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DAS LIBERAL-KONSERVATIVE MEINUNGSMAGAZIN

COURAGEOUS FUNDAMENTAL WORK OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

## **An American political scientist defends colonialism**



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Fri, March 4, 2022

*Fact-based, political scientist Bruce Gilley exposes post-modern colonial research as hostage to political correctness. Not the historical facts, but the needs of the political zeitgeist would determine the perception of this historical epoch in Berlin today.*

“Western colonialism has had a bad rap for the last 100 years. It is high time to question this orthodoxy.” Thus begins *The Case for Colonialism*, an article by Bruce Gilley, a political scientist at Portland State University, published in *Third World Quarterly*.

His work was well-founded by academic standards, well-informed, and thoroughly dealt with counter-arguments. Prior to publication, it had passed peer review (cross-referencing by independent experts in the same field) and the judgment of the journal's editor. Now a storm of indignation broke out from the woken milieu. Not only the author,

but also the magazine came under fire. A first petition by a director of the "Critical Race Network" quickly found 6,884 signatures. She called for the publication to be removed and an apology for "the dreadful article". Another petition, written by Maxine Horne (a dancer with a master's degree in project management), garnered 10,693 signatures. Gilley promotes "white supremacy."

Fifteen members of the 34-strong editorial board resigned in protest at the publication. The University of Portland Vice President dismissed calls for Gilley's dismissal, saying, "Academic freedom is critical to open debate and the free exchange of knowledge and argument... Because of Portland State University's commitment to academic freedom, we recognize everyone's rights our faculties to research science and to speak, write and publish a variety of viewpoints and conclusions." The storm then continued to gather strength. Gilley was attacked with personal attacks up to and including death threats. Also, Third World Quarterly editor Shahid Qadir, who stood by his judgment on the value of Gilley's article.

Gilley by no means denied that "inexcusable atrocities" had taken place under European colonial rule. However, he discusses the question of whether colonialism, at least from the middle of the 19th century, did not also bring many advantages for the colonized peoples. However, he reminds us that many atrocities also happened before the Europeans came - and after they left.

Frankfurters may remember K-group demonstrations of "solidarity with Zimbabwe" around 1983, when at least 20,000 Ndebele were massacred there. It was not the British or the white farmers who remained in the country who were responsible for this, but Robert Mugabe, the patriarch of African nationalism. "The notion that colonialism is a bad thing anytime, anywhere," Gilley wrote, "needs to be reconsidered in light of the heavy human toll of a century of anti-colonial regimes and politics."

Contrary to the disaster of most anti-colonial regimes, colonial rule had often encouraged the formation of coherent political communities, reliable state institutions, and with them habitats in which individuals and their families could thrive. For support, Gilley called an

unsuspected witness: Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian writer and anti-colonial hero. In his last work, *There Was a Country*, published a year before his death in 2013, he wrote, "Here is a piece of heresy. The British governed their colony of Nigeria with great care. There was a very competent cadre of government officials who were endowed with a high level of knowledge on how to run a country."

One of the most valuable achievements of colonial rule was order. "You weren't consumed by fear of kidnapping or armed robbery," Achebe recalled. "There was a great deal of trust in the British institutions." Britain's judiciary may have been tough, but it could not be bought or sold. "Now," he lamented, "it's all different."

Colonial rule managed to gain a certain legitimacy among the colonized because it provided security and the rule of law. Achebe called for a creative, differentiated appropriation of the colonial legacy. When interviewed in 2012 by Iranian journalists who urged him to condemn Western colonialism, he stressed: "The legacy of colonialism is not a simple one, but one of great complexity, with contradictions - both good and bad."

Such arguments did not appease the woken anti-colonial activists, who continued their strategy of intimidating college and university authorities. They could record a success. The article was withdrawn with Gilley's consent, he did not want to provoke physical danger to himself and his colleagues. Academic freedom advocates later posted the work on online forums, further enraging cancel culture advocates. The outrage still lingers, not only in America but has now spilled over into England, where the academic milieu is also increasingly dominated by the wokeness community.

The weight of the topic is considerable in Great Britain, because the majority of the population thinks differently than the radical trackers down every ounce of racism would like. According to an opinion poll, 44 percent think British colonialism is something to be proud of (compared to 19 percent who think empire is bad and 21 percent who 'regret' colonialism).

Nigel Biggar, Anglican priest and professor of theology and ethics at Trinity College Dublin, seized the spotlight on the issue and announced that he was launching a five-year project called 'Ethics and Empire' under the auspices of Oxford University. "The project aims to challenge the notion dominant "in most areas of academic discourse" that "imperialism is evil; and the Empire therefore unethical" and to work out "a Christian ethics of the Empire".<sup>58</sup> Oxford scholars who research "Empire and Colonialism" promptly condemned the project for "asking the wrong questions, using the wrong terms and having the wrong goals".

Another Oxford Empire historian, Alexander Morrison, sided with Biggar and denounced his mainstream-sharp colleagues' statements - as "profoundly corroding normal academic exchange". Such promotes "online bullying, public stigmatization and political polarization".

The scene from the film "The Life of Brian" is famous, where the "People's Front of Judea" plans an attack on the Roman imperialists: "They bled us white, the pigs," says their commander. "What have they ever done in return, I ask?" Then his comrades begin to make strong associations: water supply, sanitation, roads, medical care, public baths, schools, security and order, peace. In 1979, everyone who watched the film understood that Monty Python was not about the Romans. The inheritance of the Empire was a civilizational offering.

The rejection of these civilization stocks has led many of the decolonized countries into poverty, dictatorships and civil wars. Gilley writes: "At least some, if not many, or most episodes of Western colonialism have been net gains. There are numerous studies that have found evidence of significant social, economic, and political achievements during colonialism: expanded education; improved public health; the abolition of slavery; expanded employment opportunities; improved administration; the creation of a basic infrastructure; women's rights; removing the disenfranchisement of untouchable or historically excluded communities; fair taxation; access to capital; the generation of historical and cultural knowledge; and national identity formation.

Gilley showed cool standing against the hate attacks. After working on the Middle East, he turned to German colonial policy. In May 2021, the Bundestag decided to pay Namibia 1.4 billion euros in atonement for the atrocities committed by German colonial troops in 1904-1908. In the same year Bruce Gilley's next provocation appeared: "Defense of German Colonialism". And [he criticized that decision](#) as completely pointing in the wrong direction.

The Hamburg historian Jürgen Zimmerer, who whipped up anti-imperialist interpretations of colonial history, advocates the thesis that there was a continuity from the colonial crimes in South West Africa to the Holocaust. To a certain extent, critics can thus be placed in the same ranks as Holocaust deniers. Another academic Africa activist, Professor Reinhard Kössler, puts it bluntly: "This obsessive denial of genocide leads directly to the Holocaust."

Gilley points out that the crimes of General von Trotha were not only not approved by the Reich government, but were officially condemned. He was recalled in November 1905 and demonstratively not received by the Kaiser. Colonial policy in the South West was the subject of much controversy in German public opinion. A parliamentary majority in the Reichstag, led by the SPD and the Center, refused in 1907 a supplementary budget of 29 million marks for the war in Southwest Africa. In the elections that followed (the "Hottentot elections" - named after the contemptuous term for the insurgent Nama) the Center and SPD received more votes than the conservative and liberal coalition parties, from which, however, due to the majority voting system and previous agreements.

The opponents of the imperial colonial policy gained more and more ground over the next few years. During the Reichstag debate on the colonial budget in 1914, far-reaching reforms were passed in favor of the colonial population: in medicine and nursing, medical training, property rights, protection against exploitation of workers, health issues, minimum wages and limitation of working hours. The American historian Woodruff D. Smith called the resolution "the most comprehensive declaration by a colonial power of its self-imposed responsibility towards the colonial peoples and the limitation of the exercise of colonial power." The economist Lewis Gann of Stanford University stated: The

provisions in favor of the native population "went further than any other colonial enterprise of the period."

Gilley polemicizes against postmodern anti-colonialism, for which all such reforms are just another form of "violence", "a kind of abuse through benevolence." He quotes the lecturer Eva Bischoff from the University of Trier, who formulated in quaint academic terms: "Instead of through that To rule with the sword, German colonial officials sought to control, determine and optimize the living conditions of the native population." The majority of an entire generation of academics behaves according to the model of the fairy tale of the Snow Queen.

From an anti-colonialist perspective, for example, the construction of hospitals is based on the insidious plan to procure test objects for dangerous scientific experiments and to replace the native medicine men with conventional medicine – already exposed as "violence" by Michel Foucault, the godfather of deconstructivism.

Gilley works through the list of contradictions of the academic anti-colonialists in a pedantic and argumentative manner. A researcher from Warburg College found that there were seven times as many white men as women in German East Africa. The obvious conclusion: the white men were having sex with black women. From this it is concluded that sex "became a weapon of European conquest". Because the local women preferred German men. But the sex researcher encounters another scandal: There were also white men who refused to have sex with local women. This turns out to be another instrument of European conquest. The containment of fraternization only served to "increase German control over the colonial environment."

Zimmerer is also clear: Restrictions on interracial sex were racist! By denying black women access to white bedrooms, imperialism denied them access to European culture. Zimmerer in the best woken original sound: "The principle of biological descent pushed aside any interpretation of civilization missionary, according to which Africans had to be brought up to become 'Europeans'."

Gilley observes the contortions of the anti-colonial mainstream with irony and tireless scrutiny: “This kind of intellectual personality split – in which the colonialists are evil when they do something and just as evil when they don’t do something” runs as a refrain through all anti-imperialist arguments. When it comes to how colonial rulers dealt with tribal groups, the postmodern researcher states that German rule consolidated tribalism in Africa. This is also the reason why the colonies were never able to develop their own national political movements. Other anti-colonialists, on the other hand, claim that German colonialism *did not destroy tribal culture* solidified by forcing upon them a western view of national movements and the modern state.

Apparently, the native population not only adopted this western view in the seven German colonies. The non-colonized states of Turkey, Persia, Japan, Egypt and China also followed the requirements of modernity and Western models. The Indian-born temporary leader of the British Communist Party furiously polemicized against Gandhi and the conservative wing of the Congress party and won over the modernists around Jawarlahal Nehru to this position: “They are trying to fabricate a golden dream of Hindu culture from the existing evil tangle of decaying and corrupt metaphysics , of the shattered relics of the shattered village system, of the dead remnants of the courtly splendor of a vanished civilization. They want the re-establishment of a 'purified' Hindu culture - which they can uphold as an ideal and a guiding principle. As a culture of conquerors, every social and scientific development is condemned; however, any form of antiquated tradition, abuse, privilege, and obscurantism are treated with reverence and respect. So it is that the people's national leaders, who should have taken the people forward along the path of emancipation and understanding, instead emerge as advocates of reaction and superstition, caste privilege and division.”

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Like England for Hong Kong, Germany signed a 99-year lease in Beijing in 1898 for an area around the port of Tsingtao on the Shantung Peninsula with about 550 square kilometers. After the Boxer Rebellion was crushed, Tsingtao quickly transformed from a sleepy village of 1,500 people and 12,000 others in the surrounding area to a model colony. Education and the judiciary were superior to anything that China had to offer at the time, and infrastructure and economic opportunities triggered a general boom in northern China. "The German colony," writes Fion Wai Ling So, British Hong Kong historian, "promoted agricultural development in rural areas and balanced growth in all sectors of the economy." Running water, sewage pipes, schools, post offices, a shipyard, a hospital.

A small but vigilant police force made Tsingtao a place safe from robbers, bandits and pirates. In 1913, 935 European ships, 6000 junks and 12000 sampans landed. The German officials were generally Sinophile, the relations between the Chinese population, which had grown in a short time to 56,000 and in the surrounding area to 150,000, and the German-European community of around 2,100 people are perceived by contemporary visitors as extremely good. "Particularly refreshing," writes the geographer Heinrich Schmitthenner, "is the lively intellectual life and the social intercourse, in which the differences in class are less emphasized than in our African colonies.”

For the postmodern anti-colonialists, on the other hand - in the spirit of Foucault's delusional system - again all administrative measures to strengthen public security, health and the economy are merely aspects of a "domination discourse". Tsingtao becomes a prime example of "cultural imperialism" for them.

When the empire was abolished in 1912 and the Republic of China came into being, "the father of modern China", Sun Yat-Sen, sought the colony at the invitation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. It was toasted with the now famous Tsingtao beer. Sun Yat-Sen praised Tsingtao as a model city that all Chinese should emulate. "In three thousand years,



China has not done what the Germans did in fifteen years. If each provincial government of China would send ten representatives to Tsingtao to gather knowledge about government, cities, roads, ports, universities, forests, public infrastructure and administration, it would be of great benefit to China." In November 1914 the German history of Tsingtao ended. The Japanese conquered the colony, and began to find a taste for mainland China. The further painful, bloody history of Japanese expansion is well known.

In addition to the anti-colonialists of the university establishment, the majority of "serious" newspapers and radio stations are also trying to undermine Gilley's scientific reputation. Gilley made the mistake of accepting an invitation from the AfD parliamentary group in the Bundestag to give a lecture on German colonialism. According to the current practice, he has thus fulfilled all aspects of the "contact debt". Only Anna Schneider from the NZZ and Alan Posener (Die Welt) dared to cross a loud protest crowd of 50 whites and two blacks in front of the parliament. After closely observing the reactions of the AfD parliamentarians (astonished?), the left-liberal journalist Posener found that Gilley's theses did not fit their opinion profile at all.

"Germany must resume its legacy of 'liberal internationalism'," Gilley is quoted by Posener as saying, "it must not only invest in Africa, but also open up its markets and invite young people from all over the world to train them here". Posener goes on to judge in his article in Die Welt from December 17, 2019: "The AfD can do just as little with Gilley's positive connotation of colonialism as a kind of development paternalism as with his harsh criticism of China, Russia and Syria's dictator Assad and his claim that the humanitarian Interventions in Iraq and Libya would prove long-term beneficial to their peoples and to the West. With his endorsement of the export of democracy, Gilley is closer to the American neocons than to the "sovereignists" of the AfD. Indeed, Gilley's arguments imply the moral imperative of bold action in favor of development and human rights in the name of a global liberal civilization, opposed by left-wing "anti-imperialists" and right-wing "identitarians"—like communists and Nazis before them. Gilley doesn't belong in the AfD faction hall. He belongs in the plenum."

**Bruce Gilley, *Defense of German Colonialism*. Translated from the English by Richard Abelson. Manuscriptum, softcover with flaps, 200 pages, €25.00.**