

MORAL AND SCIENTIFIC BASES OF EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM

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Abstract

For over a century and a half, the European-centric imperial powers dominated and colonized much of the continents of Africa and Asia. Although the economic/military incentives and political/cultural forces were the principal drivers behind the colonial policies of the Old and the New European empires, alike. The European Imperialism, however, was a distinct phenomenon. It was particularly unique in its tradition to lay moral and scientific grounds for the subjugation and colonization of the Africans and Asians. In this respect, the European ethnographers first resorted to Race Theory, embodied in their mission to civilize Africans and Asians by colonizing them. This Civilization Mission of the Africans and Asians formed the bedrock of the greater part of nineteenth century European Colonialism. However, at the onset of the twentieth century, the Race Theory was superseded by an Organic Theory of Geography in which defence and territorial growth of an empire, rather than the civilizing mission of African and Asians, became *raison d'etre* for colonial domination and expansion. India was the first colony in modern colonial history that was not only subjected to the Racial Theory, manifested in the British mission to civilize Indians by subjugating and colonizing them but also to the Organic Theory of Political Geography, epitomized in the Great Game between the British and the Russian empires.

Key Words: Race Theory, Organic Theory of Political Geography, British-Raj, The Great Game.

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Race Theory and Imperial Morality

For over a century and a half, the European-centric imperial powers dominated and colonized much of the continents of Africa and Asia. The question of what really motivated these powers to colonize these rather vast continents finds almost a unanimous answer. Nearly every study that examines imperialism considers economic/military incentives and political/cultural forces, responsible - though with varying degrees - for imperial policies of the Old and the New empires, alike. Likewise, both the Old and the New empires carry a grim record of destruction, exploitation, and enslavement of once free peoples.¹

Notwithstanding, the nineteenth and the twentieth century European Imperialism was a distinct phenomenon. It was particularly unique in its tradition to lay moral and scientific grounds for the subjugation and colonization of the Africans and Asians.² This tradition was apparently suggestive of Europe's awakening from the Dark-Ages to an epoch of Modernity and Enlightenment.³ Consequently, the European thinkers began to challenge social and political dogmatism as well the role of clergy. This also included the rejection of monogenetic view of human-race.⁴ Consequently, a polygenetic view became commonplace, thereof a growing interest in the scientific inquiry into the origin and evolution of human races.⁵

¹ Michael W Doyle, "Empires" (London: Cornell University Press, 1986).

² J. A Hobson, "The Scientific Basis of Imperialism", *Political Science Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1902).

³ Rabia Umar Ali, "Medieval Europe: The Myth of Dark Ages and the Impact of Islam," in *Islamic Studies* 51, no. 2 (2012). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23643958>; Nicholas A. Germana, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, ed. Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni (Stanford University Press, 2007).

⁴ Sophie White, "One People and One God", In *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2012); Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, "Libertine and Libertinism: Polemic Uses of the Terms in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth Century English and Scottish Literature," in *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (2012). <http://jstor.org.proxy.library.upei.ca/stable/23242162>; Douglas Lorimer, "Race, Popular Science and Empire," in *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain, 1870–1914* (Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁵ Justin E. H. Smith, "The Specter of Polygenesis," in *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference: Race in Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

Although, the primary goal of such an inquiry was to set the European free from the old religious order. It was, however soon overtaken by politically informed and anthropologically biased views of human races, reflected in the exiguous observations and writings of Libertarians and Enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire, Hegel, Hume, Montesquieu, and Kant.⁶ These thinkers were not only cognizant of the purchase and export of millions of African slaves but were also aware of the demographic takeover of the Americas and the Caribbean by the European colonizers.⁷ In addition, these Enlightenment thinkers were much more concerned with establishing a racial differentiation and hierarchy between the European and the non-European races than a biological or scientific investigation into the origin and evolution of the human species. In this respect, they not only discarded the idea that the non-white or non-European can accomplish what European had achieved but also refused to acknowledge the non-European as human mainly because of their skin colour and facial features.⁸

Using skin colour and facial features, the European thinkers not only placed human races into various categories,⁹ but also draw social and intellectual differences between the European and non-European races, thus introducing racial hierarchy, hitherto unknown. In this categorization and hierarchy, the European progress of reason and sensibility was set as a benchmark against which the values and character of non-European were to be measured. It was argued that those who live beyond the fold of European history are culturally backward and bereft of values. This is because the Europeans had come out of the Dark Ages and immaturity by their courage to reject the role and control of the traditional guardians of society.¹⁰

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Eric Allina, "Ending Slavery and Creating Empire in Africa: From the "Indelible Stain" to the "Light of Civilization," in *Slavery by Any Other Name: African Life under Company Rule in Colonial Mozambique* (University of Virginia Press, 2012).

⁸ Justin E. H. Smith, "Race and Its Discontents in the Enlightenment," in *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference: Race in Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 2015); G. W. F. Hegel, Introduction to *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Dover Publication, New York, September 10, 2004).

⁹ Theodore Vial, "Modern Religion, Modern Race" Oxford University Press (2016).

¹⁰ Justin E. H. Smith, *Race*.

While the non-European not only lacked courage but also individual efforts to emerge out of their immaturity and minority status. Their societies failed to develop the sense of individualism which resulted in cultural stagnation thus they had no bases for either laws or freedom.¹¹ The non-European, it was argued, had been crawling in a perpetual state of barbarism and savagery; a condition that had prevented them from being an integral part of civilization.¹²

As an entire generation of enlightened European scholars discredited the cultural and intellectual contributions of the Africans and Asians,¹³ it laid the groundwork for the nineteenth century imperial ethnographers to justify the imperial intervention into the Asian and African continents and the subjugation of the natives. To lend credence to racial differentiation and hierarchy, the imperial ethnographers and colonial administrators also factored in the social efficiency, ascribing it to the economic, military, and technological superiority of the European civilization over Africans and the Asians who were branded as backward in every field of life.¹⁴ The Africans and Asians, asserted imperial ethnographers, cannot even temporarily prevail over their selfish feelings, therefore they should be governed and their lands must be developed by the superior race of Europe.¹⁵ In doing so, the superior and progressive white race of European, it was argued, could elevate the Africans and Asians out of their backward and primitive conditions. In comparison to their backwardness, the colonized status of the African and Asian was described as a

¹¹ Nicholas A Germana, "What Is Enlightenment?" in *The Anxiety of Autonomy and the Aesthetics of German Orientalism* (Rochester, New York; Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2017).

¹² Naik, J. V. "INSTANT INDIAN NATIONALIST REACTION TO JAMES MILL'S 'THE HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA.'" *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 63 (2002): 587–95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44158125>.

¹³ Robin D.G. Kelley, "A Poetics of Anticolonialism, introduction to *Discourse on Colonialism*", by Aime Cesaire (New York, Monthly Review Press 2000).

¹⁴ J.S Mill, "Civilization" in Marwah, Inder S. *COMPLICATING BARBARISM AND CIVILIZATION: MILL'S COMPLEX SOCIOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, in *History of Political Thought* 32, no. 2, (2011). <http://jstor.org.proxy.library.upei.ca/stable/26225716>.

¹⁵ J.A. Hobson, "The Scientific Basis of Imperialism," in *Political Science Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1902). doi:10.2307/2140538.

higher stage of their existence and development.¹⁶ The subjugation and colonization of the Africans and Asias was thus acclaimed as a moral and praiseworthy endeavour by the magnanimous white race of the Europe.¹⁷

Henceforth, the subjugation and colonization was justified as a moral mission of the European to humanize and civilize the Africans and Asians for their own betterment.¹⁸ This sanctimonious morality not only helped the European powers to set themselves apart from the invading hordes of the Old Empires.¹⁹ It also enabled them to create and maintain a spurious unity among themselves in their collectively launched sacred mission to civilize the Africans and Asians by colonizing them.²⁰

However, it is not as if these powers had no geopolitical differences or tension among themselves. They however had an underlying consensus that the white race of Europe should join hands in helping each other in their moral mission to civilize the Africans and Asians. In this regard, any rivalry or geopolitical tension among the white European race was considered detrimental which could undermine their collective moral responsibility to end the primitive and barbarian conditions prevalent among the dark races.²¹ This probably explains why the European powers, during the eighteen and the early nineteenth centuries, preferred diplomacy over war to resolve their geopolitical differences or boundary contests.²² Nonetheless, this racially driven shared mission to civilize the Africans and Asians was not the actual reason, let alone, a major factor that had kept the European powers from fighting

¹⁶ N. Noah Bassil, "The Legacy of Colonial Racism in Africa" in *AQ: Australian Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (2005). <http://jstor.org.proxy.library.upei.ca/stable/20638352>.

¹⁷ Timothy H. Parsons, "Mobilising Britain's African Empire for War: Pragmatism vs Trusteeship", in *Journal of Modern European History* 13, no. 2 (2015).

¹⁸ Beate Jahn, "Barbarian Thoughts: Imperialism in the Philosophy of John Stuart Mill," in *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2005). <http://jstor.org.proxy.library.upei.ca/stable/40072091>; Ronald J. Horvath, "A Definition of Colonialism," in *Current Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (1972). <https://journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/201248>.

¹⁹ H. J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," in *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904). doi:10.2307/177549.

²⁰ Timothy H. Parsons, "Mobilising Britain's African Empire for War."

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

each other. Instead, these powers were able to avoid direct and open geopolitical competition and rivalry among themselves due to the fact that much of the interior of Asia and Africa remained either unoccupied or under the dwindling structure of the Old imperial powers. In other words, the European powers had yet to stretch themselves - territorially or geographically - to the extent where they had no option but to defend or challenge the colonial status quo at the frontiers which could have sparked a mutual rivalry or war among ever expanding imperial powers. For instance, it was not until 1849 when the first Frenchman would set his foot in the port of Shanghai, while the British were still struggling to establish and consolidate their power in India.²³ Likewise, the European powers were yet to venture into the interiors of Africa and as they held control over only thirty five percent of the Earth's surface in 1800, there seemed no reason for them to indulge into an open geopolitical competition or rivalry with each other.²⁴

This situation, however, began to change towards the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly, after the European powers rushed to colonize the vast swaths of Asian and African territories.²⁵ As these powers annexed and divided up the interiors of Africa and Asia, the uncontested regions or territories began to shrink at an unprecedented pace. The same period saw - thanks to the technological advancement, rapid transportation system, and improved military methods - the expansion of the Tsarist Empire into Central Asia under the same moral mission to enhance the European civilization and enlightenment into the remote and backward

²³ Mathilde Kang and Martin Munro, "Conclusion: Towards a Francophonie of Cohabitation," in *Francophonie and the Orient: French-Asian Transcultural Crossings (1840-1940)*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018). doi: 10.2307/j.ctv80cd6t.9.Copy.

²⁴ Edward Said, *Culture Imperialism*.

²⁵ B. J. Ramage, "The Partition of Africa," in *The Sewanee Review* 7, no. 2 (1899), 221-38.

<http://jstor.org.proxy.library.upei.ca/stable/27528042>; Ieuan Griffiths, "The Scramble for Africa: Inherited Political Boundaries," in *The Geographical Journal* 152, no. 2 (1986), 204-16. doi:10.2307/634762.

region of Central Asia.²⁶ In the meanwhile, the originally European colonialists of America began to build and expand their own Empire.²⁷

This colonial expansion became intensified after lesser and newly emerged imperial powers went onto assert their power to pre-empt threatening moves by others imperial powers.²⁸ This rapid expansion brought almost eighty five percent of the Earth under the European Imperial Powers, leaving hardly any region and its inhabitants untouched by their so-called civilizing mission, except few unoccupied spaces at the fringes of colonial frontiers.²⁹

Against this backdrop, it became almost impossible for the competitive and combative European powers to avoid conflict or geopolitical competition with each other; the way they had managed to do throughout the eighteenth and better part of the nineteenth century.³⁰ And as they pressed ahead with further expansion, they found themselves at each other's colonial frontiers which raised the prospects of direct conflict. This obviously would have exposed the racially erected unity and civilized nature of European powers. To avert such an embarrassing and damaging scenario, the proponents of the Race Theory urged the European powers to stay united in their moral mission to civilize the Asiatic population.³¹ Since Europeans powers, they believed, were commonly fated in their moral mission to civilize the

²⁶ Ulrich Hofmeister, "Civilization and Russification in Tsarist Central Asia, 1860–1917," in *Journal of World History* 27, no. 3 (2016), 411-42. <http://jstor.org.proxy.library.upei.ca/stable/44631473>. Copy

²⁷ Daniel Immerwahr, "How the US has hidden its empire," in *The Guardian* 15 February (2019). <https://theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/15/the-us-hidden-empire-overseas-territories-united-states-guam-puerto-rico-american-samoa>; Henry Nash Smith, "Walt Whitman and Manifest Destiny," in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (1947), 373-89. doi:10.2307/3815800.

²⁸ Jeremy Black, *Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance* (Indiana University Press, 2016).

²⁹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

³⁰ Boris Kagarlitsky and Renfrey Clarke, "The Crimean War and the World System," in *Empire of the Periphery: Russia and the World System* (LONDON; ANN ARBOR, MI: Pluto Press, 2008).

³¹ C. E. Biddulph, "Russian Central Asia," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1891), 563-97. <http://jstor.org.proxy.library.upei.ca/stable/25197068>.

Africans and Asians therefore they must observe the principles of equality and non-interference among themselves.³²

However, the growing geopolitical tension and rivalry among the colonial powers, emanating from their relentless push to dominate and occupy the last remaining pockets of unoccupied territories, frustrated the last ditch-efforts by the advocates of Race Theory to keep the imperial powers united in their common mission to civilize the Africans and Asians by subjugating and colonizing them.

This paved the way for imperial geographers and military strategists to come forward with fresh perspectives on the need to expand the territory of an empire and practical solutions to deal with geopolitical competition and rivalry among imperial powers arising from their colonial expansion.

This marked a major transformation in the imperial discourse on colonial realities, hitherto grasped in cultural and racial terms. Afterward, colonies were largely discussed in terms of their strategic location, resources and their significance in the defence and growth of mother country versus other empires.³³ In the following section, we will understand how imperial geographers and military strategists replaced Race Theory with an Organic Theory of Political Geography to offer scientific grounds for colonial expansion and geopolitical tension among imperial powers.

The Organic Theory of Political Geography

As European Imperial powers failed to rein into their combative and expansionist tendencies, the advocates of the Race Theory had to concede that the ideas of pure racial types and fixed racial hierarchies had become irrelevant to the discussion of

³² Christopher Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire: Protestant Colonialism and Conscience in British Literature* (the University of Missouri, first edition, December 19, 2002), 192; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 96.

³³ Jeremy Black, *Geopolitics*, 122.

race.³⁴ It was an admission of guilt because they could no longer justify the subjugation and colonization of Africans and the Asians in terms of Race Theory which had long rested on the premise that the white race of Europe had come out of the Dark Ages and had fully embraced a civilized way of living and behaving. In other words, the claim that civilized and progressive race of Europe no longer fight with each other the way the savages and barbarian hordes of Old Empires had done in the past. And this gives them moral authority to interference in those regions where people still live and behave like barbarian and help them become progressive and civilized.

Thus, at the face of growing rivalry and geopolitical conflict among the so called civilized European powers, the Race Theory became not only untenable but redundant. This also meant that the whole idea of colonialism could no longer be defended let alone sustained. To avoid such an eventuality, a new breed of imperial geographers and military strategists came forward to offer scientific bases for the existence and expansion of European empires.

In this regard, several political geographers such as F. Ratzel (1844-1904), Rudolf Kjellen (1864-1922),³⁵ and Halford J. Mackinder (1861–1947),³⁶ contributed towards laying a scientific bases of European Imperialism and colonial policies. Drawing on the political and geographical insights of the earlier thinkers and tapping into the rich resources and archives of geographical societies such as the Paris Society (1821), the Berlin Society (1828) and the Royal Geographical Society (1830), these political geographers articulated a theory that meshed science with colonial geopolitics.

³⁴ Helen Tilley, "Racial Science, Geopolitics, and Empires: Paradoxes of Power", *Isis* 105, no. 4 (2014), 775. doi:10.1086/679424.

³⁵ Heinz Brill, *Political geography, geopolitics, geostrategy*.

³⁶ H. J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," in *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904), 421-37. doi:10.2307/1775498.

The central argument of these political geographers was that the existence and survival of an empire depends upon its colonial territories and their expansion. In this respect, they not only made colonies an organic part of mother country, such as, England and France but also made them intrinsic to the political life of their empires.³⁷ In this organic relationship, the mother countries, argued the political geographers, represent the core of political geography which is naturally and organically linked to its colonial territories.³⁸ Their life and death hinges on the growth and static boundaries of their colonies, respectively. In other words, if a colonial State does not expand, it is bound to face the prospects of decay and eventual death. And if it expands, it will not only survive but also thrive against all the odds. In this growth and decay kinesis, the frontiers of a colonial State would play a vital role despite their status as peripheral organs. This is because the gains and losses of territories, domination, and the sphere of influence of a colonial State will commence at its colonial frontiers.³⁹

The colonial frontiers of an empire were thus placed at the centre of Imperial geopolitics, while any loss and gain of territories at the frontiers was linked to the geographical position of an empire and the material conditions of its mobility.⁴⁰ This rather self-serving scientific argument or description of political geography enabled the European powers to not only justify the retention and expansion of their colonial possessions without recourse to racially constructed moral obligation to subjugate and colonize the Asians and Africans. It also furnished them with a kind of rationale to naturalize their mutual geopolitical competition to dominate and colonize the interiors of African and Asian continents.⁴¹ For instance, the British refused to accept the Russian's civilizing mission of Central Asia, interpreting it as a strategic

³⁷ Charles B Hagan, "Geopolitics," in *The Journal of Politics* 4, no. 4 (1942), 478-90. doi:10.2307/2125653.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Charles. B Hagan, "Geopolitics," *The Journal of Politics* 4, no. 4 (1942), 478-90.

⁴⁰ Charles B Hagan, "Geopolitics.

⁴¹ H. J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," in *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904), 421-37. doi:10.2307/1775498.

move by the Tsarist regime to dominate the marginal lands, or peripheral organs of Euro-Asia. This, according to the British political geographers and military strategists, would offset the balance of power in Russia's favour and with its vast continental resources, Russia would become the leading empire of the world.⁴²

Thus, as European empires went on to replace Race Theory with an Organic Theory of Political Geography, the territorial defence of colonies and their expansion rather than a civilizing-mission of colonized subjects became the norm. In the course, the colonial realities, hitherto grasped in cultural and racial terms, such as primitive, backward, and barbarian were superseded by geographical expressions, such as, terrain, territory, blocks, regions, and frontiers.⁴³ This geopolitical discourse transformed the very image and perception of colonies. No longer referred or treated as strange, backward, and dark places of the world, the colonies, the colonies were now described as pivotal, intrinsic, integral, and strategically important parts of empires. Their geographical status was raised to a level of importance much higher than the previously constructed image of their native subjects.

Consequently, the colonized subjects, who had already been deprived of their right to self-rule, found themselves dispossessed of the very land they had inhabited for centuries. For example, India was the first colony in the modern colonial history where shift in the imperial narrative from Race-Theory to an Organic Theory of Political Geography became all too visible. For example, Indians, from the viewpoint of Racial Theory, were described as one of the 'rudest and weakest state of the human mind'⁴⁴ who were not only incapable of governing themselves but also entirely unfit to exercise even a limited self-government, granted to them by the British Colonial Establishment in India. Based on this racially and socially

⁴² H.J. Mackinder, *The Geographical Pivot*.

⁴³ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 57

⁴⁴ Beate Jahn, "Barbarian Thoughts: Imperialism in the Philosophy of John Stuart Mill," in *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2005). <http://jstor.org.proxy.library.upei.ca/stable/40072091>.

constructed inferior/subordinate versus superior/superordinate relationship, the British ethnographers, and administrators such as J.S Mill were able to erect system of racial domination and segregation against Indian natives.

More so, the British also used their racial superiority and social efficiency to restructure the entire administrative, political, and economic system of India, tailoring it to the interests and needs of the British Empire.⁴⁵ In the course, Indians were not only debarred from exercising a modicum of sovereignty let-alone administering their own economic and political affairs. They were also subjected to social inferiority and humiliation. Likewise, when political geographers came forward to justify the predatory, expansionist and combative nature of European imperial powers, India found itself at the centre of Kipling's Great Game and later at Mackinder's Geopolitical Pivot.

Subsequently, the issue of Indian subject was replaced with the defence of India.⁴⁶ To this effect, Viceroy Lord Nathaniel Curzon (1898-1905), among others who came before him, such as, Dufferin (1884-8), Lansdowne (1888-94), and Elgin (1894-9), were the key figures who made significant efforts in creating organic and intrinsic relationship between their Indian colony and mother country England. For instance, Curzon's description of India as a fortress which must be defended against Russian penetration⁴⁷ signalled and signified the change in imperial narrative from civilizing the Indian natives to defending India against Russian expansionist designs. Henceforth, the British hardly mentioned the Civilizing-Mission of the Indian, let alone, referring India as a colony.

Thus, as the twentieth century progressed, the racially constructed image of India as a land without systems of geography and history was reconstructed as the centre of the

⁴⁵ Pandit Sunderlal, "British Rule in India," Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1 edition, 1 August (2018).

⁴⁶ Karl E. Meyer, *The Dust of Empire: The Race for Supremacy in the Asian Heartland* (Little, Brown December 31, 2010); Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (Tantor Media Inc; Unabridged edition, August 29, 2017).

⁴⁷ (Curzon and Raleigh 1906:130-1)

Asian security system. In doing so, the British geographers and military strategists not only turned India into an organic part of England but also made it a stepping stone for the further expansion of British Empire. For example, the British used Indian bases and resources to dominate the entire Indian Ocean, the security of Afghanistan, Persia, Burma, Singapore, and Malaya. Subsequently, India became the most important piece on a chessboard upon which the imperial geopolitics was played out till the last remaining regions or places were dominated and colonized by the imperial powers.⁴⁸

However, with no more space or regions to colonize, the imperial powers faced the real prospects of stagnation, which, according to their political geographers and military strategists, would cause decay and eventual death of an empire. The necessity to grow and expand thus led to the outbreak of the First World War among imperial powers. Although the Allied imperial powers (Great Britain, France, and the Russian) defeated the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey) and divided most of their colonies in Africa and Asia among themselves⁴⁹. Yet, in short span of time, the defeated powers, especially Germany joined by the disgruntled Imperial powers such as Italy and Japan began to claim their right to expand, dominate and colonize. These powers went on to rework not only the Organic Theory of Political Geography but also the Race Theory. Their combined fatal effects created the Second World War among the Imperial powers, the magnitude and ferocity of which rendered the very terms of ideology and geopolitics into negative adjectives or pejorative concepts.

This also ushered in an accelerated process of decolonization and the end of imperial epoch itself, revealing the actual conditions of colonies, long hidden behind the smokescreen of Race Theory and Organic Geopolitics. For instance, India, once described the Jewel in the British Crown and the geopolitical pivot came out from its

⁴⁸ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (University of Minnesota Press; New edition August 1, 1996).

⁴⁹ BECKY LITTLE, How Imperialism Set the Stage for World War I, HISTORY. JULY 19, 2023. <https://www.history.com/news/imperialism-causes-world-war-i>

colonial overlay as one of the most backward and poor regions in the world, enjoying a marginal role in post-Second World War economic and geopolitical order.

Conclusion

This article set out to examine how the Europe centric imperial powers deployed moral and scientific arguments to justify and rationalize the subjugation and colonization of Africans and Asians. In the course, the article revealed the way European ethnographers first resorted to Race Theory according to which the white European race was superior to the non-white races dwelling beyond the fold of Europe. The white race of Europe, argued the advocates of Race Theory, displayed an extraordinary courage to challenge the role and control of the traditional guardians of society and politics such as clergy and absolute monarchy. This eventually enabled them to come out of their Dark Ages and immaturity thus ushering in a new era of Modernity and Enlightenment in Europe. In the process, the white race of Europe acquired primacy and higher standards in almost all fields of life, including commerce, manufacturing, agriculture, law, administration of justice, systematic employment of the collective strength of society, transportation, technology, and military.

Whereas the non-white races of Asia and Africa not only lacked individual let alone collective courage to follow the white European path of Modernity and Enlightenment. They also failed to emerge out of their immature and minority status. Moreover, the non-white and non-European races refused to develop a sense of individualism which kept their culture stagnant and their societies inefficient.

It was, therefore, a moral responsibility of the white European race to elevate the non-white races of Africa and Asia from their abject, backward, and primitive conditions by subjugating and colonizing them. The advocates of Race Theory acclaimed such efforts as a moral mission of the white European race to humanize and civilize the non-white and non-European races. Based on this self-serving Civilization Mission of the Orient, the European powers continued with their colonial policies till

the last remaining pockets of Africana and Asian interiors were subjugated and colonized.

Thus, with no more regions to conquer and colonize and their inhabitants to be humanized and civilized, the European powers found themselves face to face at each other's colonial frontiers. Their relentless appetite to expand soon exposed their combative and predatory nature long hidden under the garb of their so called collective moral mission to civilize the Orient by colonizing them.

Against this backdrop, a new breed of imperial geographers and military strategists came forward to offer scientific grounds for colonial policies. Colonies, they argued, are organically and intrinsically linked to the mother country whose survival and growth depends upon its ability to defend and expand its colonial possession. As this so-called scientific discourse on political geography gained traction, the very conditions and existence of colonized subjects was allowed to fade into oblivion. Consequently, the colonized subjects, who had already been deprived of their right to self-rule, found themselves dispossessed of the very land they had inhabited for centuries.

India, this article revealed, was the first colony in the modern colonial history that took the brunt of imperial morality and science. Based on Race Theory, the British justified the colonization of India because Indians according to the advocates of Race Theory, were not only ill-mannered were also too feeble and inept to govern themselves. Based on this racial description, the British subjected Indian natives to social segregation, humiliation, and discrimination.

Likewise, when political geographers came forward to justify the combative and expansionist nature and behaviour of the European powers, the civilization of Indians was replaced with consolidation and expansion of Indian colony which was considered pivotal for the survival and growth of British Empire. In the course, the issue of Indian natives became insignificant.

Thus, both the Race Theory and the Organic Theory of Political Geography were imperial constructs and were deployed by the European powers to justify the subjugation and colonization of Africa and Asia.

It was however European who suffered most at the hands of Race Theory and Organic Theory of Political Geography when fascist regimes in Italy and Germany began to assert their right to expand, dominate and colonize. The Race Theory and Organic Theory of Political Geography came in full circle when fascist Italy and Nazi Germany added super/marshal race element with its blind patriotism/nationalism and glorification of their race to the existing knowledge and practices of Race-Theory.⁵⁰ In doing so, the German and Italian placed their race not only above the so-called uncivilized and barbarous nations of the East but also the European Slaves, Poles, Jews, and others.⁵¹

Likewise, these new imperial powers reworked - with much more precision and lucidity - the Organic Theory of Political Geography into their own geopolitical visions, arguing that imperialism is a law of nature, just as life was struggle, conflict, and conquest.⁵² For instance, Mussolini sought to reincarnate the ideal of Romanita, the greatness, and the domination of the Roman Empire.⁵³ Likewise, Hitler's Germany reinforced Friedrich Ratzel's term lebensraum (living space). The Nazi regime made lebensraum necessary for the physical, economic, and political development of the German people⁵⁴. As these powers began to execute their imperial projects under the

⁵⁰ Esmonde Robertson, "Race as a Factor in Mussolini's Policy in Africa and Europe," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (1988), 37-58. See also William Brustein, "The "Red Menace" and the Rise of Italian Fascism." *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 5 (1991), 652-64.

⁵¹ Robert O Paxton, "The Five Stages of Fascism." *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 1 (1998), 1-23. See also Levy, Carl. "Fascism, National Socialism and Conservatives in Europe, 1914-1945: Issues for Comparativists." *Contemporary European History* 8, no. 1 (1999): 97-126. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20081692>.

⁵² Alexander De Grand, "Mussolini's Follies: Fascism in Its Imperial and Racist Phase, 1935-1940." *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 2 (2004), 127-47.

⁵³ Kenneth Scott, "Mussolini and the Roman Empire," *The Classical Journal* 27, no. 9 (1932), 645-57.

⁵⁴ Charles Kruszewski, , "International Affairs: Germany's Lebensraum," *The American Political Science Review* 34, no. 5 (1940), 964-75. See also Trevor J., Barnes, and Claudio Minca, "Nazi Spatial Theory: The

guise of their own rather potent racial ideology and organic geopolitics, their combined fatal effects created the Second (Imperial) World War, the magnitude and ferocity of which rendered the very terms of Ideology and Geopolitics into pejorative concepts.