



## An Empire Rests on Sand

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If one chooses to understand the colonial system, he must admit that it is unstable and its equilibrium is constantly threatened.

Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*

### ABSTRACT

This paper tries to show that the colonial system in its continuous attempts to efface the subaltern culture by both violence and assimilation, induces nothing but more potential of national resistance and defiant spirit. The colonial force of monolithic authority, atrocities, and acts of disinformation operates reversibly and breeds uncontrollable and uncontainable challenges that work in the direction of wrecking such force and all its institutions. Colonialism, being the phenomena of force, violence, austerity, and a structure of cross-cultural domination has catalyzed menacing effects that underpinned in complex ways the whole colonial system and the set of values upon which this system is based. Being the subject to a continued process of oppression and degradation, the colonized was, as always, driven into the point where neither giving up fighting nor establishing any compromise is applicable. Struggle becomes a ritual for him and carrying whatever is available to fight his oppressor is the only path towards liberation and freedom. These people who have survived a petrified state imposed by the colonial strategies have hardened their determination to fight and sacrifice everything in their battle of regaining dignity and pride. Such people, rebellious and recalcitrant, are capable of establishing a huge power that can bring the colonial empires into collapse.

**Keywords:** colonialism, disinformation, hierarchy, resistance, liberation.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Historical Back Ground

European colonization came into being by exigent motivations of economic factors which necessitated a massive upsurge into exotic lands looking for profit and gains. Voyages and fleets were sent to different parts of the world under the pretext of exploration and laying the bridges of communication with people from the other world. Soon the pretext of exploration

turned to be a highly planned colonial project of conquest, exploitation and colonization. Masked by the pragmatic rhetoric of altruism, benevolence and promulgating Christianity, this colonial project succeeded in establishing its exploiting institutions by using both manipulation and coercive powers to outspread dominance over the colonized lands. It is evident that the impact of colonialism on colonized people is tragic and disastrous yet, this impact does not fail to affect the colonizer as well. A part from being dehumanized by the role he has to play, the colonizer becomes insecure, displaced, ambivalent and unstable in the colonized land. These pathological aspects become the identifying marks of the colonial rule which work not only in eroding its institutions but rather in consolidating the sense of fear, conflict and suspicion in the colonizer. At such point of instability and fragility, the colonial monolithic power is effectively disrupted and constrained. By the reason of such characteristics, the colonial systems have thrown away the capacity of possessing a firm stand or a rooted platform in the colonized lands which eventually led to and brought about the effective end of all colonial empires.

The assumption of the inequality and unlikeness of human races that posits the superiority of the white race and the inferiority of the non-white was a politically formulated articulation to naturalize the thrust to territorial expansions and colonial dominance. The European's intolerant persistence in asserting the dichotomous characteristics between the self and the other has created a traumatic atmosphere between the two and sharpened the sense of aversion and resentment held by both to each other. The colonizer's way of seeing and interpreting both his own cultural identities and that of the colonized not as variety of cultures but as hierarchal ensembles is seen by the latter as an unjustified and traumatic stand that necessitates a force of resistance to dismantle such a "compartmentalized structure" (Frantz Fanon 1961). Energized and fueled by the accumulation of anger and indignation, the colonized started to clamor and agitate the colonial presence in the colonized land by forming a critical force of deterrence and ever-increasing resistance to eject the colonizer and the colonial exploitive system out and at all costs.

## **1.2 The Empire Expansion**

### **1.2.1 The Negative Aspects of Expansion**

The traditional European and British colonial expansions beyond their borders since the fourteenth century have instigated national conscience and indigenous cultural reaction that incited inexhaustible native resistance and armed struggle. Such struggle, which eventually led to liberation and independence, by those who have been silenced and oppressed for long has caused the reversal of the relation of power between the colonizer and the colonized and enunciated a new era in which "the soul of a nation, long oppressed, finds utterance (qt. Elleke Boehmer (1995). In such explosive and inflammable atmosphere, there is only one outcome with threatening effects to the colonizer's rule and that is the outrage of the colonized which "can produce an explosive mixture of unexpected power" (Frantz Fanon 1961). that cannot be curtailed or contained. Anger and indignation caused by the colonizer's inhuman acts have provided the colonized with affirmed physical stamina to revolt and strike. In his fortitude and determination to preserve against the colonizer's acts of extermination and restriction, the colonized emerges as a force of defiance and an agency of resistance that

is left with no choice other than the destruction of the usurper. For the colonized who went through a systematic process of exploitation, humiliation, tragic suffering and dispossession that confiscated all his belongings, freedom and dignity, this alien and arbitrarily imposed phenomenon of colonialism necessitates an urgent and indispensable means of a death struggle to regain what has been usurped from him. His real weapon might not be the strong and advanced military apparatuses the colonizer possesses but his long and agonizing memories of death and pain inflicted on him by the colonizer have equipped him with a firm determination to confront his enemy with a stick or a knife or even bare-handed. For the colonizer, who grows unstable, displaced and insecure due to the repercussions of the perilous strangeness and bewilderment of the exotic world beyond his borders, the colonial phenomena become an instance of irremediable trauma and complicated predicament that limits power and curbs functionality. Such status of confusion and perturbation in an unpredictable land has culminated in personal, psychological and material costs that eventually brought the colonial system to its inevitable doom and destruction.

The Eurocentric scheme and assumption of 'hierarchizing' the human race into superior and inferior had dominated the early European thinking and became an overwhelmingly inveterate belief in the nineteenth-century. This rhetoric of persuasion was highly articulated to convince the colonized of his backwardness, ignorance and being without culture. It was a carefully constructed message with concomitant rhetoric that necessitated a relationship of hierarchy between the colonizer and the colonized in which the former was privileged with superiority by creating a myth of himself while the latter was deemed as the inferior who cannot govern himself, thus he needs bonds of control and tutelage. Moreover, the colonizer associated the colonized people with every malignant characteristic like laziness<sup>1</sup>, wickedness, and a lack of logic and morality in an attempt to justify acts of annexation huge swath of territory, appropriation, massacring and violence. This concept in which Edward Said refers to a "the self and the other" was created for helping the colonizer to invade and control the other's land and put hand on its natural resources. It was constructed by the colonial powers to highlight an antithetical relationship of 'binary opposition' (in Derrida's term) in which the colonizer is elevated and raised into higher position and thus the colonized is degraded and deemed nether because each entity is defined against what it is not. Presenting the 'other' as the indolent, wicked and without culture to highlight and magnify the benevolent, active and superior 'self' as an opposite and antithesis image stimulates the rise of a protesting native culture and rigorous revolutionary spirit that goes beyond any militant power and acts of assimilation enacted by the colonizer. The idea of constructing the colonized in the most degenerating forms of denial, negation and dependency is to reduce those rightful owners of the land into the confinement of the smallest, most offensive and marginalised spaces, physically and spiritually, in an attempt to justify conquest and subsequent rule. Edward Said writes in referring to how the colonized is represented, "Thus the status of colonized people has been fixed in zones of dependency and peripherality, stigmatized in the designation of underdeveloped, less-developed, developing states, ruled by a superior, developed, or metropolitan colonizer who was theoretically posited as a categorically antithetical overlord"(Edward Said 1989). Inevitably, such ethnocentrism by which the colonial discourse constitutes two antithesis identities that both work in the interest of the colonial project provide and ground an ineluctable possibility of engendering a

counter-discourse to challenge and defy such an obtrusively asserted structure of representation. Benita Barry writes in this regard:

Within another critical mode which also rejects totalising abstracts of power as falsifying situations of domination and subordination, the notion of hegemony is inseparable from that of a counter hegemony. In this theory of power and contest, the process of procuring the consent of the oppressed and the marginalized to the existing structure of relationships through ideological inducement, necessarily generates dissent and resistance, since the subject is conceived as being constituted by means of incommensurable solicitations and heterogeneous social practices (Benita Parry 1995).

What kind of reaction would be expected from someone whose humanity has been deprecated and whose land and home have been expropriated by the power of the barrel of gun? What responses can one anticipate from those whose memories and history have been declared non-existent, effaced, and cancelled? The colonist has forced the colonized to take a bloody path through which the death of the former is the only alternative of life to the latter. "Violence" writes Fanon "is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It emboldens them, and restores their self-confidence" (Frantz Fanon 1961).

### **1.3 The Workability of the Colonial Project**

#### **1.3.1 Aspects of Failure**

The colonial project has proved to be unworkable premises and have ominous consequences due to many reasons. First, such project has negative effects as it "poses an imminent threat to both the normalized knowledge and disciplinary powers" (Frantz Fanon 1961). Second, "people don't give up if they are beaten down" because "[t]hey in fact hold on even more resolutely and more stubbornly" (Edward Said 2003). This unbroken sense of determination, defiance and staunchness manifests the colonized's strong will and purposefulness to continue struggle despite his being stuck in the most terrible position of suffering and collective punishment meted out by the colonizer. What makes the colonized the powerful and the capable agency is the sense of revolt and defiant spirit in confronting the colonial machine of death and propaganda tries to reduce him into the wicked, lazy and incorrigible indolent. Such representation has long been employed consistently and continuously by the colonizer in referring to the colonized people. Perhaps the best record of representing the other in such degraded and low status can be seen in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* which focuses on the relationship between Prospero, the white colonizer and Caliban, the non-white colonized. Caliban, is represented as the one "on whose nature, / Nurture can never stick" (*The Tempest*, IV.i.188-89). The monstrosity attributed to Caliban as the other who submissively follows his instinctual urges and to whom no reference of any single potential virtue was attached is a highly designated colonial process of disinformation aiming at creating a boundary between the self as a man and the other as a monster (the word monster, with pejorative epithets, to describe Caliban is mentioned forty times in *The Tempest*.) (Virginia Mason Vaughan (1985). Such keen insistence in criminalizing and bastardizing the other, even with inconsistent and contradictory claims (Stephen Orgel 1984) reflects not only the colonizer's imperial agenda and racial prejudice but also indicates a high

level of fear and traumatic anxiety that dwell in the colonizer's self in his relationship with the other.

Believing wholeheartedly in his revolutionary will and the potentialities of his spirit, Caliban's voice challenges Prospero's mythic representation of power and authority. By unveiling the brutality and the greed of colonialism using colonizer's language, Caliban is able to show how the "civilizing mission" becomes one more a form of violence, hypocrisy and propaganda. The valour and strong accented curses Caliban initiates and concludes his first appearance on the stage in addressing his "powerful" oppressor mirror a substantial virility and warrior-like features that confront the colonial power and lock the "master" in a permanent moral and political quest. This deeply rooted sense of confidence the colonized possesses is an audacious step that grants him the power and credibility of making changes and possibilities exactly where and when no one think them possible. Those who defy the pitiless ravages of the colonist's provincialism, militarism, ideological rigidity are no more the silent victims and the fawning supplicant captives. Those who have been denied, slashed and violated are now taking the lead to make their own history.

## **1.4 The Colonial Hierarchal Classification**

### **1.4.1 The Colonial Hetero Relationship**

The heterogeneity the colonizer tries to assert in his relationship with the colonized is shaped by a "fixed" way of seeing and whetted by a xenophobic vision that negates the other and denies his presence. Such a vision is the very ground by which the colonizer identifies himself and intensifies his reference to the other as the opposite. In Memmi's words, "The distance which colonization places between him [the colonizer] and the colonized must be accounted for and, to justify himself, he increases this distance still further by placing the two figures irretrievably in opposition; his glorious position and the despicable one of the colonized" (Albert Memmi 1965). Such ideological orientation and way of seeing, which is prompted by ethnocentrism and provincialism, is not more than "cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it is not 'truth' but representations" (Edward Said 1987). This irrational representations have animated and traumatized the relationship between the two and turned it into a problematic and combustible one. Moreover, the colonial fanciful invariable assumption of the existence of this physical and intellectual gap between the West and the East is a subverting issue that sabotages the traditional dialectic of self and other and undermines the validity and credibility of the colonial cultural and ideological orientation. Albert Memmie elaborates this notion:

The traits ascribed to the colonized are incompatible with one another. He is depicted as frugal, sober, without many desires and, at the same time, he consumes alcohol, meat...etc.; as a coward who is afraid of suffering and as a brute who is not checked by any inhibitions of civilization. At the basis of the entire construction, one finally finds a common motive; the colonizer's economic and basic needs, which substitutes for logic which shape and explain each of the traits he assignees to the colonized ( Albert Memmi, 1965).

Such binary opposition imposed by the colonist in his relationship with the colonized people intensifies the colonial plight and complicates the situation because it is a contradictory and precarious. These contradictions and ambivalence of the colonial

representation in relation to the other testify a chronic frailty that “reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledge enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority”( Homi Bhabha 2002). The internal conflict that emerges from such instable status impels the colonizer, who is already coerced by his rigid cultural thoughts and resentment pertaining to the other, to recourse to irrational and imprudent strategy to maintain control which renders nothing but negative results that culminate to a crippling situation. Insecurity and uncertainty become the colonist’s daily life concern which disrupts the wholeness of his self and deprives him from the sense of tranquility and mental peace. He becomes dislodged from any stability, far from being in control and far from being secure. Robinson Crusoe, for example, in his traumatic and neurotic attempts to put Friday under surveillance turned himself to a confused and bewildered agent whose only way of interaction with the other is the reference to the gun and threats. He grew instigated, unstable and provoked to attack with a mad-like brutality at any pulse with his lethal “gun” that became the constant companion and the exclusive characteristic of his personality. Due to the overwhelming neurotic obsession in his security, the gun became not the device of protection but the constant reminder of his own danger and insecurity. The colonizer mistakenly believes that his security can be maintained by doubling his dozes of oppression and suppression against the colonized. He believes that by admitting the colonizer to an uninterrupted vindictive process of vilifying or mutilating on a daily basis can force the latter into a status of supplicating quiescence. On the contrary, every malice intention and cruel actions enacted by the colonizer to efface and repress the colonized are making the security and peace issue worse and much more complicated. It might be true that Robinson Crusoe in his alchemy, like any dictator or totalitarian system, oppressed and terrified Friday with his “magical gun”. And also it might be true that Crusoe ensured Friday’s total submission and compliant servitude by restricting the latter’s movements and activities but in fact Robinson Crusoe became mentally imprisoned by suspicion, fear and anxiety the first moment he met the native Friday. In the same connection Edward Said writes in theorizing the notion of the boomerang effects of the colonial acts against the colonized people. He gives a picture of the modes of cruelty and collective punishment committed by the Israeli forces against the Palestinians in the occupied land and the undesirable consequences of such acts:

What blindness and what moral obtuseness this is, as if more and more gratuitous punishment and humiliation of the Arabs will make Israel more acceptable and more popular instead of more hated and more likely to be the target of indiscriminate Arab violence. The Israelis seem to have learned nothing from the history of cruelty, which simply breeds counter-responses that prolong the dialectic of force, instead of the other way round (Edward Said 2000).

The colonial obsession in establishing monopolistic and ‘fixed’ disparity which informs and deforms interaction with the colonized is spurred not by a ratified truth but rather by uncouth appetite and urges of personal interests which lead the colonist astray and unhinged. The elision of identity which is maintained by a severe process of absenting the colonized presence serves to raise the social and cultural consciousness and intensifies the spirit of freedom and deepens his sense of rootedness. The colonized persistence in institutionalizing and valorizing the indigenous culture is part and parcel of his armed struggle to abrogate the

monocentrism of the colonial enterprise and Eurocentric. This social and political conscience, which is “a minimum condition for attaining freedom” (George Lamming 1960) sparks the colonized accumulated anger and the recalcitrant spirit which succumbs to no retreat and cannot be bogged down by the mystification of the colonizer. The political and combatant consciousness of the colonized is increasingly raising and is not any more in its rudimentary stage. And “in spite of the metamorphosis imposed . . . the colonized subject identifies his enemy, puts a name to all of his misfortune, and casts all his exacerbated hatred and rage in this new direction”( Frantz Fanon 1961). The colonized is no longer docile to such dichotomies set by the colonizer’s butts of rifles and the countless abuses he perpetrated in dealing with the colonized population. The colonized now possesses elements of truth, the truth of being present as the director of his destiny, the truth of being the director of the coming events, and the truth of his being himself as always. Frantz Fanon writes in regard to truth as a power, “Truth is what hastens the dislocation of the colonial regime, what fosters the emergence of the nation. Truth is what protects the ‘natives’ and undoes the foreigners. In the colonial context there is no truthful behaviour. And good is quite simply what hurts them most” (Frantz fanon 1961).

What makes the equation between such two non-equivalent powers bend in favour of the colonized in his struggle? No doubt it is the ability and durability of making a difference. Frantz Fanon posits his provoking question in relation to the militant confrontation between these non-equivalent powers, “What aberration of the mind drives these famished, enfeebled men lacking technology and organizational resources to think that only violence can liberate them faced with the occupier’s military and economic might/ how can they hope to triumph?”(Frantz Fanon 1961). Due to the heavy tasks and challenges undertaken by the colonized in facing the gigantic armament of the colonizer, the former now is stepping into an era of liberation and decolonization. Those who are ready to sacrifice anything are, as were in the past and most likely in the future, those who never give up their fight, defiance and resistance till they regain what has been usurped from them no matter how long their struggle will last. Edward Said conceptualizes such fervent tenacity in one of his interviews in referring to the struggle of the Palestinian people in their fight against the Israeli occupation force.

Human beings are very stubborn. It takes a slow seeping into the consciousness that the other side is not going to go away. Thinking that the Palestinians are going to simply give up if they are brought to their knees is foolish because they’re not [going to give up] (An interview with Edward Said, Book Notes. Brian Lamb. CNN July 2001).

## **1.5 Conclusion**

### **1.5.1 The Boomerang Effects**

Insistence and consistence to expose and pinpoint the colonial system of disinformation and arrogant pretension no doubt work in evincing the legitimacy of the colonized struggle and the credibility of his demands. Those people who have been forced into decades of ritual humiliations under occupation and oppression rise again to erect their present as the departing point from a painful past towards building a dignified future. Such revolutionary spirit breaks out sporadically here and there to sweep the colonial entity and drive it in the grip of a

wholesale panic. The colonist in the middle of such aggravated national and fervent raging finds himself isolated, frightened and restrained by a sweeping whirlwind whose force is beyond any imagination. The technological advances, the military power and the abundance of armament possessed by the colonist are aggressed by the colonized bare-handed rage and his perseverance of making an upheaval change.

Indeed what could be more courageous, global and vast than regaining one's own culture and identity with bare hands and invincible will? Identity is inscribed and created not won as a gift. Self-persistent and indefatigable energy to preserve resistance and the rhetoric of 'no surrender' what makes struggle against all forms of suppression and exploitation an insurmountable site of power and a new direction into the path of new birth. In Edward Said's words, "In human history there is always something beyond the realm of dominating systems, no matter how deeply they saturate society and this is obviously what makes change possible..."(Edward Said 1984).

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