

Introduction

James Midgley and David Piachaud

From about the end of fifteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, a number of European nations used their economic, political and military power to subjugate, annex and settle vast geographic areas in Africa, Asia and the Americas. The Portuguese and Spanish initiated this process by embarking on mercantile voyages that resulted in the creation of trading enclaves on different continents. However, trade was soon followed by military conflict, annexation, colonial settlement and the subjugation of millions of people. Other European nations including the Netherlands, France and Britain followed the Iberian lead and subsequently the United States, Russia and Japan also undertook imperial expeditions. At the end of the nineteenth century, as new territories in Africa were conquered, imperialism reached its apogee. At the same time, the struggle for sovereignty was well underway. In Latin America, Iberian rule had already come to an end and nationalist independence movements were beginning to mobilize in Asia and other parts of the world. After the Second World War, these campaigns intensified and, over a period of just a few decades, European imperial rule disintegrated. By the end of the century, many new sovereign nation states had been created and today comprise the basic units of the current global economic and political system.

Although the history of European imperialism has been extensively documented, few people today are aware of its sheer extent and its effects on the lives of hundreds of millions of subjugated people. Historians have, of course, continued to pursue scholarly inquiry into diverse aspects of the imperial epoch, but generally, academic references to imperialism are now seldom made and it would appear that it is largely forgotten. It should be recognized, however, that from time to time over the last half-century, some social scientists have drawn attention to the imperial legacy, contending that it continues to influence current events. For example, in the 1970s, a group of scholars known as the dependency theorists (Amin, 1976; Frank, 1967, 1975; Rodney, 1972) claimed that despite securing formal independence from European rule, the developing countries continued to be subjugated to a highly unequal world system that perpetuated the global economic and political privileges of the metropolitan powers. They challenged the prevailing wisdom of the modernization school whose adherents (Hagan, 1962; Hozelitz, 1960; Lerner, 1958;

McClelland, 1964) took a more positive view of the imperial legacy, suggesting that it laid the foundations for economic progress and development. They urged the governments of the developing countries to adopt the economic policies of the Western nations and follow their industrial development trajectory. These countries, they argued, would prosper if they jettisoned their traditional cultures and became modern, urban and secular. Paradoxically, classical Marxists such as Warren (1980) shared this view, arguing that Marx and Engel's original position, as articulated in *The Communist Manifesto*, correctly analysed the role of imperialism in the diffusion of capitalism to the developing countries. By undermining oppressive and backward feudal structures in these societies, imperialism created a dynamic for social change that will eventually result in the creation of a socialist society. In the 1990s, the post-colonial school employed the very different insights of post-modernist analysis to highlight the way the imperial experience continues to influence attitudes, beliefs, cultures and practices in the modern world (Guha and Spivak, 1988; Said, 1978, 1993; Spivak, 1990).

More recently, these scholarly debates have been augmented by revisionist accounts of the imperial era. Ferguson's (2003) popular book *Empire* and television series exposed a wider public to the history of imperialism, and particularly British imperialism. Ferguson's book was timely, having appeared just as the government of the United States, with the help of the British and other governments, invaded Afghanistan and Iraq – two sovereign nation states. These invasions had overwhelming public support in the United States and also had the express approval of American neoconservative scholars who urged the creation of a new world order governed by a benevolent *Pax Americana*. Like the Roman and British imperial eras, they claimed that American global domination would bring order, justice, peace and prosperity (Krauthammer, 2004; Mandelbaum, 2005; Wolfowitz, 2000). There were, of course, many dissenters, even on the political right, such as Buchanan (2002) who did not hesitate to castigate the folly of the American imperial adventure. On the other hand, Ferguson (2005) and other social scientists such as Lal (2004) approved of the United States' international role, accentuating its positive aspects and that of imperialism in general.

Although these developments have rekindled an interest in imperialism and its legacy, they have not attracted much attention from social policy scholars. Apart from the work of a handful of writers, mainstream inquiry has largely ignored the way social policies and programmes around the world have been affected by the imperial experience. This reflects the limitations of comparative social policy scholarship which has been constrained by a narrow focus on the welfare systems of the Western countries, an ahistorical approach and the frequent use of inappropriate Eurocentric typologies. Although research into international social welfare is now documenting and analysing the welfare

institutions and social policies of many more societies, much more needs to be done if the social policies of the world's nations are to be understood. Current realities can only be properly analysed with reference to the past.

This book contends that the role of European imperialism in the evolution of social welfare institutions around the world requires more thorough examination. It contends that it is only possible to understand the social policies of the countries that were previously subjugated by European rule by excavating their historical evolution and analysing the way imperialism affected social policy development both during and after the imperial period. By examining social welfare in a number of countries that were previously ruled by Britain (and which today form a part of the Commonwealth), its editors and contributors hope to contribute to the field. It advocates for a broader remit for comparative social policy that systematically incorporates an historical perspective when analysing contemporary welfare phenomena.

The book is based on an international symposium on *Welfare and Colonialism: Social Policy and the British Imperial Legacy* held at the London School of Economics in March 2010. Various aspects of British imperialism and social welfare policy were discussed. A number of countries and territories that were formerly ruled by Britain (such as Australia, the Caribbean countries, Hong Kong, India, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) were selected for more detailed examination. Participants at the symposium were obviously aware that social welfare was hardly a priority of imperial rule, and they agreed with prior accounts that stressed the preoccupation of the imperial authorities with governance, law and order and maintaining favourable conditions for trade and economic exploitation. However, they recognized that social service provisions were introduced into many subjugated territories, usually in an uncoordinated and incremental way, and for very different reasons. The experiences of different Commonwealth countries were documented and analysed, and facets of colonial social policy of particular interest or novelty were highlighted. The diversity and complexity of social policy in different parts of the Empire were acknowledged and participants were only too aware of the challenges of reaching conclusions of general relevance and applicability. Nevertheless, by exploring this neglected topic, it was hoped that some tentative generalizations about imperialism and welfare could be made.

It was recognized at the outset that a discussion of 'welfare' in the context of British imperialism could not focus narrowly on the social services and social policies of the colonial territories without understanding the wider social conditions resulting from imperial subjugation. The process of conquest, annexation and settlement was not only violent and brutal but established new systems of hierarchical control that impoverished many societies and fostered patterns of class, racial and gender inequality that have persisted up to the present day. The symposium's participants were sensitive to the

possibility that many readers of this book would be more concerned with the 'illfare' resulting from imperial oppression than the policies and programmes adopted to promote the 'well-being' of colonized people. Although mindful of the wider social consequences of imperialism, it was recognized that a very sizable literature on this topic now exists and that it was desirable to focus on the neglected issue of social policy. Many of the subjects of colonialism, ranging from Franz Fanon (1977) to Ward Churchill (1996), have produced distressing and moving accounts of the brutality and ruthlessness of colonial rule that challenge claims about the benevolence and positive effects of the imperial experience. Even revisionists such as Ferguson (2003) recognize that colonial domination was an ugly affair.

It was also recognized that discussions at the symposium were complicated by the challenge of standardizing terminologies and definitions and an attempt was made to formulate some general, albeit loose, usages for analytical and comparative purposes. It was agreed that the term 'welfare' would be used primarily to refer to social service provisions. As noted earlier, the concept of welfare can also be broadly applied to connote wider conditions of 'social well-being' but for the purposes of the symposium, attention focused on welfare provisions such as social security and the social services. Because a fair amount has already been published on colonial health and education, these fields were not given much emphasis in this book, except for one chapter which has been devoted to higher education in India to illustrate the continued effects of the colonial legacy.

The meaning of the terms 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' were also addressed and, recognizing that these terms have been used in different ways in the literature, they were used loosely and interchangeably. Although 'colonialism' refers to the actual settlement of citizens of an imperial power in subjugated territories, mostly as homesteaders, planters and merchants, it is often used as a synonym for imperialism, which technically refers to the exercise of political and military power over other nations. Dictionary definitions correctly point out that imperial power may be used to subjugate without being accompanied by colonial settlement. It was also noted earlier that the British were not the only Europeans to expand their commercial, political and military power internationally, or to introduce social welfare policies and programmes. However, it is not possible in one book to cover developments in countries ruled by these nations or to encapsulate the complexities of divergent imperial influences. For this reason, the book deals only with the British Empire and the way social welfare policies and services were affected by British imperial rule, however, on occasions, reference to other European territories will be made.

Although the book seeks to fill a gap in the social policy literature, some topics could not, for various logistical reasons, be included. For example, the

book does not address the issue of immigration in the imperial context. Colonial settlement as well as the practice of importing indentured labour was widespread and had an obvious effect on local welfare systems. Similarly, the rapid increase in immigration from the colonial possessions to Britain after the Second World War had a significant impact on social service provisions. Also, more attention could have been paid to the way social policies in the Dominions other than Australia and South Africa evolved. Social policy in Canada and New Zealand has followed interesting trajectories which diverged considerably from that of other territories which were not characterized by large-scale settlement. On the other hand, a good deal of information about the social policies of these countries has already been published.

QUESTIONS AND GENERALIZATIONS

A major issue discussed at the symposium – and a major theme of this book – is the extent to which the social policies introduced in the British colonial territories influenced the subsequent development of social welfare. In other words, is it legitimate to talk about an enduring imperial legacy of relevance to international and comparative social policy and to the Commonwealth countries in particular? If so, how have contemporary social policies in these countries been affected by the imperial legacy, and, in normative terms, what are the implications of these developments for the social services and the people they serve today? Questions about a long-term imperial social policy legacy were accompanied by questions about the characteristics and sponsorship of colonial social policies. Who introduced social policies and under what circumstances? What needs and problems did they seek to address and how and by whom were the social services delivered? How effective were they in meeting local needs?

There are many different possible answers to these questions. It may, for example, be argued that social welfare services introduced in the colonies were so rudimentary and fragmented that they could hardly form a basis for subsequent developments. It may also be argued that the evolution of national social policies owed more to the actions of national governments after independence and that only a residue of former colonial influences can be detected. On the other hand, it may be claimed that imperialism created an enduring trajectory that continues to affect current social welfare policies and practices. This latter position has been taken by some social policy scholars in the past (MacPherson, 1982; MacPherson and Midgley, 1987; Midgley, 1981, 1984, 1998). Although they claim that the inadequacies of social welfare policy in many former British possessions can be attributed to the colonial experience, this proposition needs to be assessed in the light of later developments. The

country case studies in Part II of this book address this issue; they also provide information about the origins and characteristics of social policies in the colonial and post-colonial periods and assess the relevance of the imperial legacy for present day social welfare.

The questions raised by the symposium can also be answered in the light of different theoretical perspectives. For example, the international structuralist and post-colonial schools mentioned earlier have claimed that European imperialism created an enduring legacy, which can be seen in the cultural institutions of previously colonized societies and in the way the nations of the Global South continue to be exploited in the global economy. On the other hand, the proponents of modernization theory and its contemporary neoliberal variant believed that colonialism created a positive legacy which provided the impetus for rapid economic growth and sustained social progress. Established social welfare theories can also be used to shed light on colonialism and welfare. For example, as MacPherson and Midgley (1987) reveal, functionalist, structuralist and Marxist interpretations have been invoked to examine the evolution of social policy in the developing countries. Studies that stress the role of interest groups are also relevant (Mesa-Lago, 1978), as is regime theory which has been used to categorize different types of welfare systems in the Global South (Gough and Woods, 2004). Although the insights of historical institutionalism provide a promising opportunity for analysing the way the colonial innovations have (or have not) become 'path dependent', only a few studies have used this approach, making only limited references to the imperial legacy (Haggard and Kaufman, 2008).

However, it is important to note again that there are formidable challenges in attempting to unravel the very complex processes that shaped social policy in the many different countries that today comprise the Commonwealth. These challenges are exacerbated by the very different economic, social and political contexts in which social welfare policies and programmes evolved. Nor is it merely a matter of studying social service provisions. Enduring legacies not only find expression in tangible services and programmes, but in ideas, structures and links. Ideas may have been passed down concerning the areas of social policy to be given priority, or more broadly colonialism may have shaped ideas on human rights or the appropriate role of the state. Structures may have been created in terms of departmental divisions, the organization of professions or the creation of elites that continue to dominate. Links with professional bodies or academic institutions in Britain may also continue to influence policy. As will be appreciated, these are complex issues that need to be taken into consideration in any discussion of the imperial legacy and social welfare. Despite these challenges, the symposium provided an opportunity for the participants to debate and consider these issues and to reach some tentative conclusions. Hopefully the chapters in this book will shed some light on

these and other questions and provide insights into the social policy legacy of British imperialism.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK

As may be seen, the book has two parts and a concluding section. The first part, which is introductory in nature, contains two chapters dealing with background issues. This part provides an historical overview of British imperialism and its political, economic and social effects while the second focuses on social policies and welfare services in the colonial possessions. The second part of the book is comprised of nine case studies that report on the experience of different countries or territories. However, these chapters are not fitted into one standardized format and instead discursively explore different dimensions of the colonial experience, primarily, but not exclusively, with reference to specific countries.

In Part I, the first chapter by Joanna Lewis provides a broad introduction to British imperialism and its history. The author briefly outlines the rise and fall of British imperialism in relation to major global trends and wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It focuses on the relationship between Britain as a world power and its Empire as it evolved, emphasizing continuities, collaborations and conflicts. But what was the British Empire? To try to answer this question, the author discusses some of the basic features of the Empire as they changed over time, starting with a geography of power that paradoxically rested on 'chaotic pluralism' on the periphery to produce a centralizing imperial world system. This system functioned mostly for the benefit of the centre – a centre that preferred to keep the Empire at a safe distance and whose population more often had little knowledge or great interest in it. For this contradiction to work, a number of conditions had to be present, suggesting that imperial power was rarely absolute. The chapter explores some key features of the British Empire and their implications for welfare and colonialism. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the importance of 'welfare imperialism', yet ultimately it notes somewhat paradoxically that colonial case histories may be less exceptional and exotic, sharing enough features to place them within a broader imperialism of welfare paradigm.

Chapter 2 by James Midgley offers an overview of the evolution and features of social policies in the British colonies, focusing particularly on the social services. He reviews previous research on this topic and shows that while some scholars have examined the role of British imperialism in social policy, it remains neglected and is seldom referred to in the comparative literature. Reporting on the relatively few social policy studies that have explicitly examined social policy in the context of colonialism, he suggests that it is

possible to make some tentative generalizations about the historical evolution, characteristics and sponsorship of colonial social welfare with reference to major 'agents' which included the indigenous population that drew extensively on non-formal practices to meet their social needs, missionaries, local charities, colonial governments and the metropolitan authorities. Although government involvement increased significantly during the twentieth century to augment and even replace non-statutory welfare activities, the activities of these different agents were interlinked and all to varying degrees shaped the colonial welfare system.

Part II of the book begins with a chapter by John Harrison who points out that the encounter between European imperialism and the Anglophone Caribbean from the sixteenth century engendered forms of economic and social dominance founded on the importation of slave labour that continue to affect the lives of Caribbean people. The abolition of slavery in 1834 did not dislocate patterns of dominance; nor did it transform the poverty of former slaves, except in their freedom to create livelihoods in small-scale peasant agriculture. After 1843, indentured labour, introduced mainly from India as a substitute for slavery, enduringly compounded ethnic and class structures. For the hundred years preceding World War II welfare largely comprised the Poor Law and its vagaries, religious charity and private philanthropy, with only minimal incursions by colonial administrations. Intensified poverty in the 1930s resulting from the Great Depression galvanized social unrest and nascent nationalism. In response, the Colonial Office appointed the West Indies Royal Commission (the Moyne Report) which advocated the need for fundamental economic and political change. Moyne was a landmark in Caribbean colonial welfare, laying the foundation for post-independence social policy. From 1960 to the mid-1980s newly independent governments made significant advances in social welfare policy, especially in education, health and social security. Since then, economic uncertainty has threatened earlier progress.

Chapter 4 by Leila Patel discusses the way issues of race, inequality and social welfare in South Africa were influenced by British colonialism and imperialism and later by apartheid. This was achieved largely through a system of repressive labour controls designed to turn African peasants into cheap migrant labour for the gold mining industry. A new political and economic system was created to exploit South Africa's mineral resources that resulted in the decline of the subsistence economies in the African reserves, indigenous social provision and the weakening of traditional family life. The way in which industrialization occurred impoverished blacks – and some whites – and laid the foundation of racial capitalism, social inequality and racial differentiation in social welfare. Patel shows how the imperial experience shaped the evolution of the nature, form and the content of social welfare

policy in South Africa. She argues that while the post-apartheid society has been characterized by social transformation in some areas, the past legacy of racial, class, gender and spatial inequality persists and remains South Africa's greatest social policy challenge.

In Chapter 5, N. Jayaram analyses post-independence India's attempt to address 'backwardness' through a policy of compensatory discrimination, a form of affirmative action. While the beneficiaries of these programmes are individuals, they are identified in terms of groups known as 'castes' and 'tribes'. Considering that the Constitution of India is framed around the concept of 'the fundamental rights of citizenship' and that these rights are deemed to inhere in the individual, rather than in castes or tribes, the compensatory discrimination policy has landed India in the whirlpool of caste: the more it seeks to overcome caste through caste-based compensatory discrimination, the more it is entrenched in caste. Jayaram analyses the social history of modern India from the British colonial era to the post-independence period and explains how India has landed in a socio-political quagmire. Focusing on 'caste', he shows how the British colonial administration essentialized the social reality of *varna* (the idealized pan-Indian four-fold classification of population) and *jati* (birth groups) as 'caste' (a non-native term), and assigned caste labels to various categories of people. He demonstrates how the invention of 'caste' and its role in post-independence social policy has been a major legacy of colonialism.

Chapter 6 by Kwong-leung Tang examines the development of social welfare policy in Hong Kong which was one of the last colonies over which Britain relinquished control. Tang notes that 1997 was a watershed for Hong Kong. It marked the end of British colonialism and the beginning of the era of Chinese rule. In the preceding 50 years, the British colonial state made major strides in the delivery of social welfare: medical care, housing, education, social services and social security all expanded. The author's analysis of Hong Kong's social welfare delineates four phases of welfare development which are marked by different approaches: these are residualism, 'big bang' expansion, incrementalism, and privatization. The developmental colonial state of Hong Kong used social welfare to create a peaceful environment for economic development and to enhance the legitimacy of the colonial system. In the post-colonial era, a series of economic and social crises struck Hong Kong as it integrated with the rest of the world. Poverty, inequality and family breakdown increased. The new administration was dominated by business and administrative elites who had faith in neoliberalism and managerialism. 'Big market, small government' became a dominant theme and ideology prevailed over practical considerations in social welfare. There has been too much emphasis on economic rather than social policy. Despite its economic success, Hong Kong's post-colonial state neglects social welfare, showing

little appreciation of the concepts of social justice and social integration as vital elements of modern democracies.

In Chapter 7, Edwell Kaseke discusses the impact of the Poor Laws on social welfare in Zimbabwe with particular reference to social assistance. He notes that Zimbabwe (formerly, Rhodesia) was a British colony from 1890 to April 1980 and that during this period, there was a wholesale transfer of policies and institutions from the colonial power. This was clearly evident in the colonial government's approach to social assistance which mirrored the influence of the English Poor Laws. Today, the influence of the Poor Law approach is still evident in Zimbabwe's social assistance programme. As with the Poor Laws, applicants are still classified into the deserving and undeserving poor and they cannot receive aid unless they are unable to make use of the family or the market as sources of support. A strict means is used to determine eligibility because, like the Poor Laws, it is assumed that giving assistance to the undeserving poor only serves to encourage laziness and dependency. Benefits are meagre and temporary and yet nothing is done to change the circumstances of the poor. Funding has also been minimal and recipients are stigmatized. It is also apparent that social assistance is seen as charity and accessing it is a privilege and not a right. It is feared that making it easier for the poor to access social assistance will serve to increase their numbers. In the current economic and political crisis, the social assistance programme has done little to alleviate poverty and, the author concludes, innovative approaches to addressing the needs of the country's poor are needed.

Chapter 8 by David Piachaud examines the Fabian influence on social policy in Tanzania. He shows that early Fabian thinkers were much interested and involved with Empire; the attitude, as stated by the Webbs, was of guardianship of the 'non-adult races'. By the mid-twentieth century Fabian thinking had evolved into support for colonial independence. Domestically, the Fabian approach and that of the post-war Labour Government was egalitarian and statist, based on nationalization and top-down planning. The author notes that Julius Nyerere as a student was substantially influenced by Fabian ideas and when he became president of Tanzania, he pursued policies that closely reflected Fabian thinking. His government's policies relating to agriculture, villagization, industry and government administration are discussed and their impact considered. While Nyerere helped build a stable and unified nation, in economic terms the importation of a Fabian approach was largely unsuccessful. The reasons for this are discussed and lessons that can be learned are put forward.

In Chapter 9, Edwell Kaseke, James Midgley and David Piachaud discuss the way the British government influenced the post-colonial development of social security policy in many developing countries by introducing what are known as provident funds. These are mandatory savings accounts providing

retirement pensions for workers in regular wage employment, based on their own contributions and those of their employers. Accumulations are usually paid out at the time of retirement in lump sum form. This chapter traces the historical evolution of provident funds in several former Asian and African colonial possessions. It pays particular attention to the way the provident fund established in Singapore in the 1950s has been modified by the government. Several examples of provident funds in Africa are also discussed. The role of provident funds in meeting the needs of their members are assessed and their wider contribution to social protection is also examined.

Next, in Chapter 10, Ruth Kattumuri discusses the link between India and the United Kingdom in higher education. She points out that neither the British nor the indigenous Indian elite were much concerned with popular education until the need for educated Indians capable of serving the economic interests of traders and the administrative needs of the authorities was recognized. This development was augmented by the missionaries who actively promoted education, particularly at the tertiary level and established several prestigious institutions of higher education such as the Madras Christian College which educated a number of leading Indian political leaders. A number of key Indian leaders were also educated in Britain and adopted attitudes and beliefs that were subsequently incorporated into their political programmes. These events significantly influenced India's economic and political development. Although the British influence was not without problems, it also had positive effects, resulting, for example, in the widespread adoption of English which aided Indian's economic development and emergence as a major international power.

Chapter 11 by Paul Smyth outlines the ebb and flow of the British influence on Australian social policy from colonial times to today. His central focus is the rise, fall and possible reinvention of the social rights of citizens in the welfare state. From early days, the settler society distanced itself from the harsh Poor Law regime of the parent country. A distinctive welfare regime evolved, reflecting a preference for voluntary over direct state welfare and the use of wage regulation as the primary mechanism for securing minimum social standards. By the 1970s, however, the post-war British model of a welfare state with its powerful rationale in the social rights of citizenship was a key influence in an Australian movement to replace wage earner welfare with a welfare state. This transition was left incomplete amid the neoliberal backlash against welfare of the 1980s. Today the period of globalization has left little of the original Australian wage-based social policy model. Smyth speculates on how the post-war British rights-based approach to welfare might be reframed to help address the resulting policy void. Social rights, he proposes, need to be reintegrated with economic rights and more weight should be given to the responsibilities of the citizen.

Finally, Chapter 12 by James Midgley and David Piachaud seeks to draw the preceding material together and to address the questions raised earlier in this Introduction concerning the features of colonial social policies and programmes and their sponsorship, their impact and effectiveness in meeting local social needs. Recognizing the complexity of the colonial experience and the difficulties of reaching general conclusions, they nevertheless show that it is possible to identify some general trends and patterns of interest to social policy scholars today.

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