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## ISOPOLITICS, DEEP COLONISING, SETTLER COLONIALISM

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**Abstract:** This paper contributes to interdisciplinary reflection on settler colonialism and decolonisation by proposing an analysis of two characteristic traits of the “settler colonial situation”: isopolitics and deep colonising. The first section of this paper outlines isopolitical relations as an alternative possibility beside sustained colonial domination on the one hand, and internationally recognised independence within an international system of formally independent polities on the other. Its second section concentrates on deep colonising, a notion that upsets traditional amelioristic narratives emphasising progressive processes culminating in the acquisition of social and political rights for colonised and formerly colonised peoples. Appraising concomitantly an isopolitical imaginary that persists in the present and the dynamics of deep colonising, and, more generally, focusing on the (im)possibility of decolonisation in settler colonial settings, can help reframing received narratives of decolonisation.

**Keywords:** isopolitics, deep colonising, settler colonialism, decolonisation, indigenous sovereignty.

Different colonial formations produce the different circumstances of their supersession. If colonialism and settler colonialism should be understood as structurally different phenomena, their decolonisation needs to be also framed separately. However, to move beyond settler colonialism and to imagine its decolonisation we need to understand how it works. For their exemplarity, this article outlines at first debates concerning the settler polities of the British Empire, polities that achieved independent status in the context of metropole-assisted processes envisaging ultimate substantive devolution as *an enhancement* of political ties, rather than their discontinuation. While these drawn-out constitutional processes have been the subject of extensive comparative scrutiny, the isopolitical nature of the imagination that underpinned them has remained unexplored (an isopolity can be described as a single political community joining separate jurisdictions). The independence of the ‘other Englands’ (as James Anthony Froude influentially described them in *Oceana* [1886]) was to constitute a British Empire of ‘racial identity’ (as Charles Wentworth Dilke also influentially put in *Problems of Greater Britain* [1890]). This settler colonial empire was thus imagined as a

dialectical counterpoint to the political subordination of a racialised colonial empire. Indeed, if the subordination of the latter was projected indefinitely onto the future, the future of the former was not to be subordinate. Appraising isopolitical relationships (that is, the way in which people and rights can be transferred across the constituent entities of a community of ‘racial identity’), can thus contribute to an understanding of independence and decolonisation that goes beyond familiar narratives emphasising anti-colonial militancy, metropolitan concessions, and nationalist takeovers in the context of a nonsovereign-to-sovereign (colonial-dependency-to-independent-polity) paradigm.

At the same time, as the independence of these polities was premised on an ultimate settler assumption of responsibility for the indigenous peoples contained within the area they exclusively claimed, to study their sovereign autonomy provides another point of departure for complicating available narratives of decolonisation. Settler self-governance ultimately denied the possibility of indigenous appeal to the metropolitan sovereign against settler abuse. Thus, as this passage effectively terminated any external oversight over indigenous policy, these polities’ independent status was actually premised on the enhanced subjection of indigenous “Others”. Settler independence constitutes an acceleration, not a discontinuation, or diminution of colonial practices. I define this circumstance as deep colonising: a situation in which the very attempt to bring forward the supersession of colonial practices actually entrenches their operation.

## **Isopolitics**

Isopolitical interstate associations are especially relevant to settler colonial phenomena. An isopolitical connection enables the seamless transfer of people *and their rights* between separate polities. In this context, subjects of one polity *immediately* acquire property rights and enjoy unrestricted political status as they move across jurisdictions. If settlers can be defined as *founders* of political orders (unlike migrants, who are appellants facing a political order that is already constituted), people who travel with an inherent capacity to possess real estate and father children endowed with political rights, colonising metropole and settler locale are united in an isopolitical relation. Settlers are indeed subjects who, unlike migrants or other colonised people, can immediately exercise *commercium* and *connubium*, both necessary elements of all isopolitical arrangements (of course, not all settlers depart and arrive autonomously, or are immediately endowed with political rights; they can, however, be selectively coopted at a later stage). Moreover, isopolities, one specific type of ‘interstate

kinship' (Elwyn 1993), and settler colonies are especially related: settler colonialism is inherently about the reproduction of "daughter" colonies. The classical world envisaged a variety of possible relationships between separate political entities, including, for example, isopolity, sympolitical arrangements (when a common federal citizenship is instituted beside the local one), and symmarchy (when a warring league is established, with a polity automatically engaging in war as an ally of another). Not all the isopolities of the classical world were colonies, but all colonies were isopolitical (for a discussion of isopolitical relations in the classical world, see Hammond 1951). We should recover this variety and utilise it as a conceptual toolbox in an attempt to escape the constraints of national teleologies and the nation-state. Moreover, even if these categories may look exotic and anachronistic, we should keep in mind the colonisations practiced by the Greeks and the Romans informed in fundamental ways the colonial imaginaries of the European expansion. The intensity of colonialism's imaginative engagement with the ancients should not be underestimated.

The question of how British settler nationalisms and metropolitan imperialisms have codefined each other while operating concomitantly and in reciprocal tension in a variety of settings is the subject of an extensive scholarly literature, and an issue that is periodically approached (and yet rarely resolved).<sup>1</sup> The settler nationalisms of the British Empire (and their respective sub-imperialisms) remain intractably ambivalent: their claims are routinely premised on their arising simultaneously from the settler locale and in relation to the originating metropole (see Berger 1970; Schreuder and Ward 2008). Reflecting on the long-term evolution of the relationship between Australian nationalism and Britishness, and convincingly reversing received nationalist and nationalising assumptions, Neville Meaney concluded in 2001 that 'the history of nationalism in Australia was not one of thwarted Australianness but rather of thwarted Britishness' (Meaney 2001: 89). 'Australians had two views of Britain and the Empire', he noted; 'while they overlapped' they remained distinct.

One treated Britain as the metropolitan superior, the heart of the Empire, and Australia as the colonial subordinate, a peripheral adjunct. The other saw the Empire as a multi-polar structure, an alliance of British peoples in which all white constituent elements were entitled to consideration and dignity, Australia equally with Britain. The teleological 'nationalists' consider the first view to belong to un-Australian or Anglo-Australian imperialists – Bob Menzies being the arch-villain – and interpret the assertions of equality under the second as evidence of independent Australianness.

Yet both are manifestations of an identification with Britishness – they only differ on how it should be expressed. (Meaney 2001: 83)<sup>2</sup>

In a comparative 1971 article on this subject, Douglas Cole had similarly lamented a theoretical deficit and lack of definitional clarity:

Despite some significant differences in emphasis placed upon strands of nationalism in these settlement colonies, in recent years there seems a remarkable agreement that imperialism in the colonies was only part of nationalist development. Imperial sentiment was “a variety of Canadian nationalism”, “an extension of Australian nationalism”, and “an expression of an emergent New Zealand nationalism”. Everyone, it seems, was a nationalist and most Australian nationalists had no difficulty in becoming imperialist. Lacking definition and conceptualization, anybody can be anything, and, given the favorable repute of nationalism, everyone becomes a nationalist. (Cole 1971: 163)

Meaney’s conclusion was to reconsider the role of Britishness: it was a foundation of Australian nationalism, not a distorting or a retarding factor. Cole’s answer had been to consider the ‘old nationalist-versus-imperialist dichotomy’ as ‘inappropriate’. The solution, then was

not to blend the categories by a conceptualization that turns Canadian imperialists into nationalists and suddenly converts Australian nationalism to imperialism. A more useful conceptualization and categorization would be patriotism and nationalism, with some concession to liege loyalty. All Canadians and Australians were patriotic toward their own country, some felt a patriotism to Britain and the Empire, and most felt a personal loyalty to the Crown. Amongst them there were differing conceptions of nationalism and of the compass of their nation: some were pan-Anglo-Saxon or Britannic nationalists while being imperialists, some were Britannic nationalists while being autonomists, perhaps some were embryonic Canadian and Australian nationalists, and some were unconcerned with a nationalist identity. (Cole 1971: 178-179)

Another possibility is to consider that Britain and its settler colonies were for a long time linked in what was in fact a developing isopolitical union.<sup>3</sup> If nationalism remains an exclusive and demanding faith that does not easily accommodate double allegiances, an isopolitical union allows one to be faithful to a *relationship*; one does not have to choose.

At the same time, isopolitical ties also allow for the local settler claim and the metropolitan one to potentially enjoy equal status; as such, settler colonial formations fundamentally challenge the hierarchical relationship between core and periphery that is inherent in colonial and imperial relations. The distinction between “settlers” and “colonists” as distinct terms and their usage mirrors this shift. “Colonist”, “colonial”, and “creole” identify people in the context of a hierarchical understanding of the relationship between metropole and settler locale; “settler”, on the contrary, expresses a marked degree of political autonomy. Settlers imagine a nonsubordinate relationship between settler locale and metropole – they operate isopolitically.<sup>4</sup> (On the other hand, there is another fundamental distinction that separates “colonists” and “settlers”: a “colonist” is someone who may or may not be animated by *animus returnandi* – his intention to stay in the settler locale remains unclear until the question of whether he is a *bona fide* settler – a determination that only a settler society would demand – forces the issue. A colonist could indeed be someone bent on accumulating money and returning home, someone who is not fully committed to the local settler project.)

In this context, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, for example, espoused a “colonial” conception. In *A View on the Art of Colonization*, he noted that

speaking generally, colonies and colonists are in fact, as well as in the estimation of the British gentry, inferior, low, unworthy of much respect, properly disliked and despised by people of honour here, who happen to be acquainted with the state of society in the colonies. (Wakefield 1968 [1849]: 837)

Wakefield thus envisaged a hierarchically-integrated system with the colonising metropole on top, and the settler colonial locales as its subordinate elements (however, he was convinced that the settler locales *could* be made to look very much like the metropole and that this could be done immediately – in this sense he proposed that their relationship with the colonising core be only marginally subordinate).

Of course, “colonist” and “settler” as distinct even if often partially overlapping categories interacted in a very dynamic context, and their usage and respective meanings

underwent important shifts. As James Belich has recently and persuasively documented, “settler” became progressively more important (on ‘settlerism’, the ideology of the ‘settler revolution’, see Belich 2009: 153-165; on shifting patterns of perception, see Grant 2005). The debates that propelled and accompanied the ‘settler revolution’ during the second half of the nineteenth century comprehensively reinterpreted the relationship between core and periphery. In this context, the settler locale was redefined as a site for possible political regeneration. J. S. Mill, for example, thought that the colonies – he meant the *settler* colonies – could be sites for unprecedented experimentation (see Bell 2010). Belich is right in using a terminology that emphasises rupture and discontinuity. This *was* a revolutionary reconceptualisation: whereas according to a *colonial* paradigm the settler locale is appropriate only as far as it *resembles* the metropole, according to the *settler colonial* one the settler locale is appropriate primarily because it is *dissimilar* from it. A colonial relationship was thus reconfigured into a settler colonial one and the imagination became isopolitical. The global settler ‘revolution’, in fact, entailed a global isopolitical turn.

And yet, this revolution was grounded in another. The American one had terminated a sympolitical project and defeated a centralising metropolitan effort to ensure sustained metropolitan ascendancy over its dependencies. Thus, as well as breaking up the first British Empire, the American Revolution could also be seen as actually *reconstituting* a new one in an alternative form. Not for nothing has Eliga H. Gould defined the second British Empire as a non-unitary collection of polities, ‘a consortium of realms and provinces’. He linked this diversity with the outcome of the Revolution: Parliament, he noted, never again attempted to tax in a direct manner the settlers of the empire (Gould 1999: 482). The independence of the North American colonies thus led to a consolidation of (settler) isopolitical forms within the British Empire; that isopolitical ties could grow and consolidate both *inside* and *outside* the US should be emphasised (Belich 2005). The American Revolution could then be seen as an earlier isopolitical moment in a consolidating and expanding settler colonial world.

The isopolitical entity that nineteenth century debates over emigration and “systematic” colonisation dealt with is generally referred to as “Greater Britain” (even if, as mentioned, isopolitical imaginings involved the expanding US as well, see, for example, Kramer 2002; Bell 2007; Belich 2009, especially 465-501). Isopolitics are relevant to these debates. Influential historian J. R. Seeley, for example, was explicitly in favour of isopolitical relationships: in his opinion, the British Empire should do ‘what the United States does so easily, that is hold together in a federal union countries very remote from each other’ (quoted in Gould 1999: 487, note 50). Froude would argue in very similar terms (see Bell 2009).

Seeley's *Expansion of England* actually had an educational purpose; it aimed to describe an 'ethnological unity' comprising the colonies of settlement, the Caribbean, but not India because it had been 'conquered' (Seeley 1931 [1883]). It was Seeley that popularised "Greater Britain", but the term had originally been invented by Charles Dilke (2005 [1868]). Seeley was based in Cambridge; E. A. Freeman (a bit later) lectured at Oxford; this was in fact a coherent if not coordinated effort aimed at rethinking the very nature of empire. Freeman toured the United States in 1881-1882, and referred to 'brethren in a higher brotherhood, born of one ancient stock, speaking one ancient tongue, sharers under different forms in one ancient freedom' (quoted in Armitage 1999: 437). Sharing 'under different forms in one ancient freedom' is a key trait of this type of discourse, a formulation that ultimately amounts to a description of isopolitical ties, where specific entitlements are transferred to different settings and flexibly accommodate changing political circumstances.

Albert Venn Dicey, one of the founders of the London School of Economics, eventually explicitly called in 1897 for the establishment of an 'isopolity' of the English race (he interpreted it as 'common citizenship' – 'isopolity' was probably only explicitly mentioned at the end of decades of sustained debate because in many ways it had previously gone without saying). Uniting Britain and its settler dominions and the US, this entity was to be a response to global geopolitical shifts. While Dicey specifically argued that an isopolity should be merely formalised in order to mirror already existing conditions, he was clearly imagining a community of *white men*: he excluded indigenous peoples from the working of its proposed isopolity, and suggested that an isopolitical move could be effectively used against the migration to the US of a variety of undesirables (Dicey 1897: 463-364, 466). While this framing is a reminder that settler colonial formations are equally exclusive of indigenous and exogenous alterities, his proposal did not ultimately meet with political support. Nation states were on the rise, but what is remarkable in this context is that in proposing a union between Greater Britain and the US Dicey was actually taking for granted the sustained isopolitical union of Britain and its settler colonies.

Even if the national paradigm was eventually asserted, the long lasting resilience of isopolitical sensibilities as they applied transnationally to "Greater Britain" (and the US) should be emphasised (see, for examples, Gorman 2002; Lake 2003; Lake and Reynolds 2008). Winston Churchill eventually wrote an isopolitical *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (see Armitage 1999: 429). The empire proper was then dissolving in the context of a model of decolonisation that focused on Westphalian sovereign independence for former colonial possessions, the Commonwealth, despite the protestations and recalcitrance of its



settler constituents, had been reorganised in ways that were now including formerly colonised Others (and enlisting them for the Cold War effort), but the ‘empire of racial identity’ was still showing a stubborn imaginative resilience. Isopolity (and indeed simmachy – these are times of automatic intervention in foreign theatres) retain contemporary relevance. The “special relationship” between Israel and the US, for example, is premised on the seamless transfer of people and their rights across jurisdictions and is underpinned by an extraordinary imaginary engagement that is in turn sustained by a shared settler colonial sensitivity (Veracini 2007). Isopolitics, like the settler colonial situation, should not be seen as solely restricted to the past.

Recovering the isopolitical character of settler colonial imaginaries is also important because a focus on the tension between “colonial” subordination and “independent” national sovereignty can make settler colonialism disappear. Both in Canadian and US historiographies, for example, a focus on the fundamental rupture represented by American independence has contributed to making an appraisal of settler colonial phenomena especially difficult (it is probably no coincidence that settler colonialism as a transnational interpretative category is an Australasian contribution). In the US, it resulted in an emphasis on accomplished sovereign national independence; in Canada, on the contrary, it produced an emphasis on a sustained relationship and institutional connection with Britain. A focus on the *anticolonial* struggle against the British occupiers traditionally prevented “colonialism” from entering the analytical field in the US, while in Canada “colonialism” did not enter the analytical field because it was by definition something done by someone else. Even the historiographical revisions introduced since the late 1960s did not focus on settler colonialism: in the US the main argument was that, although it had been previously denied, US foreign and internal engagements were actually imperialist (see Kaplan and Pease 1993, which reflected authoritatively on two decades of historiographical revision); in Canada the argument was that British imperialism was actually *Canadian* imperialism (see Berger 1970, which authoritatively initiated two decades of historiographical revision). The dialectical opposition between rupture and institutional continuity thus prevented an engagement with settler colonialism as an interpretative category. Without an appraisal of isopolitical relationships, settler colonialism can disappear from view.

## **Deep Colonising**

Beyond isopolitical relationships, deep colonising is also essential to an understanding of settler colonial phenomena. Australian-based anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose introduced 'deep colonising' in a 1996 paper dealing with the position of Aboriginal women in the context of recent developments in land claims legislation and indigenous tenure. Aboriginal women, she argued, were being disempowered by attempts to integrate Aboriginal policy and Aboriginal structures of governance. Specifically, she noted, women were effectively prevented from meaningfully contributing to evidence-gathering processes. Supporting evidence sustaining Aboriginal land claims was premised primarily, if not exclusively, on 'knowledge' forwarded by Aboriginal men:

While it is demonstrably the case that many formal relations between Indigenous people and the colonising nation have changed in the past three decades, as have many of the institutions which regulate these relations, it is also the case that practices of colonisation are very much with us. More profoundly, many of these practices are embedded in the institutions that are meant to reverse processes of colonisation. A land claim is an excellent example. On the one hand it reverses conquest by returning land to Indigenous people.

On the other hand, the marginalisation of women, along with [invasive] demands for information, perpetuates the colonising practices of conquest and appropriation. Colonising practices embedded within decolonising institutions must not be understood simply as negligible side effects of essentially benign endeavours. This embeddedness may conceal, naturalise, or marginalise continuing colonising practices. Furthermore, it can be difficult to offer a critique of the colonising features without calling into question the whole decolonising project.

Again, land rights offer an excellent example. If the double binds are not teased apart, and if the colonising practices are not separated analytically from decolonising institutions, conquest will continue. And if it continues in this form it will be wearing a mask of benign, or even radical, decolonisation which will make it far more difficult to challenge at all levels.

Deep colonising is the term I use for this process – conquest embedded within institutions and practices which are aimed toward reversing the effects of colonisation. (Rose 1996)

An ostensibly progressive legislation endowed with unprecedented liberating potential – some Aboriginal communities were *getting their land back* – could have, and was having, an oppressive outcome (Rose’s warning was somewhat prophetic: the recolonial federal government “intervention” in the Northern Territory of the late 2000s, when white men were “compelled” to intervene in Aboriginal communities in order to “save” Aboriginal women and children, was also premised on the deterioration of Aboriginal women’s political standing and power within their communities – a deterioration that was not countered by the land claim legislation and practice that followed the promulgation of the 1994 Native Title Act).<sup>5</sup>

Deep colonising as an analytical tool identifying a particular dynamic, however, should be pursued further and applied to *all* circumstances where a progressive and decolonising move *for some* ends up further compromising the position of others (similarly, even if in an entirely different context – she was criticising the concept of “Renaissance” – Joan Kelly famously concluded [1984: xii-xiii] that ‘events that further the historical development of men, liberating them from, natural, social, or ideological constraints, have quite different, even opposite, effects upon women’). Moreover, deep colonising is an especially necessary conceptual tool for the specific appraisal of settler colonial regimes: if a triumphant colonial society is a state of affairs where, as noted by Partha Chatterjee, change – the promised equality between coloniser and colonised – is forever postponed (Chatterjee 1993; on deferral as a colonial strategy see also Conklin 1997), where coloniser and colonised know and ultimately retain their respective places, a triumphant settler colonial circumstance, having ceased to be a dependency of a colonising metropole, having tamed the surrounding “wilderness”, having extinguished indigenous autonomies, and having successfully integrated various migratory waves, has also ceased being settler colonial (Veracini 2010). Colonial formations proclaim their permanence; settler colonial formations – on the contrary – announce their passing. Since it is primarily aimed at producing the conditions of its own supersession, settler colonial formations routinely operate via deep colonising means. That deep colonising should not be seen as exclusively characterising the present condition of the settler colonial polities should be emphasised. As long as the decolonisation of the settler colonial situation remains unresolved, settler colonial present and settler colonial past inevitably resemble each other.

Settler independence is one important example of deep colonising. On the one hand, as mentioned, settler colonial formations are charged with an inherently anticolonial dimension; they upset the hierarchical structures and organisation of colonial formations. On

the other, settler independence – a specific type of decolonisation – is actually an *acceleration* of colonising practices. Marc Ferro, for example, defines ‘colonist independence’ as the ultimate stage of imperial conquest, the ‘most advanced stage of white colonial expansion’ (Ferro 1997: 212-213). A settler freedom that is premised on indigenous dispossession, however, is not a unique circumstance in which, to paraphrase Kelly, events that further the historical development of some have quite different effects on indigenous peoples. Civil rights agendas might be mentioned in this context: when W. E. B. Du Bois noted, for example, in *The Souls of Black Folks* that ‘the problem of the color line’ would be the critical question of the twentieth century (Du Bois 1994 [1903]: 1), he performed simultaneously an act of anticolonial resistance and an act of suppression of indigenous autonomy (one could assume that in his estimation the “indigenous problem” would not be a problem at all). Similarly, the Subaltern Studies Group has extensively documented how anticolonial nationalist stances failed to represent a variety of marginalised subjectivities. The anticolonial Indian nationalists could and would not represent “voiceless” (often indigenous/Adivasi) rural subalterns. While these anticolonial erasures can be construed as examples of deep colonising, and considering that “eliminationist” shifts in indigenous policies in settler colonial contexts have been routinely couched in a humanitarian rhetoric emphasising equality and emancipation from controlling legislation, it is not surprising that indigenous militancy in a multiplicity of settings has repeatedly shown a stubborn reluctance in engaging with other insurgencies and with state driven emancipatory programs. Ellinghaus’s comparative work on ‘assimilative pathways’ in two settler colonial polities highlights instances of indigenous dispossession framed as “emancipation” (in other words, deep colonising) (see Ellinghaus 2007).

For their exemplarity, two contemporary instances of deep colonising could be mentioned in this context. As recently noted by Jody A. Bird in an article dedicated to his dealings with Native American issues, future US president Barack Obama repeatedly and powerfully articulated during the 2008 presidential campaign an ongoing project of democratic inclusion. One especially memorable (and frequently reproduced) speech epitomised this logic:

For when we have faced down impossible odds, when we’ve been told we’re not ready or that we shouldn’t try or that we can’t, generations of Americans have responded with a simple creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can. Yes, we can. Yes, we can.

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation: Yes, we can. It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail towards freedom through the darkest of nights: Yes, we can.

It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores *and pioneers who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness*: Yes, we can.

It was the call of workers who organized, women who reached for the ballot, a president who chose the moon as our new frontier, and a king who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the promised land: Yes, we can, to justice and equality.

Yes, we can, to opportunity and prosperity. Yes, we can heal this nation. Yes, we can repair this world. Yes, we can. (Quoted in Bird 2009: 23; my emphasis)

This powerful narrative identifies a series of successive emancipatory enfranchisements: of African Americans, of ethnic migrants, of workers, of women. Even the ‘settler pioneers’ are part of this process – even they get to be emancipated. And yet, as Bird perceptively points out, there are no American Indians in this picture. Indeed, Native Americans are doubly absent: they are conspicuously missing from this list of emancipatory passages, *and* they are erased as an obstacle: the pioneers who ‘pushed westward’ did not move against them (unless we are willing to consider the Indian nations that occupied the continent as part of an ‘unforgiving wilderness’). As such, Bird concludes, as ‘the pioneers, immigrants, slaves and abolitionists progressed towards a destined more perfect union, American Indian nations had to be pushed to the margins and then out of the picture altogether’ (23). Operating within a system that routinely demands that we forget that the pioneers were either dispossessing Indians or receiving stolen property (especially considering that he was in the business of winning a close election)? Yes, he was.

In November 2009 – a year after his election – President Obama invited 500 tribal leaders to a massive conference – the first of its kind – dedicated to developing a comprehensive new approach in the management of Indian affairs. His administration is not uninterested in Indian affairs; this agenda, however, is essentially framed in terms of welfare rather than sovereignty (what in Australian parlance would be referred to as “practical reconciliation”, and in a US context has been defined by Jessica Cattelino [2010] as ‘need-based’ sovereignty).<sup>6</sup> While this progressive agenda – envisaging yet another emancipatory passage for US indigenous people – remains ultimately premised on an original disavowal, attempts to address indigenous disadvantage that fail to recognise the need to decolonise a

settler colonial system of relationships can be understood as deep colonising. Besides, indigenous welfare and “rehabilitation” are about (settler) benevolence and (indigenous) need, not about inherent sovereign entitlements (Kauanui 2008: 34). Rehabilitation without reconciliation isn’t.

An ocean away, newly-elected Australian Prime Minister’s Kevin Rudd official parliamentary apology to the “stolen generations”, as noted by Maria Giannacopoulos (2009), who wrote an insightful typology of Rudd’s rhetorical strategies of evasion, provides another example of deep colonising (for the text of the apology, see Rudd 2008). Firstly, she notes, Rudd’s apology is strictly about the theft of children, not the theft of land (as if child removal could be separated from the system of power relationships in which it happened). Secondly, by definition, an apology is about saying sorry *and* about defending one’s actions: ‘Rudd’s apology appears to be less about benefiting Indigenous peoples and more about serving as an exculpation mechanism for white modes of power’, she notes. In the apology,

the state is both defendant and judge, and as such it self-prosecutes, carefully circumscribing the limits of critique that may be made against it — or, more specifically, that it calculatedly makes against itself. The apology functions simultaneously as the site of blame (prosecuted) and as the site of justification (defence). (339)

In this sense, the apology amounts to a solipsistic act, where the settler sovereign talks to *itself* about *itself*, reconciling *itself* with its past.

Moreover, Rudd’s apology carefully *contains* its scope, and is construed as only applicable in relation to past occurrences. Thus, Giannacopoulos notes, by ‘blaming itself with reference to its past incarnations the current sovereign controls the parameters of critique whilst also exculpating itself for liability in the present’; ultimately, the ‘apology is made by the current sovereign without the acknowledgment that those things being apologised for persist in the present’ (340). This narrative shift produces a situation in which *current* indigenous grievances are strategically dismissed: the apology is circumscribed to the past, the past – Rudd is quite explicit about this – *cannot* be changed, and the present is another story.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, by strictly and explicitly defining the period covered by the apology – specifically, the years between 1910 and 1970 – Rudd strategically avoids focusing on both the *establishment* of settler colonial relations (the pre-1910 period), and their ongoing current operation (the post-1970 era).<sup>8</sup> As the apology blames ‘bad laws’ enacted by ‘bad

parliaments', a double exculpation takes place: the failure was not settler colonialism's, and not of those who were personally involved in delivering and enacting genocidal policies. Both the system and the perpetrators are thus effectively excused (even if it is acknowledged that both policies and executors were racist).

Ultimately, since the apology is construed as a generous gift, 'instead of Indigenous people being given something back' it is them who owe acceptance to Rudd (344). Rudd's concluding remarks underscore this peculiar inversion: 'my proposal is this: *if* the apology we extend today is accepted in the spirit of reconciliation in which it is offered, we can today resolve together that that there be a new beginning for Australia' (Rudd 2008; my emphasis). *If*, Giannacopoulos, points out: 'Rudd is making the apology, but only *if* it is accepted can his plan succeed. If the future does not shine as Rudd anticipates it will, it will be the fault of those who have not fallen into line [i.e., the Aboriginal people who would not accept the apology]' (Giannacopoulos 2009: 345). Rudd's settler repertoire of evasion, thus, includes blaming indigenous people for settler colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Reconciliation without compensation isn't.

### **Decolonising Settler Colonialisms**

Isopolitical relationships and deep colonising are linked. If isopolitical relations institute a tremendously effective mechanism of settler colonisation, deep colonising ensures that the possibility of superseding settler colonial structures remains an especially complex undertaking. Settlers could autonomously establish localised self-governing polities and still avail themselves of the financial, technical, political, demographic, diplomatic, and military resources of the colonising cores – they could drive policy on the ground and reliably expect that the cores would come to their rescue. James Belich has referred to this process as 'cloning' and recently documented its operation (Belich 2009: 165-169). Conversely, the ongoing operation of deep colonising has frustrated even relatively genuine attempts to refashion the relationship between indigenous constituencies and settler states (on the possibility of genuine reconciliation in settler contexts, see Humphrey 2005; Muldoon 2005; Patton 2005; Short 2005; Short 2008). A settler polity that successfully reconciles with its past is performing a powerful act of self-supersession and relegitimation that fulfils its original promise (for an insightful analysis of the psychological dynamics underpinning the settler need to apologise, see Gooder, Jacobs 2000).<sup>10</sup> It's a deep colonising paradox: finally addressing historical grievances produces the ultimate subsumption of surviving indigenous

alterities. Apologising can be expensive (cheap apologies are not effective), but not apologising can also be fraught (after all, a settler polity that is burdened by a legitimacy deficit is bound to be less effective in its containment of indigenous insurgencies than one that has genuinely invested – a kind of insurance policy – in its legitimation).<sup>11</sup> Apologising can bring about a type of closure that will finalise the process of settler colonial appropriation. Rose’s warning regarding deep colonising and the need to analytically separate ‘colonising practices’ and ‘decolonising institutions’ remains compelling.

In a recent essay dedicated to the relationship between contract theory and settler colonialism Carole Pateman also noted the impossibility of settler decolonisation (unless the original settler contract is undone). The power of the ‘settler contract’, she noted, where the settlers are ‘the natural figures of the thought experiment in the texts of political theory come to life’ has meant that, even if the ‘process of decolonization and national self-determination that began after the Second World War has swept away all but tiny remnants of the colonies of the European powers’, the ‘Native peoples of the two new Worlds [North America and Australia], living within the boundaries of the states constructed from the plantation of settlers, have never been seen as candidates for sovereignty’ (Pateman 2007: 55, 73). Indeed, their experience demonstrates how sovereign independence and decolonisation do not necessarily accompany each other: settler independence discontinued one type of political subordination but enhanced the subordination of indigenous communities and sovereignties.

However, if, as stated in the opening passage, different colonial formations produce the different circumstances of their supersession, different colonial *sovereignties* also produce the different circumstances of their supersession (for an analysis of the evolution of a multiplicity of colonial sovereign regimes, see Benton 2010). Colonial formations generally *appropriate* indigenous sovereignties. In a decolonising move, an original appropriation can be undone by “returning” what was originally appropriated (and sovereignty *was* formally “returned” – whether this passage implied a substantive process of decolonisation or merely instituted neo-colonial relations is another matter). On the contrary, settler colonial formations primarily *disavow* indigenous sovereignties (even if, at times – with treaties – it recognises them in order to successively dismiss or subsume their existence).<sup>12</sup> A postsettler move logically requires that an original disavowal be fundamentally undone: indigenous sovereignties must be recognised (this, of course, is a quite complicate matter; for a recent critique of arbitrary attempts to project “sovereignty” onto indigenous forms of governance in the context of the ‘politics of recognition’ in settler societies, see Muldoon 2008; for an argument linking recognition and the logic of appropriation, see Yar 2001). One consequence



of this distinct operation is that, paradoxically, while economic development is normally considered a precondition of sovereignty for postcolonial polities, in a settler colonial context, as noted by Cattelino (2010), economic development that is premised on indigenous sovereignty ultimately *undermines* indigenous autonomy.<sup>13</sup>

In this context, focusing simultaneously on isopolitical relationships and deep colonising can help imagining possible postsettler passages. On the one hand, deep colonising should be a necessary element in the understanding of both the specific needs of constituencies that are colonised in unique ways and the specific modalities of settler colonial self-supersession. On the other hand, theorising a substantive autonomy that operates within sovereign structures and a decolonisation that does not require the markers of ultimate sovereign status can contribute to debates involving indigenous sovereignty and unsundered claims (see Bruyneel 2007). As settler colonial forms operate isopolitically, postsettler arrangements could also operate isopolitically: if settler colonialism efficiently denied indigenous sovereignties by isopolitical means, ironically, a post settler passage might entail the *recognition* of indigenous sovereignties by isopolitical means. In the global context of contemporary liberal democratic settler societies, establishing isopolitical relations between the settler polity and multiple indigenous sovereign entities might thus be a way forward and constitute the basis for a possible postsettler decolonisation. Establishing isopolitical relations should not be seen as equivalent to establishing a system of dual citizenship, whereby indigenous people can end up full citizens of an impaired indigenous polity (which is in any case entirely contained within settler national structures), and impaired citizens of a settler polity that sustains their disadvantage. On the contrary, an isopolity, a relationship, cannot be contained.<sup>14</sup>

An emancipatory ameliorative paradigm is ultimately unavailable to indigenous struggles. The settler contract was not enacted *without* indigenous people, a circumstance that could be rectified in successive waves of progressive emancipatory inclusion; the settler contract was fundamentally constituted *against* them. In other words, while the settler contract *disavows* the possible exclusion of various exogenous alterities from the body politic (for example, women, or racialised Others), it *forecloses* in a variety of ways the sustained presence of indigenous ones. If and when indigenous people become signatories of the settler contract, in a deep colonising move (as the settler entity finally loses the ultimate marker of its coloniality and as a settler society becomes a settled one), they also underwrite the ultimate demise of their autonomous collective sovereign capacity

Once the prospect of forcibly insisting on indigenous assimilation within the framework of the settler contract had to be abandoned, ‘treaty traditions’ became activated or reactivated throughout the settler world: the settler contract for most, and a separate contract for indigenous people (see McHugh 2004). ‘Treaty traditions’, or ‘Treaty federalism’, have represented a possible alternative, but their renewal can also be construed as deep colonising: their reactivation establishes a parallel, supplementary, contractual relationship, a deal which is not the settler contract but is dependent on, and is designed to coexist, with it. As such, as they recognise or establish indigenous sovereignties that are inherently contained, treaty traditions do not affect the original settler contract (indeed, while the focus is on indigenous communities finally accessing autonomous rights as indigenous, the fact that the settler contract is thereby ultimately confirmed can be easily overlooked).<sup>15</sup> Because of the specific characteristics of the settler colonial situation, indigenous emancipation is ultimately conditioned on some form of assimilation. And yet, a postsettler passage can only happen if emancipation and assimilation remain antithetical. For indigenous people, the settler contract cannot be inclusively amended – it must be dissolved. Recognition without substantive sovereignty isn’t (Yar 2001). The possibility of acquiring sovereign rights that are seamlessly transferred across jurisdictions and into and through the settler polity could be a powerful solvent.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Eddy and Schreuder (1988). They propose an interpretation emphasising the progressive growth of settler national consciousness and the parallel demise of imperial forms. This narrative framework fails to account for the fact that "national" and "imperial" assertions were essentially intertwined, codependent, and interdependent. Rather than antithetical, they could be seen as a function of each other.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Meaney noted that Britishness itself could be performed better in Australia than in the metropole. Robert J. C. Young (2008) has more recently presented a similar argument in a transnational context involving all "English" settler peripheries.

<sup>3</sup> This union was eventually broken and replaced by separate national structures. For an analysis of this processes, and the ways in which this discontinuation impacted *both* on the self-perception of British emigrants to the British settler colonies and on the receiving settler nations' perception of their migration, see Constantine (2003). Even if this author does not use these terms, his outline traces the parallel transformation of settlers (before WWII) into migrants (after WWII), and the transformation of isopolitical ties into national ones.

<sup>4</sup> Jack P. Greene (2002) also emphasises this distinction: "[m]y use of the term settlers is deliberate", he notes, "[i]t has long been employed in the historical analysis of other nations that arose out of the British empire

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(Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa), because it avoids the dependency implications associated with the word colonists (metropolitans always considered colonists to be a category of others) [...]” (251). On the contradiction between Jeffersonian settlerism and the Hamiltonian “creole complex”, see Goudie (2009).

<sup>5</sup> Of course, this is not the whole story. The situation was so dire (chronic poverty, self harm, alcoholism and other substances abuse, vandalism, domestic and communal violence, and so on) that a number of indigenous spokespersons actually considered the intervention the lesser of two evils (see Moses 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Cattellino’s insightful exploration of a “double bind” demonstrates how an understanding of indigenous sovereignty that is premised on indigenous need ultimately undermines indigenous sovereignty itself: “The double bind of need-based sovereignty for indigenous peoples is not universal across space or through time, but it is a modality of settler colonialism that has a variety of patterned effects”, she notes. “Among them”, she concludes, “are the unique barriers that face American Indians who attempt to gain economic power while insisting on their political and cultural Indianness [...], the weakening of indigenous sovereignty by its association with need, the consolidation of indigenous citizenship as failure because “successful” economic citizenship is coded as assimilation, and the recategorization of economic transfers based on treaty rights and federal–tribal trust relations as welfare benefits (and of indigenous citizenship as wardship)” (Cattellino 2010: 254).

<sup>7</sup> Apologies of this type are routinely construed in ways that pre-empt the possibility of indigenous litigation. For example, the 1993 Apology Resolution – issued a hundred years after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy – recognised that the Hawaiian people never lawfully relinquished their sovereignty but stated in a disclaimer that “[n]othing in this Joint Resolution is intended to serve as settlement of any claims against the United States” (quoted in Kauanui 2008: 190).

<sup>8</sup> Tony Barta (2008) has noted, for example, how the very focus on the stolen generations has actually diverted attention from the issue of genocide and stolen land.

<sup>9</sup> For a more positive interpretation of Rudd’s apology, see Celermajer and Moses (2010). “Occupying both the symbolic body of the representative of the nation and the very human body of a man profoundly affected by shame and sadness for the suffering of particular human beings”, they note, Rudd’s speech “navigated the complex personal and political character of the apology” (40). They also focus on indigenous responses to the apology, mostly perceived as a genuine turning point. This fact should not be underestimated.

<sup>10</sup> Gooder and Jacobs remain sceptical *vis à vis* what they call the “sorry people” and argue that apologies are ultimately narcissistic acts designed to reconstitute the legitimacy of colonising endeavours.

<sup>11</sup> “Apologies” have proliferated in recent years. See, for example, Nobles (2008). This is, however, a rapidly expanding literature. See Barkan (2000), Thompson (2002), Barkan and Karn (2006), Govier (2006), Lenzerini (2008), Berg and Schaefer (2009). This literature does not always distinguish between apologies issued with reference to a settler colonial past and apologies issued in relation to other conflicts.

<sup>12</sup> Thus, two radically different approaches to decolonisation emerge. While colonialism often “returns” sovereign capacities but rejects the possibility of “returning” stolen property, settler colonial orders may “return” (some) stolen land but emphatically reject the possibility of recognising meaningful indigenous sovereignties.

<sup>13</sup> The expectation is that indigenous communities must be poor. If they are not, and when they have been able to collectively exercise their sovereign capacity – for example, when they have profited from gaming legislation – Indian communities have sometimes been able to develop, they are inevitably perceived as inauthentically-indigenous. Their sovereign capacity thus becomes a target for discontinuation.

<sup>14</sup> On the distinction between double citizenship (when people move seamlessly between two jurisdictions) and dual citizenship (when people enjoy rights within two hierarchically organised jurisdictions), see, for example, Pearson (2002). On the multiple ways in which indigenous sovereignty can be articulated within an existing settler state, see Biolsi (2005).

<sup>15</sup> On international practices of treaty-regulated accommodations between settler and indigenous sovereignties, see Hawkes (2010). Autonomy or self rule, he argues, “can be accommodated through a public form of government where indigenous people are the demographic majority in a region, or through the exercise of the aboriginal right of self-government and the negotiation of intergovernmental agreements. The demand for greater participation in the decision-making institutions of the state, or shared-rule, can be met by guaranteed representation for indigenous peoples in the legislatures of federations, in the creation of Aboriginal parliaments, in the creation of state dispute resolution mechanisms to address the needs of indigenous peoples, in the development of treaty-making and treaty renewal processes, and through indigenous participation in the intergovernmental relations of federal states” (159).