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Rethinking Decolonization: A New Research Agenda for the Twenty-First Century

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The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire

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Abstract and Keywords

The book's Introduction reflects on precisely what we understand by decolonization and considers its relevance in light of the more recent and growing interest in global history, as well as the history of globalization. The Introduction explains how the history of decolonization is being rethought as a result of the rise of the 'new' imperial history, and this history's emphasis on race, gender and culture. It also discusses the more recent growth of interest in the histories of globalization and transnational history, as well as in the histories of migration and diaspora, humanitarianism and development, and human rights.

Keywords: Decolonisation, globalization, race, gender, culture, diaspora, humanitarianism, human rights

Over the past century, the collapse of formal colonial control, the end of empires—or, as specialists usually term it, decolonization—has reshaped the world's political geography. The ideological impact of decolonization on the ways regimes, governments, and social movements justify their behaviour has been equally profound. In much of the global South, rejecting colonialism was the necessary precursor to the creation of new nation-states, new ideological attachments, and new political alignments. For some, not least in francophone Africa, that rejection did not necessarily produce support for decolonization but, rather, for alternate claims to political inclusion, social entitlements, and cultural respect, all aspirations thought to be achievable within, rather than beyond, the structures of empire. For many others, though, anti-colonialism necessarily demanded a fuller decolonization—of politics, of economies, and of minds. These more radical and rejectionist stances fuelled equally profound social transformations, placing the end of empires within a spectrum of revolutionary change.

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Decolonization also occasioned many of the longest, bitterest wars of the twentieth century. These conflicts were often hard fought. Violence was not, however, confined to armed struggles or their colonial synonym, 'emergencies'. From symbolic acts of protest to persistent low-level insurgency, the threat as much as the actuality of violence shaped decisions about how and when colonial rule should cease. A contested process, at times pursued in the absence of forums for peaceful dialogue, decolonization catalysed differing styles of resistance, mass demonstration, and guerrilla warfare. Resistance, in turn, provoked imperial experimentation in counter-insurgency, repressive legislation, and the mass displacement of civilian populations. Counter-revolutionary in intent, these actions sometimes had social consequences as far-reaching as the original uprisings they sought to crush. Even the most highly orchestrated colonial withdrawals were rarely entirely peaceful. Partitions and, conversely, enforced territorial unifications could be especially bloody, leaving damaging legacies of unresolved argument and trauma, which split out over subsequent decades. Decolonization, then, could prefigure outpourings of retributive violence against those who were marginalized or, still worse, judged as collaborators by a country's new rulers.

Moreover, the end of twentieth-century empires—European and Asiatic—marked the biggest and most concentrated process of state-making (and empire un-making) the world has seen: prevailing ideas about sovereignty, citizenship, and collective and individual rights were all reconstituted as a result. The end of empire promoted different ideas of belonging, whether to nation, to ethnicity, or to ideals. New types of social activism were stimulated, as were innovative forms of international and transnational cooperation, enabling colonial peoples to eject colonial overseers who, with only rare exceptions, enjoyed greater access to military power. In whatever way they are described, the movements and events explored in this Handbook stand alongside the twentieth-century's world wars, the Cold War, and the longer arc of globalization as one of the four great determinants of geopolitical change in living memory.

So how might we best characterize decolonization as a global phenomenon? This Introduction and, more broadly, this collection of essays, offers some new answers to some very long-standing historiographical questions. Contributors demonstrate how the end of empire was embedded in the geopolitics of the second half of the twentieth century: the lasting effects of the Second World War, the impact of the Cold War, and new and accelerating forms of globalization. Together and separately, these geopolitical forces reacted with the unfinished business of decolonization; each, in their different ways, affected, altered, or accelerated the others.

The Second World War refashioned global politics beyond the Asian and European heartlands from which the major combatants entered hostilities in 1937, 1939, or 1941, just as the Cold War inflected the politics of decolonization. Pause, for instance, to consider the reconfiguration of territorial boundaries, the new human rights agendas, and the profound changes in international political economy that emerged in the wake of the two World Wars. Or reflect on the spread of colonial 'proxy wars', as Cold War animosities hardened. Whichever the example, we are reminded that the end of empires

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was, to some degree, contingent on the development of other geopolitical factors. Hence, decolonization has to be understood as, at once, a 'post-World War' phenomenon as well as a process that gathered momentum in the long Cold War cycle running from the 1940s to the early 1990s.¹ Different phases might be identified within that broad fifty-year spectrum, depending on which ideological struggle or whose rights and entitlements predominated, or how practices of statecraft and public diplomacy changed as international organizations and international laws proliferated.

For all that, decolonization was as much a catalyst to global change as an outcome of it. The political contestations, cultural clashes, and violent confrontations intrinsic to ending empire reverberated far beyond their immediate locale. Examples of successful contestation were a source of inspiration for communities elsewhere facing equivalent forms of political discrimination, social exclusion, or rights denial.² The underlying concerns that animated anti-colonial opposition were as pressing in South Africa as they were in North Vietnam. Methods of political mobilization, techniques of evasion, and styles of propaganda and mass communication practised in one place were emulated in others. The practices of civil rights movements in the United States, whether non-violent and ecumenical or radically internationalist, resonated especially strongly.³ A rhetoric of anti-colonial solidarity bore fruit, often articulated in stirring terms of affinities of the oppressed, of pan-Africanism, pan-Arabism, non-alignment, or Third Worldism. That rhetoric also inspired groups and individuals to action and altered the terms on which the public diplomacy of empire was conducted.⁴ Often operating outside the law and with limited material resources to hand, opponents of empire exploited their moral resources instead. Appealing for global support on ethical grounds, they demanded an end to discriminatory legal regimes. They highlighted the maltreatment of colonial subjects and posited a world without the racial discrimination at colonialism's core.⁵ Put differently, the moral disarmament of imperialism became the weapon of choice for those anti-colonialists without the means to end empire militarily.⁶

Less theorized than its cousins imperialism and colonialism, decolonization is widely framed as a relatively discrete process.⁷ Yet, as several chapters in this volume reveal, decolonization's conceptual and chronological boundaries have long been, and remain, decidedly fuzzy.⁸ One thing that unites recent if somewhat diffuse scholarship on the 'end of empire' is the tendency to increase its geographical and temporal span. The concept of decolonization is, in other words, now applied more widely and over a longer period than was the case for early political and scholarly practitioners of the term. Indeed, whereas past scholarship once presented decolonization as neatly packaged and compartmentalized by empire, region, and period, we broaden decolonization's conceptual, geographical, and temporal boundaries in ways that force us to rethink what decolonization actually was.

In theorizing decolonization, we highlight the following challenges: the prior requirement to determine whose empires are in question; the difficulty in establishing when or if decolonization was ever completed; and the need to work out whether decolonization as process was driven by its own unique motor or was pulled along by other extraneous

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factors.⁹ Together these theoretical challenges sit at the heart of this Handbook, and the rest of this Introduction explains how we have sought to tackle them, and to what interpretive effect. Our ambition—building on revisionist scholarship on decolonization—is to provide a new analytical framework, the purpose of which is not simply to explain when and why decolonization happened, but how it happened and, as importantly, with what results.

Let us start with the term ‘empire’. Established disciplinary distinctions, such as that between oceanic empires and territorially contiguous empires, tend to cloud the issue of whose decolonization is under scrutiny. Historian Tony Hopkins, for one, suggests that any definition of decolonization must encompass the informal empires of western economic influence in Latin America, East Asia, and elsewhere, alongside America’s previous and current overseas engagements and China’s escape from the shackles of extra-territoriality.¹⁰ Hence, the Handbook adopts a pluralistic understanding of the term ‘empire’, encompassing a variety of types of rule, and all of the above categorizations.

Another problem, of first principles, appears deceptively simple: when did empires end? Decades of scholarship on modernization, dependency, ‘neo-colonialism,’ ‘failed state’ architectures, and post-colonial conflict make plain that answers cannot be reduced to a watershed moment of ‘flag independence’ or, in Swahili, *uhuru wa bendera*: the point at which external colonial rule nominally ended.¹¹ State-centric explanations clearly fall down insofar as they equate the withdrawal of colonial authority with the ‘end of empire’. Deeper economic changes are overlooked, as is the replication of colonial forms of authority within nominally independent countries.

Rejecting the idea of ‘flag independence’ as a decisive break point, this Handbook reframes the idea of decolonization—less as a sequence of events and more as a globally connected process. The approach adopted is to tackle decolonization afresh, explaining not just when, but *how, why*, and, importantly, *if ever* empires came to an end. In short, how is the history of decolonization to be rethought as a result of decisive methodological shifts, which have begun to emerge in the scholarship of the last decade or so?. Imperial histories have long placed issues of race, gender, and culture at the heart of their analysis. Newer is the striking growth of interest in global history, histories of globalization, and transnational history, as well as histories of migration and diaspora, humanitarianism, development, and human rights—all of which challenge us to think more broadly still about the dynamics of decolonization.¹²

Tracing decolonization’s global span reveals how the achievement of independence catalysed different ideas of statehood, galvanizing bold, if sometimes transient, experiments in social, racial, and gender equality, and sharpening popular identification within and between nations and communities undergoing similar struggles for freedom. Some of the ideas involved here were locally specific, even unique, but many more were shared, borrowed, or adapted among the peoples caught up in fights for basic rights, for self-determination, and for the dignity of cultural recognition. If there is a primary

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dialectic at work here, it is that globalization conditioned decolonization, just as decolonization shaped globalization.

It should thus come as no surprise that the interplay between decolonization and globalization looms large in our thinking. Globalization remains perhaps the biggest intellectual challenge facing the humanities and social sciences today.¹³ Yet its champions and critics are invariably concerned with the present, with crudely exponential assumptions about the pace and scale of scientific and technological change built into globalization's teleology. These assumptions seemingly ignore the fact that much of our global past was forged in the crucible of the world's empires, which were nothing less than giant systems for organizing mobility of all kinds—of people, goods, and capital—on an international scale. If differing colonial experiences intersected, then decolonization is surely better understood within a global, rather than nation-empire, framework of analysis.

Indeed, a central argument recurring throughout the chapters in this Handbook is that decolonization was actively *globalizing*. It was a motivating force that triggered all sorts of changes ranging from global geopolitics and new trans-regional alignments to major migratory movements and bitter culture wars over the legacies of empire. The implications of this line of argument are significant. If decolonization was truly globalizing in its effects, then it becomes difficult to treat the end of a particular empire or the demise of a single colony in isolation. Explaining the globalizing effects of the end of empires requires us to take more seriously the question of inter-relatedness. It means that we need to consider how local colonial conflicts connected with wider causes, whether narrowly political or more broadly ideological, as well as with more longstanding shifts in the movement of people, ideas, and goods: in other words, with globalization. Reduced to its simplest terms, it is surely no coincidence that the Oceanic and land empires constructed over centuries by Asia and Europe's leading imperial powers disintegrated in relatively short order, and more or less together over the past century or so.

We suggest that we need to address four basic themes to demonstrate how and why decolonization exerted such a strong globalizing pull:

1. *Historicizing decolonization*, not as some inevitable and long foreseen outcome, but as something more open-ended, multi-layered, and contingent—neither entirely pre-figured nor substantially pre-determined, but a composite set of processes persisting well beyond formal transfers of power.¹⁴

2. *Exploring how decolonization's gathering momentum globalized the Cold War*. Colonialism, its discriminations, and its rights denials were issues of more tangible concern to greater numbers of people than the Cold War's ideological divides. The contention here is that the resultant struggles to bring colonialism to an end transformed the nature and extent of the Cold War. We argue that decolonization catalysed changes in international alignments, in transnational networks, and in the

intersections between the Cold War and anti-colonial attachments. As a result, decolonization registered as much across nations, empires, and international boundaries as it did within them.

3. *Analyzing the relationship between decolonization and globalization* to explain why so many empires ended in so short a space of time, revealing that the possibilities of globalization—of an interconnected world of mobility and movement—assured the supporters of decolonization greater access to essential resources, to wider networks of influence, and to a global audience.

4. *Recognizing that violent contestation was also integral to the decolonization process.* Whether in full-blown warfare within, between, or across states, or in insurgent attacks and the security force repression that these invited, or in the undeclared civil wars within colonial societies on the threshold of imperial collapse, the violence of decolonization was acutely asymmetric. So prevalent was this asymmetry that it might be judged fundamental to the nature of decolonization. We reach this conclusion because the asymmetry of colonial conflicts registered most strongly in the violence done to non-combatants: for the most part, colonial subjects unrecognized in law or practice as ‘civilians’.

Historicizing Decolonization

Historicizing decolonization means resisting the temptation to read history backwards, starting from the known endpoint of empire in order to assemble the causal factors that inexorably brought about colonial collapse.¹⁵ The interpretational dangers of doing so are clear. The complexity of colonial politics is flattened into a misleading story of supporters and opponents of empire—of opposing extremes. Moderates of all stripes disappear from the narrative. Alternatives to decolonization are ignored. The prosaic realities of day-to-day colonial life are hidden; so, too, is the sense of contingency in people’s political choices. Within European nations, the banal acceptance of empire, or at least of some form of dependent relationship between richer and poorer societies, may also be overlooked or misunderstood. The pitfalls are many: colonial histories and local specificities are obscured, and other trajectories out of empire are not taken seriously as subjects of inquiry.

Decolonization was neither ineluctable nor unavoidable. Rather, it was an outcome actively politicked over in terms of rival claims, many of which did not posit the complete rupture of imperial attachments. Social histories of popular politics in late-colonial societies offer a powerful rejoinder to reductive accounts of communities either ‘for’ or ‘against’ decolonization: they make plain that abstract concepts like ‘nationalism’ and ‘anti-colonialism’ fail to capture the diverse views and the differing motives of those involved. Anti-colonial ‘nationalist mobilization’ was rarely as total or as clearly identifiable at the time as it might appear in retrospect.¹⁶ Instead, individuals’ claims

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expressed economic, political, or cultural demands that were not predicated on the achievement of national independence, sovereign rights, or self-determination.

New scholarship on self-determination illustrates this contingency powerfully. For example, Brad Simpson suggests that human rights histories have made two erroneous arguments concerning the concept itself. First is that anticolonial movements used the discourse of self-determination instrumentally, primarily to achieve broader goals, such as economic development and racial equality. Second, that by the 1960s, self-determination's fiercest advocates in the Global South had reduced the principle-cum-right 'to the receipt of statehood and perpetual non-intervention thereafter,' diluting its liberal, democratic implications. Simpson contends that both arguments oversimplify the ways in which a variety of state and non-state actors deployed self-determination claims to envision sovereignty and human rights in the era of decolonization. Rather, self-determination is better understood as a form of claim making about the nature and scope of post-colonial rights and sovereignty—an *open-ended*, rather than a *fixed*, concept.¹⁷ Framed in this subtler light, decolonization begins to look more contested than inexorable, more historically contingent than preordained.

In order to understand what decolonization is, we need to lay bare the various processes involved. Together these processes were to question the legitimacy of an entrenched order of empires and to pave the way for a new order of nation-states to take its place. But this rethinking of decolonization as a composite concept is complicated by the fact that we still lack historical distance from the events in question. Just like a mooring rope, the further we have travelled from the era of decolonization the more we have felt its pull. To better connect the effects of the ends of empire to the making of our contemporary world, eschewing the polemics which continue to surround this subject, we need to reframe decolonization not as one process but as a bundle of processes, encompassing 'post-colonialism,' 'second wave decolonization,' 're-colonization,' and 'de-colonialization.' These processes transcended the experiences of individual colonial powers and colonies; and they predated and outlived formal transfers of power.

Chronology is equally important here. To think through decolonization as a composite concept, it is necessary to analyse the end of empires as passing through a series of interlocking phases: an initial delegitimizing of colonialism; the resultant contestations over the persistence, the reform, or the termination of external colonial control; and the very imperfect transitions to sovereign independence for former dependencies that followed. Set within this chronological framework, 'post-colonialism,' 'second wave decolonization,' 're-colonization,' and 'de-colonialization' provide a basis for rethinking decolonization by bringing into considerably sharper analytical focus the multiple trajectories and the different timelines upon which the end of empire occurred. Critically, each of these processes was accelerated, but still far from complete at the moment of independence: collectively they point towards the conclusion that decolonization was not simply as a dramatic geopolitical shift that occurred in the mid-twentieth century, but

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something that has subsequently cast such a very long shadow over our contemporary world.

'Post-colonialism' or, perhaps more accurately 'post-empire,' is taken here not to highlight discursive forms of representation and resistance, important as they are, but in a more literal sense to mark out a formative and highly transitional period in the history of international relations, one in which governments, businesses, transnational movements, aid agencies, and other international organizations were seeking to protect their interests and preserve their influence through and beyond the moment of independence. All sorts of calculations, intrinsic to the end of empire, had to be made by those who sought to navigate their way across this late-colonial and post-colonial divide. Some adapted to new realities more readily than others. Just as colonialist attitudes and colonial practices did not end abruptly, nor on the other side of the scale did anti-colonialism disappear as former dependencies achieved nationhood, or 'flag independence'. Empire, after all, had been a pervasive, almost ubiquitous, form of political organization for centuries. Its effects were bound to linger, whether in material terms of economic dependency, political clientage, and NGO activity, in patterns of migration between imperial metropolises and erstwhile dependencies, or in subtler ties of language, culture, and outlook. Furthermore, as Christopher Lee makes plain in his chapter contribution, anti-colonialism, too, would subsist as a prevailing way of thinking for many. 'Post-empire' was not a moment in time: rather it is better understood as the passage of time, marked by the dismantling of an old colonial order, the birth of a new post-colonial order, and the protracted and sometimes painful adjustments that led from the one to the other.

After wresting formal control of their states from Europe's colonial powers, national liberation movements also sought to exert more practical forms of control over what the institutions of those states actually did. On the eve of Ghana's independence, Kwame Nkrumah declared that 'we must *show* that it is possible for Africans to rule themselves.' A prescient warning, for the premise for 'second wave decolonization' is that independence was often highly circumscribed. The incompleteness of formal decolonization and the lasting consequences of colonial dependency for African and Asian people's belief in their capacity to govern their affairs are well captured by the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe. Gaining worldwide attention for his first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Achebe spoke of a 'postcolonial disposition' whereby 'a people who have lost the habit of ruling themselves' had difficulty running the new systems 'foisted upon them at the dawn of independence.' During the 1960s and 1970s, the meaning of decolonization thus shifted away from the acquisition of legal sovereignty and towards the struggle over the apparatus of government that would make that sovereignty real. The extension of state ownership in former colonies, for example, often reflected attempts by ruling parties and regimes to match their political dominance with tangible control over national assets. From the nationalization of major industries within former colonial territories to the efforts made by Middle Eastern, African, and Asian export producers to build a new international economic order that served their interests above those of the western

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world, decolonization played out in fundamental changes to the political economy of newly independent states and the terms on which trade with the nations of the Global South should be conducted.¹⁸

Resistance to 're-colonization' by post-colonial states took many forms. In his chapter, Joseph Hodge illustrates that, between the 1930s and the 1970s, the emergence of 'development' as both a guiding principle and an administrative practice of empire triggered numerous responses among colonial communities to escape its clutches. Such resistance did not end with formal independence. Quite the reverse: post-colonial states were equally inventive in asserting their rights to determine how development, now typically re-designated as overseas 'aid', should be transacted. Efforts to diversify sources of development and reduce reliance on any one donor or provider were one response, as was the formation, in short order, of a spate of non-western branches of international organizations. In order to increase their lobbying power, some of these branches grouped themselves into regional conferences—most notably, the Arab Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Middle East. In these—and other—ways the international humanitarian arena became a key site of emerging power engagement in what had traditionally been western power discussions.

To borrow the phrase of the Zimbabwean writer Chenjerai Hove, the driver behind 'decolonialization'—a concept rooted in the psychological dimensions of colonial rule—was nothing less than 'a cleansing of the colonial languages.' School curricula in numerous post-colonial societies were rewritten to accommodate regime eagerness to revitalize vernacular language teaching, to teach 'authentic' national histories, or to promote a particular ideological worldview. Arabization programmes, commonplace in North Africa and the Middle East, became identifiable, not just with the restoration of Arabic language use in schools and administrative services, but with the promotion of pan-Arab solidarity and opposition to Israel's territorial gains in the aftermath of 1967's Six Day War.¹⁹ 'Decolonial' cleansing of this type was equally evident in the realm of international law. Although the initial spark for the revision of the 1949 Geneva Conventions came from humanitarian and human rights activists, the force that propelled the negotiations that led up to the Additional Protocols was post-colonial, specifically, a radical reframing of the very idea of 'international armed conflict' to incorporate the wars of liberation movements at a time when the majority of those movements had already succeeded in their independence quest. In that sense, the Additional Protocols were a retrospective proclamation of the justice and legitimacy of the anti-colonial cause.

To reiterate, the more expansive definition of decolonization we have been applying—framed as a composite concept spanning successive phases—points to a single conclusion—one that pervades this collection of essays. Narrowly political definitions of decolonization as 'a surrender of external political sovereignty,' 'the transfer of power from empire to nation-state,' or, more vaguely, 'the taking of measures by indigenous peoples and/or their white overlords intended eventually to end external control over *overseas* colonial territories,' simply won't do.²⁰ Each definition, in its insufficiency, highlights the limitations in state-centric explanations of colonial collapse that equate the

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formal transfer of power with the 'end of empire'. Each overlooks deeper economic changes, as well as the replications of colonial forms of authority, juridical practice, land rights, property ownership, and commercial transaction in post-colonial societies.

These points bring us full circle to the question of when, and if, at all, twentieth-century empires came to an end. It is, in certain circles, fashionable to argue that empires and imperialist practices somehow persist through rich world interventions in fragile states and developing world crisis zones. This type of analysis rests on two premises. One is that the chosen sites, the motivations, and the practices of contemporary European military interventions in Africa and Western Asia are intimately connected to the imperial pasts of Europe's former colonial powers. The other is that understandings of political violence and state legitimacy are embedded in decolonization experiences. Western models of good governance predominate as indicators of how regimes should operate, how governments should reach decisions, and how communities should order their political lives.

The persistence of quasi- or neo-colonial influences beyond independence was—and is—a widely discussed phenomenon, not least in the midst of twenty-first century wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. The view that humanitarian and human rights interventions exercise power over the very people they seek to emancipate is increasingly familiar. What many of its proponents fail to grasp, however, is that assertions of Western power since the collapse of colonial rule are as likely to have been multi-lateral as bi-lateral. State aid may have become a pawn of Cold War politics, but multi-lateral aid has hardly been agenda-free either. The intervention of international agencies in post-colonial conflicts has raised growing concerns about what Nkrumah and others saw as the control of local policies from outside. Hence the idea of 're-colonization'—the replication of western forms of authority via non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations. What has fuelled such fears are the western origins and orientation of many of these organizations, including their continued reliance on the United States and Western Europe for much of their funding.

If narrowly political concepts of decolonization are analytically too limiting, the phrase 'end of empires,' by contrast, opens the door to different historical timelines, which set colonial withdrawals and conventional 'transfers of power' alongside the murkier, often muted, effects of decolonization within formerly colonized societies and its lasting legacies within Europe itself. Sensitivity to transnational currents of change need not and should not deny space for national stories of ends of empire: this collection contains several such surveys. Equally, the decolonization phenomenon was something bigger and more complex than the experiences of any single imperial power and its dependencies. Hence, as Gary Wilder suggests, we might profitably look beyond 'methodological nationalism—the assumption that the national state is the primary unit of historical analysis and the privileged explanatory matrix for historical phenomena.' Applying this thinking to experiences of empire in the francophone world, he concludes that

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... starting with the empire as an analytic category is not the same as studying French national actors in the many places they happen to be It follows that the crucial question is not how France behaved overseas or how its subject populations experienced colonial rule, but how the fact of empire, including ways that colonial subjects reflected upon it, invites us to rethink, or to *unthink*, France itself as well as the global imperial order within which it has been embedded.²¹

Wilder's point is well made and might be applied to all of the modern empires studied in this collection. To illustrate the point, stop for a moment to consider decolonization's trajectories in two very different empires, one—the Japanese—a relatively transient phenomenon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the other—the Ottoman—of a much longer, multi-century duration. Beginning in Taiwan, Japan's imperial conquests gathered momentum from the 1890s onwards. By the time that Japan seized Manchukou, a large swathe of northern Chinese territory, in 1932, East Asia's eventual escape from foreign imperial control and the global conflict that would help bring out this liberation were coming into view. Japanese efforts to carve out its newest colonial state, to demarcate it administratively, and to reshape it culturally, were thus bound up with a larger war of conquest in mainland China. This conflict would also seal the fate of the Japanese empire as a whole.²² The Japanese path from imperial conquest through political and cultural implantation to enforced decolonization combined peculiar rapidity with vast social devastation.²³ Thomas David Dubois captures this dynamic, commenting that 'in contrast to the long century of British high imperialism, the entire history of Manchukuo is thus one of urgency, grandiose planning, and bold execution.'²⁴

If Japan's experience of empire-building and forced decolonization were highly compacted, the fate of a much older imperial system—the Ottoman Empire—reminds us, following Wilder's insight, that Turkey's relationship with its colonial territories and its exposure to external imperial pressures might be usefully rethought. Let Alan Mikhail and Christine M. Philliou be our guides here:

Cleaving the questions of longevity and violent demise into two demonstrates the difficulty, indeed near impossibility, of weaving together the early modern empire with the presumptive modern one. The brokers who proved so crucial to the long-term survival of the empire from the thirteenth through the eighteenth centuries were precisely the ones who were pushed out of the system when the reforms we associate with 'modernization' and 'westernization' were instituted in the nineteenth century. And yet we are only beginning to understand in all their complexities the final tests of diversity, crisis, and change that buried the empire in the twentieth century.²⁵

The Ottoman Empire was not only much older than the Japanese Empire, it was also more of a hybrid. It was both land-based and maritime, both indirectly ruled and directly colonized. In some regions Ottoman administrators felt isolated and exposed. Other parts of the empire were meanwhile judged capable of assimilation to a greater Turkish

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homeland.²⁶ This hybrid quality helps explain why trying to fit Ottoman imperial history within a linear account of rise and fall is an analytical dead end.

The examples of Meiji Japan and late Ottoman Turkey illustrate the tension experienced by rapidly modernizing nation-states that were, at the same time, blocking demands for statehood within their colonial dependencies. The collapse of each empire following defeat in war triggered wider transformations throughout South East and Western Asia. The fate of the Japanese and Ottoman Empires thus suggest that the bigger questions still hanging over decolonization are not *why* it happened, but with what consequences—in these two particular cases *how* decolonization's broader transregional *consequences* played out. In seeking answers to these 'why,' 'how,' and 'with what consequence,' questions we are compelled to explore the connections between the global (or macro) forces of change and their more localized (or micro) dynamics.

Cold War and Decolonization: Globalizing Anti-Colonial Conflict

In the second half of the twentieth century, the local impulses behind decolonization conflicts from French Vietnam to Portuguese Angola were interwoven with the geopolitical contest between rival Cold War blocs. Yet, the political divides involved were really two sides of the same ideological coin, the basic dynamic being a clash of opposing worldviews about how societies—and particular ethnic groups or social classes within them—should be organized and ordered in relation to one another. With notable exceptions among settler-based rebellions in Palestine and Rhodesia, or among the pan-Hellenic supporters of the Greek Cypriot underground nationalist movement (EOKA) dedicated to ending British colonial rule in Cyprus, numerous anti-colonialists were drawn to the egalitarian message of the Communist bloc. Within the Communist 'second world', in turn, multiple civil society groups, educational institutions, and workplace associations proclaimed international solidarity with anti-colonial struggles.²⁷ From Vietnam to Angola, contests that pitched the United States and its Western allies against leftist anti-colonial insurgents attracted the strongest interest—and the greatest material aid—of all.²⁸ It is therefore surprising that decolonization was for many years treated by some Cold War scholars as incidental to the dominant plot of superpower opposition. Numerous historians now recognize that the end of empires was the central concern for many populations in the global South as well as within the Communist world itself. For many, opposing colonial injustice was a more potent agent of change than the ideological abstractions and geopolitical competition of Cold War.

For all that, the temptation in international history has been to privilege the disruptive impact of Cold War. That interpretative line is gradually changing with new and more nuanced perspectives on the nature and extent of Cold War–decolonization interactions.²⁹ Even so, reconciling these more varied viewpoints into a judgment on the implications of

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the Cold War for decolonization remains difficult. It could, for instance, be argued that while the Cold War shaped the course and consequences of some colonial conflicts, it was ephemeral in others. Equally, it is now more readily acknowledged that multiple-state and non-state actors on both sides of the Iron Curtain, whether in the 'First World' of the rich West or the 'Second World' of the Communist bloc, played an important part in slowing or accelerating imperial collapse. Among the latter might be counted a host of revolutionary actors, all of which offered greater dynamism, unbending commitment, and more responsiveness to the needs of their revolutionary anti-colonial clients. At state level, one might include the Yugoslavs, other non-aligned states, and, first and foremost, the Cubans. At non-state level, one thinks of a host of solidarity groups and fund-raising organizations that lent support, both moral and material, to anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia.

The essential question asked in light of this is whether Cold War pressures were driving processes of decolonization, or vice versa. Our conclusion is that the end of empires precipitated fundamental shifts in the way the Cold War was conceived and fought, through regional proxies in particular. Put simply, the collapse of empires sucked in Cold War rivals to pre-existing colonial conflicts of much older vintage. While the Cold War was increasingly global in reach, decolonization was more actively globalizing. East-West alignments and ideological divisions never mapped exactly onto the North-South conflicts that heralded the disintegration of empires. These disintegrations were sometimes falteringly slow (e.g., think of Portugal's long-lasting African attachments for instance), sometimes shockingly abrupt (recall the chaotic early months of the Congo crisis). But the essential point is that contested decolonization both antedated and outlasted the Cold War.

The constant background noise of imperial collapse was something to which the major Cold War rivals had to adjust. For example, Washington policy makers in the late 1940s fretted that a strategy of pure containment was far too negative to draw Asian peoples away from Communism's growing appeal. They turned instead to a more positive model: an 'imaginary of integration.' Cultural barriers between peoples would be broken down once it became apparent that ordinary Americans sympathetically identified with a world emerging from colonialism. The compelling need to avoid any appearance of racism, to discard any association with the language and attitudes of imperialism, and to bring about the political and economic integration of non-Communist Asia increasingly informed American diplomatic rhetoric after 1945. Some of Asia's leaders were meanwhile giving voice to an altogether different vision of their region's future. As North Vietnamese troops neared victory over the French garrison besieged at Dien Bien Phu in spring 1954, China and India reached a settlement governing relations over Chinese-occupied Tibet. At the same time, the two Asian giants elaborated the 'five principles' (*pancheela*) by which their relations should proceed: each was to respect the other's territorial integrity; non-interference in the internal affairs of the other would also be upheld; non-aggression was made a formal objective; relations were to proceed on an equitable basis; and the fifth and ultimate goal was summarized as peaceful coexistence. Western observers, inclined to dismiss the five principles as vague and utopian, missed

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the point—according to Matthew Jones, ‘it was the *pancheela*, perhaps more than any other statement at this time, that best represented the philosophical gulf between an “Asian” perspective on resolving outstanding issues between newly independent states and the fears of a bipolar division of the region into rival military blocs that the South East Asian treaty Organization (SEATO) was helping to excite.’³⁰

The divide, as much philosophical as ideological, between the Cold War mindsets of the Western and Eastern bloc on the one hand, and the emergent nonalignment of the global South on the other, was underlined a few months later when the so-called Colombo Powers, many of them newly independent nations, convened at Bogor in Indonesia in December 1954. A larger conference of Asian and African states was announced for the spring of the following year.³¹ Bandung was the result.

The significance of the 1955 Bandung Conference, of course, was never reducible to its overt challenge to Cold War thinking.³² Of greater importance was Bandung’s symbolic affirmation of a new-style Third World politics, which highlighted the primary relevance of colonial discrimination, racism, and poverty for millions of people throughout the global South.³³ Decolonization, in other words, was more than the foremost diplomatic concern of the Third World’s leading international actors. Underlying that preoccupation was the determination to expose the basic injustice of colonialism to the world. Yet, the Bandung vision was never dogmatically anti-Western—it was more inclusive and optimistic than that. The presence of two former imperialist nations—Japan and Turkey—among the Bandung delegations underscored the idea that post-empire futures could, and should, be brighter than their colonial antecedents.³⁴

Bandung expressed through summitry a profound and popularly based shift in international and race relations that crystallized in the mid-1950s. This shift, while most apparent in Asia, was also global in scope, connecting African-American civil rights activism and radical pan-Africanism with the embrace of anti-colonialism by the governments and peoples of Soviet-occupied Europe. Framed in this global, transnational setting, Bandung might be usefully connected with other epochal events of its time: the Hungarian uprising of October 1956; Egypt’s successful defiance of Anglo-French-Israeli invasion a month later; Ghana’s path-finding independence in March; and the Little Rock civil rights protests in September 1957. Each, in different yet complementary ways, brought to the surface the underlying connections between Cold War rivalries, race discrimination, and pressures for decolonization.³⁵ In Jason Parker’s words,

...[t]he ‘Suez-Ghana-Little Rock’ time line noted above inaugurated what might be called the liberation phase of the Cold War, during which the dynamics of the superpower conflict served to advance rather than hinder progress on Race issues ... in much of the Third World, liberation replaced repression because the ideological freeze of the latter thawed between a pair of burning contradictions. One, civil rights agitation in the United States began to quicken, undermining the image of the ‘land of the free’—and convincing US officials that this was a serious

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Cold War concern. Two, even 'progressive' colonial administration, understood as a gradual devolution of European authority, became increasingly untenable as the Third World asserted the right of self-rule sooner rather than later.³⁶

The late 1950s were indeed a key transitional point, even if it is tempting to argue that the 'liberation phase' ushered in during these years was as much the product of decolonization's globalizing effects as of fundamental changes in the dynamics of the Cold War.

Transnational connections were a striking manifestation of decolonization's global dynamic. The ideas and experiences of imperial rulers on the one hand and colonial peoples on the other reacted with one another. Multiple transnational networks resulted—between officials and technocratic 'experts,' between social scientific theorists and medical practitioners, and, most famously, between anti-colonialist lobbyists, writers, and fighters. Decolonization, then, was an *histoire croisée*, a complex history of inter-connection in which comparison between the actions and experiences of differing colonial communities and those who claimed to rule them was deeply embedded.

As Abin Chakraborty has put it recently,

...[w]hether it is the proliferation of Pan-African discourses on both sides of the Atlantic, the dissemination of Rastafarian culture, Che Guevara's revolutionary struggles in Latin America and Africa, the G[h]adar movement of California and its role in the Indian nationalist movement, Subhash Chandra Bose's international networks and the formation of the Indian National Army or the role of various Asian and African diasporic communities in nationalist struggles—all point to a persistently present transnational dimension in decolonizing processes.³⁷

For Che Guevara, speaking at the Tricontinental Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America held in Havana in 1966, the Vietnamese struggle against French and American imperialism epitomized 'a transnational ideal of post-colonial liberation based on a vision of proletarian internationalism.' Che's comments, redolent of the 1960s new leftism that he personified, also point to a more recent historiographical trend, namely, the attempt to explain decolonization from the anti-colonial, or insurgent, perspective. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the Bengali playwright Utpal Dutt should devote his 1960s play *Invincible Vietnam* to what he saw as the emblematic struggle of contested decolonization.³⁸

Bengal also shared longstanding bonds of solidarity with Vietnam. Bengalis and Vietnamese experienced catastrophic and colonially induced wartime famines during the 1940s. Various trade unions and political parties in Bengal observed Indochina Day on 25 October 1945 in opposition to the British decision to send Indian soldiers to assist Dutch and French colonial troops in restoring European colonial authority in Southeast Asia. Two years later, the all-India Students' Federation celebrated a Vietnam Day on 21 January 1947 in combination with other student associations. This time, police moved in to disperse the students' protest, opening fire in front of the University of Calcutta's

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Senate Hall and killing two students—Sukhendu Bikash Nath and Dheer Ramian Sen.³⁹ Bengali solidarity with Vietnam peaked during the late 1960s as American intervention heightened the impression of unbending Western imperialist resolve to stifle Third Worldist demands for freedom.⁴⁰ Here was transnational connection embedded in internationalist sentiment, in popular protest, and in cultural performance.

Decolonization and Globalization

Over the last decade, historians have paid considerably more attention to the relationship between empire and globalization.⁴¹ Neatly summarizing their continuing efforts to reconceptualize imperial histories as entangled, global processes, Durba Ghosh makes the connection explicit. He argues that the imperial/global turn in historical writing presumes that empires were a product of global history as much as a just a driver of it, and that modern empires were a consequence of global capitalism rather than a project specific to the colonizers.⁴²

Decolonization has been largely absent from this story, however. Tony Hopkins has recently argued that a profound shift in the character of globalization brought the age of great territorial empires to an end.⁴³ But if the globalization backlash of the interwar era of the twentieth century was subsequently followed by a period of ‘post-war re-globalization’ (or ‘post-colonial globalization’), the overall dynamics of that transition remain rather opaque, as does the more specific contribution of the end of empire to the process. Part of the reason for what may otherwise seem a surprising neglect of decolonization’s role in the new forms of globalization to emerge after 1945 may be sought in the underlying rationale for this Handbook: namely, that a much larger view of decolonization is required in order to relate this historic change to other major geopolitical forces of the last century. In just the same way as globalization may have shaken up old bordered imaginations to be replaced by new narratives of interconnection, so decolonization now needs to shake up our understanding of what it has meant to move from an old imperial world to one of (ostensibly) new nation-states.

Another difficulty is that the relationship between decolonization and globalization becomes distorted when economics is taken as its main proxy. Viewed economically, the globalization of the second half of the twentieth century is pushed back in time. The results of trade liberalization in the decades after 1945 were, after all, profoundly disappointing. In the wake of decolonization, a raft of state-led, import-substituting industrialization across Asia, Africa, and Latin America resulted in much of the developing world becoming more closed, not more open, to international trade.⁴⁴ The periphery shut the door just as the richer countries gradually opened up their trade regimes. So much is true. A more capacious view of decolonization, which, among other things, embraces the humanitarian, human rights, and development agendas that emerged through, and arguably as a result of, the collapse of colonial rule, and which had

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such profound consequences for thinking about economic systems, social norms, and racial relations, suggests that new and accelerating forms of globalization were already well underway by the 1960s.

In the chapters that follow, we observe decolonization becoming entangled with globalization along three major axes.

First, we should not ignore the fact that colonial rule is widely regarded as an obstacle to globalization that had to be removed. Many, if by no means all, theorists of contemporary globalization see the nation-state as one of its key agents. They believe closer international integration to have largely been a product of the interplay of different national politics and state-led initiatives. Their unspoken assumption is that a society's freedom to make its way in the global marketplace is contingent upon its prior ability to gain and assert its independence.⁴⁵ The act of giving political expression to nationalist sentiments, and thereby resisting foreign dominance, is taken to have been a necessary precursor to post-war re-globalization, regardless of the state of economic dependence that may then have persisted between the developed and developing worlds.

Other commentators on contemporary globalization lean to the view that the influence of state is retreating in the face of an array of supranational forces. Understood in this way, decolonization was a geopolitical phenomenon that was, in a very real sense, propelled by globalization—our second axis. Newly imagined forms of integration that emerged after the Second World War were premised on a less-stratified view of social relations. Globalization dismantled imperial systems of rule and displaced the racial hierarchies that had helped sustain them.⁴⁶ New discourses of humanity emerged as the end of empire offered Europeans opportunities for global engagement rather than a retreat from it. Together, a post-war generation of (mostly Western) NGOs, many built upon connections forged by European empires, sought to forge denser networks between peoples across the world and to expand the knowledge within Western societies of the suffering and plight of those living in the Global South. Their apparently relentless expansion, in turn, triggered concerns about their 'banal,' 'petty,' 'mobile,' or 'sovereign' power—anxieties that were later to give rise to alternative critiques of global power relations, and meanwhile threatened to drain humanitarian, human rights, and development agendas of what moral purpose they had once had.

These two axes of thought about the relationship between decolonization and globalization, the one pitching colonial rule as the obstacle to be removed by decolonization, the other casting decolonization as a geopolitical phenomenon driven by global changes, need not, however, be pitted as rival or antithetical interpretations. Yearnings for sovereignty were, after all, never simply about secession: they were also about new ways of thinking about belonging—of belonging to a different kind of world order, with different norms and rules. Hence, declarations of independence were almost always also, and perhaps equally, declarations of interdependence: they signified claims to be recognized by something wider.⁴⁷ This is precisely where the increasing prominence of international and transnational actors, within and beyond the United Nations, played

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such an important role. These actors served a critical function in post-colonial transitions, helping to make new sovereignties recognized and more recognizable, while simultaneously holding those fledgling sovereignties to account.

We can go further therefore to conceptualize decolonization itself as a *globalizing* process—our third axis.⁴⁸ To explain decolonization's globalizing capacity we need to be clear about the factors involved, which include capital and commodity flows, voluntary and involuntary migrations, and ideas exchanged, cultural practices emulated, and ideologies adopted. Whatever one reads into the term 'global', it is difficult to escape the conclusion that forces of global change—tangible and intangible—were instrumental in the end of empires. Is it enough, then, to acknowledge a 'global decolonization,' much as scholars have reframed the Cold War in similar terms—less as a binary ideological conflict than as a global contest substantially played out in the poorest regions of the world? States, peoples, movements, and groups spanning multiple continents were caught up in empires' endgames. Millions of lives were changed by it. The end of empires certainly catalysed new transnational allegiances and innovative forms of transregional resistance to foreign authority. To take but one example, in their writing for its newspaper, *el Moujahid*, the publicists of the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* increasingly appealed not just to fellow nationalists at home, but to potential sympathizers overseas in like-minded movements, in friendly neighbor-states, or among United Nations delegations and NGO lobby groups. Anti-colonialism, in other words, was in many cases articulated transnationally in a cosmopolitan language of rights.⁴⁹

So much is true. Yet, we are not arguing simply that decolonization should be analysed globally. Intrinsic to our use of the term 'globalizing' is the contention that decolonization was about something more than the mere deconstruction of colonial relationships. Rather, decolonization actively reconfigured the distribution of wealth and power within and between societies, altered long-established patterns of international relations, and gave rise to new forms of cultural interaction. The cumulative insights of this Handbook's chapters confirm the conclusion that decolonization a motive force that triggered all sorts of changes, some of which were social and cultural, others political and economic, still others ideational and ethical. This larger view of decolonization sees the end of empires as a geopolitical force just as profound as globalization, and not merely a function of it.

Decolonization, we argue, had a complex relationship to the new forms of integration that emerged after the Second World War. Whether understood as a prior condition to globalization, as a phenomenon propelled by globalization, or as a globalizing force in its own right, decolonization profoundly shaped the contemporary world. In particular, rethinking the relationship between decolonization and globalization reveals something about the very nature of globalization itself. Anchoring the 're-globalization' that took shape after 1945 amidst the geopolitics of decolonization exposes some of its underlying tensions. For example, by highlighting the wider geographical ramifications of local decolonization struggles we can better grasp the regional diversity of globalizing forces. These forces never emanated solely from within—nor were they simply a product of—the West, however much the literature often suggests otherwise. Perhaps, above all,

decolonization lends context to the grievances of those left behind by an era of deepening interconnectedness and interdependency while at the same time revealing those enriched by it, as exemplified by the contestation over the New International Economic Order of the 1960s and 1970s and, equally, by new forms of uncertainty arising from enhanced contact and increased mobility between the Global North and South.

Decolonization, Violence, and the Colonial Subject

Decolonization is a story of inequality, asymmetry—and violence. To understand that violence, one must first grasp how organized opposition changed through, and as a result of, decolonization. Decolonization's violence was central to the pasts—and later the memories—of colonial populations; it was much less so to the lives of metropolitan Europeans. Although some of the violence involved—its escalation and its targeting—was entirely predictable, much of it took imperial governments struggling to reassert their authority by surprise. Local populations bore the brunt of their governments' knee-jerk reactions. Disaggregating the levels of violence further, within local populations, particular communities suffered especially badly. Sometimes this stemmed from their religious or ideological affiliation, whether real or alleged; similarly, the identity politics of ethnicity and culture fed cycles of violence and reprisal. Crucially, unarmed colonial subjects, whose 'civilian status' was never recognized in domestic or international law, typically suffered more from the violence of insurgencies and counter-insurgencies than the warring parties who sought to exercise authority over them.

The extremely young and the extremely old were perhaps inevitably the most vulnerable, especially when decolonization triggered famine, forced removal of resident populations, or hyperinflation and the consequent unaffordability of essential goods. Other forms of collective violence, some clandestine and deniable, some highly public and demonstrative, targeted alleged supporters of one side or the other. Such performative violence was intended to intimidate and deter. Its principal victims were typically those unfortunate enough to find themselves on a physical, cultural, or ideological frontline. Women's domestic workloads and their primary roles in child rearing and field labouring left them exposed to the predations of insurgents and security forces alike. Younger men and women, including adolescents, figured prominently among the militias, 'self defence units,' and other paramilitary auxiliaries employed by security forces and insurgents to conduct some of the most visceral, face-to-face violence. Perhaps not surprisingly, the very young also figured among the principal victims of such violence.

Decolonization is all-too readily viewed as a binary, adversarial contest between imperial security forces and their anti-colonial opponents. Arguments tend to centre on how late colonial counter-insurgencies were fought. Such analysis can divert attention from what was locally particular, and from the dynamics of decolonization's violence within and

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between communities, rather than between rulers and ruled. Few would disagree that 'everyday violence' was intrinsic to colonialism. But recognizing the casualness of that violence, whether physical or psychological, and its repetitious banality, is critical to understanding why certain groups among colonial subject populations—women, workers, and the young—were particularly exposed to it.

A key dynamic was the ruthless determination of insurgents and counter-insurgents alike to impose their social control over civilian populations by whatever means they deemed necessary. Several chapters in this collection show a link between levels of insecurity and the intensity of violence, with many of those involved in acts of violence operating with minimal constraint or state direction. Late-colonial violence, in other words, was increasingly privatized; it was either delegated to, or actively seized upon, by groups within particular communities to advance or protect their particular interests. Violent acts often catalysed cycles of retribution that widened the circle of those caught up in decolonization conflicts.

Politicians, administrators, and military commanders responsible for devising and implementing imperial policies either misunderstood or chose to ignore the particularities of the popular opposition they faced. Macro-level explanations were instead superimposed upon (and therefore obscured) the micro-dynamics of political contestation. Regional officials and imperial governments misconstrued local demands for basic rights as portents or symptoms of broader pressure for statehood. As a result, numerous colonial governments passed up opportunities for dialogue, convinced that *force majeure* was required to suppress dissent. Even those in countries drawn to democratic universalism struggled with the proposition that their particular national brand of colonialism was less an instrument of social progress than a barrier to it.

Underlying this inclination to repress was a crucial fact: there was no recognized juridical category of 'colonial civilian' conferring guaranteed protections by the state. Quite the reverse: the non-combatant majority populations within colonial societies were reconfigured as 'objects of military necessity,' treated by those carrying arms as objects to be exploited. Value was attached to non-combatants for the goods they possessed or the labour they might provide, for the shelter or support they might offer, and for the information they might divulge.⁵⁰ The legally unrecognized status of colonial 'civilian' inevitably draws attention to the matter of rights denied, fought for, and won. In a very real sense, colonized populations were doubly rendered as subjects—not only subjected under law to a second-class status next to their imperial master, but also subjected to the demands of state security forces and other non-state armed groups in their midst. Confronted with violence in ways that armed personnel were not, these colonial subjects required and sought protection from the state and its opponents—they looked to various local or supranational protectors, from insurgent movements and loyalist militias to NGOs and other interested parties within the international community, to provide it.

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Violence, then, is a key variable, at once a driver of decolonization and a locally transformative experience for particular communities and groups. Asymmetry is, of course, widely invoked to explain the processes of contestation integral to decolonization, but invoked how? Often the argument runs thus: Europe's imperial giants gradually lost political control because superior military equipment and training proved insufficient in the face of the disillusionment with protracted colonial wars that set in among their home publics. Whereas colonial populations were necessarily bound up with the conflicts being fought out around them, Europeans rarely were. For many colonial subjects facing unending discrimination, it appeared that colonialism could only end violently. European publics, meanwhile, were increasingly being told that violence was incidental to a process depicted as globally inexorable and to a decolonization that was coming regardless.⁵¹

May we take this point further? Does the idea of asymmetry help explain the end of empires? Plenty of foreign wars, old and new, have been fought with minimal public engagement 'at home.' We are, after all, living through a supposed 'war on terror' and, as we write, the extensive media coverage of the atrocities perpetrated by the followers of Islamic State has failed to galvanize European support for renewed interventionism in the Middle East. Wars of decolonization likewise signified a reversion to European type, a throwback to the so-called 'small wars' of the long nineteenth century, rather than a continuation of the total conflict model established by the two World Wars. Ultimately, these were conflicts about adjustable interests, but not vital ones. Even those depicted by their supporters as struggles for survival turned out otherwise. Yes, settler societies faced a loss of privileged status, frequently the prospect of dispossession, even eviction. But, no, the imperial states themselves were not existentially threatened by their loss of empire. Indeed, many quickly devised new narratives of 'planned' decolonization and 'transfers of power' to affirm so.⁵²

Notice here the distinction between state and regime. Whereas governments or, in Portugal's case, even regimes might collapse under the weight of discredited colonial wars, the societies they claimed to represent did not. Violence was more remote and ultimately less impactful within the metropolitan societies in whose name it was conducted. As the 1950s wore on, residual cultural presumptions of an imperial 'right to rule' corroded. Imperial governance, once depicted as the surest route to the modernization of colonial society, was increasingly recast as the essential barrier to it. Post-war Western Europe's rising prosperity and the commensurate turn to consumerism played its part. So, too, did more critical media attention and the more pervasive ethical qualms about empire in general. Emergent youth cultures, the decline of social deference, and the consequent egalitarian shift in cultural thinking all helped break the multi-generational cycle of what one might call reflex imperialism—something that was more a habit of mind than a conscious political choice.

Thus, we have to take account of two interlocking processes in contested decolonization: on the one hand, the centrality of violence to the end of empires and, on the other, the acute exposure of unarmed and non-combatant colonial subjects to its impacts. Appreciating what decolonization felt like, viscerally, in terms of day-by-day exposure to

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insecurity and fear, and to repression and violence, means looking more closely at the unarmed, unrecognized civilians who had no choice but to live through it, and whose lives were permanently scarred by it.

Conclusion

This introductory essay has explained why this Handbook is based on a broad chronology and why it adopts an explicitly comparative focus. The plural in our title, ‘end of empires,’ is, in other words, significant. It reminds us that decolonization has deeper historical roots than are often acknowledged, requiring coverage of later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperial change, and sensitivity to decolonization’s multiple variants. Empire endings were anything but synchronous. At the same time, this Handbook allows us to trace comparable processes within, and between, the different empires—European and non-European. Authors combine geographically framed treatments of decolonization, whether national or regional, with particular historiographical themes relating to major economic, social, cultural, and political questions of the post-war era. Together, their contributions demonstrate decolonization’s transformative effects, locally, nationally, and globally.

With the aftershocks of decolonization very much in mind, this Handbook also revisits the historical legacies and collective memories of empire. By doing so, the final section, in particular, compels us to rethink how the forces unleashed by decolonization continue to resonate today. Rather than returning to somewhat clichéd arguments over American or other contemporary ‘empires,’ the collection’s final section traces several of the more tangible legacies of decolonization. Five stand out. One is the lasting shifts in global patterns of migration whose origins lie in the late-colonial period but whose consequences played out over subsequent decades. A second is decolonization’s abiding cultural impact, as various forms of art, performance, and literature wrestled with the disappointments and frustrations of colonial independence as well as marking its actual achievement. A third is the continuing arguments over the recognition of, apologies for, and possible reparation in response to past colonial misdeeds, many of which were committed within the ambit of counter-insurgency campaigns fought at the end of empire. Fourth is the consequential evidence of the colonial inheritance of twenty-first century development policy and practice, even if the implications of that inheritance are somewhat more complex than hitherto allowed. Finally, and most obviously, are the remaining colonial territories, the yet-to-be-decolonized lands, that pepper the globe, often with troubled presents as well as pasts.

These complex, and at times even contradictory, imperial legacies point to a broader conclusion: that decolonization not only remains unfinished but is perhaps indefinite. It is something likely to stay with us for decades to come. Far from being a geopolitical phenomenon that we can safely consign to the past, it remains strikingly relevant, with multiple consequences reverberating through the contemporary world. Dissecting the end of empires—their timelines, their histories, and their unfolding consequences—is intrinsic to unraveling the process of decolonization itself. What this Handbook shows is that decolonization was not a singular process, but a set of processes that decades later are still unfolding. Like its partner globalization, decolonization is therefore

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phenomenologically different from the twentieth century's other major catalysts of global change: the two World Wars, the economic crisis of the interwar years, and the bipolar Cold War. Each of these, while leaving lasting legacies, may nonetheless be largely consigned to the past. Not so with decolonization. The end of empires is a phenomenon of the twenty-first, as well as the twentieth, century. As such, this Handbook calls for a new research agenda which fundamentally rethinks decolonization, with a view to unravelling why it mattered so much at the time and why it still matters so much today. The aim of this agenda should be to enable not only the academy, but also government and a wider public sphere to understand how many of today's global challenges were once activated, and continue to be animated, by a far-reaching reconstruction of the international order, the effects of which have persisted way beyond the struggles for independence that now lie half a century or more in the past.

Notes:

(¹) Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

(²) Mark Philip Bradley, "Decolonization, the Global South, and the Cold War, 1919–1962," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. I: Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 465–466.

(³) Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African-Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956-1974* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 97–129; Nico Slate, "The Borders of Black Power"; Carol Anderson, "Rethinking Radicalism: African-Americans and the Liberation Struggles in Somalia, Libya, and Eritrea, 1945–1949"; and Yohura Williams, "'They've Lynched our Savior Lumumba in the Old-Fashioned Southern Style': The Conscious Internationalism of American Black Nationalism": all in Nico Slate, ed., *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1–12, 13–34, 147–168.

(⁴) Jason Parker, *Hearts, Minds, Voices: US Cold War Public Diplomacy and the Formation of the Third World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Christopher Lee, "Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlife of Bandung", in Christopher Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 1–44.

(⁵) Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002); Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

(⁶) Ronald Robinson, "The Moral Disarmament of African Empire, 1919–1947", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 8, no. 1 (1979): 86–104.

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(⁷) A succinct introduction to the conceptual debates surrounding imperialism and colonialism is Prasenjit Duara, “Modern Imperialism”, in Jerry H. Bentley, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 380–393.

(⁸) As historian Stuart Ward puts it, “‘decolonization’ is routinely deployed by historians as a convenient shorthand for the mid-century collapse of Europe’s maritime empires, without further attention to its conceptual origins or indeed the purposes for which it was pressed into service”; see Stuart Ward, “The European Provenance of Decolonization”, *Past and Present* 230 (2016): 228–229.

(⁹) Central to this analysis are the forms of knowledge production involved, something which, for instance, produces very different African pictures of decolonization; see Jean Allman, “Between the Present and History: African Nationalism and Decolonization”, in John Parker and Richard Reid, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 225–237.

(¹⁰) Anthony G. Hopkins, “Rethinking Decolonization”, *Past and Present* 200 (2008): 211–247; Anthony G. Hopkins, “Globalisation and Decolonisation”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, f45, no. 5 (2017), 729–45. There are echoes here of Kenneth Pomeranz’s arguments in *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 24–27.

(¹¹) Allman, “Between the Present and History”, 230.

(¹²) For insights into the methodological challenges involved, see Jean Allman and Antoinette Burton, “Destination Globalization? Women, Gender and Comparative Colonial Histories in the New Millenium”, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4, no. 2 (2003): 1–10; Heather Streets-Salter, “International and Global Anti-Colonial Movements”, in Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne, eds., *World History from Below: Disruption and Dissent, 1750 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 47–74; Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

(¹³) See Anthony G. Hopkins’ introduction, “Globalization: An Agenda for Historians”, in Anthony G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002).

(¹⁴) Viewed thus, decolonization becomes an explanation advanced—or ‘invented’—to account for transformations previously unanticipated by metropolitan politicians and publics; see Todd Shepard’s *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), as regards how French politicians and commentators rationalized their country’s impending loss of control in Algeria.

(¹⁵) Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), especially part III; Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship*

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between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and West Africa, 1945–1960 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

(¹⁶) Elizabeth Schmidt, “Top Down or Bottom Up? Nationalist Mobilization Reconsidered, with Special Reference to Guinea (French West Africa)”, *American Historical Review* 110, no. 4 (2005): 980–984; also citing Israel Gershoni, “Rethinking the Formation of Arab Nationalism in the Middle East, 1920–1945”, in James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni, eds., *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 18–25.

(¹⁷) Brad Simpson, “Self-Determination and Decolonization”, Chapter 22 in this volume.

(¹⁸) For the process in action, see Giuliano Garavini, *After Empires: European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge from the Global South, 1957–1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

(¹⁹) James D. Le Sueur, “France’s Arabic Educational Reforms in Algeria during the Colonial Era: Language Instruction in Colonial and Anticolonial Minds before and after Independence”, in Martin Thomas, ed., *The French Colonial Mind: I: Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 195–199, 211–212; Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 70, 176–177; “Stumped for words”, *The Economist*, 19 August 2017, 42.

(²⁰) All citations from John Springhall, *Decolonization since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2001), 2–3.

(²¹) Gary Wilder, “From Optic to Topic: The Foreclosure Effect of Historiographical Turns”, *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (2012): 738–9.

(²²) Thomas David Dubois, “Local Religion and the Imperial Imaginary: The Development of Japanese Ethnography in Occupied Manchuria”, *American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (2006): 52–74.

(²³) See Louise Young, “Rethinking Empire: Lessons from Imperial and Post-Imperial Japan”, Chapter 12 in this volume.

(²⁴) Dubois, “Local Religion and the Imperial Imaginary”, 55

(²⁵) Alan Mikhail and Christine M. Philliou, “The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012): 737.

(²⁶) Mikhail and Philliou, “The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn”, 724.

(²⁷) David C. Engerman, “The Second World’s Third World”, *Kritika* 12, no. 1 (2011): 183–211; Maud Anne Bracke and James Mark, “Between decolonisation and the Cold War: transnational activism and its limits in Europe, 1950s–1990s”, *Journal of Contemporary*

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History 50, no. 3 (2015): 403–417; James Mark, Péter Apor, Radina Vučetić, and Piotr Oseka, “‘We are with you Vietnam’: Transnational Solidarities in Socialist Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3 (2015): 439–464.

(²⁸) Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 10–39; Pierre Asselin, *Hanoi’s Road to the Vietnam War, 1954–1965* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

(²⁹) Recent essay collections bringing the Cold War and decolonization into the same analytical framework exemplify the trend. See, for instance, Francis J. Gavin and Mark Atwood Lawrence, eds., *Beyond the Cold War: Lyndon Johnson and the New Global Challenges of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Leslie James and Elizabeth Leake, eds., *Decolonization and the Cold War: Negotiating Independence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Gareth Curless and Martin Thomas, eds., *Decolonization and Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

(³⁰) Matthew Jones, “A ‘Segregated’ Asia? Race, the Bandung Conference, and Pan-Asianist Fears in American Thought and Policy, 1954–1955”, *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 5 (2005): 852.

(³¹) Jones, “A ‘Segregated’ Asia?”, 847–852.

(³²) Amitav Acharya, “Who Are the Norm Makers? The Asian-African Conference in Bandung and the Evolution of Norms”, *Global Governance* 20 (2014): 405–417; Chen Jian, “Bridging Revolution and Decolonization: The ‘Bandung Discourse’ in China’s early Cold War experience”, in Christopher E. Goscha and Christian F. Ostermann, eds., *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945–1962* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 149–151.

(³³) Christopher J. Lee, “The Rise of Third World Diplomacy: Success and Its Meanings at the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia”, in Robert Hutchings and Jeremi Suri, eds., *Foreign Policy Breakthroughs: Cases in Successful Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford, University Press, 2015), 47–71; see also Christopher Lee, Chapter 23 in this volume.

(³⁴) Lee, “The Rise of Third World Diplomacy”, 47–49.

(³⁵) Jason Parker, “Cold War II: The Eisenhower Administration, the Bandung Conference, and the Reperiodization of the Postwar Era”, *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 5 (2006): 887–889.

(³⁶) Parker, “Cold War II”, 890.

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(³⁷) Abin Chakraborty, "The Peasant Armed: Bengal, Vietnam and Transnational Solidarities in Utpal Dutt's *Invincible Vietnam*", in Ruth Crggs and Claire Wintle, eds., *Cultures of Decolonisation: Transnational Productions and Practices, 1945-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 109-125, at 109.

(³⁸) Chakraborty, "The peasant armed", 110-111.

(³⁹) Chakraborty, "The peasant armed", 113.

(⁴⁰) Chakraborty, "The peasant armed", 120-123.

(⁴¹) For a selection, see C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2004); Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalization. Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c.1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ankie Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: the New Political Economy of Development* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2001); Hopkins, *Globalization in World History*; Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press: 1999).

(⁴²) Durba Ghosh, "Another Set of Imperial Turns", *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (2012), 772-793, at 782.

(⁴³) Anthony G. Hopkins, *American Empire. A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

(⁴⁴) See, especially, Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007), Chapter 9.

(⁴⁵) Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalization*, 232.

(⁴⁶) Hopkins, "Rethinking Decolonization," 216, 228, 233-234.

(⁴⁷) We are grateful to Professor Jeremy Adelman for this shrewd observation.

(⁴⁸) For a fuller exposition of this argument, see Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, "Empire and Globalization: From High Imperialism to Decolonization", *The International History Review* 36 (2014): 142-170.

(⁴⁹) Fabian Klose, *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence: The Wars of Independence in Kenya and Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

(⁵⁰) Isobel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), Chapter 10; Seth G. Jones,

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Waging Insurgent Warfare: Lessons from the Vietcong to the Islamic State (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 31, 38.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 82–90.

⁽⁵²⁾ Todd Shepard, “‘History is Past Politics’? Archives, ‘Tainted Evidence,’ and the Return of the State”, *American Historical Review* 115, no. 2 (2010): 478–481; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 633–638.

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