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CONTENTS

Editorial

- Decolonising African Studies – The Politics of Publishing 3  
**Tanya Lyons**

Articles

- Africa's Past Invented to Serve Development's Uncertain Future 13  
**Scott MacWilliam**

- A Critique of Colonial Rule: A Response to Bruce Gilley 39  
**Martin A. Klein**

- Curbing Inequality Through Decolonising Knowledge Production in Higher Education in South Africa 53  
**Leon Mwamba Tshimpaka**

- "There is really discrimination everywhere": Experiences and consequences of *Everyday Racism* among the new black African diaspora in Australia 81  
**Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo and Virginia Mapedzahama**

- 'African-Australian' Identity in the Making: Analysing its Imagery and Explanatory Power in View of Young Africans in Australia 110  
**Abay Gebrekidan**

- Africa 'Pretty Underdone': 2017 Submissions to the DFAT White Paper and Senate Inquiry 130  
**Helen Ware and David Lucas**

- Celebrating 40 Years of the *Australasian Review of African Studies: A Bibliography of Articles* 144  
**Tanya Lyons**

<b>Book Reviews</b>	<b>170</b>
<i>AIDS Doesn't Show Its Face: Inequality, Morality and Social Change in Nigeria, by Daniel Jordan Smith</i> <b>Tass Holmes</b>	
<b>ARAS - Call for Papers</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>AFSAAP Annual Conference 2018 - Call for Papers</b>	<b>180</b>



## ARTICLES

### Africa's Past Invented to Serve Development's Uncertain Future

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#### Abstract

This essay examines the proposition that development, which has stalled since Independence in many African countries, can be restarted by the restoration of colonial governance. This form of rule, in place from the end of the 19th until the middle of the last century, was supposedly responsible for major improvements in a range of living conditions for colonial populations. The end of colonial governance, it is alleged, led to corruption and impoverishment for many people. Here it is argued that, as offensive as many may find the claim that colonial rule was beneficial for subject peoples, the purpose of the proposition should receive attention. The call for the return of colonial governance is placed within a wider, more influential series of proposals for how to bring development at a moment of uncertainty through a range of governance reforms. These proposals struggle with the politics of capitalist development, particularly the fraught relationship between development and democracy. The virtue of the call for the return of colonial governance is that it at least makes clear the increasingly prevalent assertion that democracy should be a lower priority than development.

## Introduction

While the central thesis of Bruce Gilley's 'The case for colonialism' (2017) is offensive for many<sup>1</sup>, his appeal for a revitalised form of governance fits within an existing trend. Couched in language designed to produce outrage, Gilley's argument for the re-introduction of colonial governance is located within a direction already being sketched internationally. The search for means to rescue capitalism from its current prolonged crisis of development has reached a critical point. While other academics, consultants and institutional officials have cloaked their political intentions in bland, even gentle, terms, including market reforms, good governance, transparency and accountability (see below), Gilley is at least direct: bring back (what he imagines as) the virtues of late colonial rule as the necessary impetus to drive development in specific countries and places, particularly on the African continent.

Where recently resigned World Bank chief economist Paul Romer urged the more limited establishment of 'charter cities', "administrative zones governed by a coalition of nations" (Romer, 2009), Gilley (2017, p. 11) wants not just areas within countries, such as Galinhas in Guinea-Bissau, but whole countries to be subject to a model he terms colonial governance. The template for Gilley's model, according to his account, was established by western colonial powers from the 19th to the mid-20th century. This idealised state has no prior history: Gilley avoids pointing to the earlier barbarism of

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<sup>1</sup> Finding something offensive is not, in my opinion, a satisfactory basis for some of the outrage the essay produced, whether the author intended to provoke a storm of condemnation, as seems possible, and the withdrawal of the article from *Third World Quarterly*, as has occurred. See for example,

[http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01436597.2017.1369037?src=recsys;](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01436597.2017.1369037?src=recsys)  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/10/09/pro-colonialism-article-has-been-withdrawn-over-threats-journal-editor>

Not only is such censorious behaviour undesirable, it is totally ineffective, except perhaps in terms of some managerial metrics applied to academic publications worldwide. In 2018, as politicians and others are finding when they try to remove Facebook postings or Tweets, nothing disappears. Gilley's essay is still available here: <https://legalinsurrection.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-Case-for-Colonialism-Third-World-Quarterly-Bruce-Gilley.pdf>. My own position is that academic debate about the consequences of colonialism needs to continue, since its re-imposition is still advocated in various forms, as I document in this essay. However Gilley's essay should not have been published in the early 'draft' form that appeared and there was something clearly inadequate and unsatisfactory with the *Third World Quarterly* review process, as the letter of October 9, 2017 from former board members emphasises <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DLtrT23XkAA4ZWI.jpg>

colonial rule. When there is brutality in the exemplary phase, he justifies this by invoking a crude doctrine of necessity, made so by the savagery of revolting Kikuyu Africans. No mention here of imperial Belgium's rule in the Congo Free State (Mertens, 2016) or of the behaviour of the European settlers displacing indigenous populations during the 19th and early-20th centuries in other colonies.

Gilley's essay draws further, sharper attention to a direction being urged internationally. The importance of this contribution is that he lays bare what has been removed from the public gaze yet remains at the centre of governance reforms: colonial rule had a conception of development which depended upon the exercise of trusteeship or guardianship. Participatory representative democracy had a minor, if any, role. He enthusiastically resuscitates what has been buried, showing an awareness that, however it is presented, trusteeship is central to development (Cowen & Shenton, 1995). Even liberal democracy is at best now marginal for development (Asongu, 2018).

As Gilley explains "it is the intervening state, bound to act as a trustee, that has the capacity initially to choose a legitimate path forward" (2017, p. 9). According to Gilley, colonial authorities acting as agents or trustees brought important, necessary changes when local populations could not do so themselves. By implication, what is wrong with the good governance agenda is not just that trusteeship as a term has become ideologically *passé*, but that for the current, more fashionable form of constructed authority agency is indeterminate, uncertain in comparison to that which held under colonial governance.

This essay commences with an outline of Gilley's argument for the need to resurrect colonial governance. Gilley's explanation for the development crisis that followed the end of colonial rule in the 1980s and 1990s, as noted by the World Bank and others, is summarised. Emphasis is placed here on how Gilley attributes conditions in a range of countries to failures of domestic authority. There is no mention of changing international conditions or the effects of international agencies acting upon these nations (MacWilliam & Rafferty, 2017). From these failures and subsequent conditions, the post-colonial 'crisis', Gilley draws the need for the return of colonial governance when other, earlier, good and effective governance reforms have failed or been ineffective.

Gilley dwells on the case of late-colonial and independent Kenya for empirical evidence to justify his call for the return of colonial governance. Here, Kenya is briefly examined for another purpose altogether; to show how the country's slide from exemplar to impoverishment requires an

understanding of the multiple connections between domestic and international conditions that have produced current circumstances. These conditions include the policy reforms favoured internationally, particularly the privatisation of state agencies and assets, which have fuelled decades of grand corruption and the increasing impoverishment of large numbers of the country's population (MacWilliam, Desaubin, & Timms, 1995; MacWilliam, 2012; MacWilliam & Rafferty, 2017). Gilley's argument is particularly weak on these connections.

Kenya is in numerous respects exemplary, for reasons examined below, and allows a major defect of Gilley's argument to be presented in more detail. Colonial and post-colonial development should not be calculated on a territorial, colonial/national scale of reckoning, but on what is central to development itself, the unity of immanent, spontaneous development and intentional development (Cowen & Shenton, 1996). Kenya's phases of the development of capitalism, or capitalist development, are best understood as moments when either spontaneous or intentional development was in the ascendancy. During British colonial rule in Gilley's exemplary phase, the former—the spontaneous development of settler largeholdings—overrode the official intention to confine this advance in the name of securing the paramourcy of native interests.

Because Gilley wants to displace or supplant the prevailing governance agenda, it is necessary to outline exactly what earlier reform efforts, driven by international and national financial and aid institutions, intended as the means for constructing agency to bring development. The second section of this essay thus commences with a brief consideration of the idea of development, and the 1980s crisis of development during which the modern idea of governance originated. Governance is shown to have arisen out of the effects and failures of earlier reform agendas—in particular structural adjustment—as a prescription for Latin America and Africa. Subsequent changes, including good governance and effective governance, as well as the more territorially limited idea of charter cities, are shown to be attempts to deal with both intent—what reforms are needed—and agency—who is to have the capacity to design and implement desired reforms. Arising from the recognition of differences between regions, countries and areas within countries, a major problem for reform design was how to match proposals with circumstances.

However, as the third section of this essay argues, Gilley's desire to return to trusteeship suggests a continuous if often unstated prioritisation of intentional development, which also strikes against much that the World Bank and other agencies mean by governance. Through the emphasis upon

trusteeship, Gilley attaches to colonial governance the primacy of intentional development over spontaneous accumulation as a continuous condition, where instead the central aim of good and effective governance has so far been to find means for making (capitalist) markets work, particularly on a national scale. Gilley brings to the fore the extent to which development requires agents and agency that do not (necessarily) comply with popular democratic norms. His directness on this matter prompts further consideration as to whether and to what extent capitalism and development—capitalist development—are compatible with democracy.

### **The case for colonial governance**

Gilley's first ground for resurrecting colonial governance is that:

...the colonial governance agenda explicitly affirms and borrows from a country's colonial past, searching for ideas and notions of governmentality...The good governance agenda has ignored the benefits of this past, while emphasising economic liberalisation, political pluralism and administrative streamlining (which) have replaced the socialist road in most countries... Reclaiming this colonial trajectory abandoned at independence is key to the colonial governance agenda. (p.7)

His second ground is similar:

...the colonial governance agenda recognises that the capacity for effective self-government is lacking and cannot be conjured out of thin air. The lack of state capacity to uphold the rule of law and deliver public services was the central tragedy of 'independence' in the Third World...To reclaim 'colonial governance' means increasing foreign involvement in key sectors in business, civil society, and the public sector in order to thus bolster this capacity. (p.7)

The effect of the re-imposition of the colonial governance agenda, according to Gilley, will be to resurrect "the universalism of the liberal peace and with it a *shared* standard of what a well-governed country looks like. ...The colonial governance agenda embraces a cosmopolitanism – a civilising mission – often lacking in the good governance agenda" (emphasis in original, p. 8). Despite continuous reference to the importance of

constructing arguments on “scientific empirical” evidence, Gilley does not deign to produce any details of the “liberal peace” or “the civilising mission”.

It is easy to criticise the empirical basis of Gilley’s argument piece by piece, commencing with his *loose* construction of various countries’ pasts and presents. The description of the establishment of Pol Pot’s murderous rule in Cambodia as a “Chinese-imposed genocidal regime” (p. 10), without drawing attention to the US government’s role in creating space for the Khmer Rouge within the country’s polity by backing a “right-wing military coup” that overthrew Prince Norodom Sihanouk, is typically selective (The History Place, 1999). To then describe the current 32-year-old regime headed by former Khmer Rouge apparatchik Hun Sen as “a successful semi-authoritarian polity with deep roots in the colonial past” (p. 10) is to also avoid the questions central to his case for colonial governance as a virtue: What part did these ‘roots’ play in the rise of the Khmer Rouge and the massacre of about one-quarter of the country’s population? How are these colonial ‘roots’ to be considered developmental?

If how exactly the cases of Cambodia and several other countries fit within Gilley’s first ground for the need to resurrect colonial governance is unclear, even less clear is his discussion of slavery which is presented as something indigenous to Africa, beneficently abolished by colonialism (p. 4). Yet, while slavery had a lengthy history in parts of Africa long before colonialism, as it had elsewhere around the world, to locate it solely as an indigenous practice ended by colonialism is not just selective but misses the importance of African slaves for the development of capitalism in Europe (Mintz, 1985; Understanding Slavery Initiative [USI], 2011). Further, the abolition of slavery was part of the 19th-century civilising of capitalism, described by Polanyi’s double movement (1944, p.b.1957) or what also occurred in some colonies, including New South Wales (Nairn, 1989). During this phase, trusteeship was placed at the centre of western colonial rule.

For Gilley (p. 2), the model of western colonial rule that inspires the idea of colonial governance is drawn from the early 19th to the mid-20th centuries. In selecting this timeframe, he is able to avoid the phase Karl Marx coupled with “so-called primitive accumulation”, a period when capital came into the world “dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt” (Marx, 1976, p. 926). But Gilley is hardly alone in his desire to exclude this initial phase in the history of colonialism. For another instance of this facile, ‘whitewashing’ approach to colonial history, see Acemoglu and Robinson (2013, p. 37), which includes, among numerous similar statements, the claim that at the colonial frontier of the United States, the indigenous



population were “sidelined...creating an egalitarian and dynamic economic frontier” (cf. Brown, 1970; Isenberg, 2016).

For Gilley, colonialism of the western European variety brought a wide range of benefits to the subject peoples, benefits which could only arise because colonial rule had been extended to these areas of the globe, particularly Africa. He claims that research meeting a particular form of scientific criteria has:

...found evidence for significant social, economic and political gains under colonialism: expanded education, improved public health, the abolition of slavery, widened employment opportunities, improved administration, the creation of basic infrastructure, female rights, enfranchisement of untouchable or historically excluded communities, fair taxation, access to capital, the generation of historical and cultural knowledge, and national identity formation, to mention just a few dimensions. (p. 4)

Largely dismissive of arguments to the contrary, Gilley is also clearly opposed to the end of western colonialism which he puts down to:

the pernicious effects of global anti-colonialism on domestic and international affairs since the end of World War II. Anti-colonialism ravaged countries as nationalist elites mobilised illiterate populations with appeals to destroy the market economies, pluralistic and constitutional polities, and rational policy processes of European colonisers. (p. 5)

Once more, despite his declared attachment to scientism, Gilley does no more than assert the veracity of this explanation for the end of colonialism. Neither the 18th-century, anti-colonial views of current “free market” hero Adam Smith (Winch, 1996), nor the post-World War II global struggle between the USA and the USSR for leadership of the anti-colonial cause appear in Gilley’s account. Instead, ‘nationalist elites’ who duped the masses, destroyed market economies etc. are the target of Gilley’s invective.

However, for Gilley there are always exceptions, selectively chosen:

...just as the colonial era was not an unalloyed good, the independence era has not been an unalloyed bad. A few postcolonial states are in reasonable health. Those whose moral

imaginings were not shrouded by anti-colonial ideology had the most productive encounter with modernity... (p. 6)

Nevertheless, the general effect of the end of colonialism, according to Gilley, is summed up with a quote drawn from a 1996 World Bank Report *Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa* that:

Almost every African country has witnessed a systematic regression of capacity in the last 30 years; the majority had better capacity at independence than they now possess (World Bank, 1996, p. 5 quoted in Gilley, 2017, p. 6).

Gilley does not pursue this ‘regression’ in any detail, ‘scientific’ or otherwise, but by citing a small number of instances which are intended to support his case. Further, as will be discussed below, he does not ask to what extent international, as distinct from domestic, factors have played a part in what has occurred in *all* the countries that have “witnessed a systematic regression of capacity”. That is, after decrying the nationalism of anti-colonial leaders and urging an international solution, a resurgent colonialism, Gilley avoids exploring if the international efforts of the last 30 years, effected under the ‘good governance’ terms he criticises as inadequate, have played any part at all in what has occurred in the African countries listed in the 1996 World Bank Report (see various essays in Moore, 2007; MacWilliam & Rafferty, 2017). Instead, Gilley provides a case for revitalised trusteeship, employing both domestic and international agents.

### **Gilley’s case for recolonisation**

As already indicated, Gilley’s outright advocacy of recolonisation is to be acknowledged for its overtness given the multitude of less forthright proposals that abound. As he states:

Rather than use an ever-expanding set of euphemisms that avoid the ‘C’ word – ‘shared sovereignty’, ‘conservatorship’, ‘proxy governance’, ‘transitional administration’, ‘neo-trusteeship’, ‘cooperative intervention’ – these arrangements should be called ‘colonialism’ because it would embrace rather than evade the historical record. (p. 2)

Gilley offers three ways “to reclaim colonialism” against the bad press or “pejorative meaning” (p. 2) it has received over the last 100 years. These are by: a) replicating “as far as possible the colonial governance of their pasts – as successful countries like Singapore, Belize and Botswana did”; b) Western countries being “encouraged to hold power in specific governance areas (public finances, say, or criminal justice) in order to jump-start enduring reforms in weak states”; and c) “in some instances it may be possible to build new Western colonies from scratch” (pp. 1-2).

While noting the “immense challenges” of “making new forms of colonialism work”, Gilley directs policy-makers to three specific arenas of concern. The first is how to make colonialism acceptable to the colonised, the second “how to motivate Western countries to become colonial again”, and third “how to make colonialism achieve lasting results”, presumably what he means by “sustained development” (p. 1). It is the solution to these three challenges that makes Gilley’s argument both in line with international trends (see below) and the most controversial because at the forefront. Overt trusteeship is not only a means for surmounting the “euphemisms”, but also for placing colonial governance at the fore. For having abandoned what he terms “the myth of self-governing capacity” (p. 8), Gilley insists that it is only the intervening state, with a formal share of sovereignty, that has the capacity to chart a “legitimate path forward” (p.9), that is, to bring development or make development happen. While acceptance by the local population and the assistance of local leaders is important, “[a]s in colonial times, foreign control by a liberal state with its own robust accountability mechanisms is the closest that a people with a weak state can come to ‘local ownership’” (p. 9). Which western colonial state was liberal, and when, is left for each reader to decide.

To use just one example—of particular relevance given Gilley selects an island in the former Portuguese colony of Guinea-Bissau for his thought-experiment on the restoration of colonial governance—the early to mid-20th-century rule of Portugal in Africa would not seem to fit the description of liberal colonial governance. Indeed, Portugal’s April 1974 Carnation Revolution, which ended the worst of the authoritarianism under the longest dictatorship in 20th-century Europe, also terminated the country’s colonial rule in Africa. That is, the political change in Portugal was part of the global anti-colonialism for which Gilley provides such a simplistic explanation (see above, and Gilley, 2017, pp. 5-6). Yet without explaining why politics in early 21st-century Portugal would open any space for a reformed role by that former colonial power (cf. Finn, 2017; Martins, 2017), it is the country Gilley

assumes would be party to the task of bringing revitalised trusteeship to Galinhas, an island off the coast of West Africa, part of Guinea-Bissau.

The most obvious reason why Gilley chooses part of an ex-Portuguese colony for his proposed experiment is that it allows him to offer an extension of his poorly developed general proposition ‘colonialism good, anti-colonialism bad’. Without enquiring whether the character of Portuguese colonialism had anything to do with the specifics of the independence movements that arose in that country’s colonies, Gilley engages in a rant against African liberation movements, in particular the “anti-colonial ‘hero’ Amilcar Cabral” (p. 5). Guinea-Bissau then fits within the overall picture of another country that has gone downhill since independence (Gilley, 2017, pp. 5-6), again without any detail on its colonial condition. In such circumstances, Galinhas can be constructed as the perfect location for recolonisation, leased back to the Portuguese government and then rebuilt, not as a ‘charter city’ pace Romer (2009, see above), but as a “small European state ... [grown] up on the African coast” (p. 11), courtesy of controlled, presumably compliant, labour immigration, Portuguese aid funds, trade and investment. The success of ‘recolonisation’ on Galinhas would then serve as a local as well as global model.

The fight against the pernicious doctrine of anti-colonialism and its ideologues, including Cabral, would be assisted as well. As Gilley concludes:

At 60 square miles, Galinhas could, over time, easily accommodate the entire population of Guinea-Bissau. If successful, it would attract talent, trade and capital. The mainland parts of Guinea-Bissau would benefit from living next to an economic dynamo and learning to emulate its success, while symbolically escaping from the half-century anti-colonial nightmare of Amilcar Cabral. The same idea could be tried all over the coastlines of Africa and the Middle East if successful. Colonialism could be resurrected without the usual cries of oppression, occupation, and exploitation. A preposterous idea? Perhaps. (p. 11)

It is now necessary to turn from such a thought-experiment to the actual circumstances of a country that also features in Gilley’s diatribe against anti-colonialism and the deleterious effects of the end of colonial rule. Kenya provides Gilley with the opportunity to extend his criticism.

## Colonial governance—The case of Kenya

The 1857 Indian Mutiny influenced not only the future of colonial rule in that country but also the general direction of British colonialism. After the revolt, rule by the British East India Company was replaced with the specific authority and administration of the British colonial state. Trusteeship became central. For colonial Kenya, it was the later 1923 Devonshire White Paper written by British colonial secretary Victor Cavendish, the 9th Duke of Devonshire, that signalled a specific intent for major change. In a colony where European settlers had an early dominance, the White Paper emphasised that in the struggle between the settlers and Indian/Asian commercial interests, colonial authority would attempt instead to secure the paramountcy of native interests. Rather than being an anti-colonial doctrine, the paramountcy principle emphasised the importance of trusteeship or guardianship for colonial policy.

While it was the fightback against the Devonshire declaration that is of immediate importance here, the policy intent to restrain both European largeholding settlers and Asian commercial ambitions had longer-term implications. Although European settlers and their allies in British politics as well as the local administration were able to ensure that paramountcy did not extend to the largeholding areas acquired previously outside native reserves, further expansion was initially restrained. When European settlement increased again after World War II, this occurred in conditions less favourable to largeholding agriculture, which forced reductions in labour forces: 'squatters', tenants and others were driven back into the already crowded, mainly Kikuyu reserves of central Kenya. More fuel was added to a smouldering fire: those with land, usually chiefs and their followers who could produce food and other goods to meet the growing post-war demand, clashed with the landless, unemployed and impoverished. While nationalism, led by educated and some chiefly Africans, was initially able to ride the growing insurgency, by the late 1940s and early 1950s this was no longer possible as the revolt known as Mau Mau enveloped much of central Kenya (Rosberg & Nottingham, 1966).

Gilley reduces this period of revolt and its crushing to an empiricist debate about measurement, rather than offering any analysis of what underlay an especially brutal moment in the country's late colonial history. Thus, for him the questions become: what would have happened if the British were not there? And how many Africans/Kikuyu were on each 'side'? The first question has more than a tinge of the atavistic explanation for the revolt found in an early official report by Corfield (1960): that the savagery displayed,

including oath-taking by Mau Mau recruiters, was due to African primitivism.

The second question about numbers is of greater interest here as Gilley's form of reductionism misses the crucial point about 'the sides' and why some subsequent post-Emergency and post-Independence Kenyans expressed appreciation for the outcome of British rule. Gilley states that:

Just as many Kenyans joined the Kikuyu Home Guard and the special prison service for the rebels as joined the insurgency, and the independent Kenyan government long applauded the historic contribution of the British in suppressing the movement. (p. 3)

Here he draws support from a hypothetical proposition by Anthony Daniels (2005) that “[h]ad the British left Kenya to the Mau (*sic*), there would have been anarchy and further civil war, perhaps even genocide” (Daniels, 2005, p. 26 quoted in Gilley, 2017, p. 3). Apart from not identifying which members of the independent government “applauded”, Gilley avoids enquiring why some did so. Fortunately, others have been more studious. (The detailed literature on the causes and conduct of the revolt and its subsequent suppression is too voluminous to cite here).

The revolt in Kenya came to a political-military head in October 1952 with Governor Evelyn Baring's Emergency Declaration. Despite increasing evidence aired in the British parliament and press about the savagery of the British and local military and police, even as the Emergency ended in 1960 the British government remained committed to the security of European settlers *and* the aspiring African bourgeoisie. Certain types of private property had to be defended at all costs, even at the expense of the reputation of British colonialism. The British government played a major role in crushing the revolt, and then in securing the terms of the Independence (Majimbo) federal constitution and 1963 elections.

While the military and policing effort defeated the revolt, the long-term problem behind Mau Mau remained for late colonial and post-colonial governments, that of how to reduce unemployment and impoverishment, to make productive that which was unproductive or underutilised, and bring development. At the same time as soldiers and police battled insurgents, colonial officials—guided by the Swynnerton Plan (Thurston, 1987)—had commenced a major effort to further commercialise households in occupation of smallholdings.

Once the British colonial government was removed, and trusteeship increasingly seen internationally and domestically as an unwanted relic, development in Kenya continued to be subject to the vagaries of conflicting conditions, both local and international.

One major condition was African capital's drive to increase largeholding acreages (see below). The second was that the end of colonial rule brought major changes to electoral, representative democracy, which extended the franchise to the majority indigenous population. As some of the brakes were taken off the advance of African capital with the departure of many European settlers, post-colonial Kenyan governments continued to have to deal with the importance of smallholder expansion as the main means of limiting unemployment, expanding agricultural exports and feeding the increasing population (Cowen & Shenton, 1996; MacWilliam, Desaubin, & Timms, 1998). Cowen and Shenton (1996) summarise much of the post-colonial direction:

Agrarian schemes of household production...were developed by parastatal authorities to both secure the basis for employment, as an alternative to direct wage employment, and the productive base of the economy. Central government expenditure...was biased towards agriculture, in that it absorbed four times more than what was directly allocated to manufacturing by way of state services. (p. 346)

The Kenya African National Union (KANU) victory at the 1963 pre-Independence, self-government elections ensured that a government that principally represented the ambitions of the Kikuyu bourgeoisie would hold power. The new regime's commitment to defend and extend existing property arrangements secured international support, including funding from the World Bank.

While domestic dissatisfaction continued and led to the 1966 'Little General Election' (see Gertzel, 1970), the Kenyatta government was able to oversee the process of 'Africanising' the White Highlands. The African, mainly Kikuyu, bourgeoisie's ambition to become large farmers was substantially extended (Njonjo, 1977). Under the Million Acre scheme, largely funded by international loans, some of the demand for more smallholder farms was also eased. For more than a decade and a half after Independence, Kenya remained an exemplar internationally, as criticism grew domestically and in neighbouring countries at the increasing dominance of the Kikuyu bourgeoisie (Swainson, 1980). Increasing unemployment,

rural as well as urban, remained a continuous feature of the political economy, forcing the search for solutions (International Labour Organization, 1972).

### **Kenya: from exemplar to model of corruption**

Gilley, along with the World Bank and other development agencies, is invariably keen to portray the post-Independence slide in former colonies, but less enthusiastic about explaining why development stalled. There is, however, sufficient material available on Kenya's political economy to be able to remedy this defect. Upon Kenyatta's death in 1978, Daniel arap Moi became President and commenced a policy of marginalising Kikuyu business people and politicians from positions of political and economic power. While it was impossible to remove Kikuyu from ownership of many of the central Kenyan assets acquired in the immediate post-Independence period, the Moi regime initially aimed to extend largeholding ownership among members of the KAMATUSA (Kalenjin-Maasai-Turkana-Samburu) alliance into other areas of Kenya (Cowen, 1986; MacWilliam, 2012). This drive occurred in parallel with the international push for structural adjustment reforms promoted by the World Bank and summarised in the *Berg Report*, officially *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa – An Agenda for Action* (World Bank, 1981).

Once the exceptional mid-1970s price boom for coffee and maize ended, to be followed by the 1979-80 drought and the second oil price shock, the regime had to deal with conditions that undercut its popular support. Kenya became a major importer of firstly maize and then wheat, which in turn fuelled demand for international borrowings (from private banks as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies). Balance of payments difficulties arising from declining government revenues from exports were however rapidly covered by the availability of funds internationally in the post-1979 'oil crisis' years. External loans as a percent of GDP increased from about 12 percent in 1971 to over 50 percent 21 years later, with the most significant upward shift beginning in 1979, the year after Moi came to power (MacWilliam, Desaubin, & Timms, 1995, p. 56, Figure VII). By the early 1990s, Kenya had become a heavily indebted if not yet a poor country. This change, from exemplar of growth to major international borrower and corrupt, followed the trend described in the 1996 World Bank conclusion cited by Gilley (see above; 2017, p. 7). The regime's initial popularity, based upon claims to represent not the 'big fish' of the Kenyatta period but the



'little people', soon declined (see Cowen, 1986; MacWilliam, Desaubin, & Timms, 1995).

If declining popular support and impoverishment linked to unemployment and underemployment was a political problem that gathered pace during the 1980s and the 1990s, there were also serious difficulties for the section of the indigenous capitalist class that Moi represented. The principal difficulty was how and where to extend its accumulation beyond the spaces in the national economy already occupied by the Kikuyu bourgeoisie. Fortunately, the international ideological shift of the 1980s—dubbed 'free market reforms'—provided a partial answer in the fashion of privatisation, even if subsequently the means of doing so were denigrated as corruption (MacWilliam & Rafferty, 2017). While there was some expansion into largeholdings producing maize, wheat and tea in areas of the Rift Valley, privatisation of state activities provided further new opportunities. Banking and financial services became a target: where Kikuyu bourgeois had previously moved into banking through the vehicle of GEMA (Gikuyu-Embu-Meru Association), partly to overcome the loss of state power that followed the ascension of Moi to the presidency, now room was created for KAMATUSA bourgeois and their allies to also open and operate banks (Cowen & MacWilliam, 1996).

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a two-step increase in the number and activities of private banks in Kenya, encouraged by the liberalisation of financial markets (Cowen & MacWilliam, 1996). This expansion was in part due to the increasing commercialisation of households as commodity producers and consumers, but also by financiers moving into areas not occupied by development banks and other agencies, particularly in the financing of micro-enterprises.

Especially prominent in the increased number of financial institutions were what became known as the 'political banks', Kalenjin-owned and often Kenyan-Asian, Kenyan-European or expatriate managed. These were a subset of banks closely tied to the Moi regime, hence the appellation 'political', which became the focus of growing criticism of corruption. By 1993, IMF pressure forced the regime to close the most prominent of the political banks, Transnational Bank, and the Central Bank of Kenya's role in providing funds to save these banks was strongly condemned (Cowen & MacWilliam, 1996). As the private banks were being established, the parastatal Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) was effectively 'Kalenjinised' in its staff so that it obeyed government directives to open rural branches. The KCB became one more instrument of the Moi regime, as did parastatal institutions, including the National Social Security Fund and Kenya Post and Telecommunications

Corporation, which deposited funds into the Kalenjini, rather than the Kikuyu, owned banks.

After the 2002 regime change to President Mwai Kibaki, a major Kikuyu land-owner from Nyeri rather than Kiambu where former-President Kenyatta's principal political base lay, the drive to extend commercialisation extended to publicly-owned forests and range-land. Public reserves previously excised for forests, animals and water catchments were targeted, with the struggle between smallholders and indigenous bourgeois over privatised land prominent (MacWilliam, 2012). International and domestic agencies have published reports on the mechanisms by which land was 'grabbed', even as Transparency International down-graded corruption in Kenya from "highly acute" to "rampant" (MacWilliam, 2012, p. 123).

In summary, for much of the post-Kenyatta period, domestic political tussles reduced and undercut any capacity of successive Kenyan regimes to make productive that which had become unproductive or underutilised, especially labour. Little to no assistance was provided in advice from international agencies, which insisted on a reduced state presence in a 'freed up market'. Increasing unemployment required an agent to bring intentional development, whether domestic or international, and an increasingly weakened national government headed by a layer of local capital had little intent or capacity to provide the necessary agency for development. While some efforts were made to continue state support for smallholder agriculture (Leonard, 1991) and urban small and medium enterprises, these invariably took second place to the drive by African capital to accumulate. In 2000, for one instance, the Kenya Tea Development Authority was privatised as the KTD Agency Limited with ownership passing from the Kenya government to over 50 firms with tea processing factories, some of them owned by leading political-business people. As much as the role of agent for development passed to international financial and aid institutions, including the World Bank, these had a limited capacity to direct required outcomes in Kenya. This account now turns to the idea of governance, at the centre of efforts for Kenya and development more widely.

## **Development and the political economy of colonial governance**

Gilley lists in generalities what he would consider the desired outcomes of re-introducing colonial governance. The objectives would be to:

...(reaffirm) the primacy of human lives, universal values and shared responsibilities – the civilising mission without scare

quotes – that led to improvements in living conditions for most Third World peoples during most episodes of Western colonialism. (p. 1)

With this vagueness of objectives he largely avoids exploring the idea of development that remains central to nearly all other proposals for governance reform emanating from official agencies and other institutions. It is now appropriate to try to fill the gap and reconcile, if possible, the differences between development and colonial governance left vacant by Gilley. In short, can colonial governance be reconciled with good and effective governance over the matter of agency for development? Once more, some of the history eschewed by Gilley provides a suitable starting point.

Improvement, employed by Gilley as an objective of re-instituted colonial governance, is an idea that preceded the formation of the modern idea of development: to cite one instance, the period from the early 18th century in Scottish history, when large farms began to consolidate the holdings of displaced tenants, was one of industrial agricultural improvement (Davidson, 2005). Development is an altogether different and later description, a response to the effects of *spontaneous* accumulation in early capitalist industrialisation and the disorder following the Napoleonic Wars (Cowen & Shenton, 1996). As much as industrialisation could be seen as improvement and progress, these terms did not adequately cover or propose solutions for the unemployment and disorder that faced western European—particularly British and French—governments of the early to mid-19th centuries. The spontaneous advance of capitalism, covered by improvement and progress, was increasingly recognised as a unity of positive and negative forms of change. Development was formulated to deal with, and then describe, a process of change by which negative conditions could be *intentionally* reformed without overthrowing the positive consequences of spontaneous (capitalist) change. Development became the description to cover a unity of two processes, one *immanent*, spontaneous and the other *intentional*. However, development is also an idea of reform, accepting the external authority of capital as a permanent and desired state or condition. Simply put, development is capitalist development, or change subject to the external authority of capital.

With this understanding of the idea of development, the point of governance reforms—as proposed in the contemporary iteration of the term at the end of the 1980s, considered below—can be understood. These reforms were intended to describe a means, and provide agency and direction, for intentional development in the circumstances of what was described as a

crisis (see below). The development crisis of the 1980s had itself been preceded by reforms to ‘free up markets’, that is, to give primacy to spontaneous accumulation at a moment when it was claimed that development had stalled in industrial as well as in non-industrial countries. Structural adjustment measures, outlined in the World Bank’s *Berg Report* (1981), were aimed at the supposed excessiveness of state interventions in the economy. Reforms included privatisation, removal of currency restrictions, reductions in state employment, and reducing indebtedness. Where implemented, these policy changes hit many ‘developing countries’, including Kenya (see above), at an especially critical time, coinciding with considerable price fluctuations in international markets and declining terms of trade between primary produce and manufactured goods, as well as higher oil prices.

While first introduced to official circles at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, governance is an idea which continues to evolve. Some of the extent of the changes over the next three decades will now be shown, along with a brief timeline illustrating what Merilee Grindle (2010) has dubbed ‘the inflation of an idea’. During the 1980s it became obvious yet again that the spontaneous process of development, alias the ‘free market’, brings both positive and negative effects (Cowen & Shenton, 1996; MacWilliam & Rafferty, 2017). Governance and its first modification, good governance, was initially evoked to deal with what followed the corruption that itself flowed in part from the adoption of structural adjustment and related policies. Most importantly, governance was employed for a reform process pushed by international and some national state agencies to deal with a crisis of development (Moore, 1999 & 2007). In 1989, a World Bank report aimed at transforming a ‘crisis’ in Africa to ‘sustainable development’ described governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development” (World Bank, 1992, p. 5, cited in Larmour, 1998, p. 1). Unsurprisingly, a report from an institution bound by its charter to eschew politics did not specify either the nature of power or *who would exercise it* to bring what the Bank desired as development.

How to frame the agency of international financial and aid institutions continued as an objective over the next decades, even as those organisations sought to maintain the fig-leaf that the reforms being pressed were apolitical. Capitalism too did not appear, just free markets without classes of labour or capitalists (Galbraith, 1999). The 1989 World Bank description, cited above, was a case of how to advance reform, making a state-elite, without being able to resolve struggles between the national holders of power at a time when

kleptocracy, prebendal politics, (neo)patrimonialism and crony capitalism were commonplace descriptions of conditions in ‘developing countries’ (for two examples among many, see Robison, 1986 and Bayart, 1993).

Nearly 30 years later, while politics is acknowledged, the problem is now described as how to find apolitical institutions to press reforms against international and domestic politics. For the 2016 World Bank Policy Research Report *Making Politics Work for Development Harnessing Transparency and Citizen Engagement*, it was vital to surmount the inevitability of politics in some, but only some, arenas. This is because: “Politics is typically underplayed in development policy not only because of prohibitions on some international agencies to engage in it, but also because it is removed from the day-to-day functions of appointed bureaucrats and service delivery professionals” (World Bank, 2017b). Ah! The apolitical bureaucrats and professionals, the managerial elite - all to produce a new developmental order - talk about wheels going round and round (see Burnham, 1962)!

With the partial recognition of the centrality of politics, the subsequent World Development Report 2017, titled *Governance and the Law*, reshapes governance even further. Since:

Policy making and policy implementation do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, they take place in complex political and social settings, in which individuals and groups with unequal power interact within changing rules as they pursue conflicting interests. The process of these interactions is what this Report calls governance, and the space in which these interactions take place, the policy arena (World Bank, 2017a, p. 51).

According to the Report (World Bank, 2017a, p. 51), in order to make politics “work for development” it is necessary to “harness transparency and citizen engagement” to secure “effective governance”, a term also employed by other agencies including the Department of Foreign Affairs in Australia (DFAT, 2017). This latest form of governance is described as:

...the process through which state and nonstate actors interact to design and implement policies within a given set of formal and informal rules that shape and are shaped by power. This Report defines *power* as the ability of groups and individuals to make others act in the interest of those groups and individuals

and to bring about specific outcomes (World Bank, 2017a, p. 3, Box O.1).

Now there is “governance for the bottom half” (World Bank, 2017b, p. 48), acknowledging the existence of elites and others who employ politics to attain their objectives, objectives which preclude development. Or in World Bank (2017b) speak:

Groups that are typically marginalized from the policy arena—such as those at the bottom of the income distribution—should have the same access to opportunities as all others. This is an essential pillar of progress in development. (p. 48)

From this “marginalization” comes the need for “apolitical organizations” to secure this access. Concludes the World Bank of its 2016 Policy Research Report: “The report distils policy lessons for how apolitical organizations can leverage their independence and technical expertise to bring about the needed changes in political behaviour for effective governance” (World Bank, 2017b). Here the drivers of change include coalitions between elites and citizens, operating within the rules that permit contestability as well as provision for top-down and bottom-up driven outcomes (World Bank, 2017a, p. 72). How organisations can be apolitical when engaged in policy contests over development is not explained, merely asserted.

By not pursuing the politics of colonial governance in any detail, Gilley avoids the issue the World Bank has slowly come to grapple with, albeit still in a limited manner. As he invokes the mythology of ‘apolitical’ colonial administrations and officials now to be returned to take up their selfless tasks, Gilley is still able to marginalise ‘the people’ who are expected to be simply grateful for the outcomes of the mainly internationally imposed authority. Neither agency nor direction have a popular democratic face: in these absences Gilley’s colonial governance has an overtly more authoritarian bent than either that proposed by the World Bank and other development agencies, or by economist Romer’s ‘charter cities’ (2009).

Romer’s charter-cities proposal tackled the missing politics of governance from another direction altogether. Charter cities are “city-scale administrative zones governed by a coalition of nations”, constructed on uninhabitable land. Romer’s TED presentation has a cute graphic showing how much of the world’s land mass is uninhabited: why this is so doesn’t seem to concern the World Bank’s former senior economist. For him, in these spaces desired outcomes could occur through aligning the choices of

governments and populations, providing the basis for rules that make development possible (Romer, 2009). That is, for Romer politics is a consensual activity but without any consideration of the means through which consensus arises. Political and class power do not appear. There is not space here to examine Romer's argument in depth nor to show its relationship with public choice economics, the reactionary nature of which is now at the centre of considerable controversy (MacLean, 2017). Suffice it to say that while Gilley also flirts with popular support as a component of colonial governance, unlike Romer he is not averse to colonialism, or the authoritarian force associated with it.

Of more importance for the argument presented here, what Gilley brings out into the open is that, unlike Romer and others advocating good and/or effective governance, intentional development occurs without any democratic pretence. Or in Gilley's terms:

One lesson from the colonial past is that the share of sovereignty [from within the nation to without] needs to be substantial and thorough in most cases. If external actors are constrained to work with rotten local institutions...then reforms will be difficult. Remaking a local police force may be possible without a share of sovereignty, but cleaning out a thoroughly corrupt national criminal justice system requires external control. Again, the reason to reclaim the word 'colonialism' is that it does not sidestep this important empirical insight. (p. 11)

As shown above in the case of Kenya, it was the British government, through colonial secretary Lord Cavendish, that saw the potential for disorder in unchecked European settler settlement and Asian/Indian commercial expansion. The paramountcy of native interests was framed *against* demands of settlers, then in a powerful position in the Legislative Council, by a colonial regime that could at one level override parliamentary opposition as expressed in the colony. Trusteeship, the necessary force for the form of development that deals with, even anticipates, the deleterious effects of spontaneous development, is not required to be popular or democratic. Unlike the official agencies, which struggle with this fact and over time have sought more and more to deal with how to give their plans a democratic tinge, including in the name of 'citizen engagement' and 'governance for the bottom half', Gilley openly advocates authoritarian trusteeship.

## **Conclusion**

The extent to which capitalism is compatible with democracy is hardly a new matter for consideration (Streeck, 2014). However, it has reappeared with renewed vigour over at least the last 30 years, coinciding with and related to the end of colonialism, national independence for so many former colonies, and the conclusion of the post-war economic boom globally. The length of the global downturn, described as a crisis internationally and in so many countries, has fuelled debate and produced extensive scholarly as well as popular literature. This literature is not confined to examination of conditions in ‘developing countries’ (see for the USA, Desmond, 2016; Fraser, 2015; Packer, 2013).

One theme in this debate is the construction and centrality of non-representative institutions in removing important matters of public policy from places where elected representatives hold sway (Mair, 2013). At an international level, Mair points to the institutions of the European Union. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and other development banks also fit within this rubric. At the national level, there are many instances of similar institutions, including various central and reserve banks, Fair Work Commissions and other bodies that control monetary and other policies. Streeck argues that these dimensions of what he terms the “consolidation state” represent a form of “buying time” for the “delayed crisis of democratic capitalism” (2014, pp.97-164). Gilley’s ‘colonial governance’ as well as Romer’s ‘charter cities’ fit neatly within these unrepresentative forms of the capitalist state.

Gilley is apparently unconcerned with whether development and democracy are associated: he does not see the latter as either a necessary condition for, or outcome of, the former. Colonial officials, the trustees of development admired by Gilley, were neither directly elected nor responsible to colonial legislatures where these existed. Control of colonial states rested with the colonial power, and these were not necessarily even parliamentary democracies, as in the case of Portugal. In making the point so directly Gilley has rendered an important service. Further, it is a service that should be recognised when development is advocated as a cure or even palliative for undesirable conditions in and beyond Africa.

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