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Introduction

Racism and imperialism have been basic features of the modern world order from the start.[1] They have often appeared together: colonial regimes were usually racially organized, and racist beliefs and practices usually flourished in colonial contexts. And they have also been conceptually linked in various ways: in particular, both racial and imperial thought have drawn heavily upon developmental schemes, in which designated groups have been represented not only as racially distinct but also as occupying different stages of development, with their degree of advancement often being understood to depend on their race and to warrant various forms of hierarchical relations. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, social Darwinists understood the major groupings of human beings to embody different stages in the biological evolution of the species, which were manifested in their different stages (more or less advanced) of social evolution, and which warranted relations of domination ranging from peonage at home to imperialism abroad.

In its various renderings – as enlightenment, civilization, progress, social evolution, economic growth, modernization, and so forth – the conception of universal history as the ever-advancing development of human capacities has been fundamental to both the self-understanding of the modern West and its view of its relations to the rest of the world.[2] During the nineteenth century, this took the form of a hierarchical ordering of races and cultures along developmental gradients ranging from savagery to civilization, from barbarity to modernity. And in the twentieth century, developmental theory and practice became a basic means for interpreting and organizing difference in a global setting.

[1] The East India, West Indies, Virginia, and Royal Africa Companies were all founded in the seventeenth century.

[2] A number of the most important conceptions of "development" are discussed in some detail in chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7, and I will not review them here.

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Sharpening our understanding of such uses of developmental thinking in the past will put us in a better position to recognize and resist its continuing operation in racist and imperialist ideologies today, not only in popular culture and the mass media but in social science and social policy as well. Ideologies of race and empire may seem now to belong irretrievably to the past – driven there by, among other things, the scholarly opposition to race thinking that took shape in the 1920s and 1930s and was consolidated in the wake of the Holocaust, the decolonization struggles and civil rights movements of the post-World War II period, and the UN Charter and General Declaration of Human Rights. If that were so, this work would be an exercise in intellectual history and not, as it is meant to be, a contribution to the critical history of the present. So I shall begin by trying to make plausible, at least in a preliminary way, that various forms of "neoimperialism" and "neoracism" are of continuing significance in the contemporary world.

I

With *neoimperialism* or neocolonialism I can be very brief, as the idea has been current since the 1960s, soon after various struggles for national independence had achieved their goal.[3] The main line of thought was straightforward: although the newly emancipated ex-colonies were now formally independent, sovereign nations, they were in fact unfree to control their own fates. Ways were being found to maintain their subservience to former colonial powers without resorting to such classical mechanisms of subjugation as conquest and direct rule. This was, then, a "neocolonial" continuation of the systems of colonial domination and exploitation from which they had just formally emancipated themselves.

In what follows, I shall be using the terms "empire" and "imperialism" broadly to include all such systems and thus will not make use of the distinction that some authors draw between the "colonialism" of the settler and commercial colonies prior to the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the "imperialism" of the decades immediately preceding World War I – the "age of empire" in the narrower sense, which witnessed an intense struggle among competing national powers to secure overseas colonies, including the infamous "scramble for

[3] Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

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Africa," and at the end of which more than three-fourths of the globe was governed by colonial relations.[4] What is most important for my purposes is common to both the colonial and imperial formations in these more restricted senses, namely the domination and exploitation of the "periphery" by the "center," whether driven by settlers, private trading companies, or national governments. From the start, the expansion abroad of European economic interests in investment opportunities, natural resources, trading blocks, and the like went hand in hand with an extension of political and military power to protect and administer those interests;[5] and this money-power dynamic was common to the different forms. Across the many variations in its ideological representation, the "development" it propelled centered in fact on integration into economic relations with the colonizing country on terms and conditions that were favorable to the latter. This typically meant a transformation of the local economy that left it dependent on a new and unfair system of trade. For that purpose, forms of direct and indirect rule had to be put into place to regulate, administer, and enforce these unfair exchange relations, which meant more or less extensive restrictions on the scope and power of local government.

While this general pattern fits the classical modern empires of Britain, France, Holland, Spain, and Portugal, as well as the late nineteenth-century burst of imperialism by them and other more recent entrants into the "great game," the United States is something of an exception. For much of its history its imperial ambitions were focused on continental expansion by conquest and acquisition of contiguous territories. Only at the end of the nineteenth century did it too scramble for overseas colonies. Its more usual attitude toward European colonialism was critical: the trading blocks formed were barriers to its own ambition to expand abroad economically. At the same time, after the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, the United States practiced a form of hegemonic imperialism, without direct rule, in the Western Hemisphere, particularly in Central and South America, which was a precursor of the type of imperialism without formal

[4] E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).
[5] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), chap. 5.

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colonies discussed today under the rubrics of "neocolonialism" and "neoimperialism."

Although military power has been repeatedly used from time to time to extend or defend such relations – as presently in Iraq – the preferred means of advancing geoeconomic and geopolitical interests today are less *overtly* violent, often indirect exercises of power and influence by strong states and transnational corporations over weaker states, whose sovereignty is nominally respected. The means in question include everything from establishing and/or supporting client states to controlling the international agencies that set the terms of global trade and finance. The striking imbalances of representation in such bodies as the IMF and World Bank – not to mention the G-7 – is an obvious illustration. And since the most developed countries are disproportionately former colonial powers, and the least developed are former colonies, the neoimperial system of domination and exploitation appears to be, in some considerable measure, a legacy of the five preceding centuries of colonialism and imperialism in their classical modern forms. If this is so, the present requirements of global justice include not only establishing relations of non-domination and fair terms of exchange but also, and interdependently, repairing the harmful effects of past injustice. This may well involve some forms of preferential treatment for the least developed societies – for instance, those artificial nations with arbitrary boundaries that resulted from the mad scramble for Africa – before they get to the point where they could develop themselves in a more equitable global system.

II

The relation of what, following Etienne Balibar and others, I am calling *neoracism* to earlier modalities of racism is less familiar and more controversial, and hence will require a lengthier introduction.[6] To begin with, whereas neoimperialism is a way of maintaining key aspects of colonial domination and exploitation after the disappearance of colonies in the legal-political sense, neoracism is a way of doing the same for racial

[6] Etienne Balibar, "Is There a 'Neoracism'?" in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, and Class* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 17–28. See also Martin Barker, *The New Racism* (London: Junction Books, 1981), and Robert Miles, *Racism after "Race Relations"* (London: Routledge, 1993).

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domination and exploitation after the displacement of "race" in the scientific-biological sense. Dividing the human species into natural kinds has a long and variegated history.[7] It is important to remember that the genetic conception of race that came to prominence in the twentieth century was the dominant conception for only a comparatively short period. "Race" could not be "in the genes" before the Mendelian revolution early in the twentieth century; and within a few decades, further developments in genetics itself helped to undermine it. Prior to that, racial essentialists tried to explain what it meant for "race" to be "in the blood" through a shifting variety of theoretical accounts, from Kant's idea of an original stock of racial germs to Darwin's idea of naturally selected and transmitted racial traits. But though arriving at a generally accepted theoretical account of the deepest biological roots of perceived racial differences required more than a century, investigations at levels closer to the surface proceeded apace. Thus comparative anatomists and physical anthropologists repeatedly studied such putative morphological characteristics of race as skull size and shape, facial angle, cranial capacity, and the like. And even closer to the surface, the usual classifications according to skin pigmentation, eye shape and color, hair texture, body type, and other "stigmata of otherness" (Balibar) continued without interruption. In short, though biological essentialism was characteristic of the modern idea of race, just how that was to be spelled out was a matter for ongoing conjecture until the "modern synthesis" in evolutionary biology finally ended the debate by calling into question the very idea that "race" was a useful scientific concept.[8]

It is also important to recall that these repeated attempts to spell out the idea that races are natural kinds in biological terms could make sense only after the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. When Aristotle and his medieval followers talked of things being such-and-such "by nature," the idea of nature in question was articulated primarily in terms of "formal" and "final" causes rather than in terms of the "material" and "efficient" causes that came to dominate in modern science. Their conceptual and teleological approach to natural

[7] See, for instance, Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[8] The current conception in population genetics of genotypically differentiated breeding populations does not support the amalgamation of phenotypic differences with mental and moral group differences that is characteristic of the modern idea of race under discussion here. See the remarks on this in chapter 3.

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kinds was displaced only with the development of natural history in the eighteenth century, when the idea of natural kinds could be articulated largely in taxonomic terms. Racial description and classification could then proceed at this natural-historical level more or less continuously, despite the instability of depth-biological race theory before the modern synthesis in evolutionary biology. That is to say, although biological essentialism was characteristic of the mainstream of modern race theory, there was no general agreement concerning the biological "deep structure" of race prior to the twentieth century; and so *in practice*, the racialization of difference was carried out upon surface structures treated as generally available to the senses.

Moreover, "race" was never a *purely* biological construction. It always comprised a congeries of elements, including not only other "material" factors such as geographical origin and genealogical descent, but also a shifting array of "mental" characteristics such as cognitive ability and moral character, as well as a mobile host of cultural and behavioral traits. While such non-biological elements had previously been regarded as belonging to racial natural kinds, in the nineteenth century they came increasingly to be viewed as manifestations or expressions of deeper biological essences or causes – so that all of them could be said to be "in the blood" or, later, in the genes.

Finally, it is important to note that the ever-shifting theoretical attempts to get at the deep biological structure of race had little *immediate* effect on the social practices that reproduced racial formations. Because racial classification was a social construction out of such publicly available markers as somatic features, ancestry, geographical origins, cultural patterns, social relations, and the like, it remained relatively undisturbed in practice by short-term perturbations in theory.[9] And this is relevant to the conception of neoracism: since the structures of domination and exploitation embodied in differences of economic role, social standing, political power, and the like could be maintained across changes in scientific theories of race – in a self-reinforcing feedback loop with "common-sense" racist beliefs and practices – the disappearance of scientifically certified races did not bring an end to racial stratification. Just as postcolonial neoimperialism

[9] *Specific modalities* of racist thinking were, however, sometimes susceptible to critiques emanating from the cultural domains upon which they drew, from religion and philosophy to natural and social science.

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could outlive the demise of formal colonies, post-biological neoracism could survive the demise of scientific racism. And just as the shift to neoimperialism required modes of domination and exploitation that were compatible with the nominal independence and equality of all nations, the shift to neoracism required modes that were compatible with the formal freedom and equality of all individuals.[10]

Whatever their specific form, content, and function, racial representations and classifications were generally mediated by power relations: they served to inform, interpret, and justify unfree and unequal social, economic, and political relations.[11] Although the studies in Part One focus on racist *ideologies*, their *functional contexts* are often visible in the background; in particular, the need for systems of coerced labor generated by colonial settlements in the Americas, which led both to the growth of the slave trade and to the rise of ideologies of blackness legitimating it; and the need after Reconstruction to keep recently emancipated slaves "down on the farm" (i.e. cotton plantations) and out of Northern industries, which furthered both the institutionalization of segregation and discrimination and the spread of a "scientific racism" that sought to rationalize them. And, as noted above, in other colonial contexts, the transformation of local modes of production and trade, so as to integrate them into economic systems that served the colonizers' purposes, required political and administrative regimes to enforce exploitative relations as well as ideologies to reconcile all this with the increasingly liberal cast of political thought in the European centers.

Another major context for modern racism appears only occasionally in these studies, and then principally in connection with the United States, and so I shall say a bit more about it here. It has become a commonplace of recent writing on racism to note its many affinities with nationalism.[12] The national imaginaries that served to unite disparate populations around putative commonalities of origin and descent, language and tradition, custom and culture increasingly overlapped with racial

[10] Thus the specific functions of neoracism differ from those of classical racism.

[11] For historical overviews of diverse power-knowledge interconnections that entered social constructions of "race," see Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); and Bruce Baum, *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race* (New York University Press, 2006).

[12] See, for instance, Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, chap. 6; Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism," in Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, and Class*, pp. 37–67; and Miles, *Racism after "Race Relations."*

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imaginaries in the course of the nineteenth century. The Romantic emphasis on the unique spirit, mentality, and character of each people earlier in the century later tended to get displaced by, or combined with, a naturalistic emphasis on common ancestry and shared "blood." By the end of the century, with the near-total triumph of scientific racism in its post-Darwinian forms, race theory was applied not only to broader subdivisions of the species but to narrower national groupings, which were increasingly understood as races or distinct mixtures of races – the Anglo-Saxon race, the German race, the Irish race, the Jewish race, and so on.[13] This union of nationalism and racism was made easier by the many elective affinities between them: both invoked imagined collectivities with imagined similarities and differences; both operated with we/they dialectics of inclusion and exclusion; both encouraged identification across class and other divisions; and both identified certain "others" as special threats to racial and national purity. This was particularly true of alien bodies internal to the national body, such as European Jews. Racialized versions of nationalism thus gave traditional anti-Semitism an especially virulent new form, particularly in connection with such "pan" movements as Pan-German and pan-Slavic nationalism.[14] And it is also this sort of racialized nationalism that dominated debates about US immigration a century ago – and that, with cultural racism substituting for biological racism, still influences debates about immigration today.[15]

[13] This expanded application of the race paradigm meant, of course, that the putative somatic markers of racial difference were not so evident to the senses. But, as a look at the common caricatures of the period makes clear, the demands of the paradigm were nevertheless met, at least in regard to such negative stereotyping as the Irishman's simian appearance, the Jew's hooked nose, and so on.

[14] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, chap. 8.

[15] In this respect, some variants of contemporary neoracism construct "race" in ways similar to some constructions of "ethnicity." Although "ethnicity" usually centers on culturally transmitted customs, traditions, language, religion, and the like, some variants also stress ancestry and appearance – i.e. "blood." And just this type of culturally, genealogically, and somatically constructed identity/difference has tended to become salient in situations of domination, resistance, and conflict. So long as race thinking understood salient cultural differences to be biologically caused, there was at least a clear analytical distinction from thinking in terms of ethnicity. But now that the link between origins, ancestry, and appearance, on the one hand, and values, attitudes, and behavior, on the other, is usually taken to be cultural rather than biological even in race thinking, the differences narrow considerably. So contemporary neoracism is often (e.g. in the context of immigration debates) a form of "ethnoracism." My reasons for accentuating the "racism" component will become evident below.

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The recent surge of racism in connection with immigration to the former colonial centers of Europe has been widely remarked – violent attacks on Third World immigrants, the rise of right-wing anti-immigration movements and parties, the continuing preoccupation of mainstream politics with "the immigration problem," and so on. Like other important contexts of contemporary neoracism – the continuing plight of African Americans in the US, for instance, or the gross inequities in life chances across the globe – this one evinces unmistakable continuities with the previous history of race relations. Following World War II, the acute shortage of labor power in reconstructing Europe was met in part by recruiting temporary migrant workers from other parts of the world, quite often from former colonies. When the need for migrant labor receded in the 1970s, many of these "guest workers" remained in their host countries, with an ever-increasing number of dependents but usually without full citizenship rights. And they were joined by growing numbers of political refugees and illegal immigrants. The presence of millions of "others" from third-world regions such as the Caribbean, the Indian subcontinent, Africa, Turkey, and so forth, in countries with high unemployment rates and expanding welfare rolls, and with heavily segregated housing patterns that gave rise to ethnoracial urban ghettos, intensified private and public racism across Europe. Familiar patterns of race thinking, particularly the construction of negatively charged stereotypes combining both physical and cultural elements, proliferated. Nonwhite immigrants from underdeveloped cultures were increasingly represented as foreign bodies that threatened the health of the nation.[16] This was particularly true when the raced bodies were the bearers of what was increasingly perceived to be a backward and violent Islamic culture.[17] Similar variations on racist themes familiar from the histories of colonialism and nationalism have been played, in different keys, outside of Europe as

[16] To mention only one example: campaign posters of the Swiss People's Party (SVP), currently (2008) the most powerful party in Switzerland's federal parliament, have displayed an image of dark-skinned hands snatching at Swiss passports, and another of three white sheep standing on the Swiss flag while driving a fourth, black sheep away.

[17] Of course, the growth of anti-Muslim sentiment across the West is not simply a matter of neoracism. It is everywhere a confusing mélange, in which the grammar of religious difference is one important ingredient and the fear of terrorism another. But there is usually also an element of neoracism in the mix, whereby Muslims are represented as non-white peoples from backward cultures.

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well – for instance, in the increasingly heated debates about Latino immigration to the United States.

The point of applying the term "neoracist" to these and other recent discourses is to emphasize their logical and functional similarities to the classical paradigm. Real or ascribed somatic markers are taken as signs of deeper differences. Stereotypical representations combining phenotypic features with cultural and behavioral traits are used to include and exclude. And the negative stereotyping of "others" functions to explain and legitimate ongoing racial stratification. Raced bodies signifying differences in culture and psychology; racially inflected structures of inequality; and racialized grammars of difference serving as ideological justifications thereof seem grounds enough to continue to speak of racism after the demise of its relatively short-lived scientific version. To be more precise, what has been largely eliminated from academic and official discourse is the *natural*-scientific version of race theory anchored in biology. But what is referred to as "neoracism" or "cultural racism" does, in fact, come in *social*-scientific versions.[18] The discourses in the US about "the culture of poverty" in the 1960s and 1970s, and about the "socially dysfunctional behavior" of the "underclass" since the 1980s, as well as the ongoing discourse concerning the "dysfunctional cultural values" of "underdeveloped" societies are instances of a general pattern of ethnoracial thinking in social science and social policy.[19] In such discourses, depth biology no longer supplies the hidden links between phenotype and character: rather, the links were forged historically in various systems of racial oppression, adaptation to which by those oppressed gave rise to "cultural pathologies" of various sorts. According to the views I am characterizing as neoracist ideologies, such oppressive systems have long since been dismantled; but the pathologies have proved to be self-perpetuating and now function as a kind of independent variable in the etiology of poverty and

[18] Social-scientific versions of "cultural racism" are critically analyzed by Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); and Michael K. Brown *et al.*, *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), among others. Richard H. King offers a useful overview in *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940–1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

[19] See the works cited in the previous footnote and *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, ed. L. Harrison and S. Huntington (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

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