

Book Review:

Settling for Less

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Settling for Less by Lachlan McNamee, 2023, Princeton University Press.

More than a regular dose of self-confidence is required to review Lachlan McNamee's *Settling for Less*. The book starts with the statement by Indonesia's President Sukarno at the Asian-African conference in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955, where he says: "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' (p. 1). The Bandung conference is often fondly remembered as the moment when the most marginalized peoples worldwide joined political forces against European colonizers (p. 1). Theoretically, McNamee provides a comprehensive overview of the existing Western perspective on settler Colonialism, which generally evokes a condition in which states discriminate against certain peoples based on their ethnicity. "Colonial subjects are generally victims of discrimination and exclusion from all forms of colonial rule. But in colonial India, Britain ruled in collaboration with native people."

European colonization was severely limited; Charles Wallis, the third Viceroy of India advised his superiors in London that it would be of essential importance to the interests of Britain that Europeans should be discharged and prevented as much as possible from colonizing and settling in possession of India (p. 5). Pertinent to this is the author's discussion of the oppression of natives, which, according to him, has engendered wars. 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 (p. 8). Alternatively, consider India, when in 2019 it revoked special status of Kashmir granted by the constitution of India to facilitate the migration of Hindus there. Encouraging Hindus to settle in a contested territory prompted considerable international outrage and resistance by native Kashmiris. Colonialism does not equate to ethnic cleansing when the state responds to an external threat by settling a contested borderland and that area is already inhabited by the majority ethnic group. For example, Indonesia and Malaysia share a long porous, land border on the Island of Borneo which was historically populated by an indigenous group, the Dayak, who were not commonly loyal to any state. On the other hand, colonialism tends to involve ethnic cleansing when the state is seeking to secure control over areas populated by disloyal minorities (p. 43).

The state is inclined to colonize and cleanse minorities whose co-ethnics are actively engaged in a civil war against the state. For instance, since the 1950s Myanmar has been consistently embroiled in warfare with several minority groups, such as the Kachin, the Shan and the Karen (p. 44). Another example is Australia, where ever since the early days of European settlement, the northern part of the continent has been the focus of Australian colonial anxieties. As Rowse has pointed out in a recent exchange, it is difficult to see how the colonization of Australia followed a logic of elimination, because settlers did not eliminate indigenous peoples in the northern half of the continent (p. 97).

Another example is China from 1952–1972, when the share of the Han Chinese population of the province of Xinjiang rose from six percent to almost forty percent. The massive change in Xinjiang's ethnic composition was far from inevitable, and far from spreading evenly across the province. China has never been alone in its settlement policy of central Asia (p. 100), as the USSR had also long pursued resettlement to the Far East under Stalin; so much so that Moscow had frequently used forced deportations to populate and develop Siberia. This resettlement policy experienced

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a new momentum due to a decline in Sino-Soviet relations. By the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union displayed conspicuous haste in planning to develop the vast and thinly populated region of Siberia by pouring in substantial capital and people. Internal Soviet census data corroborate this decline in the ethnic Russian community in the Russian Far East. Unfortunately, unlike in China, there do not exist publicly available yearly demographic data for the USSR (p. 111). However, Xinjiang have gained less worldwide attention than issues such as the plight of the Tibetans, Myanmar's Rohingya, Kashmir of India, or the Darfuris of Sudan (p. 135).

One of the initiatives of the book is how the author departs from two different theoretical building blocks. The first, the hypothesis that states and settlers have different interests, to the extent that states seek to maintain control over a territory at a minimal cost, while settlers migrate to wherever is most profitable. Second, states have several options for securing control over a contested territory, and from this perspective, McNamee's work makes a significant contribution to the existing scholarship on colonialism and its history, its internal mechanisms, as well as the theorization of native settlers, who are mostly neglected in relevant literature. I would categorize his understanding of colonialism as 'neocolonialism' that has existed within nation-states on the basis of ethnic and group divergence and conflict. However, the book has left a number of questions unanswered. Questions such as the definition of the concept of colonialism, especially in the context of indigeneity and how it can be understood through empirical work. However, *settling for Less*, should be viewed and studied from the perspective of ethnography, although it also discusses different secessionist movements, *inter alia*.

Another attractive section of the book is its discussion of the association of the different secessionist movements with colonialism, which is necessary to understand colonialism and its epistemological dimension. However, the author does not further engage in how the knowledge paradigm operates in native colonialism. Ultimately, *Settling for Less* is an essential reading for those who are interested in colonialism, ethnic conflict and secessionism, as well as their theoretical formulation and ontological embeddedness across the globe.

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