

The McDonald Centre for Theology, Ethics & Public Life
A Research Institute at the University of Oxford



"The Case for Colonialism": A Colloquium

On Monday, 7 May 2018 the McDonald Centre hosted a colloquium to discuss Bruce Gilley's provocative article, "The Case for Colonialism". A Professor of Political Science at Portland State University, Gilley is a specialist in the comparative politics of China and Asia and a theorist of political legitimacy. In September 2017, *Third World Quarterly* published his article, which argues that colonial rule was sometimes legitimate, that post-colonial states would do better to nurture certain aspects of their colonial legacy than discard them, and that certain kinds of 'neo-colonial' consensual partnership between former colonies and Western countries can and could be beneficial. Predictably, "The Case for Colonialism", created a furore.

The purposes of the McDonald Centre's colloquium were threefold: to examine Gilley's reading of the colonial past; to test his proposals for a 'neo-colonial' future; and to reflect upon the controversy.

In addition to Bruce Gilley himself, thirty historians, economists, ethicists, experts in international relations, and former civil servants attended. They included:

Ali Ansari: Professor of Modern History with reference to the Middle East, and founding director of the Institute for Iranian Studies, St Andrew's University; author of *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (2012).

Nigel Biggar: Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology, and Director of the McDonald Centre, University of Oxford, where he leads the 'Ethics and Empire' project; author of *Between Kin and Cosmopolis: An Ethic of the Nation* (2014) and "Rhodes, Race, and the Abuse of History" (2016).

Jeremy Black, MBE: Professor of History at the University of Exeter; author of *Crisis of Empire* (2010) and *Geographies of an Imperial Power: The British World, 1688–1815* (2017).

Philip Bowcock: former officer in the Colonial Administrative Service in Sudan and Northern Rhodesia; author of *Last Guardians: Crown Service in Sudan, Northern Rhodesia, and Britain* (2016).

Sir Paul Collier: Professor of Economics and Public Policy, University of Oxford; author of *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (2009) and *Exodus: How Migration is Changing our World* (2013).

Philip Cunliffe: Senior Lecturer in International Conflict, University of Kent; author of “Still the Spectre at the Feast: Comparisons between Peacekeeping and Imperialism in Peacekeeping Studies Today” (2012); member of the International Editorial Advisory Board of the *Third World Quarterly*.

Margaret MacMillan: Professor of International History and former Warden of St Antony’s College, University of Oxford; author of *Women of the Raj* (1988) and *The War that Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War* (2013).

Zareer Masani: former current affairs producer at the BBC; author of *Indira Gandhi: A Biography* (1976) and *Macaulay: Britain’s Liberal Imperialist* (2013).

Alexander Morrison: Tutorial Fellow in Modern History, New College, Oxford; author of *Russian Rule in Samarkand 1868–1910. A Comparison with British India* (2008).

Tirthankar Roy: Professor of Economic History, London School of Economics; author of *The Economic History of India 1857-1947* (3rd ed., 2011) and *An Economic History of Early Modern India* (2012)

The day after the Oxford colloquium on Tuesday 8 May, Nigel Biggar, Bruce Gilley, Zareer Masani, and Tirthanker Roy appeared in a panel discussion about "The Legacy of the British Empire", which was hosted by the Times newspaper at their London headquarters. The 200 tickets for the event had sold out within days.

