

THE PROCESS OF DECOLONIZATION AND ITS IMPACT IN IR

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Abstract

This paper describes two faces of decolonization: the historical part from its beginning and the analytical part its impact in the International Relation.

The purpose of this paper is to describe how much the colonization and decolonization has influenced the development of states in International Relations till today. Decolonization in most discussed cases is automatically connected with the rise of new states based in nationhood. Security, freedom, order, justice, and welfare are at least five basic social values that states are usually expected to uphold, and three basic traditional International Relation theories regard the state system as a valuable core institution of modern life and recognize the significance of these basic values.

From the historical perspective and from the analysis of many authors on the issue of decolonization, three waves of decolonization are usually counted, but in more detail some authors count up to six waves.

The analytical part of the paper proves that with decolonization was opened a *worldwide international system*, the *power of influence passed from the Europeans to the USA and the Soviet Union*, *self-determination* replaced imperialism, superpowers gradually weakened with the economic and moral rise of other highly developed countries moving to a *polycentric world*, European decolonization in the Third World more than *tripled the membership of the UN*, *state system became completely global*, *Third World took its place as a new player in the international arena*, the *problem of weak and fragile states became more important*.

The analyses is based on the information taken from scholar books of different authors, research articles from credible journals and information and documents from official web sites of certain named institutions. We used descriptive and analytical method to arrive at the conclusion of this topic, proving theoretically and practically that decolonization has had a huge impact in international relations in the whole world.

INTRODUCTION

The decolonization began the very same day as colonization, because the revolt was always there. No one wants to be ruled in their house by someone else. No one wants to pay for the bread of their own land. But history has taught us that the mankind thought differently back then, because back then there was no such thing as self-determination.

To talk about decolonization it is very important to analyze the consequences of its starting point, and the starting point is colonization. So colonization must occur for further decolonization to occur. But in the meantime it is very important to understand and clarify the empire, imperialism and its differences with colonization. Understanding the empire, colonization and imperialism, leads to the definition, meaning and importance of Decolonization as a process and its impact on International Relations.

In world history, no continent has possessed various forms of colonies like Europe in the form of access to civilized missions. That is why when is discussed about colonization or decolonization it is inevitable the impact of Europe in these two processes.

Decolonization represents the specific historical world process, the multilateral process in each region and state where secession from colonial rule was initiated.

Decolonization brought the end of empires, self-determination for nations, increased the number of independent states, and gave proper form to the principles of democracy.

1. DEFINITIONS, INTERRELATIONSHIPS AND MEANING

In the term of terminology (not theoretical) *colonization* is connected with migration to establish a settlement, often agrarian, meanwhile *colonialism* is connected with the control of one

people by another, culturally different one, which exploits the differences of economic, political and cultural development between the two (Reinhard W. , 2001).

Imperialism according to Webster's Dictionary: 'any extension of power or authority or an advocacy of such extension.' Clearly, such a definition can cover almost any situation (Wesseling H. , 2001). But discussing from political corner imperialism is relationship of dominance and power (Walter, Colonialism and Imperialism, 2008). *Imperialism* is a form of international hierarchy in which one political unit, or polity, effectively governs or controls another polity. It is one of the oldest known political institutions, first used as an invective against the expansionist policies of Napoleon I, the term has been employed most frequently to refer to the colonial practices of the European states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, attempts to revise the international territorial status quo, and the economic domination of one country by another (Lake D. , 2001).

An 'empire' may be defined as a hierarchical system between an imperial government and its various dependencies, in which sovereignty is held exclusively by that government and is exercised as supremacy or dominion over its dependencies (Robert Jackson, 2013, pp.143).

The term *decolonization* was created in 1932 (Albertini 1966, p. 28) but the process is much older and refers to the process through which colonial rule dissolved, and it encompasses the various political, economic, cultural and social dimensions of this process both in the periphery and in the metropole (Klose, Decolonization and Revolution, 2014).

If we make an explanatory summary then Empire is considered to be a political and economic structure, Imperialism is considered as a practice of creating these structures, Colonization is practically considered to be the settlement and population of territories and Colonialism theoretically supports Colonization, while Decolonization is considered as a broad concept containing opposing actions and processes overturn the above.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF DECOLONIZATION

Decolonization in most discussed cases is automatically connected with the rise of new states based in nationhood. Security, freedom, order, justice, and welfare are at least five basic social values that states are usually expected to uphold, and three basic traditional International Relation theories regard the state system as a valuable core institution of modern life and recognize the

significance of these basic values (even if they disagree about which ones are most important)—e.g., realists emphasize the importance of security and order; liberals emphasize freedom and justice; and IPE scholars emphasize economic equality and welfare (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013, pp.5-8).

Realism was not so loud in terms of decolonization, although traditionally opposed to the imperial adventures displayed under the guise of idealism, in fact it was extremely silent at a time when the idea of creating new states was a more urgent event than itself the Cold War, and this silence seems to have been enriched by the post-war debate on decolonization, a debate monopolized by modernization theorists and confined within the confines of international organizations (Guilhot, 2014, pp.698-720).

Liberals in general and contrary of realists are optimistic about human progress, cooperation, and peace, closely connected with the emergence of the modern liberal state, but the liberal model of imperialism also represented moral justification for the Empire of the nineteenth century Britain. Liberal philosophers, beginning with John Locke in the seventeenth century, saw great potential for human progress in modern civil society and capitalist economy, both of which could flourish in states which guaranteed individual liberty (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013, pp.100). At this point decolonization finds compatibility, but at some point Locke and Kant, for example, have been seen as articulating a series of (different) arguments that justify European colonial rule, so while there are imperial aspects of almost all liberal thought, there are also some very important differences between variants of liberalism. The kind of liberalism found in the work John Locke, Kant in the and J.S. Mill has an ambivalent and complicated trajectory in the post-colonial period, but it is very far from the only tradition of liberal thinking (Williams¹, 2018, pp.94-118). The liberals who demonstrated the limitations of the exclusive trading rights regime, the economic costs and bad governance of the colonies, they did not, however, demand or call for definitively abandoning the colonies, thus remaining aligned with the partisans of the continued Empire, so if the points of view of the liberals and neo-mercantilists converged in the end at all, it was at the point where economic considerations came second to arguments of politics and civilization (Clément, 2012, pp.5-26).

In the 1970s, Third World (now developing) countries were considered weak in economic terms because of the exploitation from their colonizers, so they started to press for changes in the international system to improve their economic position in relation to developed countries, while

neo-Marxism emerged as an attempt to theorize about economic underdevelopment in developing countries, so this became the basis for a third major debate in IR about international wealth and international poverty—i.e., about International Political Economy (IPE) that is basically about who gets what in the international economic and political system. ‘Dependence’ is a core concept for neo-Marxists, so they claim that countries in the developing world are not poor because they are inherently backward or undeveloped. Rather, it is because they have been actively underdeveloped by the rich countries of the developed world (Robert Jackson, 2013,p53-54).

Post-colonialism focus is on the relationship between Western countries in Europe and North America, and the areas in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere that were colonized or dominated by Western countries. Post-colonialism argues that Europe was not a repository of potential modernity, enlightenment, and progressive development, but is one of massive violent conflict and extermination, and because of that intellectual strategies of ‘decolonization’ are needed in order to liberate our thinking from that Western dominance (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013, p.239-241).

One of the most known thinkers of the movements of decolonization that challenged colonial rule across the third world was the intellectual and revolutionary Frantz Fanon, born and raised in Martinique as a colonial subject under the rule of France. Fanon in his two legendary books “Black skin, White masks “and The Wretched of the Earth” describes decolonization as a historical process where two contradicting powers meet each other face to face, the colonizer and the colonized, and he defended the use of violence to gain independence (Burke E. , 1976, pp.127-35).

The leaders in the movements for decolonization were forced to confront the same dilemma that many historical figures have faced: on a template of oppression and subordination, how does one draw an image of freedom and self-determination (Margaret Kohn, Postcolonial Political Theory and the Problem of Foundations, 2011). Moderate nationalist movements in the early twentieth century made claims based upon the dominant narratives of progress and by adopting the tools of liberal governance as their own, but were denied the opportunity by colonial powers not ready to relinquish their positions.

Sawt al-‘Arab star broadcaster Ahmad Sa‘id concluded that “Decolonization, in sum, helped reconfigure not only national but also regional and transnational and global spaces of

politico cultural action and belonging, rendering more complex the question “who is ‘us’ (Cyrus Schayegh, 2020, pp.137-145)

Southeast Asian historian Wang Gungwu stated ‘What did those who found themselves decolonized actually get?’, What did national freedom mean? In the actual reality of being decolonized, freedom was followed by an increasing sense of discontentment. In many aspects of life, decolonization did not bring the sea changes that historical traditions and nationalist discourses have assumed (ELS BOGAERTS, 2012). Not all decolonized states had the ability to enjoy the freedom because of the consequences left by the colonizers specifically economic problems.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DECOLONIZATION

In terms of historical context, “decolonization” is most commonly used to refer to the transition from a world of colonial empires to a world of nation-states in the years following World War II, and in terms of historiography, colonial influence transcends historical boundaries; as a result, much of the language we speak, the narratives we retell, and the approaches we take are still to some degree under colonial influence (Young,2016,)

According to the well-known historian Prasenjit Duara, decolonization as a process from a historical perspective returned the world to the stage of history, where history was not written only by colonizers but the rapid spread of modern historical writings in most parts of the world enabled us to see how events in one region (no matter how peripheral) were often linked to processes and events in other parts, it became possible to understand the whole globe as an interconnected entity to understand and act even from the corner of history (Duara, Introduction: The decolonization of Asia and Africa in the twentieth century, 2004, pp.19-36).

From the historical perspective and from the analysis of many authors on the issue of decolonization, three waves of decolonization are usually counted, but in more detail some authors count up to six waves. *The first wave* started from 1776 through 1825, brought about the independence of most of the colonies in the Americas; *the second* was a British peculiarity: the autonomy of the white settler societies in Canada (1867), Australia (1901), New Zealand (1907), and South Africa (1910) as dominions, transformed into full sovereignty in 1931; the *third* began

from 1945 through 1947 in Asia (Moellendorf, 2012, pp.335-365). According to the German historian Wolfgang Reinhard 1950-1960 is considered as *the fourth wave* of decolonization, the time when Africa was apparently not yet ready for decolonization and when the colonial powers once again tried instead to compensate for their losses in Asia by economic development of their possessions in Africa (Wolfgang, 2011, pp.120). Under the growing political pressure of the superpowers, the UN, and world public opinion some 17 African countries became independent in the fourth wave of decolonization 1950s-1960s, and a *fifth wave* began in the Portuguese colonies in 1974–5 and accelerated political change in South Africa when Portugal finally let go of Angola and Mozambique (Reinhard W. , 2001, pp.140-143) The sixth wave of decolonization in the 1990s, this time internal, included not only the end of South Africa's white minority regime, but also quite unexpectedly the breakdown of Soviet rule in Central Asia and Caucasia and Israel's first arrangements with her Arabs (Reinhard W. , 2001). Also some micro colonies have become sovereign states, and Hong Kong and Macao have only reverted to China in 1997 and 1999, respectively (Reinhard W. , 2001, pp.148).

European expansion, which had continued since the medieval crusades, had already brought about massive changes in the relations between the communities. The United States had obtained its independence by armed secession from Britain in the eighteenth century, and the importance of the United States in the international system needs no emphasis.

Chronologically these are the most decisive stages of decolonization as a process, as an event and specifically as a term "decolonization", without going into historical details from ancient Greece, as a resistance to imperial rule over a certain territory and people, resulting in the achievement of an alternative form of rule, decolonization can be said to have a longevity that extends to the ancient world. All these above mentioned phases have substantially affected the relations of the European continent with other continents, especially when we are dealing with a period of relations of 200 years analyzed from the angle of decolonization as a process.

4. THE IMPACT OF DECOLONIZATION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The term “decolonization” was minted to serve the concerns of the colonial powers and offering an apt image of the imperial departure (*the end of empires*) that means the retreat of the West from its dominance. (ELS BOGAERTS, 2012)

The European expansion into the rest of the world had by no means reached its climax when its second stage, **decolonization**, began in the second half of the eighteenth century, with the assertion of independence by European settler states in the Americas, not all at once but gradually and steadily, over a period of half a century in four phases, finally, the fourth phase was the major change brought about by **decolonization**, and in the twentieth century they lost control of it, and was opened a *worldwide international system* (Watson, The evolution of international society: a comparative historical analysis, 1992, pp.265-295).

One of the reasons of the decolonization was the two world wars, specifically the four decades that followed the Second World War (1945–85), the damage inflicted by that war on Europe and Japan destroyed the capacity of the Europeans to control the system, and left the United States and the Soviet Union to step into the shoes of the Europeans (Watson, The evolution of international society: a comparative historical analysis, 1992, pp.288). So from a reason it became an impact of the decolonization into the worldwide international system, because the *power of influence passed from the Europeans to the USA and the Soviet Union*, which was mostly noticed during the Cold War and continues today. After the First World War, *self-determination* replaced imperialism as the fashionable doctrine of the age, and the acquisition of colonies no longer seemed legitimate, colonialism had by then become as unacceptable as slavery a century before and the concept of general decolonization spread rapidly between the two world wars. Both superpowers encouraged decolonization, the Soviet attitude influenced by Lenin’s questionable analysis of imperialism, US anti-colonial rhetoric, with an earlier clear realization that west Europeans that retention of colonies was no longer practical (Watson, The evolution of international society: a comparative historical analysis, 1992, pp.295). Colonization was not any more an imperial issue, decolonization marked the introduction of an international issue regarding the right of independence of the colonized states and their participation in the international society.

The newly independent states and members of the international community were again challenged by their lack of experience in international affairs and economic problems, so some of them were forced to admit that economic independence as opposed to political independence was

unfeasible in those conditions. Here comes the emphasis on the two new superpowers that inherited the management role of the international community and over forty years ensured stability coming out of their hegemonic control but accepting the changes brought by decolonization. Over time, the dominance of the two superpowers gradually weakened with the economic and moral rise of other highly developed countries, especially Germany and Japan, regaining their weight in the world system and moving to a *polycentric world*.

About seventy percent of the world's population before the first World War was subject to foreign rule, either colonial or semi colonial. By 1964, however, only two percent could be regarded as lacking the right of self-determination, the number of sovereign states having grown steadily (Mushkatt, 1972). When the United Nations was founded in 1945, some 750 million people, nearly a third of the world's population, lived in territories that were dependent on colonial Powers, European decolonization in the Third World more than *tripled the membership of the UN* from about 50 states in 1945 to over 160 states by 1970 (United Nations, Global Issues- Decolonization, 2021). About 70 per cent of the world's population were citizens or subjects of independent states in 1945 and were thus represented in the state system; by 1995, that figure had increased to virtually 100 per cent. The spread of European political and economic control beyond Europe thus eventually proved to be an expansion of the *state system which became completely global* in the second half of the twentieth century (Robert Jackson, 2013, pp.21-28).

Today, the state system is a global institution after the final stage of the globalization of the state system with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, together with the simultaneous breakup of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia at the end of the Cold War, which expanded *UN membership, reached almost 200 states* by the end of the twentieth century.

In the ten years following the end of the Second World War, with successive waves of decolonization in Asia and Africa, the *Third World took its place as a new player in the international arena*. As international society expanded through the process of European expansion and decolonization, and as the state became the dominant form of political organization, so the *problem of weak and fragile states became more important* (Alderson & Hurrell, 2000, pp.12-15).

The beginning of the Twentieth Century proved that world politics had to accept a diversity of countries with cultural, religious, linguistic, ideological differences, etc., and this became a challenge of International Relations both politically and economically and academically, so we

conclude that decolonization in addition to the above-mentioned influences, it also brought about *a large and deep internal division in the state system between the rich North and the poor South*: i.e., the centrally developed countries which dominate the system politically and economically, and the countries of the underdeveloped in the suburbs, which have limited political and economic influence.

CONCLUSION

What would the world be like if decolonization had not taken place? This question requires an in-depth and meaningful analysis, so in this case it could be summarized as follows: The world would be ruled by two or three super powerful empires as colonization would continue indefinitely. From the political point of view in International Relations the world would be like a family where decisions would be made by omnipotent and omniscient emperors, as the difference between the strong and the weak would be decisive in every aspect of life. International relations would not really make as much sense as they do today, because where there is no justice, the word "international relations" would not make real sense.

Being definitely free in your country does not mean that life is definitely good and fair, problems can be of different types, but it is better to have a free life with challenges in your country, than to be servile and work for the welfare and wealth of another state that aims to be more powerful than to come and own your autochthonous life and wealth. This is the general conclusion of the impact of decolonization in the life of all the colonized people and in International Relations.

With decolonization the meaning of democracy sounds better, self-determination.

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