

DECOLOZNIATION AND MILITARY INTEVRENTIONS: DRIVERS AND ENDURING IMPACTS

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CONTENTS

Introduction : Militarization is at the core of colonization, decolonization and post-colonial social structures and representations

Objectives : characterize militarization in the context of decolonization, identify its main drivers and its enduring impacts (a preliminary framework for understanding)

- 1. Empires fall, superpowers rule... or do they?**
- 2. Militarization of decolonization as a norm : supremacism, messianism and race**
- 3. Outdated policies, strategies and doctrines**
- 4. Wars lost at home, on the battlefield and between Moscow and Washington**
- 5. Enduring impacts in the post-colonial era**

Conclusion : Understanding both postcolonial structures in Western countries and in « ex-colonies » (a biased concept)

Introduction: Militarization is at the core of colonization, decolonization and post-colonial social structures and representations

Context

- Colonization as a conquest
- Expansion of Western/European norms
- Clash of clans and Clash of empires
- Slavery
- System based on caste with some level of flexibility
- Legitimizing factors of dominance: system of values, administrative aspects and military aspects

Decolonization

- Fragilized empires: France and UK suffered during WWII
- Debt and reconstruction: different diagnostics in UK and France
- UK pragmatism, French Grandeur.
- Progressive structuration of the cold war.

1. Empires fall, superpowers rule... or do they?

Empires fall

- Major defeats during World War 2
- Western armies can be defeated
- Cost of modern military and size of the empires (Kennedy)
- Trade agreement as a more efficient strategy (Uk model)
- Direct control is overated
- What about the economy

Superpowers rules

- WWII Prestige of the Soviet Union
- Alternative model to Western empires
- Suez Crisis and the humiliation of colonial powers
- The limits of the Cold War as a key for understanding

2. Militarization of decolonization as a norm : supremacism, race and messianism

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Supremacism

- Western countries share the most advanced state organization, military firepower and culture
- Africa, Asia and South America were seen as « wild » new frontiers.

Messianism

- Different perspectives (French messianism and British, for instance)
- *It is an Empire's duty to elevate the savages (religion, administration, culture...)*
- Who would dare to define the German conquests in Europe or the Eastern bloc as colonization?

Race

- Colonization is also about race
- Race remains in the background while it is a crucial factor of identities
- It is also a characteristic of the military institutions and nationalist movements
- Based on the logic of the enemies/alterity who, sometimes, has to die.

3. Outdated policies, strategies and doctrines

Post World War 2: business as usual?

- France took long to truly enter the Cold War. Most of the Cold War is spent fighting into decolonization wars
- Uk let its empire go more quickly

Containment?

- Dominos, anyone? Where are the evidence supporting this theory?
- This concept helped to legitimize Western military interventions and decolonization wars... and other crimes

Counterinsurgency doctrines doomed to fail

- Imperial order or rebel disorder
- Security as an impossible goal (useless firepower) while insecurity remains easy to maintain
- The cost of winning a counterinsurgency war on the battlefield (Battle of Algier)

4. Wars lost at home, on the battlefield and between Moscow and Washington

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The unacceptable cost of victory

- Colonization and its discontents... At the core of the empire
- Western powers are democracies
- Relative importance of far left parties
- Liberal movements rejecting the imperial logic

When moral superiority meets torture, wars, multiple form of violence and humiliation, discrimination...

- War in Algeria (FR)
- War in Vietnam (US)
- But already in India (peace protest organized by Gandhi)

5. Enduring impacts in the post-colonial era

Security and the post-imperial insurance

- How many military interventions in the post colonial era
- France is sometimes characterized as the main African military power
- Is Mali a French protectorate?
- Djibouti as a hub for exogenous military powers in Africa

Ex-colonies seen as ressources to secure

- US Africa command: containing terrorism?
- The place of Africa within the Chinese strategy
- The return of Russia
- India, Brazil and south-south relations

Discourses

- Do supremacism and messianism vanished?

Conclusion

Tools dropped in the sandbox

- A general theory of decolonization wars would be misleading (it is a Western bias)
- It is impossible to avoid the Cold War
- One should not overestimate its importance

Understanding both postcolonial structures in Western countries and in « ex-colonies » (a biased concept)

- It is still challenging to discuss the role of France as a colonial power
- Can one analyze the role of France in Africa without taking into account its military power and more importantly its willingness to deploy it?
- Who questions the rational behind France military intervention?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION



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