

Problems of Anti-Colonialism

Proposal for new book series

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Editorial Aims and Scope

The proposed new book series “Problems of Anti-Colonialism” aims to fit a very large gap in the academic and scholarly publication programs surrounding both the historical and present-day relevance of European colonization of the world. The series would aim at a broad scope of works that relate to the causes, processes, nature, and consequences of European expansion, first to the Americas and Asia and later to the Middle East and Africa. This would therefore cover the major colonial episodes of most European countries including Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Denmark. The core aim of the series would be to serve as an intellectual place where works that challenge the contemporary dominance, indeed hegemony, of anti-colonial perspectives can be heard. The series would range widely over historical, cultural, political, and philosophical fields. It would draw together scholars who in increasing numbers felt frustrated by the “meta-narrative” that anti-colonialism has become, a straight-jacket on understanding that has impoverished thinking about European colonialism. The series would be unique and powerful in this respect.

As a major intellectual effort taking as its topic a major intellectual current in the 20th and 21st centuries, this series would aim to be both academically rigorous, intellectually stimulating, cross-disciplinary, and widely accessible. The books in the series would likely focus on a particular aspect or episode of anti-colonialism, but they would be commissioned and edited so as to be widely accessible to an educated audience. Certainly the major disciplines that it will draw from would be history, area studies, political science, economics, and international relations. However the aim would be to widen into the humanities since so much of the intellectual spade work of anti-colonialism has been done by intellectuals in fields such as language and literature, philosophy, cultural studies, and English. While this broad potential audience exists, the main marketing target for the series would be twofold: history and area studies. This ensures both that the series is intellectually ambitious enough to achieve its aims, yet also firmly grounded in a specific target market.

The series and its contributions will be broadly sourced from scholars and professional researchers in Western countries. Through his intellectual engagement in this area as a result of his 2017 article “The Case for Colonialism”, the proposed series editor has established a large network of scholars from Western countries interested in this topic. This extends beyond the West to include scholars in Latin America, East Asia, Africa, and South Asia. As an American academic, the proposed series editor will be active in sourcing contributions relating to the American market. All contributions will be in English, although there is scope to think about bringing some major non-English contributions into the series through translations (good examples are the translations into English from the French original of the works of Pascal Bruckner, *The Tears of the White Man: Compassion as Contempt* by the Free Press in 1986 and *The Tyranny of Guilt: An Essay on Western Masochism* by Princeton University Press in 2010).

Rationale for the Series

Throughout the 20th century, anti-colonialism as both an intellectual construct and as a source of political mobilization was growing, leading to the rapid and largely unexpected elimination of European colonial holdings throughout most of the world by 1980. After that, anti-colonialism became more of a paradigm – a way of viewing the world – than an empirical or practical proposition. Today, anti-colonialism (or post-colonialism) has become a rarified ideological construct, a meta-narrative within which practitioners fit all their data and viewpoints. The result is that historically or empirically grounded research on the causes, nature, consequences, and present-day enduring relevance of European colonialism is by necessity today force-fit into the anti-colonial standpoint. Major works that challenge anti-colonialism or which point out its internal problems tend to be published by trade presses or by smaller academic imprints rather than by major academic houses.

There is a recognition in many fields that works that critique anti-colonialism and that restate some of the earlier premises for the colonial encounter is long overdue. (A good summary of this is Tom Young, "The Gilley Debate", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2019) Scholars have been writing new works that peel back the mists of anti-colonialism and reinvigorate the study of imperial histories.

There have been a few attempts as book series to diversify scholarship on colonialism. The *Empires in Perspective* series by Routledge promises that "the series encourages methodological pluralism and does not impose any particular conception of historical scholarship." However none of the books issued in the series so far depart from or challenge dominant anti-colonial tropes. The long-running *Studies in Imperialism* series of Manchester University Press, meanwhile, promises "the widest possible range of studies in the field" and "always seeking to be at the cutting edge." Yet again, it has artificially constrained the range and innovation in the field to those works that adopt an anti-colonial perspective. The University of California's *Colonialisms* series meanwhile, which offered "to explore the historical realities, current significance, and future ramifications of imperialist practices" to "emphasize the cultural, practical, experiential, affective, and aesthetic strategies of imperialist agendas and colonialist projects," has apparently sputtered. The failure of these series to move away from the dominant and hegemonic premises of anti-colonialism has shown just why a book series with an explicit and consistent commitment to critique, challenge, and investigation of the problems of anti-colonialism is so sorely needed.

This proposal is in part motivated by Dr. Gilley's contact with several authors whose works that challenge some aspect of anti-colonialism have not been accepted by publishers even though they fully fit the descriptions of the interests or series, merely because they adopt a critical attitude towards anti-colonialism. There are already three works that would potentially fit the series available. Moreover, a series that not only allowed but actively and explicitly encouraged a critique of anti-colonialism would be likely to attract a surge of proposals if for no other reason than the series would be "teh only game in town" in terms of scholarship working from such premises.

Editorial Board and Administration

The chief editor of the series would be Dr. Bruce Gilley. Given that his name has been widely associated with the critique of anti-colonialism, this reputational advantage should help to market and locate the series in a crowded book market. Given the global scope of the question of colonialism, series editors would be recruited from many countries and universities with an aim to both promote the series, recruit new authors, and serve as editorial advisors. Possible members of the editorial board would be

Orlando Arboroz (Central University of Venezuela), Jay Bergman (Central Connecticut State), and Nigel Biggar (Oxford). Dr. Gilley (as a result of the controversy over his article "The Case for Colonialism" now maintains a database of over 300 scholars around the world who are sympathetic to critiques of anti-colonialism. There would be little trouble finding senior scholars willing to serve on the editorial board of the series.

The series would be administered jointly by the editorial board with the chief editor taking primary responsibility for working with potential authors whose books have been accepted by the series and interfacing with the publisher on the market potential and marketing strategy of each.

Format of the Series

The format of the series would include range of styles: densely researched monographs on a particular aspect or episode of anti-colonialism; edited volumes bringing together "classic" papers or recent conference proceedings on anti-colonialism; broad theoretical essays on colonialism and anti-colonialism; and more personal, autobiographical, or biographical accounts of anti-colonialism.

There are at present four volumes that are in mind for this series:

Eric Louw (University of Queensland). *Decolonization and White Africans: The Winds of Change, Resistance, and Beyond* (manuscript is completed)

Lee Boldeman (Australian Department of Industry and Commerce, retired) *Mau Revisited: A Critique of the Revisionist Account of Mau* (manuscript is completed)

Bruce Gilley (ed.). *Problems of Anti-Colonialism* (edited book of classic articles)

- Christopher Morris, "What's Wrong with Imperialism?"
- Elazar Barkan, "Post-Anti-Colonial Histories: Representing the Other in Imperial Britain"
- James Feyrer and Bruce Sacerdote. "Colonialism and Modern Income: Islands as Natural Experiments."
- Zareer Masani, "Economic Lessons from the Raj: The Myth of Colonial Plunder."
- Meerkerk van Nederveen Meerkerk, "Challenging the De-industrialization Thesis: Gender and Indigenous Textile Production in Java under Dutch Colonial Rule, c. 1830-1920."
- David Skinner, "The Incorporation of Muslim Elites into the Colonial Administrative Systems of Sierra Leone, The Gambia and the Gold Coast."
- Karl Hack, "'Devils that suck the blood of the Malayan People': The Case for Post-Revisionist Analysis of Counter-insurgency Violence."
- Harri Englund, "Anti Anti-Colonialism: Vernacular Press and Emergent Possibilities in Colonial Zambia."
- Camille Lefebvre, "The decolonization of a commonplace. the artificiality of African boundaries: How a colonial intellectual legacy became the banner of anti-colonialism."
- Charles Allen. "Who Owns India's History? A Critique of Shashi Tharoor's Inglorious Empire."
- Helen Andrews, "Zimbabwe's Trauma."
- WM Roger Louis & Ronald Robinson. "The Imperialism of Decolonization."

From these titles, the mixture of formats for the series will include a wide variety of authors and disciplines, although comparative history and area studies will remain the dominant area. The aim would be to produce 2 volumes per year.

Market Profile/Potential

Studies in imperialism and colonialism continue to command a very large market as evidenced by the number of scholarly articles and books published each year. The *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* lists 338 books published on colonialism in English in 2018, compared to 228 in 2017, and 347 in 2016. Many of these books are published as series.

The *Empires in Perspective* series by Routledge issued two books in 2019 (as of this writing), four in 2018, and three in 2017 following its 2016 launch that involved rebranding 24 previous volumes as part of the series. In terms of institutional uptake (using Worldcat.org figures), the 2018 volume *Liberalism and the British Empire in Southeast Asia* was held at 78 libraries worldwide at this writing while the 2018 *Outskirts of Empire: Studies in British Power Projection* was held at 76. Depending on the typical ratio of institutional to non-institutional purchases for scholarly books, these figures suggest a healthy market for standard monographs.

Manchester University Press's *Studies in Imperialism* series is the most well-known and long-established series, launched in 1986. The series issues a very large number of books each year (12 in 2019 alone), many of them edited conference volumes. The monographs are of a high quality and tend to attract large sales, in part because the series has a reputation that has attracted many standing orders. For instance the 2017 monography *Livingstone's 'Lives': A Metabiography of a Victorian Icon*, is held at 684 libraries worldwide, while the 2016 monograph *Masters and Servants: Cultures of Empire in the Tropics* is held at 508 libraries.

On question that arises is whether this series, because of its explicit focus on critiques of anti-colonialism, will face political resistance from librarians and faculty, who are overwhelmingly of the anti-colonial persuasion. Comparison might be made to some books that have adopted a pro-colonial or critique of anti-colonialism perspective. Niall Ferguson's *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* of 2003 is held at 546 libraries worldwide, although this must be a sliver of its total sales given its wide popular attention. A more recent book, Jeremy Black's *Imperial Legacies: The British Empire Around the World* will be a good litmus test of a non-superstar author's ability to sell books with a pro-colonial approach. It is at 26 libraries worldwide after just a month on sale.

This then points to an important aspect of the marketing and selection of books for this series: a significant (maybe 50%) market will be the general educated reader, who usually does not share the intense anti-colonial dispositions of professional academics. The market profile would thus be composed of four main segments with approximate market shares and strategies as follows:

Segment	Estimated Share	Estimated Sales for Typical Series Book	Marketing Strategy
Library/ Institutional	30%	300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to faculty • Outreach to libraries • Media coverage
Teaching/ Courses	10%	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of publisher education/ textbook resources • Adaptability of books as e-chapters
Foreign Language Rights	10%	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections to major publishers in France, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Germany, etc.
General Readers	50%	500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media coverage • Dr. Gilley outreach and book events

This of course depends on the overall strategy adopted. Dr. Gilley would push for the acceptance of books likely to “make a splash” with the general public, the three of which above are good examples. The adaptability of the proposed “readings” book to the classroom would be a good example of combining a high impact volume with a teaching market.

Conclusion

The first two books in the series could be put into production almost immediately. Further books would be commissioned and sought to ensure a steady pipeline and to build up the reputation of the series.