Part I

Undertones

Imperialism

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European and American empires seemed to be at their peak when the twentieth century opened. By its end, decolonization, at least in a formal sense, seemed to be complete. Imperialism, some would argue, had moved into a different phase, but it is certainly true that the world had been shaped by empires and their legacies were universally apparent. Everywhere, boundaries (often artificial) and problems of ethnicity were the product of the imperial age. Many of these, such as the crises in the Middle East, the communal tensions in Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Fiji, Somalia, and many other places, were fraught with conflict. For empires had not only distributed white people of European origin around the globe, they had also stimulated flows of Africans (not least through the slave trade) to North and South America and some parts of Asia, Indians (through indentured labor) to Indian Ocean islands, the Caribbean, and Africa, and Chinese to the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Rim, Australasia, and the Americas. In the twentieth century, these earlier population flows created many stresses and strains. Non-European territories of white settlement sought to stem such migration in the period before and after the First World War, and in the post-Second World War era, European states became the destination for many migrants from the so-called Third World. On the one hand, such population movements were vital in the filling of jobs which whites were no longer prepared to occupy, but they also sparked right-wing, quasi-racist (or openly racist)

movements which vainly sought to maintain white ethnic purity and keep such people out. Many international problems, including the legacy of the Holocaust in Israel, were rooted in these imperial phenomena. Moreover, by the end of the century a global nation-state order, represented in the extensive membership of the United Nations, had taken over. Politics generally represented the successful long march to power of an educated, more or less westernized, nationalist bourgeoisie almost everywhere.

Empires in the Early Twentieth Century

By 1900 most of the major acts of imperial acquisition had been completed. The final decades of the nineteenth century had witnessed the partition of Africa – the almost complete carve-up of that continent – as well as a scramble for Pacific islands involving the British, the Germans, the French, and the United States. At the end of the century, the US had developed further as an overseas imperial power (the earlier expansion of the original colonies across the continent, as well as the annexation of Alaska and Hawaii, had already made it a major imperial force despite all protestations to the contrary). In the Spanish–American War of 1898, one old European imperialist power gave way to the thrusting new federal state, which acquired the Philippines and territory in the Caribbean. The tsarist empire of the Russians had

consolidated its hold over its East and Central Asian possessions through the building of railway lines, including the trans-Siberian. Elsewhere, older rivalries had appeared to continue unabated. In that same year, military forces of the French and the British came face to face on the Upper Nile in the Fashoda incident, when General Kitchener, who had just reconquered the Sudan (Anglo-Egyptian forces had been defeated by those of the Mahdi in 1884–5), faced down Colonel Marchand. Another new imperial power, Italy, had received a major setback when defeated by the Abyssinians (Ethiopians) at the Battle of Adowa in 1896. In the twentieth century, a fascist Italian government was to be restless to avenge this defeat.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the European and American empires, rapidly joined by the Japanese, had effectively carved up the world into zones of "formal" and "informal" empire. In formal empire, the imperial power directly administered territory, developing infrastructure and ports in favor of international trade. In informal empire, the imperial power exercised economic influence, but permitted the territory to be ruled, however weakly, by indigenous agents. The British also maintained the concept of the "protectorate," a territory whose boundaries were generally established by the imperial power but which maintained some semblance of traditional rule. The fiction was maintained through oversight by the Foreign Office. However, many of their protectorates were formalized into Crown Colonies in the early twentieth century, a transition which moved their control to the Colonial Office. Other diverse modes of governance were exercised in various places and the considerable complexity of imperial rule was dependent on a range of indigenous rulers, commercial collaborators, and westernized elites who normally used their training in western ideas and techniques to advance themselves within the imperial systems. It was from this essentially bourgeois group that the new nationalisms of the twentieth century were to arise.

Other zones of influence resulted from the decline of former empires, notably the Ottoman. The weakness of this empire, which had been at the peak of its power between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, had already produced major political changes in Greece and the Balkans in the course of the nineteenth century. Islands such as Cyprus had been lost to the west, while subsidiary rulers in North Africa had progressively asserted their independence – as with the khedives in Egypt – before falling under European influence. In the early twentieth century, the British were the nominal rulers of Egypt, although they only declared a protectorate in 1914. Algeria and Tunisia were under the formal control of France, while Morocco fell into the informal French sphere after a series of crises in which Germany attempted to assert an interest. Libya became Italian after a brief war in 1911–12.

Elsewhere in the world, it is possible to demarcate these formal and informal spheres. In the Caribbean and Central and South America, different systems coexisted: European empires had formal control of almost all the Caribbean islands, as well as territories on the northern coast of South America and the lands of Central America. American influence had been established in Panama, preparatory to the opening of the canal there in 1914. South American countries labored under a sort of dual system. The British were economically powerful, notably in Argentina, but the Americans effectively insisted that it was their zone of influence, a notion first established by the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. The British maintained formal hold over the Falkland Islands off the coast of Argentina (known to the Argentineans as the Malvinas), a situation which was to stimulate conflict in the Anglo-Argentine War of 1982. Other Atlantic islands held by the British included Ascension, Saint Helena, Tristan da Cunha, and South Georgia.

Sub-Saharan Africa was almost entirely under the control of the Portuguese, British, French, German, Italian, and Belgian empires. The Spanish had enclaves in the north and the west, while the Americans maintained informal and economic control over Liberia. Only Ethiopia was fully independent. In Asia, the British exercised authority over a vast swathe of territory from the Yemen and the Gulf, through their most important possession, India, to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in the south and Burma (Myanmar), the Malay states, and Singapore in the east, with outriders in Sarawak and

North Borneo. Hong Kong on the coast of China was rapidly becoming a bustling commercial emporium, recently rendered viable by the cession of the New Territories from China (1898) on a ninety-nine-year lease. The Japanese had acquired Formosa (or Taiwan) in 1895 and added Korea to their empire in 1910. The French were powerful in Indo-China, in the territories of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, while the Dutch possessed the extensive empire of the East Indies, Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and many other islands, including parts of New Guinea and Borneo. Siam (Thailand) was effectively under informal control, mainly that of Britain. In some places, the British ruled through companies. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Royal Niger Company had only recently been wound up (1898), but the British South Africa Company (Southern and Northern Rhodesia, the future Zimbabwe and Zambia) was to continue to exercise authority until 1923. The British North Borneo Company survived until the Second World War, while Sarawak remained under the rule of supposedly independent rajahs who were British in nationality. Commercial companies were also powerful in Mozambique and elsewhere.

The Unique Power of the British Empire

In these imperial systems, the British Empire was uniquely powerful. In many respects, there were several British empires. India was often demarcated as an empire in its own right. It too reflected the complexities of imperial rule: vast areas were under the direct rule of British authorities, but there were also many Indian princely states which supposedly ruled themselves, under the watchful eye of a British resident, while their princes offered allegiance to the monarch through the viceroy. Along the northern frontiers of the subcontinent there were a number of buffer states, like Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal, nominally independent, over which the British kept careful external control. It was as a result of anxieties about encroachments from competing empires like Russia and China that the British also kept a close watch upon Afghanistan and went so far as to invade Tibet in 1905.

The second British Empire was the empire of colonies of white settlement. Although Britain's greatest setback had been the loss of the thirteen North American colonies in the 1770s, the settlement colonies had remained extensive. By the early twentieth century, Canada had been progressively federated from 1867 (though Newfoundland was not to join until after the Second World War). The Australian colonies of New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia had formed the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. New Zealand, the Cape, and Natal were also colonies which exercised "responsible government," full internal self-government. All still looked to Britain for foreign and defense policies. As we shall see below, seismic changes in South Africa were to produce the Union of South Africa, adding the Transvaal and the Orange Free State (or after 1902 Orange River Colony) to the Cape and Natal, in 1910. To India and the white settlement colonies we could add two more British "empires," that of islands and strategic staging posts important as commercial way-stations, as coaling or telegraphic cable places, or as naval supply points, a system which effectively spanned the globe. And finally there were the "dependent" colonies, those which were administered as colonies under the authority of the Crown or as protectorates. These multiple imperial systems were to have varied effects upon the international systems of the twentieth century.

Loss of Equilibrium in the International Imperial Order

But the developments of the turn of the twentieth century failed to consolidate the imperial order. Major instabilities were now becoming apparent in the international system. The British, who had generally overcome challenges to their authority in the previous century, were beginning to show signs of weakness. Despite possessing what commentators described as the largest empire the world had ever known, the empire on which the sun never set, Britain was rapidly losing influence. The colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, described the United Kingdom as a "weary Titan, staggering under the too great orb of its fate."

Both the US and Germany surpassed it in steel production. Its navy, the source of its nineteenth-century power, was unlikely to maintain its two-power standard (the notion that the Royal Navy had to be larger than those of the next two navies combined). Internal stresses, including the rest-lessness of Irish nationalists, labor and trade union problems, and other social discontents, aroused alarm. But the major threat to the inter-national standing of the British came from the efforts of Chamberlain and the high commis-sioner in South Africa, Alfred Milner, to consoli-date their power in the southern African subcontinent. The Anglo-Boer War, which broke out in 1899, largely provoked by the British, was designed to reestablish their authority over the Boer (or Afrikaner) republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The British government hoped to bring the major gold production of the Transvaal (or South African Republic) under its control (important from the point of view of maintaining the stability of the international cur-rency, sterling), establish the political freedoms (what would today be called "civil rights") of European migrants within the republic, and, above all, protect the strategically important colo-nies of the Cape and Natal against the dangers of foreign alliance. Despite the existence of the Suez Canal, South Africa remained important strategi-cally as a commercial route to India and to Aus-tralasia. There was also an important naval base at Simonstown.

But the war between the world's largest impe-rial power and republics that were relatively thinly populated by whites was no "pushover." The British experienced a series of major reversals and three important centers, Mafeking, Kimberley, and Ladysmith, were besieged by the Boers over many months. Even when the sieges were raised and the British captured the Boer capitals, the war was not over. The Afrikaners became guerrillas and used their knowledge of the terrain and their formidable bushcraft to continue to confound the British. When the Peace of Vereeniging was signed in 1902, the Boers could maintain a sem-blance of never having been defeated.

Far from solving problems, from the point of view of the British, the war created new ones. Many Afrikaners remained irreconcilable and, in some respects, they won the peace. Plans for a major movement of British immigrants and the Anglicization of the region never materialized. Africans, too often left out of consideration in historical assessments of the war, in fact became its major victims, ultimately losing land, any sem-blance of political involvement, and opportunities to advance their fortunes within the South African economy. In many respects, the foundations of the later notorious apartheid system were laid during this period. It would take the whole of the twentieth century to work these problems through.

On the international front, the British were now fully aware of their weakness. It was appar-ent, for example, that Britain could no longer maintain the necessary naval and military pres-ence in the Far East. The British had been intrigued by the rise of Japan, a state made up of an archipelago of islands with a hostile continen-tal power nearby. The parallels with Britain itself, not least because the Japanese were adopting British engineering and technological expertise, as well as modeling their rapidly expanding navy on the Royal Navy, were much discussed in the period. Moreover, the Japanese emergence as an imperial power whetted its ambitions for further acquisitions. In 1902, the British abandoned their policy of "splendid isolation" and signed a treaty with Japan. Soon the disequilibrium which the British most feared was heightened by the devel-oping power of Germany. Recognizing the true source of British predominance, the kaiser and his ministers ordered a major naval building program which caused great alarm in the British Admi-ralty. It also produced a reversal in British naval policy. Whereas in the past the Royal Navy had been concerned with global authority, preferring to police the seas with a large number of relatively small vessels, the Admiralty, under the influence of Admiral Jack Fisher, set about concentrating on defense in Europe through the medium of larger battleships known as dreadnoughts, the first one being launched in 1906.

The perceived German threat caused the British to form new ententes that were to have effects upon imperial policy. The Anglo-French entente of 1904, just ahead of the resonant cen-tenary of the Battle of Trafalgar, meant that the

longstanding friction between the two empires was put to rest. This was followed by an entente with Russia which, like France, had been a traditional enemy. The British had been afraid of Russian pressure at a number of points, notably upon the Ottoman Empire in the Black Sea region, seeking to force their way into the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles (thus securing an ice-free route into the wider world). The Russian encroachment from their Central Asian possessions upon Persia (modern Iran), Afghanistan, and the Northwest frontier of British India had caused widespread alarm in British quarters for some time. The British and Russian bout of shadow-boxing on this frontier had prompted the coining of the celebrated phrase "The Great Game." Third, Russian continental power reaching out to the Far East had caused alarm with regard to the commerce and "treaty ports" of western Europeans in China. In these ports, Europeans enjoyed "extraterritoriality," the right to run their commercial enclaves according to their own laws.

But the Russian threat had been removed by the growing power of the Japanese. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 had been concluded by Japanese victories, notably in the naval Battle of Tsushima in 1905, which the Japanese Admiral Togo had regarded as the equivalent of Trafalgar one hundred years earlier. The British entente with Russia helped to alleviate tension in some areas of "informal imperialism." Persia was divided into two spheres of interest, the Russians in the north, the British in the south adjacent to the Persian or Arabian Gulf, which they regarded as their commercial and strategic zone. They maintained a powerful British Resident in the Gulf, under the aegis of the Indian presidency of Bombay, with agents in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the Trucial states (now the United Arab Emirates), and Muscat. The extensive imperial shipping line, the British India Steam Navigation Company, maintained a frequent service from Bombay to many of the Gulf ports.

Indeed, the dominance of Europeans and Americans throughout the world has to be understood in terms of the advanced technologies of the day, technologies that were being increasingly adopted by non-European peoples. British shipping companies were to be found all over the world dominating trade routes in the North and South Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as the Far East. The great majority of the ships passing through the Suez Canal were British, and the British shipbuilding industry, on the rivers Clyde, Mersey, Tyne, and Wear, was by far the largest in the world. There were also major German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, American, and, increasingly, Japanese shipping concerns. Marine engines were much more efficient than they had been in the past and the latest steam turbine technology was installed in ships where speed was vital, as on the North Atlantic, and in the dreadnoughts. But it was not only the deep-sea trades that were important. Rivers such as the Euphrates, the Irrawaddy, the Nile, the Niger, the Congo, the Amazon, the St. Lawrence, and those that were navigable in India and China abounded in river steamers. So did lakes, such as the great lakes of North America and those of East Africa. The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, to take one example, had a fleet of more than a hundred vessels. Coasting trades were also important, with services like the Straits Steamship Company, based on Malaya and the eastern islands, and Burns Philp, an Australian concern connecting Australian ports to Pacific islands and Southeast Asia. Powerful shipping companies had also emerged in Canada, New Zealand, and elsewhere. These were supplemented by more advanced rail technology, connecting much of the interior of Africa and Asia to the ports, with engines built in Europe or North America. By the beginning of the twentieth century much of the world was connected by telegraphic submarine cable and landlines. Commercial messages, as well as military and naval dispositions, could be sent almost anywhere within minutes. By the time of the First World War, this system would be supplemented by nascent radio transmission. Machine guns and other artillery, small arms, together with naval armament and firepower had become increasingly sophisticated. Theoretically, European and American technological dominance should have been complete. But increasingly, if intermittently, examples of these new technologies were beginning to reach, and be utilized by, non-European peoples.

Yet the years up to the First World War were a time of considerable apprehension and anxiety for the imperial system. Violent revolts, the Maji Maji and the Herero respectively, took place in German Tanganyika (Tanzania) and in Southwest Africa (Namibia). Both were suppressed with great brutality. The British would shortly face a revolt in Somaliland (Somalia) led by a leader they named the "Mad Mullah" (Sayyid Abdullah Hassan). Of even greater significance for the future was the fact that nationalist movements were gaining in strength, notably in India, but also in South and West Africa, where educated elites were founding parties. But it has often been argued that when the First World War broke out, it was for essentially European rather than imperial reasons. Nevertheless, as the British journalist and politician Leopold Amery pointed out, the Germans were intensely jealous of the British Empire. Despite this, on the eve of war, the Germans and the British confirmed an agreement on the division of the Portuguese Empire in Africa (first contracted at the end of the nineteenth century) if the republican government established in 1910 should decide to withdraw. But if the origins of the First World War within competing empires are obscure, the imperial results of the conflict were profound.

Imperialism and the First World War

In Africa, there were campaigns against the Germans in Southwest Africa and in Tanganyika. South African troops, with the participation of British and Belgians in East Africa, effectively captured these colonies, while the Germans also lost Togo and Cameroon in West Africa. In the east of the continent, the German General von Lettow Vorbeck continued to mount a guerrilla campaign which continued until the end of the war. These campaigns provided the South African Jan Smuts with experience, power, and influence that led to a seat in the British Imperial War Cabinet, the rank of field marshal, and considerable influence at Versailles and over the foundation of the League of Nations. Similarly, the German Pacific possessions were captured. The Ottoman Empire, under considerable German

influence before the war – notably in the building of the Baghdad railway – took the German side, a decision which led to its ultimate destruction. The British fomented the Arab revolt, led by Colonel T. E. Lawrence and the Sharif Husayn, Emir of the Hijaz, and after initial setbacks to British and Indian forces in Mesopotamia (the modern Iraq), the Ottoman provinces fell one by one. One of the characteristics of the war was the conclusion of secret agreements among participants. When the Italians entered the war on the Allied side in 1916, they sought rewards in the enhancement of their imperial possessions. The French and the British agreed to a division of the Middle Eastern spoils as well as debating the possibility of a Jewish homeland in the region.

In 1919, at Versailles, some of these agreements bore fruit. When the League of Nations was established, it was agreed that the German and Ottoman possessions should be administered under a mandates system, whereby victorious Europeans would exercise authority under international supervision. Through these arrangements the British secured Tanganyika (with some redistribution of land to the Belgians in the Congo and Rwanda Burundi), parts of Togo and Cameroon, together with Palestine, Transjordan, and Mesopotamia. The French took some of the German territory of West Africa together with Lebanon and Syria. The startling development was that some European colonies now became imperialists in their own right: South Africa secured the mandate for Southwest Africa while Australia and New Zealand assumed authority in the German parts of New Guinea and Samoa respectively. The Italians got no more than a few crumbs from the imperialists' table, namely a rearrangement of the boundaries of Libya and Italian Somaliland. But just as the empires of Britain and France reached their widest extent, it became obvious that the postwar world was going to be highly unstable.

In India, the interwar years were to be a time of great turbulence. A brief Afghan war broke out in 1919. The Indian nationalist movement had been fractured in various ways from the years before the First World War. The Indian National Congress, founded as far back as 1885, had

become divided into militant and constitutional wings. The war had invoked a certain amount of "loyalty" and the man who was to become the leading nationalist symbol, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, soon known as the Mahatma, even served in an ambulance corps. The British were now attempting to mix limited constitutional reform with a crackdown on dissidence, but the latter resulted in the notorious Jallianwallabagh massacre in Amritsar when troops fired upon unarmed demonstrators, killing some 400 people. Gandhi was nonetheless able to secure a degree of control over the nationalist movement through what was effectively a "third way": passive resistance, combined with constitutional talks. But another major faction was to develop its power during this period. This was the Muslim League. The original Congress had set out to bring Hindu and Muslim together, but the Muslim League was founded as a separatist Islamic movement in 1905. In 1940, under the leadership of a westernized and secular lawyer, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, it demanded a separate Muslim state.

The Interwar Years

There is a curiously ambivalent air about European imperialisms in the interwar years. On the one hand, the strains and tensions that would ultimately lead to decolonization are unquestionably present. On the other, it seems in many ways to be something of a golden age. Imperial administrations were placed on a more systematic footing than had been the case before. In all the empires, administrators were selected and trained more carefully. Partly because of the economic problems of the period, governments were anxious to foster an imperial spirit. It was a period of intensive official propaganda in the French Empire. The last great empire exhibitions took place in this era, including those at Wembley in 1924–5, Glasgow in 1938, Paris (1925 and 1931), Liège and Brussels (1930 and 1935), as well as in many other parts of the world. In Britain, the Empire Marketing Board was founded in 1926 to encourage the purchase of empire produce. Imperial preference was finally, after many years of controversy, introduced in the Ottawa agreements of 1932. Moreover, the development of the American quota system and the resulting barriers to large-scale European migration that had been such a characteristic of the pre-First World War years meant that more Europeans headed for the empires. More Britons migrated to imperial territories between the wars than went to the US (though many returned). Italians and Portuguese also headed for colonies within their own imperial systems, as well as to British and South American territories. The British also created ex-servicemen's settlement schemes, partly in an effort to draw off some of the resentments generated by the fact that the mother country had not proved to be a "land fit for heroes."

The British dominions progressed further down the path of becoming fully independent states. Having been involved in Versailles, they joined the League of Nations and, in some areas, began to pursue independent foreign policies. In 1926 the "Balfour Declaration" proclaimed that, with Britain, they were "free and equal states, in no way subservient one to the other." This was given expression in the Statute of Westminster of 1931. Moreover, strains and stresses were working through both on the domestic front and in respect of the Middle East. In 1922, treaties with both Ireland (excepting the six counties in the north) and Egypt effectively restored independence to those countries. In Egypt, the imperial power retained control of defense and foreign affairs in order to protect its interests in the Suez Canal. A further treaty followed in 1936. Similar developments occurred in Mesopotamia (Iraq). In both of these countries, and in Transjordan, the British tried to develop constitutional monarchies and maintain their informal influence. They succeeded until the 1950s.

If the British imperial system was fraying around the edges, strenuous efforts were made to replace formal with informal controls. The Americans granted self-government to Cuba in 1934 and the Philippines in 1935, while maintaining their "protection" of these territories. They continued to hold Puerto Rico.

But the prime conditioning factor in imperial relations in these years was the severe cyclical depressions in the world's economic system. The first of these occurred in the early 1920s, followed by a severe downturn after 1929 which continued

until some improvement occurred just before the Second World War. Only South Africa was relatively free of these economic crises because of the significance of its gold production. Elsewhere, economic problems and an accompanying downturn in wages and standards of living produced social and political discontents throughout the imperial systems. By the end of the 1930s, partly under pressure from labor troubles in the West Indies and elsewhere, the British began to produce schemes for the central funding of empire development. In the French Empire, government-sponsored propaganda and tighter economic and administrative controls were developed. This was also true of the Belgian and Dutch empires. The Portuguese Empire came to be seen as a central characteristic of the new Estado Nuovo founded in 1926, while the Italian fascists placed their empire at the center of their concerns. The capital of Eritrea was developed as a major Art Deco city, now appreciated for its extraordinary architectural and aesthetic achievements, despite its rather dubious origins. And Mussolini, under pressure from internal problems, resolved to avenge Adowa by invading Ethiopia in 1935–6. This shamelessly opportunistic action, which the western powers entirely failed to prevent, was hailed by Afro-Asian nationalists as indicative of the aggressive decadence of Europe. The one state in Africa, with a major Christian population, that had managed to resist imperial conquest was subjected to twentieth-century aggression.

The League of Nations, lacking an international armed force, was also powerless to prevent the increasingly aggressive actions of Japan in the Far East. Manchuria was invaded in 1931 and a puppet ruler was imposed upon the new colony of Manchukuo, a territory which happened to be rich in iron resources, which Japan itself lacked. This was followed by brutal incursions into the Chinese mainland. The Anglo-Japanese alliance had not been renewed after the First World War and the British now recognized that Japan constituted a major threat to its possessions in the Far East and Southeast Asia. Extensive fortifications were built in Singapore, mainly pointing out to sea, and were clearly designed to protect the extremity of the Malaysian peninsula from the potential for Japanese aggression.

The Second World War

Whereas the imperial campaigns of the First World War largely took place in sub-Saharan Africa and involved the conquest of the German colonies, those of the Second took place primarily in Asia and the Pacific, in the war against Japan, and in North Africa. Japan and Italy, on the Allied side in the First World War, were realigned with Germany in the Second. The Japanese were able to demonstrate the extreme weakness of the European empires by rapidly overrunning all of their colonies in the Far East and Southeast Asia in 1941–2. They used their alliance with Thailand to attack Burma, bringing them within reach of British India itself (though they faced insurrection in Thailand as they did elsewhere in the territories they conquered). The Japanese also moved into the Pacific islands and began to threaten the security of Australia and New Zealand.

Elsewhere, the imperial status quo was further undermined by the fact that the allegiance of the French territories was divided into those which supported the German puppet Vichy government and those which allied themselves with the Free French. France's North African territories were ruled by the Vichy regime, as French West Africa was initially, while French Equatorial Africa supported the Free French forces of General de Gaulle. This divide was even apparent in North America where the tiny French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon in the Gulf of St. Lawrence were loyal to the Vichy regime until captured (to the distress of the Americans) by the Free French, with Churchill's support, to remove any threat to Canada. French Vichy North Africa and Italian Libya ensured that a major campaign would be fought along the Mediterranean shore, with the British and later the Americans using Egypt as their base.

The Japanese occupation of the Asian territories of western empires helped to stimulate the emergence of communist resistance movements. These were a feature of resistance to Japan in Indochina, Malaya, and Indonesia. With the defeat of Japan after the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Americans became convinced that the western empires had to be removed from the region. Their very weakness might ensure the spread of communist

ideology, as had happened in North Korea after the withdrawal of Japan. The Korean War and the partitioning of that country was one of the legacies of Japanese imperialism. The Dutch, much weakened by German occupation of the Netherlands, were unable to resume their colonial authority and Indonesia became independent in 1949 after an insurrection led by Sukarno. The French attempted to return to Indochina and suppress communist insurrection, but they were effectively defeated at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The subsequent Geneva agreements partitioned the country, though the communist north sought to reunite it in subsequent years. By 1964, the Americans had been drawn into the exceptionally violent and destructive Vietnam War, a war which the Americans lost and which caused a major rethinking of American policy.

Meanwhile in Malaya the British used a number of techniques, including the creation of fortified villages and a "hearts and minds" campaign, to defeat a communist insurgency which was mainly inspired and conducted by ethnic Chinese. The fact that the British wished to hand power to indigenous Malays who had little sympathy with the Chinese insurgency greatly helped the British in their suppression of the revolt.

Decolonization

The postwar era, as with the interwar years, has something of a paradoxical feel to it. No one would predict that the European empires were going to be largely decolonized within a quarter of a century. Both the French and the Portuguese attempted to consolidate their colonies with the metropole more strongly than before. The French and the British embarked on major schemes of investment in their colonies, the British through their Colonial Development and Welfare Acts and the French through the Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Sociale. The League of Nations mandates, particularly those in Africa and the Pacific, were transferred (with the exception of Southwest Africa) to the United Nations trusteeship system. African colonies in particular seemed to be a long way from achieving independence. Yet the reality was that a vast colonial logjam was beginning to move as

it was propelled by floods within both the international system and the social and political systems of the individual territories.

The most notable act of decolonization of the period was the British departure from India. And this abandonment by Britain of its major imperial territory highlights some of the significant issues surrounding the decolonization process. India had, in effect, become increasingly ungovernable in the years leading up to and including the Second World War. The British never moved at a speed which would satisfy Indian aspirations. In 1935, the Government of India Act had devolved some domestic powers to the Indian provinces in a mixed system which was known as "dyarchy." While Indians came to control many internal matters, the British held on to the major levers of authority at the center, notably defense and foreign affairs. When the Second World War broke out, the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, immediately declared war on behalf of India without any consultation with Indian politicians. While he was strictly within his powers in doing so, it was a highly undiplomatic move which deeply offended Indians. While India, both in the form of the nationalist movements and in the shape of the princely states, had remained loyal during the First World War, this was not to be the case in the Second. In 1941, the Quit India movement was instigated and many leading Indian politicians, including Gandhi, were imprisoned.

By this time, the Indian nationalist movement had lost all semblance of unity. The Indian National Congress had originally been founded on a nonsectarian basis, but the Muslim League had successfully developed its communal base, not least through the provincial elections which took place under the 1935 constitution. The League was able to campaign effectively during the war when the Indian National Congress was in many ways disabled. In the course of the war, the British promised that dominion status would be granted to India after its conclusion. But by this time the ambitions of Indian politicians had moved on. The dominion status which had been developed by the territories of white settlement no longer appealed and only a full independence, with republican status, would suffice. After the war, it was abundantly apparent that the British,

struggling with massive debts, could not afford to maintain extensive armed forces and other personnel in India. The Labour government of Clement Attlee decided that independence had to be granted as soon as possible. Lord Mountbatten was sent to carry out the job and he soon decided, to the horror of Congress, that only partition of the subcontinent would satisfy the demands of Muslims and avoid civil strife. The date of independence was brought forward and the political arrangements as well as the "division of the spoils" took place in a helter-skelter manner. A boundary commission sought to establish the incidence of Muslim populations, with the result that a partition line was duly established which left millions of Hindus and Muslims stranded on either side of the line, causing a massive exchange of populations (ten million Hindus from Pakistan to India and seven and a half million Muslims in the other direction), with over a million people killed in communal strife. The princely states were encouraged to abandon the remnants of their sovereignty. A new state with the synthetic name of "Pakistan" (made up from the initial letters of some of its provinces) emerged and was divided into the larger West and the smaller East. This was to prove a highly unstable arrangement. Pakistani politics became notably more turbulent and less stable than those of India, and in 1971, after the Indo-Pakistan War, the ill-favored East broke away to become the independent state of Bangladesh.

The British were now in rapid retreat. Sri Lanka (the former Ceylon) and Burma became independent in 1948. In that year, the Indian government discovered a formula whereby it could remain a member of the Commonwealth despite being a republic, King George VI being recognized as titular head of the Commonwealth. The same notion was adopted by Sri Lanka, but Burma left the Commonwealth, as had the Republic of Ireland. Meanwhile, in the Middle East the British had effectively bestowed independence upon Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Transjordan (Jordan). Perhaps the most shameful British departure from the region occurred in Palestine. There the numbers of Jews arriving to escape Nazi Germany had become a flood. The British, mindful of the rights of the Arab Muslim population, attempted to stem this flow, but were put under considerable pressure by Jewish resistance, notably through the Irgun and the Stern gang, which behaved as terrorist organizations. The situation became so uncontrollable that the British decided to cut and run. Jewish settlers fought the first of their several wars against Palestinians and other Arabs, succeeding in establishing the state of Israel in 1948.

Once the communist insurrection had been suppressed, the British set about decolonizing in Southeast Asia. There, as in other parts of their empire in Africa and the Caribbean, they hoped to decolonize to larger states by instituting a federation. The Malay states, where the traditional rulers had continued to exercise some authority, had been federated since 1896. Malaya secured its independence in 1957 and, in 1963, moved into a federation with Singapore, North Borneo, and Sarawak (Brunei refused to join). The major problem with this was that the population of Singapore was predominantly Chinese and this imbalanced the delicate demographic structure of the new territory. The Singaporeans soon felt that their best interests would be served by the creation in 1965 of an independent island state.

In Africa, the post-Second World War era threw up severe economic and social strains. Many black soldiers who had served in the Second World War (the British, for example, had employed them in the Burma campaign) returned to their home colonies and agitated for more employment opportunities. Postwar reconstruction was inhibited by unstable commercial conditions and developing nationalist movements had fertile social soil in which to generate. The British began the processes of decolonization in West Africa, generally seen as more "advanced" than the eastern and central colonies, granting a degree of internal self-government in Ghana as early as 1951. Once this door was partly open, politicians and their followers pushed for further rapid constitutional advance. Ghana became independent in 1957, swiftly followed by the other British territories – Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia. By contrast, the French tried to tie French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa (federations of colonies) more tightly into the constitutional and political arrangements of the postwar Fourth Republic. But by the 1960s these attempts at forms of integration were becoming shakier.

The 1960s turned out to be the decade of decolonization. The violent Mau Mau campaign in Kenya, coinciding with the Malay emergency and intercommunal strife in Cyprus, convinced the British government that the continuation of formal empire was impractical. Although they had hoped to maintain the power and significance of the "sterling area" as a trading partnership through a common currency, the military and financial realities were increasingly apparent. The British also decided to abolish the conscription of young men into the army and concentrate on a smaller professional force. In swift succession, the British departed from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika, the latter combining with the island of Zanzibar to become Tanzania. The inauguration of the Fifth Republic and Charles de Gaulle's assumption of the presidency led to the French withdrawal from their African territories in West and Equatorial Africa in 1960. Tunisia and Morocco had secured independence in 1955–6, but Algeria was much more fraught because of the presence of so many French settlers (or pieds noirs). Against strenuous opposition amounting almost to a civil war, Algeria was granted independence in 1962. France (like Portugal later) provided an example of colonial conflict producing major political change in the metropolitan state. The Belgians also departed from their vast Congolese territory in 1960 after unrest had made their rule untenable. The Congo risked falling apart in the face of separatist movements in the Katanga, the copper-rich region in the south.

The British had attempted to stave off decolonization in Central Africa (on the grounds that the numbers of educated Africans were insufficient and that the technical, social, and political infrastructures were inadequate) by creating in 1953 the Central Africa Federation of Southern and Northern Rhodesia together with Nyasaland. It was soon apparent that this was a means of maintaining white power in the region and African nationalism was galvanized into action. A Declaration of Emergency was made in 1959 after considerable resistance and rioting in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The federation was broken up and these two countries became independent as Zambia and Malawi. Further south, Britain also gave independence to three states which had been, in economic terms, hostages to

South Africa: Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basutoland (Lesotho), and Swaziland. The South African government had made attempts in the twentieth century to incorporate these territories as part of its expansionist drive, but the British had maintained control.

The zone of white power in Africa rapidly retreated, though pockets of whites set up considerable resistance. In 1965, the prime minister of Southern Rhodesia, Ian Smith, declared unilateral independence from the British. The British government failed to intervene and, despite United Nations sanctions, the territory continued under white rule until 1980, when it was decolonized as Zimbabwe. It had been able to do so only because of the support of the apartheid regime in South Africa, which had come to power in 1948. This regime seemed more or less invincible, despite extensive African resistance which, after the independence of Zimbabwe, became increasingly violent and transcended frontiers. But progressive geopolitical changes in the region, together with sanctions and increasing white, as well as black, restlessness, produced dramatic change. The Portuguese quasi-fascist government was overturned in 1974, partly as a result of the tremendous drain on resources caused by campaigns in Portuguese Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique. These territories became independent in the following year and the two in southern Africa immediately gave sanctuary to anti-South African guerrilla movements. They were also the victims of civil wars, exacerbated by South African support for insurgent groups. South Africa itself attempted a wholly spurious form of internal decolonization, pursuing a myth that every African had a "Homeland" (or Bantustan) which could become a semi-independent country. These territories never received any international diplomatic recognition except from Israel.

However, by 1994 the zone of white power in southern Africa had finally been eliminated. In a remarkable series of events, the leading nationalist Nelson Mandela and his associates were released from prison and the white government abdicated to what became known as "the great transformation." Namibia, ruled from South Africa since it had been a German colony, became independent in 1990. Moreover, from 1989 onwards, the Soviet Empire, based on that of the Romanovs

and on the outcomes of the Second World War, began to fall apart. The Berlin Wall came down; Germany was reunited; the eastern European states that had been in the Soviet bloc now sought to realign with the West, including applying for membership of the European Union. Many of the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and the Black Sea region emerged as independent states.

One of the final acts of supposed decolonization of the century was the British abandonment of Hong Kong in 1997, when the lease on the New Territories ran out. Hong Kong was merely handed over by one empire, the British, to another, the Chinese (which had consolidated its hold over Tibet after the crushing of a rising in 1959). The effect of all these acts of decolonization was to enlarge the international nation-state order. Traditional indigenous authorities had, by and large, been overturned, and bourgeois nationalists, more or less educated in western styles, had come to control their political fortunes, not always in the best interests of their peoples. By the end of the twentieth century, it was apparent that Asia was going to be the continent of the twenty-first. The "tiger economies" of the Pacific Rim had already begun their period of striking growth and China was emerging as a major force. Some would argue that, with the decline of Russia as a superpower, the United States and China operate quasi-imperial functions in the world. The regulation of world trading and investment systems, formerly in the hands of the imperial powers, has been transferred to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the "Group of Eight," and other modes of international economic management. The world remains divided, as in imperial times, into the powerful and the rich on the one hand, and the weak and the poor on the other. This is reflected in strikingly unequal patterns of consumption, education, and health and in the frustrated ambitions of many people to transfer into the more prosperous states.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

C. M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya Forster, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981). A valuable study of French imperialism.

F. Ansprenger, *The Dissolution of the Colonial Empires* (London: Routledge, 1989). Good on the process of decolonization.

C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). Contains an immensely stimulating discussion of imperialism and globalization in the formation of the power relationships of today.

Judith M. Brown and William Roger Louis, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4, *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Valuable essays on the British Empire.

Gervase Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825–1975: A Study in Economic Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985). Offers a corrective to earlier interpretations of Portuguese imperialism.

John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke: Penguin, 1988). Excellent on British decolonization.

D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966). An older work that remains a valuable examination of all the European empires.

R. F. Holland, *European Decolonisation 1918–1981* (Basingstoke: Penguin, 1985). A useful overview of the process of decolonization.

Paul Kennedy, *The Realities behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865–1980* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981). An analysis which offers some insights into imperialism; also see the modern sections of his *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

V. G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982). Offers comparative insights on imperialism.

M. Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands and the Rise of Modern Imperialism: Colonies and Foreign Policy* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1991). Good background on Dutch imperialism.

William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism 1890–1902* (New York: Knopf, 1935). An older work that continues to offer an excellent background to imperialism in the international relations of the early twentieth century.

Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (London: Pimlico, 2003). A magisterial sweep through Russian history down to modern times.

P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer-

sity Press, 1996). Offers useful background on various aspects of imperial culture and international relations.

Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jurgen Osterhammel, eds., *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986). Contains much useful discussion of informal empire and the role of imperialism in the dynamic balance of international relations.

Jane Samson, ed., *The British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Readings that illuminate various aspects of imperialism, including the diplomatic.

Tony Smith, *The Pattern of Imperialism: The United States, Great Britain, and the Late-Industrialising World since 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Good on the shift in power from Britain to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978). A useful study of German imperialism.

Martin Thomas, *The French Empire between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). Good on this period of French imperialism.

Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871–1918* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985). An influential study of German imperialism that emphasizes the importance of social structures.