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1

Introduction

“WE ARE often told, ‘Colonialism is dead.’ Let us not be deceived or even soothed by that. I say to you, colonialism is not yet dead.”¹ With these words, President Sukarno of Indonesia opened the Asian-African conference in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Gathered in the audience were representatives from 29 African and Asian countries, including many of the world’s leading anti-colonial activists like Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Zhou Enlai of China, and Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam. The principal aim of the conference was to deepen a sense of political solidarity between the newly liberated nation-states of the Third World. And Sukarno’s fiery rhetoric reflected the radical nature of the Bandung conference, which took place in a context when much of the world still remained under Europe’s thumb. For how, Sukarno implored, “can we say [colonialism] is dead, so long as vast areas of Asia and Africa are unfree”?

The Bandung conference is often fondly remembered as the moment when the most marginalized peoples around the world joined political forces against European colonizers.² Declaring their opposition to the “subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation,” Bandung’s participants vocally affirmed the right of all peoples to self-determination. The Bandung conference essentially heralded the winds of change that would soon sweep away most of Europe’s remaining possessions in Africa and Asia. For this reason, Léopold Senghor, the first President of Senegal, later claimed that “since the age of the Renaissance, no event has ever been of such historic significance” (Burke, 2006, 948).

What this romanticized narrative usually omits, however, is that one of Indonesia’s primary motives for holding the Bandung conference was to build support for its claim to the western half of the island of New Guinea (West Papua, Figure 1.1). In 1955, West Papua remained under the control of the

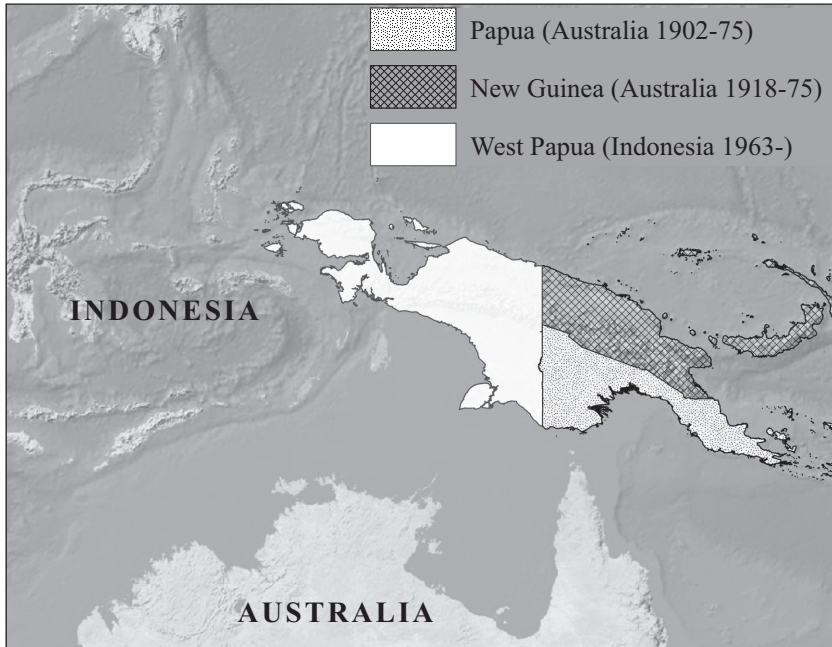


FIGURE 1.1. How the island of New Guinea was divided between Australia and Indonesia over the twentieth century.

Netherlands but was claimed by Indonesia. The Dutch, sensing the winds of change, were actively preparing to transfer sovereignty to indigenous Papuans. Sukarno, however, railed against what he regarded as Dutch “trickery” and attempts to establish a “puppet state” there, calling on all the peoples of Africa and Asia to help liberate West Papua from Dutch rule.³ It is in this context, with Sukarno desperately seeking to prevent an independent West Papua, that Indonesia invited the world’s leading anti-colonial activists to Bandung.⁴ On Sukarno’s urging, the Bandung communiqué affirmed that the conference “in the context of its expressed attitude on the abolition of colonialism, supported the position of Indonesia” in West Papua (Asian-African Conference, 1955, 166).

Chastened and internationally isolated, the Netherlands eventually transferred sovereignty over West Papua to Indonesia in 1963. If Indonesians expected to be welcomed as liberators in West Papua, however, they were sorely mistaken. Since the 1960s, Indonesia has faced a separatist insurgency there led by the Free Papua Movement (OPM). Seeking to flush out the

OPM, the Indonesian military killed tens of thousands of West Papuan civilians in security operations over the rest of the twentieth century.⁵ And, with a view to knitting West Papua permanently to the rest of the Indonesian archipelago, Indonesia resettled 300,000 farmers from its core islands to West Papua between 1984 and 1999.⁶ Indigenous Papuans are now a minority in much of West Papua beyond the highlands.

The irony that the Bandung conference was complicit in producing a condition in West Papua that looks distinctly like “alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation” has not been lost on indigenous activists. On the 60th anniversary of the Bandung conference, a leading West Papuan liberation group sent a statement to all foreign embassies in Jakarta, claiming: “It is Indonesia, today, that holds West Papua as a colony. Today, the time has come to end colonial rule and permit West Papuans a genuine act of self-determination.”⁷ West Papuans, it would seem, agree with Sukarno: colonialism is not yet dead.

The tensions raised by the entanglement of Bandung and West Papua deepen once we turn our attention to the eastern half of the same island. For if West Papuans were seemingly colonized by a state ideologically committed to decolonization in Indonesia, then Papua New Guineans were willingly decolonized by a state ideologically committed to colonization in Australia. Papua New Guinea was at the vanguard of an abortive “Australasian Empire” over the twentieth century. Inspired by the example of the United States, Australian elites in the early twentieth century dreamt of realizing their own “Pacific Ocean destiny,”⁸ encompassing the Australian continent, New Zealand, New Guinea, and Fiji. Australia’s annexation of Papua in 1902 and New Guinea in 1918 were envisioned as the first steps in a nascent white imperial project in the Pacific.⁹

The centerpiece of Australian colonial rule in New Guinea was a scheme, much like Indonesia’s, to resettle farmers onto alienated indigenous land. To entice European settlers to New Guinea, the Australian government ensured that any white male settler that migrated to Papua could have as much land as he wanted for free from 1906. Much to the consternation of Australian officials, however, the promise of free and fertile land in the Papuan highlands proved insufficiently alluring to white settlers. Rather than become farmers in Papua and New Guinea, the hundreds of thousands of Europeans who emigrated to Australia in the early twentieth century flocked to its rapidly industrializing cities like Melbourne and Sydney. White Australia could not make Melanesia white.

Papua New Guineans ultimately gained independence in 1975 as a result of a bizarrely inverted decolonization process. Australia's classification of Papuans as subjects, not citizens, had become increasingly unviable after Bandung, and a delegation from Papua New Guinea requested full Australian statehood and citizenship in the mid-1960s. The Australian government responded by taking statehood off the table and setting Papua New Guinea on the road to independence. Papua New Guinea's decolonization by Australia in 1975 was thus a one-sided affair. There had been no political struggle: no mass rallies demanding independence, no subversive nationalism, no insurgency, no political prisoners, no referendum. Rather, in quite bad faith, Australia's leaders recast Papua New Guinea's independence as a mutually beneficial liberation. For instance, then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam reflected that "Australia was never truly free until Papua New Guinea became free."¹⁰ With Australia determined to decolonize Papua New Guinea, indigenous leaders there could control little but the timing of their own liberation.

The point of starting this book with the history of New Guinea is not to invalidate the Bandung conference, whose spirit of self-determination continues to be a source of inspiration to marginalized peoples around the world. Rather, the point of juxtaposing West Papua and Papua New Guinea is to reveal the hollowness of a Manichean worldview, epitomized by Sukarno, that divides the world into colonized and colonizer based on whiteness. Even the most vocal proponents of decolonization like Indonesia can coercively settle the lands of indigenous peoples. And even white settler states like Australia can, under the right circumstances, become vocal proponents of indigenous sovereignty. In order to understand when and why states colonize indigenous peoples, we should therefore dispense with preexisting assumptions and follow Aimé Césaire's advice "to think clearly – that is, dangerously – and answer clearly the innocent first question: what, fundamentally, is colonization?" (2000, 32).

Innocent yet dangerous like Homer's Sirens, Césaire's question could easily ensnare the unwitting writer in a mess of contradiction. Colonization is a nebulous concept and is used differently in popular, academic, and legal contexts. Lashing myself to the strongest conceptual mast in sight, I draw on its agrarian roots to define colonization as a process of state building involving the displacement of indigenous peoples by settlers. The origins of the word "colonization" in the Latin *colonus*, or farmer, reflects the fact that colonization historically described what happens when groups of farmers coercively settle in and claim a frontier on behalf of a distant state.¹¹ Let me break this down.

The acquisition of new territory by states is imperialism (Hobson, 1902, 2). Imperialism is distinct from colonialism and colonization, which refer to *how* states govern over frontier lands. Colonialism generally evokes a condition in which states discriminate against certain peoples on the basis of their ethnicity.¹² For this reason, Albert Memmi (2010) suggests that “the idea of privilege is at the heart of the colonial relationship,” Partha Chatterjee (1993) calls colonialism “the rule of difference,” and for Frantz Fanon (1963) the colonial world “is a world cut in two.” Colonial subjects are victims of discrimination and exclusion from certain spaces on the basis of their ethno-racial identity.

But not all forms of colonial rule look the same.¹³ For instance, in colonial India, Britain ruled in collaboration with indigenous elites with a view to extracting the resources and labor of its native people. European colonization was severely limited; Charles Cornwallis, the third Viceroy of India, advised his superiors in London in 1794 that “it will be of essential importance to the interests of Britain, that Europeans should be discouraged and *prevented as much as possible from colonizing and settling* in our possessions of India.”¹⁴ But in other nineteenth century British colonies, quite the opposite was true. In settler colonies like Australia, Canada, and the United States, colonization was integral to “state making” (Tilly, 1985) or how Europeans eliminated indigenous sovereignty and secured control over frontier territory. Understood as a process of dispossession by ethnically distinct farmers, colonization is analogous to “settler colonialism”; it is a form of state building entailing the coercive redistribution of frontier land to settlers.¹⁵

I will use the terms settler colonialism and colonization interchangeably and in a descriptive, not normative, way in this book. The identities of settler and indigene, or colonized and colonizer, are contextual and are based on one’s relationship to power (the state). Where migrants are gifted expropriated land on the basis of their ethnicity, it is appropriate to speak of them as settler colonists even if these same migrants were also fleeing dispossession and discrimination by another state. In this sense, Edward Said identifies the painful irony that Palestinians since 1948 have been “turned into exiles by the proverbial people of exile, the Jews” (Said, 2000, 178). Refugees can become settlers.¹⁶

Using the term settler colonialism to refer to resettlement programs within nation-states like Indonesia or Israel does, admittedly, come at the cost of some dissonance. The stereotypical image of a settler is a bronzed white man in Wellington boots, leaning on his shovel, staring into the setting sun (Memmi, 2010). But settlers are simply migrants who partake in projects of territorial conquest. Hence, when migration and land redistribution is

non-consensual, undesired and unregulated by a preexisting population, we should speak of settlers and colonization projects even if migrants are non-white. Otherwise, we fall into the trap of using different terms to refer to different resettlement programs based purely on the racial characteristics of those involved or the rhetoric that accompanies them. There are too many similarities in practice between Australia's and Indonesia's attempts to settle New Guinea, for instance, to just dismiss the notion that these two projects may have similar underlying logics.¹⁷

Alternatively, consider the fact that in 2019 India revoked Kashmir's autonomy to facilitate the migration of Hindus there. Encouraging Hindus to settle in a contested territory prompted considerable international outrage and resistance by native Kashmiris. But as India's Consul General in New York, Sandeep Chakravorty, reasoned: "If the Israeli people can do it, we can also do it."¹⁸ All states can be colonizers.

Having sailed past Césaire's Sirens and found firm conceptual ground, we can now return to the central question of this book: when and why do states engage in colonization?

The conventional answer to this question has remained essentially unchanged since the publication of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. This wisdom rests on two key tenets. The first tenet is that colonization is driven by the desire of states to appropriate indigenous land and resources.¹⁹ For instance, in his study of the historically ungoverned zones of Southeast Asia, James C. Scott (2009, xii) echoes Marx and Engels by asserting that states, above all, seek to exploit the labor and land of their peripheries. When faced with mobile indigenes whose forms of subsistence cannot be easily taxed, states forcibly impose more legible agrarian landscapes on the periphery by reallocating land to colonists. As he summarizes:

Internal colonialism, broadly understood, aptly describes this process. It involved the absorption, displacement, and/or extermination of the previous inhabitants. It involved a botanical colonization in which the landscape was transformed—by deforestation, drainage, irrigation, and levees—to accommodate crops, settlement patterns, and systems of administration familiar to the state and to the colonists.

Colonization is, in other words, a phenomenon "hard wired" into states and the resource needs of capitalism (Scott, 2009, 4–12).

An emphasis on capitalist exploitation also characterizes the writings of prominent anthropologist Patrick Wolfe. Operating with a “logic of elimination,” as Wolfe put it in his 2001 essay for the *American Historical Review*, capitalist states kill, deport, incarcerate, and forcibly assimilate indigenous peoples in order to secure land for commercial agriculture.²⁰ Settler colonialism is, as Wolfe summarizes elsewhere, “an inclusive, land-centered project that *coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment*, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies” (Wolfe, 2006, 393).²¹ The logic of elimination has since become an obligatory point of departure in the historiography of settler colonialism in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Pacific, the United States, Japan, and beyond.²² The logic of elimination, as one historian recently put it, “is now dogma” (Shoemaker, 2015, 29).

The second key tenet of this conventional wisdom is that variation in colonization is driven solely by logistical constraints. After all, if states always prefer to coercively reallocate frontier land to their own colonists, then it follows that indigenous peoples are only spared colonization when settlement is infeasible, indigenous resistance is too fierce, or their land is undesirable. For instance, Scott (2009) emphasizes how mountainous terrain presented hard limits to the viability of commercial agriculture and thus the colonization projects of Southeast Asian states. Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001, 1370) emphasize how Europeans extracted native labor only in colonies where mass European settlement was infeasible due to tropical disease burdens.²³ And Wolfe attributes the rise of British settler colonialism in the late eighteenth century to a population boom driven by early industrialization (Wolfe, 2001, 868–870). Iberian colonies like Brazil were largely spared European settlement because Portugal, unlike Great Britain, remained preindustrial and lacked a “surplus” population of willing settlers.

Combined, these two tenets lead scholars to a rather pessimistic conclusion. Since the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, rising population pressure, the suppression of tropical disease burdens and associated settler mortality, and the development of modern infrastructure have made newly possible the penetration of state power into remote lands. Hence, indigenous resistance to colonization is presumably no longer possible. As Scott (2009, xii) laments in Southeast Asia:

Since 1945, and in some cases before then, the power of the state to deploy distance-demolishing technologies—railroads, all-weather roads,

telephone, telegraph, airpower, helicopters, and now information technology—so changed the strategic balance of power between self-governing peoples and nation-states, so diminished the friction of terrain . . . [that it has] led everywhere to strategies of “engulfment,” in which presumptively loyal and land-hungry valley populations are transplanted to the hills.

The result is the ultimate triumph of the colonist over the indigene and “the world’s last great enclosure” (Scott, 2009, 282).

This wisdom, though conventional, is incoherent. Take the first tenet. It may be true that policymakers have generally exploited the people, lands, and resources of their peripheries for their own benefit. But actively encouraging the displacement of indigenous peoples by a new population of settlers is an odd strategy for capitalist exploitation. For why would the metropole seek to eliminate indigenous peoples and thereby lose a potentially important source of trade and labor?

This concern is not merely hypothetical. For instance, in the mid-1830s the British Parliament established a Select Committee to report on native policy across the British Empire. Its report was damning of the decision of British troops in 1811 to clear the Xhosa from the Eastern Cape in order to make way for settlers. The result of this decision, according to the commissioners, was “a succession of new wars,” the “loss of thousands of good laborers to the colonists,” and the “checking of civilization and trade with the interior for a period of 12 years,” with the only gain “some hundreds of thousands of acres of land, which might have been bought from the natives for comparatively a trifle.”²⁴ As they summarized more broadly, indigenous elimination is costly to states:

The oppression of the natives . . . has engendered wars, in which great expenses were necessarily incurred, and no reputation could be won; and it has banished from our confines, or exterminated, the natives who might have been profitable workmen, good customers, and good neighbours.²⁵

Similarly, the genocide of the Herero in South West Africa in 1904 by the German colonial state is often cited as an operative instance of the logic of elimination. But the Herero genocide led to a sustained recession in South West Africa, as colonial diamond and copper mines lost most of their preexisting labor force. The annihilation of the Herero was an “antieconomic” decision that imperiled the economic heart of the German colonial state (Steinmetz, 2007). Settler colonialism, as a violent process that results

in the loss of indigenous labor, seems to contradict the capitalist imperative of revenue maximization. So, something beyond mere avarice must be driving the calculus of officials when they *do* decide to violently displace or kill indigenous people.

Beyond this underlying theoretical tension, the notion that capitalist states are driven by a logic of elimination also struggles to withstand historical scrutiny. Recall that the logic of elimination is a coordinated, genocidal project connecting the metropole to settlers on the frontier. Examining historical processes as they unfolded, however, reveals that even canonical cases of European colonization—the evidentiary basis of the logic of elimination—were *not* obviously characterized by coordination between settlers and the metropole. For instance, in Victoria, a state that takes up the southeast corner of Australia, almost 80% of the some 10,000 total indigenous population died between 1836 and 1853 following a rush of British settlers (Ryan, 2010). Accordingly, Wolfe claims that the logic of elimination “approximated its pure or theoretical form” in southeastern Australia “resulting, within a short space of time, in the decimation of the Aboriginal population” (Wolfe, 2001, 871).

But the historical record reveals that indigenous elimination in Victoria occurred *against* the wishes of the British government. The first penal colony in Australia was established in Sydney, New South Wales in 1788. Colonial governments in New South Wales subsequently restricted colonization to the extent that by the 1830s European settlement on mainland Australia was limited to a relatively small area in and around Sydney. Chafing at these restrictions, in 1835 a group of settlers formed a consortium with a view to colonizing the southern coast of Australia. Their newly constituted “Port Phillip Association” established a new town at the head of Port Phillip Bay (present-day Melbourne) that same year.

These actions prompted a flurry of letters between Sydney and London. Publicly, the Governor of New South Wales, Richard Bourke, opposed the colonization of Port Phillip Bay, declaring the new settlement “void and of no effect against the rights of the Crown” and the settlers “liable to be dealt with in like manner as intruders upon the vacant lands of the Crown.”²⁶ But privately, Bourke lobbied his superiors in London to relax restrictions on colonization, arguing in October 1835 that “no adequate measures could be resorted to for the general and permanent removal of intruders from waste lands, without incurring a probably greater expense.” Bourke pointedly asked the Colonial Office “simply this: How may this Government turn to the best advantage a state of things, which it cannot wholly interdict?”²⁷ The Secretary of State for

the Colonies, Lord Glenelg, accepted Bourke's logic of strategic fatalism and licensed the colonization of "waste land" in Australia in 1836.²⁸ Expedience and a desire to avoid conflict with settlers lay at the heart of this watershed change in government policy, for as Glenelg put it:

The motives which are urging mankind, especially in these days of general peace and increasing population, to break through the restraints which would forbid their settling themselves and their families in such situations, are too strong to be encountered [*sic*] with effect by ordinary means. To engage in such a struggle would be wholly irrational. All that remains for the Government in such circumstances is to assume the guidance and direction of such enterprises, which, though it cannot prevent or retard, it may yet conduct to happy results.²⁹

The subsequent, extremely rapid elimination of indigenous peoples in much of Victoria was characterized by a highly decentralized process of killing that is difficult to straightforwardly characterize as official policy.³⁰ Over the next two decades, settlers, facing at least the nominal risk of arrest and incarceration, progressively eliminated the Aboriginal population when they contested occupation of frontier land.

The absence of metropolitan eliminatory intent or coordination with colonists in southeast Australia suggests that something is amiss with the notion that colonization is driven by a logic of elimination. Rather, the defining paradox of Australian colonial history—one that continues to be debated by scholars and the public today—is that relatively benign metropolitan intentions toward indigenous people coincided with their violent elimination.³¹ But lest we think that southeast Australia is a strange anomaly, let us also examine the process through which North America—the other "pure" case of settler colonialism nominated by Wolfe (2001)—was colonized by settlers.

Consider the policy direction of the United States in its earliest stages of independence. In 1783, the United States Confederation Congress, which opened in the last stages of the American Revolution, feared war with the western Indian nations. Consequently, Congress prohibited settlement on Indian lands west of the Appalachias and the purchase of any Indian lands "without the express authority and direction of Congress."³² But settlers moved into prohibited areas anyway. Over the next year, more than two thousand families migrated to areas of the Ohio valley formally closed to settlement.

Much as in colonial Victoria, American officials, facing a relentless emigration to the backcountry, feared that without any formal incorporation settlers

would soon found independent republics. For instance, George Washington told Henry Lee, then President of the Congress, that “the spirit for emigration is great. People have got impatient and, though you cannot stop the road it is yet in your power to mark the way; a little while later and you will not be able to do either.”³³ So, in 1784 the Confederation licensed the expansion of the Union west of the Appalachian mountains, ultimately drawing the American state into a long and costly war with the Northwest Indian nations (1785–1795). In this sense, to portray early American expansion “simply as a conflict between the American state and Indian tribes misses the complexity of the relationships of the various groups involved,” as White (2010, 420) put it. The violent process of early American colonization was not premeditated or coordinated but rather depended crucially on the agency of settlers.³⁴

And lest we think that southern Africa—a third area of the world commonly associated with British settler colonialism—is any different, consider the haphazard series of events that led to the colonization of present-day Zimbabwe in the late 1800s. The 1885 Berlin conference had neatly divided Africa up between competing powers, with only a few areas remaining in dispute. One of the largest disputed areas was the stretch of land that currently makes up Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, coveted by Portugal, Germany, the Transvaal, and Great Britain. The Berlin Conference had established, however, that European powers could ultimately only acquire territory in Africa through “effective occupation.” And effective occupation could only be established in two ways: direct administration by European agents on the ground, or the acquisition of exclusive rights to sovereignty through treaties with local leaders.

The Berlin Conference kicked off a race amongst competing powers to secure a treaty with Lobengula Khumalo, the King of the Ndebele and the leader of the major indigenous kingdom in present-day Zimbabwe. In 1888, the British government wrote to Portugal affirming Lobengula as the “independent King” and “undisputed ruler of Mashonaland and Matabeleland” (Davies, 1989, 31). And Britain signed a treaty with Lobengula in February that year proclaiming that “peace and amity shall continue forever between Her Britannic Majesty, Her subjects, and the Amandebele [*sic*] people.”³⁵ But by 1894, Lobengula was dead, his kingdom was in ruins, and his lands were being alienated by white settlers. What changed in the intervening six years?

Here, the agency of settlers again mediated imperial expansion and indigenous elimination. Cecil John Rhodes, a leading politician and businessman in the Cape Colony, had recognized that by merely establishing a friendship

treaty the February 1888 agreement with Lobengula did not constitute “effective occupation” under the Berlin Conference. So, seeking to secure the reportedly mineral-rich lands in Mashonaland, he pressed his agents to secure from Lobengula the right for British settlers to mine in Mashonaland in return for an annual stipend. Lobengula signed this agreement in October 1888 and his interpreter, Charles Helm, later attested that Lobengula was orally promised Britain “would not bring more than 10 white men to work in his country, that they would not dig anywhere near towns, etc., and that they and their people would abide by the laws of his country” (Brown, 1966, 81). But, no doubt deliberately, the written treaty in fact contained no such limitation.

Having secured this mining concession, Cecil John Rhodes then raced to London to seek the metropole’s assent to establish effective occupation over Mashonaland through a private company, the British South African Company (BSAC). The British government was wary of Rhodes’ motives, however, and wished to avoid being entangled in costly wars. So, Britain legally limited BSAC to only carrying “into effect divers [*sic*] concessions and agreements which have been made by certain of the chiefs and tribes.”³⁶ In other words, any effective occupation of new territory in the name of the British Crown was to be done peacefully and with the consent of native authorities.

But Rhodes now had his opening. Recognizing that Lobengula would never agree to a formal renunciation of sovereignty, but with his mining treaty not limiting the number of white settlers allowed in Mashonaland, Rhodes could effectively occupy the area for Britain by sending large numbers of settlers there to “mine.” So, in June 1890, he organized a private convoy of 179 settlers to set out for Mashonaland, deftly skirting around the areas most directly controlled by Lobengula’s armies. His “Pioneer Column” reached Harare hill in September 1890 and founded a new settlement, Fort Salisbury. A steady stream of settlers from the Cape soon followed, attracted by reports of mineral-rich and easily alienated farmland in the area around Fort Salisbury.

Three years later, a Mashonaland kingdom refused Lobengula tribute, declaring that they were now under the protection of BSAC. Lobengula sent troops to Mashonaland to enforce the tribute but he had fallen into a trap. Rhodes could now claim that Lobengula had broken the terms of the mining treaty and could legally amass BSAC troops in response. A brief war followed that resulted in the complete destruction of the Ndebele kingdom and the capture of its capital, Bulawayo, in late 1893. These actions prompted alarm in the metropole, but a logic of strategic fatalism triumphed once again.³⁷ The participants in Rhodes’ war still got their land bounty. By 1895, more than 1,000

white-owned farms covered more than 10,000 square miles in Ndebeleland and a number of “native reserves” had been established in rough terrain north of Bulawayo to house the displaced Ndebele (Rotberg, 1988).

The point of these cases is not to provide a conservative interpretation of the benevolence of the British Empire. To emphasize the contradictions in state policy does not excuse metropolitan authorities of responsibility for the mass killing of indigenous peoples by their colonists.³⁸ Rather, the point of examining the intentions of the metropole as European colonization unfolded is to provoke the curiosity of those who want to understand the actual dynamics of settler colonialism. As the elimination of indigenous peoples is an “antieconomic” decision, one would expect that indigenous elimination is rarely viewed as the best outcome by a metropole. And the historical record bears this expectation out. The mass killing of indigenous peoples was triggered by the predation of land by European settlers in Australia, the United States, and Zimbabwe, conducted at critical junctures in explicit contravention of metropolitan authority. Contrary to the notion that there always existed a coordinated project to destroy indigenous peoples and reallocate their land to white colonists, the formative stages of European settler colonialism were characterized by an “illogic of elimination.”

We should be wary of studies that ignore such historical complexity and that instead explain colonization with reference to vague abstractions that conflate states and settlers. Consider the central claim by Wolfe that “invasion is a ‘structure’ and not ‘an event’ . . . Elimination is an organizing principle of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence” (Wolfe, 2006, 388). Lorenzo Veracini explains that this “structure persistently pursues a specific end point” (Veracini, 2011, 3) and that “settler colonialism is designed to produce a fundamental discontinuity as its ‘logic of elimination’ runs its course until it actually extinguishes the settler colonial relation” (*ibid.*, p. 7). This logic manifests itself in a dynamic way as states shift between an array of strategies all with the design to eliminate indigenous peoples. Emblematic of this form of reasoning, Maddison (2016, 425) claims that Australia during the twentieth century “attempted to eliminate the Indigenous presence through policies of protection, assimilation, self-determination, intervention and, most recently, recognition.” States are attributed a collective agency and a relentless, unfalsifiable logic in which even the constitutional recognition of indigenous peoples and their ancestral land rights are manifestations of elimination (e.g., Veracini 2007; Moses 2011;

Morgensen 2011; Coulthard 2014; Maddison 2016; Simpson 2016; Strakosch 2016).³⁹

It has so far largely fallen to historians, who possess a natural aversion to abstraction, to problematize this understanding of colonial history to date. As Jun Uchida (2011, 396) cautioned in her study of colonial Korea, Japanese settlers far from always furthered the ambitions of the Japanese metropole—rather, much like in Australia, settler “activities and initiatives reveal how colonial power was often dispersed, not simply imposed but mediated and modified at the local level.” Likewise, Harris Mylonas (2015, 741) has warned against the tendency of scholars of mass atrocity to infer elite intentions from eliminatory outcomes, emphasizing that policymaker “intentions are not always translated into policy choices, nor do those choices always produce the desired outcome.” Perhaps most notably, Frederick Cooper (2005) has admonished the tendency of post-colonial theorists to write “ahistorical history.” Ahistorical history works backwards, connecting past to present without actually interrogating the way that historical processes unfolded over time. Abstract concepts such as the “logic of elimination” simplify the history of colonialism into a unidirectional narrative, Cooper argues, that ignores contingency and the mediating agency of both colonizer and colonized.

Settler colonial theory at present is characterized by precisely these ahistorical tendencies, which has diminished our understanding of colonial history twofold. Firstly, scholars have been overly eager to retrospectively impose a stable, underlying logic to cases of indigenous elimination. Much like teleological theories of anti-colonial nationalism (Lawrence, 2013), we have lost sight of the paths not taken and the peaceful alternatives for managing ethnically diverse or newly conquered peoples that were once available to the metropole (and that may have once been seen as more desirable). The result has been the creation of historical fables that merely project eliminatory teleologies backwards in time. And the conflation of all the different means through which states can actually eliminate ethnic difference—assimilation, ethnic cleansing, and genocide—does a disservice to the periods in which indigenous peoples were subject to homicide by state agents. We need to better understand the contingent process through which policymakers shift from one strategy for engaging with indigenous peoples to another (and often back again), and the mediating role of settlers in this process.

Secondly, writing history backwards impedes our understanding of the limits to state power. By only focusing on cases where states ultimately “succeeded” in eliminating native peoples, we have a distorted understanding of

the conditions under which colonization occurs.⁴⁰ For instance, let's now reconsider Scott (2009)'s claim that modernization and the development of distance-demolishing technologies results in the final victory of the state and settler over the indigene. This conclusion is plausible if we only examine cases where indigenous peoples were actually colonized in recent history. But attending to negative cases reveals that modernization does not necessarily increase the colonizing power of the state. In fact, precisely the opposite might be true.

Consider Portugal's failure to colonize Angola in the late twentieth century. Portugal founded the Angolan capital, Luanda, in 1575 and, except for a brief period in the seventeenth century, Angola remained under Portuguese control until 1975. For the vast bulk of this time, Angola was a canonical "colony of extraction" (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, 2001); Portuguese rule was primarily oriented toward the coercive exploitation of indigenous labor (through the slave trade) and resources (primarily rubber, diamonds, and coffee).

In 1961, however, Portugal dramatically shifted policy.⁴¹ That year, it founded a provincial settlement board (*Junta Provincial de Povoamento de Angola* or JPP) with the responsibility of facilitating the mass settlement of rural Angola. The Governor General of Angola emphasized in 1961 that he would do everything in his power to attract Portuguese settlers, particularly former soldiers, to the new *colonatos*. With vaulting ambition, the government envisioned securing up to half a million new farmers in the south of Angola alone. Over the next decade, large areas were expropriated from indigenous Angolans for settlers and more than one million people, or almost a one quarter of Angola's population, were ultimately moved off their land (Cain, 2013).⁴²

Yet, the *colonatos* were a failure. Not only did few Portuguese settlers actually take up the offer of free transport, land, and income support in Angola, but of those thousands who did, approximately 70% abandoned their farms by the end of the 1960s (Bender, 1978, 131). Reflecting increased metropolitan investment and a brief oil boom, Angola did experience rapid growth in its white population over the 1960s but, much to the consternation of officials, almost all of this growth was concentrated in Luanda. In sum, over the course of a decade, Portugal spent the equivalent today of approximately \$200 million dollars on the JPP program to secure an increase in the white population in rural Angola of 840.⁴³

The Angolan case raises a number of questions that teleological theories of colonization cannot adequately answer. Echoing the sudden rise in

Indonesian transmigration to West Papua in the 1980s, why did Portugal shift its policy direction so suddenly in 1961 and expend extremely large sums of money encouraging whites to settle in rural Angola? And, echoing Australia's efforts in Papua New Guinea, why were such efforts ultimately a failure? The failure of Portugal to colonize Angola cannot be attributed to lack of population pressure or Portuguese reticence toward emigration. Over the 1950s and 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Portuguese did emigrate but primarily to the Americas and the rest of Western Europe (Penvenne, 2005, 85). Nor can it be attributed to an innate inability of Europeans to live in the tropics. Over the 1960s, over one hundred thousand people did emigrate to Angola from Portugal but, contrary to the intentions of the metropole, almost all of these migrants were drawn to Angola's urban centers (Bender and Yoder, 1974). How is it possible, then, that a relatively wealthy state flushed with the technologies of modernity so spectacularly failed to colonize its periphery?

Faced with historical complexity, the answer is *not* to abandon what Steinmetz (2007) calls the "chimerical" goal of providing general theories of colonial rule. Retreating into the historical detail and warding against every attempt to generalize has the cost of failing to draw out the commonalities in human action that *do* exist across time and place. So, the current additive model of settler colonial studies in history and anthropology—one that provides ever more disconnected case studies of settler colonialism in ever more contexts—has its epistemological limits.⁴⁴ We also need theoretical frameworks to help us navigate the morass of history.

Equally, when discerning the common logic behind different cases of settler colonialism, we can do better than rely on ahistorical teleologies like the "logic of elimination" or the "last enclosure." Theoretically, we need to disaggregate the state, clearly distinguishing between the intentions of the metropole and settlers with a view to understanding their conflicts of interest and the limits to state power. We need to attend to the sequencing of historical events, paying close attention to understanding why policymakers in the metropole shift toward encouraging the colonization of particular areas or groups at particular points in time. And finally, we need to track migration flows to discipline our theories and uncover the extent to which they cohere (or do not cohere) with reality. This means that we must insist, above all, that settler colonialism is less an abstract "structure" than a series of concrete migratory events resulting in coercive land redistribution and demographic change.

So, when do states try to colonize the lands of indigenous peoples and when do their efforts prove successful? Colonization projects are characterized by a triangle of actors—settlers, indigenes, and the central state—each with distinct interests (Haklai and Loizides, 2015; Lustick, 2015). Understanding the logic of settler colonialism, I explain in this book, requires attending to the different conflicts of interest within this triangle.

The first and most obvious conflict of interest is between settlers and indigenes. Colonization is, essentially by definition, characterized by a “zero sum” conflict between settlers and indigenous peoples over the control of land. Studies of settler colonialism to date have largely focused on the settler-indigene relation, paying particular attention to the process through which settlers and their descendants legitimate the usurpation of land through racist ideologies.

But states do *not* necessarily have the same zero-sum conflict of interest with indigenous peoples. States seek to control maximal territory at minimal cost, and so the primary goal of states in diverse peripheries is to most economically circumscribe the autonomy of indigenous peoples to facilitate capital accumulation (Sahlins 1989, 117; Tilly 1992, 100; Scott 1998, 82; Hechter 2000, 15). And settler colonialism—unlike other strategies like assimilation or ruling in partnership with indigenous elites—is an “antieconomic” form of state building that exacerbates conflict with indigenes in the short run and results in the loss of capital and labor. This makes colonization a generally unappealing policy. As the Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes in Great Britain emphasized in 1837:

One of the two systems we must have to preserve our own security, and the peace of our colonial borders; either an overwhelming military force, with all its attendant expenses, or a line of temperate conduct and of justice towards our neighbours. . . . The choice rests with ourselves.⁴⁵

As an uneconomic strategy for would-be imperialists, states generally license colonization only under two circumstances. The first are circumstances when settler actions force the hand of states. Settlers, responding to population pressure at home and the presence of valuable resources or easily alienated land in the periphery, may push into indigenous territory. Policy-makers in the metropole are then faced with the prospect of overextension and frontier war to protect their colonists. But siding with indigenes also creates the fearful prospect that settlers will simply found independent republics outside of central control. Facing population pressure in the core and a seemingly

relentless emigration to the periphery, officials—as during the Ohio Valley, Victorian, or Rhodesian migration crises—have often found it most expedient to license the eliminatory actions of their colonists in a *laissez-faire* way.

But officials do not merely respond to migratory events on the ground; the movement of settlers into a frontier area can also be actively planned and funded by the metropole. State-sponsored colonization schemes like Indonesian transmigration tend to take place under circumstances not necessarily of settler expansionism but when states face a pressing security threat.⁴⁶ Colonization improves state security because, in the midst of war and insurgency, states are unable to distinguish between friend and foe in frontier areas. Scholars of political violence have shown how, when states lack information on individual loyalties, they then often use race and ethnicity as an heuristic for individual loyalty.⁴⁷ Expelling stereotypically “disloyal” indigenous groups and populating their lands with stereotypically “loyal” settlers is an effective means for the metropole to secure control over a frontier when facing an imminent threat.

This argument, abstractly presented, is best illustrated with reference to some of the cases that I have identified so far. Returning to New Guinea, recall that in the 1980s Indonesia drastically scaled up transmigration to West Papua. In Chapter 3, I detail how this occurred in response to an attempted capture of the West Papuan capital by the Free Papua Movement (OPM) in February 1984. Although the coup failed, heavy fighting continued for several months between OPM and the Indonesian military. OPM’s favored tactic during this conflict was “curtain of the masses” (*tirai massa*), a Maoist strategy in which insurgents would launch guerilla attacks on soldiers in rural areas and then quickly melt back into the populace. Unable to distinguish between friend and foe, the Indonesian military responded by treating all West Papuans as potential insurgents and cleansing them from contested border areas. Indeed, the motto of the Indonesian military at the time was “let the rats run into the jungle so that chickens can breed in the coop”—referring to the forced expulsion of indigenous Papuans and their replacement with transmigrants from the rest of Indonesia. By raising the curtain provided by the masses through coercive demographic change, the Indonesian state sought to defeat a separatist insurgency.

The dogs of war also account for shifting Portuguese policy in Angola. In 1961, thousands of Angolan insurgents launched an incursion into northern Angola from their base in Congo-Léopoldville (present-day Democratic Republic of Congo), kicking off the Angolan War of Independence

(1961–1975). This conflict, much like the long-running war of Indonesia against OPM, was characterized by guerilla warfare in which the Portuguese army faced an insurgent group dispersed widely across rural territory whose favored tactics were hit-and-runs. As part of its counterinsurgency campaign, Portugal forcibly relocated over a million Angolans into “protected strategic settlements” (*aldeamentos*) where their movements could be better monitored. This relocation, in turn, opened up a considerable amount of land for new white settlers. The *colonatos*, a demographic buffer through which no indigenous insurgents could pass unnoticed, were envisioned to serve a security buffer between Angola’s urban centers and the insurgent-controlled interior.

Warfare, and the use of ethnicity to distinguish between friend and foe, also accounts for many of the cases in which European colonial states *did* actively organize and intend the elimination of indigenous peoples. For instance, consider the fairly well-established series of events that led to the Appin Massacre in 1816, often described as the first state-sanctioned mass killing of indigenous people in Australia.⁴⁸ The Governor of New South Wales at the time generally sought to encourage indigenous assimilation with a view to increasing the amount of labor in his colony, exhorting “the Natives to relinquish their wandering, idle and predatory Habits of Life, and to become industrious and Useful Members of a Community where they will find Protection and Encouragement.”⁴⁹ Governor Macquarie notably supported the establishment of indigenous schools and the allocation of land to indigenes in order to transform them into “civilized,” sedentary agriculturalists.

But when facing organized indigenous resistance, Macquarie was also quick to abandon assimilation. In 1814, a chain of tit-for-tat killings between European settlers and the Gandangara started in southwest Sydney following the murder of a youth who had taken maize from a settler farm. This localized conflict escalated in February 1816 when a group of settlers, in pursuit of a group who had stolen some food, was ambushed. During this attack and other similar ambushes over the next month, nine settlers were killed. Facing widespread criticism for his inaction and settler demands for protection, Macquarie ordered a military reprisal aimed at “clearing the Country of [Aborigines] entirely, and driving them across the mountains” and directed “as many Natives as possible to be made Prisoners, with the view of keeping them as Hostages *until the real guilty ones have surrendered themselves.*”⁵⁰ Lacking information on individual “guilt” or “innocence” for recent attacks, all Aborigines south-west of Sydney were treated as suspect based

on their shared ethnicity and subject to collective removal by the colonial state.

This case illustrates how European colonial genocides—like the genocide of the Herero in Namibia in 1904, the genocide of Tasmanian Aborigines in the 1820s, and the genocide of the Yuki in California in the mid-1800s—were preceded by rising conflict between indigenous groups and settlers. Indigenous bands would skirmish settlers in response to settler expansionism and predation of their land, livestock, and people. Facing settler demands for protection and unable to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, colonial states eliminated indigenous peoples in order to win frontier wars (Madley, 2004). As one *San Francisco Bulletin* editorial during the Yuki genocide summarized: “Extermination is the quickest and cheapest remedy, and effectually prevents all other difficulties when an outbreak [of violence] occurs.”⁵¹

States therefore clearly do sometimes organize and intend the mass displacement, dispossession, and killing of indigenous peoples—from Ireland in the 1600s, to California in the 1850s, or to Angola in the 1960s. But colonization is always the exception, never the rule. Colonization is distinct from policies like forced assimilation or slavery that seek to transform subject peoples into profitable sources of labor. As an “antieconomic” form of violence, one would expect states to only actively displace indigenous peoples during periods of war when there is little information other than ethnicity for states to distinguish friend from foe. In the midst of conflict, states particularly seek control over strategically important areas. So, frontiers endowed with rich natural resources and porous borderlands will both tend to be disproportionately cleansed and colonized by states. Theorizing the decision to colonize relative to the alternatives that exist for exploiting frontier lands sheds clearer light on when states become colonizers.

Finally, and completing the triangle, there is a third conflict between the geopolitical interests of states and the material interests of settlers. This conflict manifests very differently according to a country’s level of development. In less developed, agrarian settings, settlers desire frontier land but states seek to avoid costly wars with indigenes. To prevent war with indigenes, it is common for the metropole to demarcate zones of legal settlement for their colonists. But, as I have previously discussed, settlers often do not respect the laws of the center. Facing ongoing skirmishes between settlers and indigenes, states must weigh up the cost of policing their colonists with frontier war.

But in more developed, industrialized settings, states face the opposite problem of settler reticence. Given the high value of land in agrarian states,

it has long been easy for states to populate a contested frontier by offering “free land” there to colonists. As countries grow richer and the share of the population engaged in agriculture falls, however, urban areas—not “open frontiers”—attract migrants (Forsyth, 1942; Zelinsky, 1971). Consider the fact that most of Japan today is rapidly depopulating and the only area still growing substantially is its largest urban center, Tokyo.⁵² As living standards in the core rise, luring settlers to “backwater” peripheries like New Guinea or Angola through free land or other incentives becomes an ever more expensive and futile task. Hence, states, past a certain threshold of development, ultimately lose the power to colonize indigenous people.

In other words, global history is characterized by the rise and fall of settler colonialism as a technology of state building. As early states developed in Europe and Asia, officials there first harnessed the power to coercively settle contested frontiers. And the logic of state building explains why even formally “decolonized” nation-states like Indonesia and India continue to colonize indigenous peoples today. But, in a somewhat cruel historical irony, European and East Asian states were also the first to *lose* the power of colonization as they grew richer over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I detail in this book how even infamous settler states like Australia, China, Portugal, Greece, and the United States ultimately ceased colonizing frontiers not for lack of land but for lack of settlers.

Napoleon’s foreign minister, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, once quipped that empire is “the art of putting men in their place” (Pagden, 2007; Frymer, 2017). But as states modernize, they lose the art of putting men and women anywhere other than major urban centers. Modernization therefore spells the end of empire. For as states are obliged to pay more for settlers, they end up settling for less land.

I am aware that the argument of this book pushes against a number of countervailing intellectual trends in the academy today. Theoretically, the concept of “modernization” has acquired something of a bad name. Influenced heavily by Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, historians and social scientists long regarded the countries of Western Europe and North America as the paragons of “modernity,” providing a model of political and economic development that the rest of the world would eventually imitate. The notion of a linear, universal process of social change, however, was subject to heavy criticism in the late twentieth century.⁵³ Since then, understanding generalizable social “transitions” associated with economic development has fallen out of intellectual favor (Smith and King, 2012; King, 2012).

Yet, the baby has been thrown out with the Marxist bathwater. Economic change does prompt political change. Indeed, the durability of Marxist-influenced social science from the mid-twentieth century (e.g., Schumpeter 1942; Williams 1944; Polanyi 1944) is testament to the analytical power of historical materialism. In this book, I account for important changes in the way states engage with indigenous peoples whilst avoiding the discredited assumptions of orthodox Marxism and conventional modernization theory. Economic development does not prevent colonization by making politicians and settlers more humanitarian or less attached to “primordial” ethnic identities.⁵⁴ Rather, modernization prevents colonization by reconfiguring the location of valuable economic activity away from the rural-periphery and toward the urban-center. In doing so, modernization reverses the prevailing direction of migration, ending the power of states to colonize contested frontiers—and obliging states to reevaluate their relationships with indigenous peoples. The end of colonization means that decolonization, not imperialism, is actually the highest stage of capitalism (cf. Lenin 2010).

This book also pushes against the prevailing intellectual grain because it does not ascribe great importance to racial ideologies in the global history of settler colonialism. This is not because I think racial ideologies are completely unimportant; racist ideas have certainly helped license violence against indigenous peoples in some historical cases.⁵⁵ But recall that I began this book with a contrast between Australia and Indonesia—two countries with starkly different racial ideologies. In the end, the state committed to racial equality (Indonesia) became the violent colonizer and the state committed to white supremacy (Australia) became the willing decolonizer in New Guinea.

What these cases reveal is that notions of racial supremacy are neither a necessary nor sufficient explanation for colonization. Racism is not sufficient because even explicitly white supremacist states like Australia or the United States ceased colonizing indigenous peoples over the early twentieth century. Indeed, Australian and American officials became leading proponents of indigenous sovereignty in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines in the mid-twentieth century in large part *because* both states were committed to maintaining the whiteness of their nations; indigenous independence effectively prevented millions of poor, non-white peoples in these islands from making claims to Australian or American citizenship. Racism is consistent with both colonization and decolonization.

In addition to being insufficient, racism toward indigenous peoples is also not a necessary condition for colonization.⁵⁶ At Bandung in 1955, Sukarno

declared the dawning of a new day for all the peoples in the world united by “a common detestation of racialism” (Asian-African Conference, 1955, 22). Sukarno would go on to emphasize how Indonesia was a country without ethno-racial oppression, and was instead defined by the principles of “Live and Let Live” and “Unity in Diversity.” Indonesia’s colonization of West Papua has been difficult for observers to understand precisely because the violent dispossession of West Papuans by settlers appears to contradict Indonesia’s core ideological principles. We are confronted by the practice of colonization in a state rhetorically opposed to colonialism.

But just as notions of ineradicable racial inferiority can morph into arguments for decolonization, notions of ethnic equality can morph into rationalizations for colonization. When all ethno-racial groups share the same political rights, after all, no one group has any greater normative claim to a piece of territory than any other group. Equality before the law can therefore be used to rhetorically justify the *denial* of indigenous sovereignty. For instance, to justify the presence of Han settlers in ethnic minority areas like Tibet and Xinjiang, China’s President Xi Jinping recently emphasized how “Ethnic equality is the prerequisite and basis for achieving national unity . . . the Han cannot be separated from the ethnic minorities, and the ethnic minorities cannot be separated from the Han.”⁵⁷ Martono, Indonesia’s Minister for Transmigration, similarly emphasized how settling people in frontier areas like West Papua would “realize what has been pledged: to integrate all the ethnic groups into one nation, the Indonesian nation.”⁵⁸ The rhetoric of national equality was also recently used by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to justify the abrogation of Kashmiri autonomy. Modi emphasized how scrapping Article 370, which long prevented non-Kashmiris from emigrating to Kashmir, would help foster equality by removing the special legal privileges in Kashmir previously held by indigenous Kashmiris.⁵⁹

Racial ideologies are malleable things, easily twisted to rationalize the interests and actions of those in power. By way of analogy, consider how white Americans today resist policies like affirmative action that would affect their material standing by using the rhetoric not of racial supremacy but of racial equality and color blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Indigenous autonomy can be similarly delegitimated by those in power, like Sukarno, Modi, and Xi, for purporting to give special rights over a piece of territory to a particular ethnic group. “Ethnic equality” and “national development” then become codes for denying the territorial claims of indigenous peoples and flooding their lands with co-nationals.

The only necessary and sufficient condition for colonization is the existence of willing settlers. This is what makes economic development the most powerful force for ending the subjection of peoples to “alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation.” For if we are to understand why—exactly contrary to the expectations of Bandung’s participants in 1955—Indonesia colonized West Papua and Australia decolonized Papua New Guinea, then we must understand why Indonesians and not Australians were willing to emigrate to New Guinea for free land. By constraining the practice of colonization, economic development creates the demographic space for decolonization. I develop these and other implications of my findings further in the conclusion.

Following custom, I will now end this introduction by briefly summarizing the rest of the book. In the next chapter, I outline in much greater detail my theory of colonization. I take a shamelessly interdisciplinary approach, borrowing insights from anthropologists, historians, economists, political scientists, geographers, and demographers. My object of study demands this interdisciplinarity, as to understand settler colonialism we need to understand the intersection of land, migration, race, and state power. My aim in this chapter is to provide a toolbox of concepts for understanding the contingent place of coercive migration in state building. Throughout, there is a concern with distinguishing the logic of state-sponsored colonization from the logic of colonization initiated and led by private settlers.

The later chapters are then devoted to exploring how well my theory makes sense of different colonization schemes around the world by drawing on rich, newly collected historical data. My first two empirical chapters compare Indonesia’s and Australia’s colonization of West Papua and northern Australia, encompassing the Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea. Historical comparison illuminates the causes of settler colonialism that might not be evident when examining particular cases in isolation.⁶⁰ Comparing Indonesia and Australia in New Guinea allows me to control for other factors that we might think are important, like geography or resources, and better uncover how economic development shaped the success of these two countries at colonizing the same island.

These cases were also chosen for their historical importance. Indonesia’s transmigration program was the world’s largest voluntary resettlement scheme during the twentieth century and involved the assisted migration of over five million people (Whitten, 1987). Any theory of settler colonialism worth its salt should help make sense of this important case. Likewise,

Australia has long been regarded as an example of a state governed by a teleological logic of elimination. If Australia—the canonical “settler colony”—ceased colonizing indigenous peoples, then it is important that we understand precisely when and why.

In Chapter 3, I provide the first analysis of Indonesian transmigration using an unexplored archive of government statistical data. I have compiled detailed data on the yearly numbers of state-sponsored transmigrants and Muslims in every regency (county) in West Papua after 1964. Consistent with my theory, I find that Indonesia colonized its borderland with Papua New Guinea after 1984 in order to defeat secessionist insurgents based along its border. I secondly find that Indonesian transmigration in West Papua during this conflict is best explained by the location of valuable gold and petroleum resources. Drawing on the first comprehensive data on transmigration, I provide quite strong evidence that Indonesia’s colonization of West Papua was driven by the twin logics of resource extraction and counterinsurgency.

In Chapter 4, I contrast Indonesia’s “success” in colonizing West Papua with Australia’s failure to colonize its unsettled north. Australia attempted to colonize Papua New Guinea and the Northern Territory in the early twentieth century for a combination of ideological and security reasons. To understand why this failed, for Papua New Guinea I have compiled new data tracking the number of settlers both over time between 1906 and 1938 and within each district. There was almost no increase in the white population in Papua New Guinea over this period. Drawing on diverse archival sources, I find that the closure of Australia’s frontier can be attributed to the state’s inability to overcome the forces drawing Europeans to mainland cities. I then turn to examining Australia’s struggle to colonize its Northern Territory in the interwar period in response to the rising threat posed by Japan. I draw on archival sources to show how, as in Papua New Guinea, Australia was unable to settle its north due to countervailing forces drawing labor and capital to its more developed urban centers. Together, this chapter demonstrates that economic change, not normative change, is key to understanding why Australia ceased colonizing indigenous peoples during the twentieth century.

The next two chapters focus on the dynamics of settler colonialism in China. China has long occupied a central place in the study of frontier colonization. This is for good reason. As Scott (2009, 142) points out, “The nearly two-millennia push—sporadic but inexorable—of the Han [Chinese] state and Han settlers . . . has surely been the single great historical process

most responsible for driving people into the hills [of Southeast Asia].” The perceived inexorability of Han Chinese expansion, particularly after the adoption of modern transportation technologies, also makes China a hard case to corroborate my argument. For, as Owen Lattimore stressed in the mid-twentieth century: “wherever a region of frontier colonization is served by a railway there is no longer any doubt of the ascendancy of Chinese over the tribesman” (Lattimore, 1962, 316). But what if China’s rapid development over the late twentieth century instead reduced the power of the state to settle Han in minority areas?

Chapter 5, co-authored with Anna Zhang, uncovers the contingent origins of Han dominance in China’s frontiers by examining demographic change in northwest China. We compiled confidential internal statistical data tracking yearly Han Chinese settlement and ethnic minority expulsions in every county in the northwest province of Xinjiang since the early 1950s. We find that conflict with the former USSR over the Sino-Soviet split (1959–1982) explains why Han Chinese only predominate in certain areas of Xinjiang. China responded to the Sino-Soviet split by colonizing non-natural border areas, oil rich areas, and Russian-populated areas with Han Chinese. We also draw on Soviet census statistics to show that the USSR similarly responded to conflict by cleansing and settling strategically important border areas with China. International conflict and geopolitical strategy, not inexorable historical forces, reshaped the demography of much of Central Asia in a very short period of time.

In Chapter 6, I use the same demographic data to examine China’s struggle to colonize Xinjiang since the emergence of an Islamist insurgency there (1990–present). I find that, despite Beijing’s spending remarkable amounts of money trying to colonize Muslim-majority and border areas of Xinjiang with Han since 1990, very few Han Chinese have migrated to these areas. With the exception of the few oil-rich areas of Xinjiang, almost all internal migration over this time has been toward China’s rapidly industrializing eastern seaboard. By comparing China’s attempts to colonize the same region at two different times during the twentieth century, these two chapters show how China’s rapid development since the 1980s ultimately closed its western frontier.⁶¹ Consistent with the patterns from New Guinea, I show how *less* developed states actually have much *greater* power to colonize their frontiers. Given the economic forces drawing migrants to cities and away from rural areas, even wealthy and strong states such as Australia or China today have little power to settle contested peripheries.

To demonstrate that my theory applies more widely than these specific cases, in Chapter 7 I look at global patterns of colonization. This chapter is based on data that I have compiled on the incidence of settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing in the late twentieth century across all countries from a number of sources. Consistent with my argument, I find that settler colonialism tends to occur in less developed and territorially insecure states like Indonesia, Iraq, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. Such states tend to colonize rebellious and resource-rich minorities like the West Papuans, the Tamils, the Kurds, and the Rohingya, as well as minorities inhabiting contested border zones. There is little evidence that democratic institutions or international norms explain these patterns. Together, these chapters establish that that colonization is a highly patterned form of violence outmoded by economic development.

In the final chapter, I reflect on what the end of colonization means for our understanding of modernization and the politics of decolonization. Both the individual chapters and the conclusion are relatively self-contained, and the reader is free to peruse as she wishes.

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