Europe and Migration after Decolonisation

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The dissolution of colonial empires has brought about an extensive literature dwelling first and foremost on its roots and its consequences. In this study of the origins and the aftermath of decolonisation, preference is given to the political and economic dimensions of the phenomenon to the detriment of its demographic aspects. This probably explains why the subject of migration after decolonisation remains an incompletely explored area of history.

However, by combining national and international statistical sources and secondary sources, a first attempt may be made to shed some light on the subject. At least this is the aim of this article: to assess the position of Europe and the Europeans in population movements caused by decolonisation.

Such population movements concern groups of people that differ greatly one from another, and cover vastly diverse geographical areas. The granting of independence forced Europeans who were settled in the colonies to return to their home countries. Since Europeans were not the only colonisers, they were not the only people to experience forced return. The Japanese, too, were repatriated after decolonisation. Moreover, Europeans never returned home alone. They were accompanied by "non-Europeans". Such migrations from the colonies to the home countries are considered as international population movements. But we shall see that the dismantling of empires also entailed exodus movements in Asia and Africa, involving a greater number of people but in a more circumscribed area. Lastly, there is, within the borders of former colonies, a connection between the

granting of independence and rural exodus. This aspect will not be examined. It has to be pointed out that the effects of the attraction felt by rural populations for the jobs and housing left vacant after the departure of strongly urbanised European and Japanese colonial populations have been studied only by very few researchers.

The Loneliness of the White Coloniser in the Tropics

The full significance of migrations caused by decolonisation can be seen only if they are put back in the context of population movements caused by colonisation. They have to be examined in the perspective of the history of European settlements outside Europe.

The main characteristic of European settlement in the colonies is that there were very few settlers. In the tropical colonies (called *colonies d'exploitation* in the French classification) there were fewer than 100,000 Europeans around 1830. This figure rose to about 700,000 around 1880: 400,000 of these Europeans were in Algeria. The European population in the colonies rose to 1.6 million in 1913, and to 2.7 million in 1938. This was scarcely more than 0.2% of the total population of the colonies in the nineteenth century and less than 0.5% between 1913 and 1938. While between the two World Wars white people made up about 75% of the population of the British *dominions*.

There was a clear difference between tropical colonies, where European populations hardly dug in, and settlement colonies where white expatriates settled down permanently. Europeans were particularly few in Asia (0.1%) and in Sub-Saharan Africa (0.4%). In the African continent, white people lived mostly in the temperate zones, particularly in North Africa (Tunisia, Morocco, but above all Algeria and Libya), the only area where between the two World Wars there were nuclei of white settlers. However their numerical importance (1.6 million in 1938) should not be exaggerated; just before the second World War there were about the same number of Japanese (1.5 million) living in the Japanese colonies (mainly in Korea and Taiwan). Contrary to the experience of the settlement

TABLE 1 - Estimates of the size of foreign communities a) resident in tropical colonies and in dominions in 1913 and 1938, in thousands and in percentages of the total population of colonies.

	1913		1938	
	In thousands	Per cent	In thousand	Per cent
COLONIES				
America	120	4.4	170	4.7
Asia	884	0.2	2,030	0.4
Western colonies	390	0.1	560	0.1
British India	175	0.1	155	b)0.0
Malaysia	13	0.5	21	0.4
Indo-China	21	0.1	32	0.1
Dutch Indies	129	0.3	260	0.4
Philippines	11	1.3	50	0.3
Japanese colonies	494	2.5	1,470	4.8
Korea	272	1.8	650	2.8
Formosa	135	3.9	310	5.4
Maghreb	950	7.5	1,550	8.5
Algeria	760	14.3	960	12.8
Tunisia	150	7.9	230	8.5
Morocco	20	0.5	200	3.1
Libya	6	0.8	95	10.9
Black Africa	150	0.2	550	0.4
French colonies	27	0.2	61	0.2
British colonies	48	0.1	160	0.3
Portuguese colonies	30	0.6	75	0.8
Italian colonies	5	0.4	170	1.4
Oceania	30	2.1	40	1.9
Total	2,100	0.4	4,120	0.6
Total without Japanese colonies	1,600	0.3	2,650	0.4
B. DOMINIONS				
Canada (including Newfoundland)	7,726	98.1	11,222	98.2
South Africa	1,330	21.4	2,085	20.9
Australia	4,830	98.6	6,900	98.4
New Zealand	1,079	95.1	1,528	94.4
Total	14,965	74.4	21,735	72.4

a) Comunities of European, North-American and Japanese origin.
b) 0.04%
Note: For definition reasons: America excluding Puerto Rico; Asia excluding the French Mandates (Lebanon and Syria) and the British Mandates (Palestine and Trans-Jordan) in the Middle East; Maghreb excluding Egypt; Black Africa excluding Mauritius and Réunion.

Sources: B. Etemad, *La possession du monde. Une pesée de la colonisation XVIIIe XXe siècle*. Forthcoming, Editions Complexe (Brussels), spring 1999.

colonies in America and Oceania, the white population in the Maghreb and the Japanese in their Asian colonies did not withstand the granting of independence when these communities fell to pieces.

The distinction between tropical colonies and settlement colonies is, of course, a rough simplification. As in every classification, there are some border-line cases. French Algeria, for example, in 1938 had 960,000 European residents, of whom almost 80% were born in the colony, whereas in Asia and black Africa, Europeans were swamped by the masses of indigenous people. Similarly, South Africa with its black majority does not reflect the "pure" settlement colonies (Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Algeria and South Africa appear to be mixed colonies where white settlers, numerically in the minority but nevertheless of a considerable number, deprived the indigenous population of their land and subsoil rights. Algeria and South Africa would have become real settlement colonies if the European population had been more numerous than the native population, as had happened in North America and Oceania. However, since the opposite was the case, the privileges of the European minorities were doomed to disappear in the long run because of the indigenous people's claims.

The existence of these border-line cases should not prevent us from stressing the difference between tropical colonies and settlement colonies, since their decolonisation did not have the same meaning. The countries with European populations in North America (the United States and Canada), in South America (Argentina, Uruguay and Chile) and in Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) gained their independence under the aegis of white settlers, and colonial structures were not destroyed. Large-scale European immigration submerged the sparse native populations which, under the pressure of the "white peril", were suppressed or repressed. In these "new countries", as in the countries of South America where the white population had mixed to a greater or lesser extent with the Indians and the black descendants of African slaves, Europeans stayed at the top of the political and social hierarchy.

The independence of settlement colonies cannot therefore be likened to real "decolonisation". This term should be used only for

the emancipation of the peoples of Asia and Africa who in the nineteenth century had undergone a process of colonisation which did not bring with it a significant European population. Decolonisation *stricto sensu* dates back to after the second World War. It concerns settlers and white expatriates who had to leave lands where they did not outnumber indigenous populations. Their forced withdrawal to the European metropolis was inevitable in that these "repatriates " represented less than 1% of the colonised populations of Asia and Africa, whereas in early nineteenth-century America 45% of the total population was white.

The numerical inferiority of white people lost among the black and yellow multitudes is therefore an essential characteristic of the entire contemporary colonial period. It explains, moreover, the speed with which empires crumbled. Disease was responsible for the huge contrast between the immense geographical areas and the vast population of the empires of Asia and Africa, and the ridiculously low number of European residents supposed to run them.

Fevers, dysentery and aggressive pests doomed the first attempts of Europeans to settle in the Carribean, Asia and Africa to disaster from the health point of view. To quote only one example, in the mid-nineteenth century half of the Europeans in West Africa died during the first year of their stay.

The high mortality rates registered in the Tropics during the first stages of colonial expansion discouraged European settlement and the use of white labour. However high mortality rates did not constitute an unsurmountable obstacle to the formal domination by white people. Disease did not prevent Europeans from seizing India, Algeria and Java in the first half of the nineteenth century, from settling down on the coasts of Africa and from developing even earlier a plantation agriculture in the West Indies.

Before the advent of scientific medicine in the last third of the nineteenth century, the white man's hold on distant lands was possible because he systematically relied on non-Europeans. In the sugar colonies of the West Indies, European planters turned to black labour. Everywhere in the Tropics, colonisers relied on native go-

betweens and auxiliaries in order to reduce the number of European soldiers and officials to be exposed to the unhealthy and hostile environment. In 1913, when conquests ended, native soldiers recruited locally made up about 70% of all colonial troops.

It was, indeed, this capacity to rule Asian and African countries with the assistance of a limited number of Europeans that lowered the human cost of empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and made it tolerable to their fellow citizens. The following figures illustrate this perfectly. From 1500 until the mid-twentieth century between 75 and 80 million people joined the flow of intercontinental migrations connected with European expansion overseas. Of these, between 60 and 65 million were Europeans; about 11 million were Africans deported to the Americas in the transatlantic slave trade; and between 2 and 3 million were Asian indentured labourers. Less than 5% of all the European emigrants went to tropical countries considered hazardous for white people.

The fact that white people were so much in the minority made European rule extremely fragile in the Tropics. Right up to the granting of independence to their colonies, Europeans in the Tropics formed small islands rather than real communities. These expatriates were almost exclusively men between the ages of 20 and 40, mostly traders, civil servants, soldiers and missionaries. They were joined by political refugees, deported convicts and adventurers of all sorts. Since there were no European women, these men "got involved " with native women. And so groups of mixed-blood people were born, their number varying from place to place, acting as go-betweens for white people and natives, and often accompanying the colonisers in their return when the empires crumbled.

White women arrived in the tropical colonies too late to change this human landscape, which was dominated by birds of passage. In those places where whites from the most handicapped socio-professsional classes arrived to swell the number of Europeans, political decolonisation was already under way (e.g. in French West Africa in the 1930s or in Angola after the second World War). Although at the end of the colonial period the imbalances concerning

age and sex were reduced, they did not disappear. In most cases, there was no stabilisation of the white population.

The Return to the Home Countries

The building and dismantling of empires produced very different demographic effects. The initial shock of colonisation weakened or partially destroyed the native populations, upsetting their economic, social and cultural environment, whereas decolonisation gave rise above all to population movements.

Population movements from the colonies to the metropolis involved two large groups of people. Firstly they were the Europeans and the Japanese belonging to the governing community, and the "non-governing" Europeans connected with the colonial system (the Italians and the Maltese in Tunisia, the Portuguese in the Belgian Congo, the Greeks in West Africa, etc.).

The second group was made up of imperial subjects, local intermediaries (mixed-blood, Jews in North Africa, etc.) and "native auxiliaries" swept along with the ebbing governing communities. For example, those who fought alongside the coloniser had no other choice in order to flee from nationalist retaliation but to follow their former masters back home (the "Harkis" in France, the natives of the Moluccas in the Netherlands, etc.). Other groups can be included in this category (coolies and Indian traders, Lebanese tradesmen, etc.) who by fair means or foul settled in the European colonies of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and who, affected by decolonisation, were uprooted and left the countries where they used to live. These heterogeneous groups of "non-Europeans" to a greater or lesser degree moved to European home countries.

The case of Indo-China illustrates well the heterogeneity of these displaced persons: citizens of metropolitan France, Europeans who had become French nationals, French from the Antilles, Eurasians, Indians from the French trading stations in Vietnam, Indo-Chinese of French nationality and the Asian wives of French citizens. For the census-taker, they all belong to the "population with European status".

For the sake of simplicity, we shall call "repatriate-expatriates" all those of European and Japanese origin, and all non-Europeans closely connected with colonial power, who moved to the home countries together. The term "repatriate" refers to those who, born in the metropolis, were forced by the pressure of events connected with the decolonisation process to go back to their home countries. The term "expatriate" refers to all the other groups mentioned above, for whom European countries were not their homeland. The "repatriation" of the French Algerians, the so-called *pieds-noirs* who had not lived in France for several generations, was in fact experienced as an uprooting.

How many repatriate-expatriates moved to Europe? It is difficult to give an exact answer to this question, comprehesive studies of the subject being somewhat rare. An estimate is all the more difficult to make, in that moves were sometimes spread over several decades and that some repatriate-expatriates passed through other countries before arriving in the metropolis.

Table 2 shows estimates of the number of repatriate-expatriates who moved to Europe after the second World War. The figures show the approximate size of the movement and reveal the details regarding each country. A total of between 5.4 and 6.8 million people over a period of about 40 years moved to the European home countries. That equals about 8% of all intercontinental emigration connected with European expansion between 1500 and the mid-twentieth century. If we confine ourselves to the "Europeans" who returned to the metropolis, their number (between 3.3 and 4.0 million) represents between 5% and 6% of the 60 to 65 million people who left Europe to go overseas since the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Taking into account the size of the population of the empires and that of the home countries, the number of immigrants as a result of decolonisation is particularly high for Portugal and France, but relatively low for the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In the case of England, the weight of the population of British India explains the high proportion of "non-Europeans" among the repatriate-expatriates. It should be noted that a considerable number of Indians

TABLE 2. Estimates of the number of repatriate-expatriates moving to Europe after decolonisation, from 1945 to the early 1990s, in thousands; grand total in rounded figures.

	Europeans [a]		Non-Europeans		Total	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Belgium	**90**	**120**	**15**	**20**	**105**	**140**
Congo	85	110	13	16	-	-
Ruanda-Urundi	5	10	2	4	-	-
Netherlands	**270**	**300**	**250**	**280**	**520**	**580**
Dutch Indies	265	290	25	30	-	-
Surinam	2	4	175	180	-	-
Caribbean	3	6	50	70	-	-
Italy	**480**	**580**	**20**	**50**	**500**	**630**
Colonies	320	380	...	...	-	-
French Maghreb	120	150	...	...	-	-
Egypt	40	50	...	...	-	-
Spain	**170**	**200**	**10**	**20**	**180**	**220**
Portugal	**500**	**600**	**75**	**150**	**575**	**750**
Angola	310	350	50	100	-	-
Mozambique	160	200	20	40	-	-
Others	30	50	5	10	-	-
France	**1,400**	**1,700**	**350**	**500**	**1,750**	**2,200**
Algeria	1,000	1,100	250	300	-	-
Tunisia	150	200	45	60	-	-
Morocco	200	250	20	30	-	-
Indo-China	25	30	10	15	-	-
Black Africa	5	10	15	35	-	-
Others	20	110	10	60	-	-
United Kingdom	**380**	**500**	**1,350**	**1,750**	**1,730**	**2,250**
India and Ceylon	120	140	750	1,000	-	-
Far East	40	50	120	150	-	-
Africa	100	160	210	260	-	-
Caribbean	10	15	250	300	-	-
Mediterranean	100	120	10	20	-	-
Others	10	15	10	20	-	-
General Total	**3,300**	**4,000**	**2,100**	**2.800**	**5,400**	**6,800**

(a) Including Eurasians (around 180,000) in the case of the Dutch East Indies.

Sources: Author's computations and estimates based on figures taken from *Statistical Abstract*, United Nations, New York, various years; J.-L. Miège and C. Dubois, under the direction of, *L'Europe retrouvée: les migrations de la décolonisation*, L'Harmann, Paris, 1994, passim; and for the United Kingdom from D. Coleman and J. Salt, *The British Population. Patterns, Trends and Processes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p. 450.

TABLE 3. Ratios between the population of the empires and the population of the home countries on the eve of the second world war, in millions of inhabitants and in percentages.

	Populations of empires in millions	Populations of home countries in millions	Col. 1/Col. 2 per cent
France	70.6	42.0	168.1
United Kingdom	-	47.5	-
with dominions	496.8	-	1045.9
without dominions	466.8	-	982.6
Netherlands	68.4	8.7	785.9
Portugal	10.6	7.5	141.5
Spain	1.0	25.6	4.1
Belgium	14.3	8.4	170.2
Italy	12.9	43.6	29.5
Total	-	183.3	-
with dominions	674.5	-	368.0
without dominions	644.5	-	351.6
Japan	31.0	71.9	43.1

Sources: B. Etemad, *La possession du monde, une pesée de la colonisation XVIIIe-XXe siècle*. Forthcoming, edition Complexe (Brussels), spring 1999.

who emigrated to the British Isles came from East African colonies (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). In the case of the Netherlands, which in Indonesia governed one of the population giants of Asia, it is the scale of immigration from Surinam and Dutch Caribbean that is surprising.

Other characteristics may be noted. The retreat back to the metropolis was sometimes very abrupt. The exodus of the French from Algeria, which is well known because extensively studied, took place in tragic conditions. In three months, from May to July 1962, 800,000 people fled from Algeria. According to a French historian, "they were allowed to take with them only two suitcases; with no hope of returning, they left their homes and their lands to seek refuge in a metropolis in which some of them had never even set foot". All in all, in 1961-1962 almost 1.5 million people left Algeria: they were

mostly Europeans, but there were also some Algerian Jews and some Muslims. More than 95% of them chose to go to France; the rest went to Spain, Canada, Israel or Argentina. Similarly, the large-scale return of the *retornados* to Portugal took place in a few months in 1975 and 1976, which obviously gave rise to problems regarding their reception and their integration.

By contrast, Italians returned to Italy in stages. People left Indo-China over a period of almost twenty years. Emigration to the United Kingdom took also place in waves. Most immigrants from the West Indies went to the United Kingdom between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s. Most immigrants from the Indian sub-continent entered the United Kingdom between the early 1960s and the early 1970s. Moreover, the size and diversity of the British Empire gave white settlers a certain leeway, which was unconceivable elsewhere. When Kenya and later Southern Rhodesia were granted their independence, white settlers moved to South Africa and Australia, as well as to Great Britain.

Yet another difference should be noted. Some colonies were literally emptied of their European population. This was the case in the French possessions in the Maghreb, in the Belgian Congo, in the Portuguese colonies in Africa, in British India and in the Dutch Indies. On the contrary, in former French and British West Africa, not only did fewer white people move out, but independence attracted new white immigrants (military and economic advisers, development experts, etc.). A "gentle" decolonisation allowed those Europeans who wished to stay on to do so.

The case of Japan is not well known, and in many respects seems exceptional. Japan is the only modern colonial power that did not have regular soldiers recruited from among colonised people. Koreans and Taiwanese were enrolled in the colonial police or recruited as workers in the army. But, as far as is known, none of these native auxiliaries went to Japan with the Japanese after 1945 when they left their colonies. In other words, as far as Japan is concerned, only repatriates *stricto sensu* went back to their metropolis. Another

peculiarity is that there were as many repatriates from the informal empire as from the formal colonies. It is an isolated case of a type never seen in the history of European expansion.

TABLE 4. Number of Japanese repatriates at the end of 1952, in thousands.

	Civilians	Soldiers	Total
Formal colonies			
Korea	712	206	919
Taiwan	322	157	479
Karafuto, Kuriles	277	16	293
Pacific Islands	28	103	131
Total	1,399	482	1,822
Spheres of influence			
Siberia	18	452	470
Manchuria	1,004	42	1,046
Mainland China	464	1,038	1,502
Philippines	24	109	133
Southeast Asia	56	655	711
Total	1,754	2,617	4,429
Grand total	**3,154**	**3,099**	**6,251**

Sources: Taken from I.B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1958, p. 346

From August 1945 until the end of 1952, 95% of the 6.6 million Japanese resident or stationed in the Japanese colonies or spheres of influence in Asia went back to Japan. Excluding the 3 million soldiers stationed in the informal colonies, Japanese repatriates numbered about 3.2 million, of whom 85% were civilians. This surge back to the motherland was far more brutal and on a far larger scale than similar cases in Europe.

One last peculiarity marks the end of the Japanese colonial experience. Whereas the breaking up of the European empires caused African and Asian auxiliaries to move to the metropolis, in the case of Japan there was a population movement in the opposite direction - from the former metropolis to the ex-colonies. Between August 1945

and the autumn of 1950, 1.6 million former subjects of the Japanese Empire, 1.2 million of whom were Koreans forced to go to work in Japanese factories, had to be repatriated.

Migration Currents within the Colonised World

Tossed about in the chaos of decolonisation, millions of Asians and Africans were internally displaced. The departure of the Japanese from Korea in 1945 threw about a million refugees onto the roads in a country that was in the process of being divided in two. About the same number of Vietnamese crossed in opposite directions the border which the Geneva Agreement of 1954 set up between the north and the south of former French Indo-China. Some 2.5 million Algerians were internally displaced between 1954 and 1962. In southern Africa, about 5 million people fled from guerrilla warfare areas that were the result of decolonisation (Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe).

However there is no doubt that the partition of India in 1947 caused the most spectacular and the most tragic population movement in the history of decolonisation. From the summer of 1947 to January 1948, between 13 and 16 million Hindus and Muslims crossed the newly set-up India-Pakistan borders in opposite directions. A single convoy, stretching over 70 kilometres, was made up of 800,000 people. More than 2.3 million wretched people were displaced by train between 28 August and 6 November 1947. In the history of mankind there has never been a population movement involving such huge numbers of people in such a short period of time. Nor perhaps has there ever been so much bloodshed and such murderous insanity shown. A female Muslim politician had warned the Hindus that what was going to happen would remind them of Genghis Khan. She exaggerated only slightly: direct and indirect casualties (victims of massacres, hunger, disease and exhaustion) were estimated at about 10% of the total number of refugees; in other words there were between 1.3 and 1.6 million dead.

Conclusions

One way of concluding would be to take stock of decolonisation-led migration. From 1945 until the early 1990s, the outflow to the

metropolis of people of European and Japanese origin, and of non-European groups closely connected with the presence of the colonial power, involved about 9 million people: of these, about 40% were of European origin. If we add to this total the movements of Asian and African populations within the colonies, the overall figure is more than 35 million people. By way of comparison, between 28 and 30 million people were displaced in Europe during and immediately after the second World War. Movements of population to the European home countries lose a lot of their tragic character when compared with the exoduses in Asia and Africa that caused heavy losses in human life.

Another way of concluding would be to put decolonisation-led migrations into perspective. The exodus of populations of European origin or connected with the colonial power played its part in reversing the trend in that century-old movement which since the sixteenth century had driven Europeans to emigrate overseas. After the second world war there were more people who came back to Europe than left the continent. On the whole, the repatriate-expatriates managed to integrate, despite the trauma of decolonisation. It is true that when they arrived, Europe, which was undergoing rapid reconstruction, had entered a period of unprecedented economic growth. However, not all had the good fortune to come back to Europe during the postwar economic boom: the *retornados* arrived in the mid-1970s in a Portugal with an economic crisis in full swing.

In parallel with the reversed trend in European emigration, the Old Continent became a land of immigration for West Indians, Africans and Asians. Nowadays millions of former imperial subjects - and their descendants - live and work in France, in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands. According to one historian of European expansion, "the end of colonialism was thus marked by the colonisation of the colonial countries by the formerly colonised ." West Indian, Asian and African immigration seems an unexpected consequence of decolonisation. For a Europe with a stagnant demography, these immigrants and their numerous descendants are both a blessing and a curse.