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Beyond Domestic Empire: Internal- and Post-Colonial New Mexico

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BEYOND DOMESTIC EMPIRE
INTERNAL- AND POST-COLONIAL NEW MEXICO

Introduction

In the 1960s internal colonialism became an important sociological theory advanced to explain the historical development of ethnic and racial inequality in the United States and the rest of the modern world. By the 1980s the theory had been dismissed as inadequate; nonetheless, its influence persisted even as more global, interdisciplinary, colonial theories evolved. In this essay we will outline the connections between internal colonialism and postcolonialism, two dimensions of an evolving colonial paradigm. To test these theories against historical reality, we will apply them to ethnic Mexicans and Indians, especially Navajos, in New Mexico in order to ground them and colonialism in general at the regional level. This essay claims that internal colonialism continues effectively to explain the historic subordination of indigenous and mixed peoples within larger states dominated by other groups. This condition understood, the paper sees postcolonial theory as providing ideas to end internally colonized societies since the theory critiques the lingering negative effects of colonialism and envisions a world beyond it. Ultimately, this essay argues that contrary to earlier dismissals, internal colonialism gains credibility in light of more recent developments in postcolonial thought and in context of the evolving colonial paradigm.¹

Definitions

The colonial paradigm is the collection of ideas and theories surrounding the concept of a colony. In 1963 Mexican social scientist Pablo González Casanova defined it thus, “Originally. . . . the term ‘colony’ was used to designate a territory occupied by emigrants of the mother country. . . . then colony was understood . . . as a territory in which the . . . emigrants dominated the indigenous peoples.” Colony means a land occupied by outsiders, but also the society resulting from the occupation. Colonization means the settling of a land, an empty place, such as the Azores, or an already occupied place, such as the Canaries. Colonialism is the set of beliefs, such as a civilizing mission, and practices, such as military conquest or political control, associated with that settling. Formal colonialism is government-sanctioned settlement and control. Informal colonialism can be loose migration, such as Comanche expansion, or religious missions, such as Protestant proselytizing in nineteenth-century New Mexico. Economic domination, without overt political control, of a region and people by outsiders is another form of informal colonialism; trading posts are examples.²

Internal colonialism can be either formal or informal. Whenever a people and its homeland are subordinated within the borders of another people’s nation state or contiguous empire, the former and the immediate ruling group become an internal colony. When the United States conquered New Mexico, the area became a territory within a contiguous American empire with an Anglo national state at its eastern core. Thus, New Mexico was a formal internal colony. Its former Mexican citizens were ruled by governors from Washington. After 1912 New Mexico achieved statehood, formal

self-government, but internal colonialism continued informally due to the continuing socioeconomic subordination of most of the non-Anglo population.³

Internal colonial theory seeks to explain the subordinate status of a racial or ethnic group in its own homeland within the boundaries of a larger state dominated by a different people. An example would be the Navajos whose reservation exists under the supervision of the surrounding United States. Historically, that colonized status usually results from military conquest, often followed by political, economic, cultural, and complete social and even psychological subordination. The degree of domination varies by time, locale, gender, class, and other factors, such as the presence of additional ethnic groups, which create complex hierarchies—as in the late nineteenth-century dominance of Anglo-American male merchants over patriarchal Mexican landowning families that in turn subordinated matrilineal Navajos in New Mexico. Internal colonialism is the domestic subset of the larger colonial (or imperial) paradigm, including formal colonialism, neocolonialism, postcolonialism, borderlands theory, and postnationalism, that explains broader relationships of ethnic inequality across history and geography, thus suggesting appropriate solutions to that inequality. Internal colonialism is applicable globally to dynastic and national states, as well as contiguous empires, from antiquity to the present—a breadth that attests to this theory's importance.⁴

Postcolonialism defines the status of a native or mixed population in its homeland after formal domination by a foreign people or state has officially ended. The independence of Mexicans and their homeland from Spain in 1821 would be an example.

That status should mean the realization of self-determination, allowing the passing of laws such as those against the discriminatory Spanish caste system. The independent society, nonetheless, includes residual colonial effects, such as the continued prejudice against darker members, including the Pueblos and other indigenous peoples.

Independence is only one postcolonial political possibility; another is integration into the surrounding society, such as the incorporation of mestizos into the national citizenry of Mexico. Needless to say, full social, economic, cultural, and psychological independence or integration is difficult to achieve, the desirability of either course open to question.

Because of the multiple states controlling New Mexico in the nineteenth century and its varied population, the region serves as a good laboratory for examination of the colonial paradigm.⁵

Chronology of Colonialism in New Mexico

The Pre-Contact Era

A priori, the colonial paradigm rests on space, the occupation of uninhabited land initially, then the lands of others. According to archeologists, the place later called the Rio Grande Valley was occupied over two thousand years in succession by the Mogollon, Hohokam, and Anasazi, all ancestors of the Pueblos. By the late sixteenth century the native land of the Pueblos, included about eighty self-governing towns along the Rio Grande and its tributaries, stretching from present El Paso to Taos, New Mexico. These towns shared a similar culture in terms of religion, agriculture, architecture, and world view, if not language. The Pueblos thus had a history in place second to none. Indeed, their own history told that they came into the present world from one below, a narrative

reflected in the architecture of the sacred kiva. Around these communities were more recently arrived and varied Apaches to the southeast and southwest, Navajos and Utes to the northwest, Comanches to the northeast. These were varied peoples, whose homelands changed configuration over the centuries, due to environmental change, migration, cooperation, and warfare. The interpretation of colonization prior to European contact, we leave to native and other archeologists, anthropologists, and historians.⁶

Spanish Colonialism

Colonialism, as distinguished from colonization, is the set of beliefs and practices associated with settling. Spaniard Francisco Vázquez de Coronado raided the Pueblo lands as early as 1540 without planting a colony, engaging in the practice of war under the belief that the pursuit of wealth was justified by his Christian beliefs. In 1598 Juan de Oñate established the first Spanish colony through conquest, following the same beliefs as his predecessor. He and his settlers moved in on the Pueblo town of Ohke, that they renamed San Juan. Subsequently, Spaniards would pair their settlements with Pueblo towns in order to tap the resources and labor of the local population. In each town a Franciscan mission was founded to convert the Indians to Christianity. One group of Tlaxcalan Indians built their own church in the Analco barrio in Santa Fe. From the beginning the settlers from central Mexico were an intermixed lot, many of Indian descent already.⁷

By imperial standards, New Mexico had vague boundaries and was not an especially remunerative colony, but Franciscan coffers sustained the effort to eliminate

every vestige of Pueblo religion. As a result, Popé, and other religious leaders, launched the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, an independence movement powerful enough to drive the colonizers from the homeland for twelve brief postcolonial years, during which the very altars of Catholicism were desecrated in the desire to scrub the homeland of the invaders' beliefs. Unfortunately for the rebels, a unified resistance could not be sustained, so the Spanish returned to rule for another 130 years. Having military, political, economic, and social control was not enough, Spanish colonialism transformed the religious beliefs and the ethno-racial composition of the colonized.⁸

By subjugating the Pueblos, Spain settled and changed the region it called New Mexico, a colony that would extend beyond the tributaries of the Río Grande. The Spanish had more difficulty controlling the nomadic peoples away from the river valleys. Between 1692 and 1821 the Spanish engaged in constant warfare with Apaches, Comanches, and other peoples, often capturing and losing women and children who were incorporated into the opposite society. Pueblo labor was thus augmented by other indigenous peoples in support of the colonial elite who required shepherds, farmers, masons, carpenters, cooks, tanners, miners, domestics, laundresses, and many other workers. In this way, whole communities of *genízaros*, detribalized Christian Indians, became hispanicized colonists, more or less loyal subjects of the empire. At Abiquiu a *genízaro* community served as a bulwark against nomadic attacks on the Río Grande Valley. One result was further racial intermixture with mestizos from central New Spain, a hybrid population ranked in a complex caste system above Indians, but below *penínsulares* born in Spain and *criollos*, Spaniards born in Mexico, respectively. The

semi-official ethno-racial labels ranged from coyote to *saltatras*, as colonial authorities tried to track and maintain the purity of the Spanish elite. The mixed population on the frontier reflected in many ways that of Mexico City where various indigenous peoples intermixed with imported Africans and even Filipinos from Spain's trans-Pacific empire.⁹

Among the reasons for the end of the Spanish Empire in Mexico was the inequality produced by the colonial caste system. In 1810 criollo Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla led his *casta* troops against the royal armies to overthrow the dominance of peninsular rule. Despite his failure, the struggle endured until 1821 when the previously royalist criollos finally found it in their own interest to sever the ties to Spain that benefitted the penínsulares above them. Though the war for independence was little felt in New Mexico, the consequences of formal Spanish colonialism and its fall inevitably affected the history that followed.¹⁰

Mexican Independence

In theory postcolonialism follows the independence of a nation and its homeland from an imperial power. In 1821 Mexico freed itself from Spain, but briefly established an empire with Emperor Agustín Iturbide as a constitutional monarch. Following a Napoleonic model, the new monarchy sought to control a landmass extending from northern California to Panama utilizing a centralized government. This conservative system was too much like the old dynastic empire and the colonial Viceroyalty of New Spain, so it quickly collapsed. One cause was that Central America felt itself colonized by Mexico City and broke away to form its own state, subsequently to fragment further.

Though Mexico had entered a postcolonial era, the residue of formal colonialism remained.¹¹

To counter sectionalism, liberals established a more modern republican federal system. In doing so Mexico followed the liberal Spanish Constitution of 1812 that had sought to create a massive federation out of the Spanish Empire. The new Constitution of 1824 divided Mexico into states, somewhat following the boundaries of the previous provinces of New Spain. The U.S. federal Constitution also had an influence. Prior to mass forms of communication, federalism permitted enough autonomy so regional governments could make decisions in a timely fashion. In this postcolonial era, Mexicans were thus able to govern themselves, to rearrange geopolitically, for example, provinces into territories, states, or departments.¹²

In the far north of Mexico lay the Mexican provinces of California, New Mexico, and Texas with general boundaries and hispanicized populations too small for self-government, at least in the opinion of Mexico City. Despite rejecting overseas or external colonialism, because their goal was usually to merge their citizens into a single people, modern nation states nonetheless often implemented an internal colonialism. Thus, from 1821 to 1848, New Mexico's former Spanish subjects became Mexican nationals, but their land became temporarily a territorial possession of the larger nation, not yet an equally federated state. Though the territory had far greater autonomy than it had experienced under the Spanish Empire, the region remained subordinate as did its varied peoples.¹³

New Mexico, therefore, remained a formal colony within the evolving Mexican national state, a formal internal colony of Mexico's contiguous empire, rather than an overseas colony of Spain. Socially, criollos and mestizos, in that order, ranked above Pueblo Indians and remained agents of Hispanic colonization, but the elite itself, lacking full representation in the national government, was not yet fully incorporated into the Mexican nation-state. To achieve that goal, both national and local elites expected to continue the imperial policies of Spain to convert the native peoples into hispanicized citizens. However, any hope of expanding into indigenous homelands to transform them into territories suitable for statehood was dashed by powerful Navajo and other Native counterattacks. Thus, in this seemingly postcolonial era for Mexico as a whole, in varying degrees New Mexico continued to perpetuate and experience colonized conditions domestically, even as Navajos, Apaches, Utes and other indigenous peoples retained independence.¹⁴

Despite Mexican claims to New Mexico between 1821 and 1848, Navajos successfully repelled colonization and retained political sovereignty. On the other hand, they had become economically dependent on the sheepherding introduced by Spain, so they raided Hispanic settlements for livestock and captives. Mexican authorities countered with military incursions designed to punish the raids, regain captives, and secure Navajo slaves. In 1823 New Mexican Governor José Antonio Vizcarra penetrated Navajoland well into today's Arizona, but did not secure the conquest by occupying the homeland permanently. Other nomadic groups also remained independent and could not

be considered colonized in this period, especially the Comanches who according to one historian established an empire in territory claimed by Mexico.¹⁵

Unlike the Navajos, some sedentary indigenous peoples, such as the Pueblos, remained subordinate, colonized, within the independent nation of Mexico and its New Mexican territory. Even though they had secured a measure of autonomy under Spain that continued under Mexico, Pueblos did not gain social equality with Hispanic white and mestizo Mexicans. Despite Mexico's national laws granting citizenship to all its indigenous peoples, Pueblos retained a native culture regarded as inferior by hispanicized Mexicans. Although Pueblos were relatively hispanicized landholders, they also remained a major supply of local labor. In the independent Mexican republic, Pueblos thus continued in a subordinate status within an internal colony of an evolving national state. Only the detribalized genízaros, often descended from captive slaves including Navajos, occupied a lower position. Thus, this postcolonial era meant an end to the formal Spanish colonialism controlled from Madrid, but a formal internal colonialism persisted in New Mexico.¹⁶

Ironically, Mexico's attempts to rid itself of Spain's restrictive colonial trade policies led to greater exposure to Anglo-American imperialism. As early as 1821, the Santa Fe Trail opened to the United States, allowing for the settlement of Anglo traders and the penetration of eastern manufactures into New Mexico. Though by 1846 Mexican merchants actually dominated the trade due to their access to silver bullion from Zacatecas, Anglo commercial penetration opened the way for U.S. military expansion.

Ultimately, inexperience in self-governance and economic underdevelopment at both the national and regional levels would encourage Anglo-American colonialism.¹⁷

Civil strife developed in Mexico between those who wanted a centralized state modeled on that of France and those who wanted a federal republic similar to that of the United States. In 1834 the centralists overturned the federalist constitution, and briefly incorporated New Mexico as a department in a unitary republic. Though this change made the province equal to the other departments of the republic, the new structure made all the provinces more subservient to Mexico City, a situation more similar to that of the colonial viceroyalty. The result was armed rebellion in many parts of the country, including Texas and New Mexico. Nuevomexicanos successfully deposed the governor appointed by the central government, thereby securing as much autonomy as the province had ever had. However, New Mexico, unlike Anglo Texas, did not declare itself independent, as the cultural ties to Mexico remained. Despite such ties, formal internal colonialism led to violent domestic resistance and opened Mexico to imperialism from abroad.¹⁸

Anglo-American Empires

The Texas Revolution set the stage for the expansion of Anglo imperialism into New Mexico. Anglo colonization of Texas had led to separatism from Mexico, and effective independence in 1836. Texas's imperial claim to territories well beyond Anglo settlement, including half of New Mexico, the Comanche Empire, and other indigenous homelands, was taken up by the United States after annexation in 1845. Mexico's refusal

to concede the claim led to war, resulting in the U.S. Army's occupation of Santa Fe, the area secured after the failed Taos Rebellion of 1847, an insurrection of both Pueblo and mestizo Mexicans. Senator Roger S. Baldwin did not mince words a few years later in describing the purpose of the war: "an army was sent to by the United States to conquer New Mexico and California..." After the cessation of hostilities, Mexico surrendered its far northern provinces in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848. With the Anglo-American conquest Mexicans--indigenous, mestizo, and white--within the new boundaries claimed by the United States experienced a new layer of colonizers.¹⁹

During the long U.S. territorial period, New Mexico was again reconfigured as a formal internal colony. As a territory, it lacked full representation in Congress, and its inhabitants thus lacked full citizenship. Socially, white Mexicans lost their dominant position in society to Anglos despite retaining it over mestizos and Pueblos. Early, Apaches, Navajos, and other tribes retained their independence. Mestizos lost their own middling political and economic position to the point where Anglos often perceived them as indistinguishable from Indians. Holding military and political power, Anglos gained economic power especially by securing the farms and grazing lands of Mexicans. Though long passed its time as a formal overseas colony of Spain, New Mexico paradoxically experienced post-Spanish colonialism in the continuing status of internal colony, first of Mexico, then among the territories of the United States.²⁰

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Indians moved down the hierarchy dominated by Anglo Americans with ethnic Mexicans in between. Pueblos struggled to

retain whatever autonomy they had held under Spain and Mexico; many if not most genizaros merged into the mestizo population. Navajos, on the other hand, experienced the full weight of empire in the 1860s, despite valiant resistance under the leadership of Manuelito. In 1864, the “red and blue coats” of the U.S. Army, with mostly Anglo troops, and the New Mexico Volunteers, mostly hispanicized militia, conquered the Navajos and removed them from their traditional homeland in the Four Corners to a reservation near Texas. This was in keeping with Indian removal policies implemented by the U.S. government, following earlier British colonial models. In 1868 the Navajos were permitted to return, but they had lost their independence and become wards of the federal government on a reservation, a “domestic dependent nation.” They and their homeland *Dinetah* had become part of the U.S. internal colonies known as the territories of New Mexico and Arizona.²¹

While the reservation system had encapsulated Indian homelands as internal colonies, by 1871 the federal government ended treaty making with tribes, essentially denying them recognition as sovereign nations equal to the United States. In 1887 even the existence of internal colonies was threatened by a policy of termination to end the reservation system. The Dawes Act pushed for assimilation of Indians by breaking up their collective land holdings into individual allotments of private property. In New Mexico Navajos who accepted such small parcels were promised U.S. citizenship if they succeeded at farming. On the other hand, failed farms were auctioned as unclaimed lands to Anglo and Hispano settlers. As a result, the eastern boundary of the Navajo reservation became a checkerboard of private and tribal land. Through termination,

internal colonialism would end with the integration, indeed the disappearance, of Indians into the dominant society. That was one negative shape postcolonialism could take.²²

Some Mexicans had sought statehood since acquisition of New Mexico by the United States. Despite repeated efforts the territory remained a formal colony during the nineteenth century because Congress perceived it as too foreign. In an effort to overcome that perception, newspapers and other opinion makers attempted to whiten the Spanish-speaking people by referring to them as Spanish-American. A more Euro-American label fit well into their traditional caste system and into the newer Anglo-American racial system. After a long list of Anglo governors, Washington appointed Miguel A. Otero to the post where he served from 1897 to 1906. He served as a symbol of Hispano self-determination, especially when he promoted issues such as bilingual education.²³

Statehood

With admission to the Union in 1912, New Mexico seemed at the end of colonialism as its Anglo- and Spanish-American residents gained full voting rights. The whiter Mexican elite also gained more political power, even winning high offices including those of governor and U.S. senator. Born in Las Vegas, New Mexico, Ezequiel C. de Baca was a journalist with the liberal *La Voz del Pueblo*, who had helped include bilingual education in the state's constitution. After serving as lieutenant governor from 1912, he entered the governor's office in 1917, only to die one month into his term. Octaviano Larrazolo, born in Mexico, became a Republican after the state Democratic Party declined to improve representation of the 60 percent Hispanic population then of

that ethnicity. He held the governor's office from 1919 until 1921--a short term during which he established a board of health that especially assisted poor ethnic Mexicans. In 1928 he was the first Hispanic elected to the U.S. Senate, but died shortly thereafter in 1930. The holding of such high political offices suggested the arrival of a postcolonial era.²⁴

However, by 1930 Anglo population gains and economic depression eroded the status of the elite. Middling and poor mestizo "Mexicans" experienced downward social mobility on occasion even falling below Indians, as laborers on reservation lands. Despite these exceptions the generalization of mestizo social dominance over Indians stemming from the Spanish colonial period continued. The formal colonialism of the U.S. territorial period had evolved into an informal internal colonialism. Short of independence, complete integration, or ethnic autonomy, New Mexico could not be considered fully postcolonial.²⁵

On admission of New Mexico to statehood, the Navajo reservation remained a formal internal colony, officially subdivided between that state and Utah, with most of the land lying in Arizona. Such boundaries further reflected the colonial geopolitical condition of the region. Despite termination policies, the Navajo Nation had retained a land mass with significant natural resources and control over public services, such as health and education. Though officially sovereign, the people and their land were no longer an independent nation vis-à-vis the United States, nor was the reservation equal to the surrounding states of the federal Union in such terms as representation in Congress.

Only an improbable asymmetrical federalism could allow equitable integration in terms of preserving the special membership, language, religious, and other rights of the Navajo Nation, a federalism requiring unprecedented amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Even this reform would not be regarded as postcolonial in some quarters since such integration would be a denial of the full sovereignty of independent nationhood.²⁶

Reflecting U.S. foreign policy after World War I, Congress eventually discarded termination and moved towards a policy of self-determination. The anti-imperial, pro-democratic principles that had led to the League of Nations and the independence of several Eastern European nations enjoyed a revival during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 incorporated a major reversal in U.S. policy toward Native Americans. Though American Indians were certainly not deemed eligible for independence, greater autonomy seemed more in line with internationalist principles that began to question colonialism beyond Europe. Indian tribes were encouraged to form democratic governments along lines acceptable to Washington bureaucrats. Though the Navajos rejected the act, they gained significant self-determination through arrangements in 1936 with the federal government along lines more reflective of their own culture, an anti-colonial if not postcolonial development.²⁷

Hispanos had to share such resources and powers with the Anglo population of New Mexico and other states. The colonial hierarchy established after the U.S.-Mexico War had certainly altered. While Hispanos by statehood played a major role in New Mexico politics, they controlled their homeland little more than Navajos did. Being a

mixed de-tribalized population, most ethnic Mexicans denied their native heritage. While many if not most identified with their Spanish ancestors, mestizo Mexicans also had indigenous ancestry through maternal lines, through the women who were subjugated or otherwise induced into becoming the mothers of a people. The denigration of this background was part of the colonial psychology.²⁸ While the Spanish-American elite maintained its status above mestizos and Indians, mestizo Mexicans were doing less well in an overall society still controlled by Anglo Americans. Consequently, neither Hispanos nor Indians existed in a postcolonial condition, even though the formal Spanish colonial and formal American territorialeras had long passed.²⁹

During World War II the so-called Spanish Americans, especially those serving in the New Mexico National Guard, played the role of colonial troops defending the Philippine colony against the Japanese rivals of the American empire. Represented in the infamous Bataan Death March, Hispanos like other Mexican Americans served with distinction despite prejudice at home. The Navajo code talkers, and other American Indians, used their previously denigrated languages to pass on valuable military information to aid the Allied cause. Native-son Dennis Chávez represented many of these troops as New Mexico's U.S. senator from 1935-1962. He was a staunch backer of the New Deal that sustained Hispanos and the poor, but was less supportive of Navajo interests.³⁰

Despite the gains made in Indian self-determination during the New Deal, the political climate quickly changed. World War II had led to greater emphasis on

American patriotism, conformity, and assimilation. Despite the anti-imperialism and decolonization that resulted from the Allied victory, those ideals did not penetrate into U.S. Indian policy. Once the Cold War with its anti-communist propaganda developed, termination again seemed a good idea; it would undermine the collectivism of tribal Indians and turn them into individualistic all-American property holders. The policy was in full force from 1952 to 1966 when the last tribe was terminated. In New Mexico the Navajos and Pueblos averted the worst of this reinvigorated colonialism in terms of land loss, but suffered the consequences of reduced social and educational services.³¹

The internally colonized condition of Hispanos became very evident again in the late 1960s during the Chicano movement. Reies López Tijerina revived the land grant struggle of the nineteenth century. Occupation of foreign land was of course the earliest form of colonialism, and Tijerina understood that the subordination of his people resulted from that occupation. In doing so, he referred to his people as Indo-Hispanos to recognize that their claim to New Mexican land rested ultimately on the indigenous side of their heritage; the maternal *india*, as opposed to the paternal conquistador. The contrast between Tijerina's grassroots movement and the traditional Hispano elite was evident in the U.S. Senate. Beginning in 1964 Democrat Joseph M. Montoya served two terms, supporting bilingual training for those in health care, but criticizing Tijerina and doing little about land grants.³²

In response to agitation by the American Indian Movement and other activists, particularly at Wounded Knee, President Lyndon B. Johnson called for an end to

termination and for a renewal of self-determination. Congress during the Nixon Administration, following liberal policies resulting from the mobilization of the time, passed the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act (1975) that allowed tribes more direct access to federal programs. Described by a compatriot as “a very smart man,” Peter MacDonald promoted economic development of the Navajo Nation for some twenty years. Unfortunately, this tribal chairman also became involved in the corrupt practices often associated with capitalist development. Under President Ronald Reagan, the Self-Governance Act (1988) permitted further access to health care and human services, rather than going through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These acts involved relations between tribes and the national government a bit closer to the relations between independent nations that existed in the era of treaty making. These relations nonetheless remained colonial, akin to those between the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the United States.³³

Though the Alianza failed to regain the Hispano land grants, the movement led to greater political integration. The election of Democratic Governor Jerry Apodaca (1975-1979) to a single term indicated that development, Apodaca, being the first Hispano chief executive in over fifty years. He restructured state government for greater efficiency and raised taxes to support its services especially for poorer Indians and Hispanos, only to lose reelection in an increasingly conservative climate. Toney Anaya (1983-1987) also served in office for only one term, largely due to his support for New Mexico as a sanctuary for refugees from the wars in Central America. His opposition to President Ronald Reagan’s imperialist policies in Central America led to his defeat for reelection.³⁴

After 1988 the emphasis on Indian self-determination ebbed, Congress began to pay more attention to state complaints of lacking enforcement powers over laws that overlapped on the lands under the jurisdiction of both states and reservations. A major concern was the rise of gambling casinos on reservations that states claimed violated their ordinances. The national government decided to force reservations to negotiate directly with the states over such matters. In the eyes of many American Indians, this new policy abrogated the special international relationship that Indian nations had with the government in Washington. In New Mexico by 1997, some Pueblos had entered into gaming compacts with the state. Others, such as Cochiti, preferred different types of development; according to tribal planner Ray Trujillo, "You give up a lot when you enter into gaming." Many Indians believed they should negotiate contracts with the U.S. government at the level of independent sovereign states, not on the secondary level of federal states.³⁵

In the twenty-first century evidence of the growing political clout of Mexicans was even more reflected in the governor's office where, for the first time, two Hispanics were elected to three terms totaling twelve years. Though not a native New Mexican, Governor Bill Richardson (2003-2011), who had Mexican ancestry through both of his parents, was visibly mestizo, giving the population comprising the majority of Mexican Americans, national and even international recognition. However, as governor, he did little specifically for Hispanos, even vetoing legislation that would have prevented the use of eminent domain for private land development, an issue that harked back to the land

losses they had experienced in the nineteenth century. Born in El Paso, Texas, Republican Susana Martínez, who took office in 2011, was certainly a sign of the advance of Mexican-Americans and women, as the first female governor in the state's history. Having switched parties earlier in her career, she did not receive the vote of the majority of Hispanics, suggesting that conservative Anglo voters could still control the state by co-opting willing candidates. Though politically, Hispanos seemed increasingly in control, private property and the economy remained in Anglo hands; moreover, most land remained in federal hands, indicating persistent internal colonialism.³⁶

Discussion of Postcolonial Possibilities

Curiously, to understand the past, we may need to predict and interpret the future. While such speculation may run counter to the thinking of empirical historians, those with a more humanistic bent allow greater use of the historical imagination. How might New Mexico and its peoples become postcolonial? The answer to this question helps us understand what was colonial, both external and internal, and what remains so.³⁷

Some Native American scholars have understandably rejected the applicability of postcolonial theory to the history and present situation of American Indians. Since the current national states of North America remain under the control of the descendants of European settlers, the independence of those states from colonial British, French, and Spanish rule in earlier centuries did not mean self-determination for the indigenous peoples of the continent. According to Chickasaw literary critic, Jodi A Byrd, "'post'-... represents a condition of futurity that has not yet been achieved as the United States

continues to colonize and occupy indigenous homelands.” The settlers remain in power, much as they did in South Africa prior to the election of Nelson Mandela. Thus, the American Indian situation is not presently postcolonial, an argument that has merit. Moreover, as mestizo Mexico and the settler states of the United States and Canada occupy virtually all indigenous lands, Indians are everywhere colonized in those countries. To speak of internal colonies in terms of regions ignores the total nature of the geographical situation. Nowhere are Euro-Americans in their homelands, which would be external across the Atlantic; both the core and periphery of these new states are comprised of lands lost to native peoples. North America remains colonized throughout, another indigenous argument that also has merit.³⁸

If the entire continent remains colonized, then some students of Native Americans accept basic colonialism, even if they reject notions of internal and post-colonialism. In response, we could see the United States, rather than a single colonized Native America, as a largely contiguous collection of internal colonies, occupied native homelands. We could also argue that while the situation of American Indians is not postcolonial, it might reach that point for some groups. For example, the Navajos could conceivably become an independent nation-state, even if that is unlikely in the foreseeable future. They could become self-sufficient enough to avoid economic dependency, even if the surrounding indigenous peoples remained subordinate. Because native peoples did not originally comprise a single nation, state, culture, or monolithic continental group, it is reasonable to consider them as separate peoples, separate colonized groups, separate internal colonies, each with the potential for full sovereignty. However, it is improbable that

many native peoples of those local places could ever decolonize because Anglos and others occupy as vast majorities most Native American homelands. (Individual Indians, on the other hand, could reach a postcolonial condition to the degree that they recovered their cultures and personal self-determination.) The Euro-Americans' lack of an original homeland in North America hardly negates internal colonialism since with independence from Europe they secured their economic and political metropolitan cores in areas of North America, now known as New York, Washington, Toronto, and Monterrey. Virginia is now at the core of an Anglo-American empire based in the Powhatan homeland even as the latter remains an internal colony of the United States, rather than an external or overseas political and economic colony of England. Nonetheless, indigenous scholars could reasonably claim that America remains an overseas racial and cultural colony of Britain and Europe.³⁹

How then might Indians in New Mexico reach postcolonial status? Full statehood for Navajoland within the American Union would seem a step up in autonomy, but a step short of former full sovereignty when the Navajo Nation engaged in international relations with Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Though full independence seems improbable in the foreseeable future, in the long run a breakup of the American federation, a breakup similar to that of the Soviet Union, might occur. Then an independent Navajoland might gravitate toward a reconfigured NAFTA, a North American Union similar to the European Union after its evolution from the European Common Market, with former suppressed Soviet nations like Lithuania as members. Such a confederation would leave ultimate sovereignty in the distinct nations, seemingly

a postcolonial outcome, though some might argue that such membership sacrificed too much national sovereignty. Such criticism arises from opponents of U.S. membership in the United Nations and similar international organizations. The geography of New Mexico would need to be reconfigured also, allowing for Pueblo, Apache, Ute, and possibly other nation states. The extent of their pre-contact homelands would need to be ascertained, and redrawing the political geography would certainly lead to disagreements among Indians, ethnic Mexicans, and of course Anglos. Internal decolonization of the United States would be more difficult than the breakup of the Soviet Union.⁴⁰

Independence is neither a likely nor even a desired postcolonial outcome for the *nuevomexicano* population, neither is an irredentist reunification with Mexico or with the Spanish Empire if it still existed. But demographic, cultural, political, and economic control of the existing state seems an achievable goal in the twenty-first century. For Hispanos demographic recovery promises a robust future; in 2010 the state was 46.7 % Hispanic, 10.1% Indian, and 40.2% Anglo. However, the U.S. government is the largest employer in the state at about 25% of the jobs, hardly suggesting economic or political self-determination. Internal colonialism will end when Hispanos hold offices and wealth equal to their numbers in the population and when their language and culture enjoy usage and prestige equivalent to English. Of course, for the few individuals who might see the complete ejection of Anglo-American culture as the only truly postcolonial future, postcolonialism would seem impossible. Return to the pre-1848 past is no more possible, nor desirable, than reversing history.⁴¹

Conclusion

The comparison of the historical experiences and future possibilities of Mexicans and American Indians, especially Navajos in New Mexico, clarifies the relationship between internal- and post-colonialism.⁴² Since postcolonial theory analyzes the condition of peoples and lands after formal colonialism has ended, it helps us understand when informal colonial conditions continue and end. Internal colonial theory demonstrates this process domestically. While ethnic Mexicans had moved beyond formal colonialism in New Mexico by 1912, neither they nor Navajos have moved beyond domestic empire by 2013.

DRAFT

ENDNOTES

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