked the capabilities to implement policy outside of the capital city and often had no option for pursuing policy other than coercion” (Lange 2004: 907). For a sample of 33 former British colonies, he constructed a variable measuring the extent to which British colonial rule depended on customary legal institutions for the regulation of social relations, by dividing the number of colonially recognized customary court cases by the total number of court cases in 1955.<sup>4</sup> Bollen and Jackman (1985) argue rather generally that the transfer of power was more orderly in British than in other colonies.

In places where colonialists had to cope with high mortality rates, they settled less and created extractive institutions (Acemoglu et al. 2001, 2002). In contrast to settler colonies,

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<sup>4</sup> The result of Lange’s statistical analysis is that extent of indirect colonial rule is strongly and negatively related to several different indicators of postcolonial political development: the more direct colonial rule was, the better the chance for “good governance” and democracy today.

these extractive institutions concentrate power and are prone to expropriation of property. Institutions as educational facilities and infrastructure are, according to Grier (1999), more established where colonization lasted longer. She also emphasizes constitutional differences within the British empire. La Porta et al. (2008) are less concerned with constitutional differences between the areas ruled by one colonial power, but rather between different colonial powers. According to this research, the legal systems established in British colonies are based on common law, which allows less state intervention than the French legal system established in other colonies. In between the two are the German, Scandinavian, and Socialist legal systems.

One of the most problematic legacies of colonial domination resulted from the instrumentalization of ethnolinguistic and/or religious cleavages. It was common to identify “martial races” (and, thereby, non-martial races) and recruit among them the soldiers/mercenaries for the colonial army. From the Indian experience came the British ‘martial races’ doctrine, “which held that certain ethnic stocks were summoned by culture and history to military vocations” (Young 1994: 105). The British in particular “specialized in cultivating certain populations as military allies” (Trocki 1999: 88): Their Indian army was clearly segregated on the basis of religion and caste membership. In British Borneo, mainly Iban were used as policemen and soldiers, while in British Burma the army was – apart from staff brought in from British-India – dominated by the Karen and Shan, who had been converted to Christianity mainly by U.S. missionaries. Also in the British areas in Africa, the military units created under colonial rule utilized an ethnic recruiting strategy: Tiv in Nigeria, Acholi in Uganda, Kamba in Kenya (Young 1994: 105). In the Netherlands East Indies, the Dutch had long made it a policy to employ Ambonese in the colonial military (Young 1994). Ethno-religious minorities also filled the lower ranks of the French colonial army in Syria (Thobie et al. 1990: 204).

The recruitment into civil service followed in certain cases a similar strategy. Groups allied with the colonialists were given privileged access to education and therefore to the administration; others were disadvantaged, neglected, or punished for being unruly, while some remained generally outside the scope of government policy. In British Ceylon, Christian Singhalese and people of partly European descent, but also Tamils, were clearly overrepresented in the administration. In the state of Jordan, newly founded under British protection, lower officials were mainly Palestinians and Syrians (Cleveland 1994: 199). In Cambodia and Laos, the French preferred to employ Vietnamese in the administration and also as domestic workers, thereby reinforcing older ethnic animosities (Forest 1980: 454-58), while in their mandate of Lebanon, all key political posts were given to Maronites (Traboulsi 2007: 76). Liberated slaves had a special position in some African countries, such as Gambia, Sierra Leone, or Benin. In Gambia, they were “gradually acquiring prominence in commerce and the educational and religious institutions established by the British, as well as entering government employment” (Hughes and Perfect 2006: 2). In Togo, the embryonic secondary education leading to posts in the administration was dominated by Ewe and Guina-Mina, and five families alone comprised 16% of the enrollment (Künzler 2007: 71). Also in Benin and the Ivory Coast, the colonial administration was dominated by groups from the Southern parts.

Also in the economic sphere, colonial policies created or reinforced occupational specializations along ethnolinguistic and/or religious lines, mainly by granting concessions to members of some groups more often than to others. In Egypt, the British privileged Syrian Christian middlemen (Reid 1998: 238). In Southeast Asia, Chinese and Indians were generally seen by the colonial powers as better suited to trading and work on plantations than indigenous groups such as the Malays. Chinese operated as tax-farming entrepreneurs and *compradores*, collecting and managing goods and businesses for colonial financial and agen-

cy institutions and importers and exporters. The “various tiers of Chinese entrepreneurs and middlemen” were the ties between the world economy and the village, the mining camp and the plantation in Southeast Asia (Elson 1999: 170). In newly independent countries, these legacies proved to be social explosives.

### **The Economic Impact of Colonialism**

The main arguments regarding the economic impact of colonialism are the ‘drain of wealth,’ expropriation (mainly of land), the control over production and trade, the exploitation of natural resources, and the improvement of infrastructure. As Tomlinson summarizes about India:

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century India was the largest purchaser of British exports, a major employer of British civil servants at high salaries, the provider of half of the Empire’s military might, all paid for from local revenues, and a significant recipient of British capital. (Tomlinson 1993: 13)

Colonialism led to a substantial outflow of *financial resources*. It is best documented in the case of British India, where a controversy between Indian historians and defenders of British colonialism still has not been settled. The so-called “Home Charges,” the official transfers of funds by the colonial government to Britain between 1858 and 1947, consisted mainly of debt service, pensions, India Office expenses in Britain, purchases of military items and railway equipment. Debt service occurred not only because of investment in infrastructure, but also due to costly wars and architectural extravagances like the building of New Delhi. Government procurement of civilian goods, armaments, and shipping was carried out almost exclusively in the metropole country; there were no efforts at developing industrial enterprises in India that could have delivered these goods at probably lower prices. Of these official payments, therefore, service charges on non-productive debt, pensions, and furlough payments can be considered as a balance of payment drain due to colonialism. For the 1930s, Maddison estimates these home charges in the range of £40 to £50 million a year, and “if these funds had been invested in India they could have made a significant contribution to raising income levels” (Maddison 1971: 20). In addition, there were private remittances, probably about £10 million a year, and dividend and interest remittances by shipping and banking interests, plantations, and other British investors. According to the ‘drain of wealth’ argument,

most of the colonial surplus was extracted by the metropolitan countries (in the form of interest payments on loans, repatriated profits, salaries and pensions) and this, by reducing the indigenous capital accumulation process, had a negative effect on the colonies’ growth prospects. Direct exploitation also included taxes, tariffs, restrictions on trade and foreign investment, forced labor, and even enslavement of the indigenous population. (Bertocchi and Canova 2002: 1852f)

For a sample limited to African countries this “drain” is measured as the GNP/GDP ratio in 1960 as this “reflects repatriated profits on foreign investment, royalties and direct exploitation activities” roughly at the end of the colonial period (Bertocchi and Canova 2002: 1853).

Diamond (1988:7) emphasizes the establishment of monopolistic state control of cash crop production and exportation, the mining of minerals, and the development of infrastructure as the main impacts of colonialism. The effect of colonialism on trade is assessed by

Mitchener and Weidenmier (2008); they argue that “empires increased trade by lowering transactions costs and by establishing trade policies that promoted trade within empires. In particular, the use of a common language, the establishment of currency unions, the monetizing of recently acquired colonies, preferential trade arrangements, and customs unions help to account for the observed increase in trade associated with empire” (1). Their augmented gravity model shows that belonging to an empire roughly doubled trade relative to those countries that were not part of an empire, between 1870 and 1913. In their analysis, the positive impact that empire exerts on trade is sensitive to whether the metropole was Britain, France, Germany, Spain, or the United States and to the inclusion of other institutional factors, such as being on the gold standard. Trade between the colonial power and its colonies was regulated in different ways: tariff assimilation/customs union, preferential tariff policies, and/or “open door” policies. Fieldhouse (1971) discusses long-term change in colonial trade policies, but – with some exceptions – finds stronger protectionism within French colonialism compared to British. Grier (1999: 320) supports this argument and finds for Spanish colonies a strong mercantilist approach was employed.

*Plantations* were core elements of the colonial economy. In general, a plantation is “owned by a legal entity or individual with substantial capital resources, the production techniques are based on industrial processing machinery, and the labor force consists of wage laborers resident on the estate” (Paige 1975: 4). The development of a plantation economy required expropriation, which took place in different forms, implying more or less displacement of indigenous population. In British-Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the plantation boom of the 'coffee era' (1830-1880) was enabled through a combination of a special land-sales policy and financial control through banks and agency houses, based on assumed ownership by the colonial government of all 'uncultivated land.' In the end almost all export production was in British hands (Birnberg and Resnick 1975: 18). Plantations were a world different from the surrounding land, not only because of the comparatively modern equipment and facilities, but also because of the related work immigration. Working and living conditions on plantations were generally bad. Many plantation owners used a long-term debt strategy to bind workers to their enterprise. Tropical diseases were widespread and accidents common.

Migratory estates in colonial areas in particular have been sites of frequent resistance movements; rural revolts against the colonial regime were based in large part on migratory wage laborers in, for example, Algeria, Kenya, and Angola (Paige 1975: 68). In general, “the more highly industrialized sugar, tea, rubber, and sisal plantations were considerably more likely to generate labor movements than were less industrialized tree crop plantations in rubber, palm, or copra” (Paige 1975: 350). Sugar, tea, sisal, and oil palm were typical plantation products, while wet rice, coffee, rubber, tobacco, and cacao were also or mainly produced by small farmers.

While in some colonies, governments assisted actively in setting up large estates, in others they favored small production units, “encapsulated in a colonial rhetoric of the nobility of peasant cultivators or, in the Philippines, the ideal of the yeoman farmer” (Huff 2007: 131). The production of cash crops by peasants need not necessarily be less exploitative than plantation work. Especially in the case of agricultural monopolies via marketing boards, traders and/or state officials could gain huge rents by underpaying peasants for their produce. According to Lange et al. (2006: 1443), this “promoted an unproductive economic elite, weak peasant production, and the preeminence of dysfunctional markets.” While they were not based on migrant labor and modern equipment, concessions granting the exclusive rights of exploiting forests were often even more exploitative than plantations. In the Belgian Congo, the collection of wild rubber on huge private concessions resulted in the depopulation of entire villages and “the perpetration of heinous crimes against humanity [...] Villages unwilling or unable to meet the assigned daily quotas of production were subject to rape,

arson, bodily mutilation and murder” (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002: 22). The situation on the private domain of King Leopold and in the neighboring French Congo was similar.

Opening up plantations in the interior depended on adequate means of *transport and communication* to get the produce to the ports. This was a challenge especially in the mountainous areas where coffee and tea was produced, as in Ceylon or Assam, but also in the linking of the Indian cotton- and jute-producing ‘hinterland’ with the mills of Bombay and Calcutta. These required significant investment in infrastructure. The main transportation technology in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe was the railway, and they were to be built in the colonies as well. Railways also acted as instruments of imperial control, because the technology and much of the capital came from the metropole country. Between 1865 and 1914, railway expansion absorbed 42% of British capital exports (Huff 2007: 134). There were purely military and strategic reasons behind certain railway projects, such as the line in British India leading up to the Khyber Pass to Afghanistan or the Mombasa-Uganda railway intended to ensure British claims on eastern Sudan against the progressing French. While Indian nationalists argued that railways were an expensive military asset rather than an appropriate piece of developmental infrastructure, Fieldhouse attributes to the railway system in India “a huge impact on the Indian economy. It generated an engineering industry that was to provide the basis for much of India’s economic development and created for the first time something approaching an integrated economy” (1996: 118).

Compared with the huge land masses of the Indian peninsula and Central and South Africa, the situation in Southeast Asia (and to a certain degree in West Africa) was different. In the archipelago, the plantations were never far from the coast, and the most of the rice for export was grown in the deltas of the rivers Irrawaddy (Burma) and Mekong (Indochina). Here, investment in canals and irrigation systems were at least as important as railways. In north and west India, a huge canal system was built mainly to reclaim land for agriculture. The French railway following the long Vietnamese coastline has been criticized for being not only too expensive but also not really necessary for North-South transportation (Albertini 1982). However, these projects had an economic impact even before concluded, through the modification of the structure of economic incentives, the spread of paid labor, work migration, and changes in the colonial administration (suppression of revolts and management of famines, for example). Murray (1980: 8) concludes that, for French Indochina, “official efforts of the colonial state administration were instrumental in initiating an accelerated process of primitive accumulation,” referring to the imposition of colonial taxation forcing rural inhabitants to engage in commodity exchange, compulsory labor, and large-scale land confiscations.

Roads were also important for the exertion of colonial authority, bringing profound changes even to more remote villages. According to Kerbo (2005a, 2005b), the different levels of colonial infrastructure development during colonialism contribute to explaining the post-colonial socioeconomic disparities in Southeast Asia. In general, the building of the colonial infrastructure was often labor-intensive and capital-extensive, conceived with regard only to colonial economic and political needs. As Rodney (1972: 228) states, “means of communication were not constructed in the colonial period so that Africans could visit their friends,” nor were they laid down to facilitate internal trade. For example,

All roads and railways led down to the sea. They were built to extract gold or manganese or coffee or cotton. They were built to make business possible for the timber companies, trading companies and agricultural concession firms, and for white settlers. Any catering to African interests was purely coincidental. (Rodney 1972: 228)

Stories about gold in distant, remote countries caused fascination among medieval sailors from Portugal and other European areas. One part of the West African Coastline was soon to be known as the “Gold Coast,” a name adopted subsequently for the British colony there. The Gold Coast became one of the world’s biggest gold producers, but ranked behind another area of the British Empire, South Africa, from where nearly half of the world’s gold came, and almost all of the diamonds (Walshe and Roberts 1986: 545). The control of *mining* was one of the key interests of colonial powers, and large-scale mining<sup>5</sup> had a huge impact on the local population. Migrant wage labor, the need for housing, food and entertainment triggered considerable urbanization, social distortion, and the advent of new forms of sociability and political activity. Mining took a heavy toll on the workers in the form of accidents and unhealthy living conditions that contributed to the spread of disease.

### The Social Impact of Colonialism

“Western virtues are not nearly so obvious and easily imitated as vices.”  
-- World Christian Handbook 1949, 150f

Some authors emphasize more general effects of colonial domination, such as alienation. Frantz Fanon, for example, writes “colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of a devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today” (Fanon (1963[1961]: 170). However, such notions can hardly be measured in a comparative way. According to other authors, the social impact of colonialism depended on the number settlers of European origin, colonially-induced labor migration and the level of colonial investment in the health and education sector. Related to that were different practices of ethnic and/or religious discrimination or privileges.

In Latin American Spanish colonies, the low proportion of settlers caused limited social development in the areas of education and health (Mahoney 2003). Countries with between 10% and 30% settler populations tend to have higher income inequality (Gini measures) than those with a higher or lower percentage (Angeles 2007). In settler and plantation colonies, there was a considerable amount of expropriation of land in different forms. The concentration of land ownership was higher where horticultural societies were colonized than in areas with higher population densities and more complex agricultural technologies. The latter were also less prone to the importation of labor. The colonially-induced labor immigration had a strong regional bias (Amin 1972; Fieldhouse 1996). In many colonies, economic specialization developed along *ethnic lines* with the ‘new’ sectors being taken over by ‘newcomers.’ In British Malaya, policies of the colonial government resulted in “such large and self-sufficient migrant communities that the older pattern of absorption into local society [...] only rarely occurred” (Watson, Andaya, and Andaya 2001: 342). On Borneo, the British Brooke regime developed a clear ethnic specialization in which ethnic Chinese were traders and cash-crop farmers, Malays administrators, Iban (an indigenous ethnic group) policemen and soldiers while other indigenous groups in the interior of the island remained generally outside the scope of government policy. The government always favored the amalgamation of smaller groups into one of the larger categories, usually along religious cleavages, i.e. all Muslims were considered to be ethnic Malays. This policy contributed to the formation of an identity among the numerous distinctive and often rival

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<sup>5</sup> Not all mining enterprises were colonial, capital-intensive and large-scale; in some areas where mineral deposits were sufficiently rich and alluvial, traditional small-scale traditional techniques could be applied, as in British Malaya (Huff 2007: i131).

indigenous ethnic groups (Watson, Andaya, and Andaya 2001: 253). Lange et al. (2006: 1446) conclude that through colonial policies of ethnoracial discrimination and exploitation British colonizers “contributed to enduring ethnoracial polarization,” especially by preventing large groups from being able to participate in productive economic opportunities. Unsurprisingly, in these ‘plural societies,’ the anti-colonial nationalist movements came to see the ‘non-national’ communities as reminders of foreign domination (cf. Trocki 1999: 114; Paige 1975: 355). Many of these minorities became targets of the new governments’ policies and, often, victims of government-sponsored or -tolerated pogroms.

The artificiality of *colonial borders* is one of the popular truisms about the effects of colonialism. According to Englebort et al. (2002: 1093), there is “little disagreement that the boundaries of contemporary African states are unusually arbitrary as a result of their largely colonial origins.” There are two aspects of “artificial borders”: the creation of ethnically fragmented countries and the separation of the same people into bordering countries (Alesina et al. 2006: 2). In the Near East, the spheres of influence and control established in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 led to an artificial dismemberment and reassembly of Arab territories formerly belong to the Ottoman Empire. Vandewalle (2006: 40) calls Libya an “accidental state,” “created by, and at the behest of, Great Power interests and agreed to by the local provinces who feared other alternatives.” On the Southeast Asian continent, the definition of the river Mekong as border between (semi-colonial) Thailand and (French) Laos was agreed upon by the French and the British, thereby cutting the area inhabited by Lao-speaking people in two parts along the main traffic artery – the Mekong. However, the opposite aspect, the creation of “artificial non-borders” is usually neglected in the analysis of the colonial “heritage,” e.g. the creation of the Dutch East Indies that became modern Indonesia. The colonial borders proved to be long-lasting and have not been changed, except for very few exemptions not included in our sample (Eritrea, East Timor). However, this has also been a deliberate policy by the Organization of African Unity and by the United Nations.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence of this fixation, according to Herbst (2000), neither colonial nor post-colonial administrations have incentives to invest in the periphery of their territories, causing inefficiency and weak institutions. The colonial borders furthermore created landlocked states, in Africa more than in any other region. And they created large countries, increasing the likelihood of civil wars (ibid.).

Many authors see the investment in the *education and health* sectors as the most positive impact of colonialism. According to the new estimations by Bolt and Bezemer (2009), ‘colonial human capital’ is the most important colonialism-related determinant of long-term growth in sub-Saharan Africa. However, it has to be kept in mind that education under the colonial government was not primarily meant to improve the knowledge of the indigenous population or to open the ways to European universities but to recruit and to train clerks/officials for the administration. Education policies were guided by the practical needs of colonial society. For instance, in Egypt, the British “attempted to confine the Westernized schools to the training of the future civil servants and to direct the bulk of primary school graduates into vocational institutes” (Cleveland 1994: 101); in Malaya, “it was considered unnecessary to offer higher levels since the government viewed education as means of equipping the population with the tools appropriate for their assigned lot” (Watson Andaya/Andaya 2001: 255). Rodney (1972: 264) argues that colonial schooling was “education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment.” However, he sees differences within as well as between

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<sup>6</sup> “Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.” (United Nations, *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*, adopted by General Assembly resolution 1514, XV, of 14 December 1960. <www.unhcr.ch>).

colonies, and assumes that British colonies offered more educational opportunities than French ones, largely due to the activities of the missionaries.

The empirical data on enrollments at the end of the colonial period indeed show huge variations in sub-Saharan Africa (Künzler 2007: 74f.). Financial arguments played an important role: In Egypt, austerity measures under the rule of Lord Cromer (1883-1907) such as the closing of public schools and the increase of fees led to a decline of the primary and secondary enrollment rates (Cleveland 1994: 101). At the same time, independent schools were in many colonies forbidden or carefully observed in order to exclude the development of a potentially anti-colonial elite. Trocki (1999: 88) argues that the impact of schools was “far-reaching, since it had the effect of creating cultural allies for the colonial powers”. There was virtually no other option for school graduates than to work within a colonial structure (government, trade, mission), a situation that created what Wallerstein (1970: 410) called the “clerk between two worlds” where “[t]o concentrate on his psychological dilemmas [...] is to miss the key factor, the structural bind in which this class found itself.”

“Cultural allies” were also the parts of the population that converted to the religion of the colonizers. *Missionary activities* thus belonged to the repertory of the European colonizers from the beginning in 15<sup>th</sup> century, and in many places their collaborators and subjects accepted their religion as ‘superior’ – and/or for opportunistic motives. In many areas, missionaries came with the colonizers, in some before them. Colonization or semi-colonial rule often brought religious freedom and the protection of missions for all kinds of Christian churches and sects. A relation too close with the colonizers could be a disadvantage for the mission. In India after independence, the Christian Church “has become free from the stigma that it was an ally of the ‘foreign’ rulers,” while during the British colonial domination, it “was often looked upon as an ally of an alien imperialism” (World 1949: 150f).

How far-reaching the change of life related to conversion to Christianity really was, beyond routines and rituals, is difficult to assess. Much depended on the distance between traditional life and the new religious instructions and standards – the new religion demanded not only exclusivity and renouncement of traditional practices such as ancestral worship and shamanistic health rituals as well as non-sedentary lifestyles, polygamy and open promiscuity. Missionary activities were especially successful where a process of self-Christianization could be set in motion. In these cases, local assistants successively took over the preaching and converting, and “native Churches” were built. In Africa, there was more African control over missionary activities where missions were established before colonial rule, while in the reverse case the dividing effects on African societies were more distinct (Ilfle 1969: 130). Among the consequences of Christian missionary work in Africa was also an age cleavage since it was above all the young who were attracted to the early missions, “so that acceptance of education and Christianity often appeared almost as a revolt of a whole generation against its elders” (Ilfle 1969: 128). There were also many other unintended consequences, such as Christianity-inspired, but anti-Western messianistic movements, “native Churches” that could inspire independence movements, or a dissolution of the traditional cultural value system followed by a complete breakdown of social structure. In Vietnam, the Cao Dai sect was founded in 1926, a case of “frankly fabricated traditionless syncretism” which mingled Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, spiritism, and freemasonry, among others, with a quasi-Catholic church organization (Osterhammel 1997: 99). The impact of missionary activities was big in areas which were not converted to one of the “high” or scriptural religions (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism etc.) already, i.e. mainly areas in south of the Sahel belt in Africa (with the exception of the East African coast), in Southeast Asia (in the Archipelago the Philippine and some Indonesian islands, on the continent the so-called “mountain tribes”) and in Oceania. Among the highly educated in stratified societies, missionaries argued in favor of Christianity by referring to the superiority of European

knowledge, technology etc. The latter met usually open doors, but unrestrained missionary zeal put these exchanges at risk, again and again, as in the case of Vietnam (cf. Watson Andaya/Ishi 1999: 200). In Islamic areas, colonial missionary activities were especially unsuccessful. If this has to do with traditional animosities out of centuries-old religious competition or with the fact that apostasy is a crime punishable by death in Islamic law (Lewis 1995: 295), is not of importance here. As the World Christian Handbook summarizes:

in the whole Moslem world, particularly in the homelands of Islam in the Near East, the number of converts from Islam to Christianity has always been very small and is still very small. The Christian churches consist of foreign residents and of people belonging to families which were never Moslem. (World Christian Handbook 1949: 76)

In mainly Islamic areas, converts usually were followers of ancient Christian churches, which had survived in some parts of Western Asia. In many colonies, converts were given special tasks in administration and/or army, and they usually became “loyalists.” This had a lasting impact on interreligious relations, independently of their absolute numbers. The decolonization process brought many risks for converts, which were often – especially in cases of armed conflicts and wars of independence – met by emigration.

Regarding *health and life expectancy*, colonialism had a mixed impact. On the one hand, medical centers were founded, typically with the purpose of lowering infant mortality and advancing disease prevention and vaccination campaigns. The limited impact of these measures has to do with the predominant orientation of “imperial medicine” (Elson 1999), which was “particularly interested in controlling, by medical research and eradication campaigns, the most spectacular manifestation of ill-health, epidemic sicknesses ... The continued outbreak of such epidemics was an affront to Western dominance, moreover they had serious economic consequences because they killed so many labourers and rendered so many others incapable of work” (ibid. 177f).

By ending or reducing traditional warfare – whose frequencies and character are hotly debated – in many regions, colonialism had a pacification effect which reduced economic disruptions and related famines. For Southeast Asia, Elson (1999: 160) argues that it was the significant reduction of mortality, not an increase of fertility, which led to a net population growth in colonial period. On the other hand, urbanization and the work in mines, plantations and on the big infrastructure construction sites favored the spread of diseases and increased dramatically the number of work-related accidents. In Southern Vietnam, one in twenty plantation workers died, which was double the overall mortality for the French colony (ibid., 157). In Africa, the establishment of plantation colonies had “a grossly disturbing effect on the African nutritional economy” (De Castro 1952: 179). In certain areas colonialism led to a drastic population decrease. In the Belgian Congo, the decrease was by 50 percent between 1879 and 1919; mainly due to forced labor and the atrocities linked to it (Hochschild 2000[1998]: 233). Furthermore, colonial investment in health facilities mainly benefited the colonialists, especially in settler colonies.

### **Conclusion**

We started by admitting that the problem of colonization as 'intervening variable' remains unsolved in recent research, including our own. The huge variety and diversity of colonial experiences that we found described in the research literature (and that we can confirm on the basis of our evaluation) is a challenge to all attempts at coding the factual impact of colonialism and therefore its “legacy.”

Our research survey shows that there are differences between the socio-economic development in colonized and non-colonized areas/countries. The (few) non-colonized areas in Africa/Asia experienced less intensive modes of integration into the world economy, a slower disruption and disintegration of the traditional social structures, all in all a slower pace of change compared to colonial economies (cf. Dixon 1999b: 57f). Although some Asian countries, e.g. Vietnam, Indonesia and especially South Asia (former British-India, Burma, Ceylon) did experience colonial domination with far-reaching consequences, the political impact of colonialism has been widest in sub-Saharan Africa, in areas where a lesser degree or the absence of traditional state- and empire-building opened opportunities for significant political transformations. The economic impact of colonialism varied greatly, both in Asia and Africa. Many regions have been transformed through the development of plantations, mining booms and settler economies, others have been tied to empires through colonial policies as in the case of the French mercantilism or Japan's highly interventionist colonialism. Other areas have remained untouched or only superficially changed through colonialism, such as neglected land-locked regions in Africa as well as highly developed traditional economies in East or West Asia. Regarding social transformation, the difference between Africa and Asia is most pronounced. With few exceptions (French-Indochina, Fiji, Malaysia), all countries which experienced a profound colonially-induced social transformation through immigration, proselytization and partition are located in Africa south of the Sahara. In most heavily-populated areas with traditional states and empires as well as dominant scriptural religions, this was not possible, not necessary or not desirable for the respective colonial power.

However, the impact of colonialism should not be overestimated. As demonstrated in many analyses, it is *one* important determinant of the socio-economic development of Africa/Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century, but not the only one and in many cases not the most important one. On the Arab Peninsula, for instance, the decline of the demand for pearls in the 1920s and the large-scale production of petroleum are considered to have changed societies much more than British indirect rule and related investment, which was promoted by indigenous elites (Owen and Pamuk 1999: 76ff). In many cases, colonies were annexed before their geopolitical or economic value to the Imperial Empire was even assessed: "One consequence was that, once colonies were seized, the imperialist powers were frequently content to permit local economic activities to stagnate rather than to allow a rival metropolitan state administration to assume either formal or informal control. This 'benign neglect' – in addition to the discovery and subsequent exploitation of natural resources in other colonies – produced a heterogeneous pattern of capitalist economic development throughout the colonial world (Murray 1980: 13).

We therefore conclude that caution is justified regarding the supposedly transformative effects of colonialism. While for some areas, it is obvious that profound changes in economy and social structure can be traced back to colonial measures, others remained almost untouched, sometimes even conserved. To deal with the impact of colonialism by dummy-variables ("colonized/not-colonized," French/British, etc.) is clearly inadequate. The challenge is to identify the main dimensions of colonial transformation and to find indicators to measure the factual, real levels of impact. The next level of the project aims at developing a multidimensional measure of the impact of colonialism in order to open up new avenues for comparative research, qualitative as well as quantitative.

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