Chapter 11

Postcoloniality: The French Dimension?

After examining various aspects of the long history of France's relationships with her erstwhile or present colonies, the point has been reached where we need to pose the question of what the specifically French dimension to postcoloniality might be or, indeed, whether there is a French dimension to postcoloniality. At the heart of these questions is the matter of the continuing relevance of postcoloniality as an influence on these relationships, as a factor of explanation of some of the issues on the present agenda or as part of any strategy for the future.

Postcolonialism and the New 'New World Order'

There is a general consensus in the world today regarding the existence of unacceptable poverty and inequality. While there is no general agreement on the causes of this great global divide between the affluent, 'developed' countries and the wretched, 'underdeveloped' countries, there are few coherent explanations on offer that do not situate its origins in the history of imperialism. According to this type of explanation, the causes of the present lamentable state of many of the poorest, most indebted countries of the planet lie in their former status as colonies or semi-colonies of the world's imperial powers. To contest this is to discount the fact that the single shared characteristic of all those countries worst affected today is their historical status as former colonies.

There is no shortage of people today who will argue that imperialism was, on the whole, a good thing, beneficial to the territories and peoples concerned, bringing in its train peace, prosperity and, most importantly, development. Niall Ferguson has made this case for the British Empire (Ferguson 2003). Even the British Chancellor, Gordon Brown, campaigning for measures to bring an end to poverty during his tour of Africa in January 2005, sang to the same hymn-sheet. It was time, he said, to stop apologising for Britain's colonial history. The British should be proud of those who had formed the backbone of the British Empire, which had been 'open, outward and international' (*Guardian*, 27 January 2005). He repeated these views in an interview

on BBC Newsnight on 14 March 2005, when he stressed it was time to put forward the positive virtues of British values (*The Times*, 15 March 2005). This is in contrast to recently reported remarks by Jacques Chirac, who is reported to have responded angrily to criticism of Africans taking their children out of school to work in the fields with a reminder of the realities of French colonialism (*Libération*, 21 September 2004). We have seen, however, in Chapter 8, that, at the instigation of members of his own political movement, a law normalising the revisionist revalorisation of colonialism was passed in February 2005, provoking considerable controversy. For the apologists of empire, the corollary of their position is that it was not imperialism or colonialism that contributed to the current problems, but the ending of empire; it was the accession to independence that arrested the development process, thus leading to underdevelopment.

The links between imperialism and development, along with the ambiguities and contradictions that arise, have already been discussed in Chapter 2. Any theory that emphasises 'development' as the primary process at work in empire risks elision into an apologia for imperialism and colonialism. The impetus for the historical spread of global capitalism needs to be sought elsewhere, in the grasping of the opportunities for making profits and super-profits. Viewed in this light, it becomes clear that it is not underdevelopment that is the prime issue but super-exploitation. In other words, it is because of super-exploitation on the part of the imperialist economic powers that global capitalism has produced the effects it has, not because of underdevelopment on the part of the formerly colonised, aided and abetted by the failings of the post-independence regimes. Arguing otherwise is an attempt to shift responsibility from the perpetrators to the victims.

Moreover, revisionist theories of imperialism tend to prioritise the political benefits of empire. The peace and order brought by the imperial administration and juridical system are highlighted. 'Development' is often seen primarily in educational, moral or cultural terms and the primacy of the economic processes at work is obscured. If, on the contrary, the analysis grounds itself in these economic processes, it produces an account of their continuity into the present age, whereby the same fundamental operations of capital accumulation and extraction of super-profits operate within a framework that continues to be dominated by the hegemony of finance capital, with the addition of the further opportunities generated by unequal trade and by the servicing of debts incurred in a development process largely based on importing technology, as well as the trading in arms to shore up post-independence regimes in confrontations with real or imagined internal or external enemies.

One of the positive features of a postcolonial framework of analysis is thus to stress this continuity in a world where the formal end of colonialism has not diminished the overall economic, political and cultural hegemony of the 'North' or the 'West' or the G7/G8 countries over the rest of the world, where, on the contrary, this hegemony has adapted to new circumstances and gone from strength to strength to become all-pervasive. The underlying binary divide between those who mainly benefit from the current global economic system and those who mainly suffer its undesirable consequences is still fundamental, in spite of the challenges by some

former colonies or semi-colonies in Asia and Latin America that are increasingly moving into stronger economic positions and demanding their share of the cake. Moreover, although power has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the United States, the former European colonial powers still have important roles to play in maintaining the systemic hegemony of global capitalism, as well as in carving out for themselves particular spheres of influence.

The picture is, of course, further complicated by the alliances that are forged between nations and groups of nations on either side of the divide, bringing in diverse regimes as junior partners in this globalised system. France, however, more than any other of the former European colonial powers, has consistently maintained a policy of consolidation and strengthening its influence in key parts of its former empire, notably in Africa. It has done this with ever-increasing sophistication, employing the full gamut of representations and discourses to convince the formerly colonised world of the benefits and attractions of remaining within the French orbit, whilst remaining ready to intervene with more crude political or military means if the situation appears to warrant it. Its recent involvement in the Ivory Coast is a case in point, or, at least, this is how it has been perceived. Indeed, in an interview published in *Le Parisien*, the Ivory Coast President, Laurent Gbagbo, compared the intervention of troops participating in Operation Licorne to that of the Soviet tanks in Prague in 1968, claiming that this was how things worked in the cosiness of the French fold (*Le Monde*, 16 December 2004).[1]

France has used its colonial history and relationships to support its attempts to go it alone, often in partial defiance of American interests, as with its nuclear policy and its various challenges to the dominance of American mass culture. France has also contrived to maintain, and indeed extend, an independent sphere of influence in Africa and the Middle East, particularly with its pro-Arab policy, including its nuanced opposition to the war in Iraq in 2004. To some extent, this was facilitated by the little interest which America has shown hitherto in Africa, though this now appears to be in the process of changing, as also with American efforts to encourage the formation of a new Middle Eastern grouping, linked by adherence to the 'democratic way'. There is also clear evidence of keen American interest in Algeria in particular, formerly considered the *chasse gardée* of France, but now seen as a linchpin of American policy to create the *'grand Moyen-Orient'* not only because of its oil, but also because of the role it might play in collaboration on security issues, with joint military exercises with NATO already under way (Roberts 2003; *Guardian*, 3 March 2003; *Quotidien d'Oran*, 14 April, 11 November, 1 December 2004).

The relation with France continues, of course, to play an important role. After a shaky start with the new regime of President Bouteflika in 1999, when French criticism of the election was dismissed with outrage by Bouteflika as evidence that Paris still wished to exert a 'form of protectorate' over Algeria (*Le Monde*, 30 July 1999), France has gone out of its way to attempt to mend relations and set them on a new footing.

France has also not been slow to stretch out a hand to the former African colonies of other European powers, notably those of Britain, which have been made very

welcome for some years now at the Franco-African summits that have taken place since 1973. Rivalry between the spheres of influence of *Francophonie* and *Anglophonie* has also operated elsewhere in the world, even in the South Pacific, as in the case of the territory formerly known as the New Hebrides, and jointly administered as an Anglo-French condominium until its independence in 1980 (Ager 1996).

Indeed, France has appeared more than ready to impinge on the British sphere of influence, for instance, with its invitation to President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe to join the 22nd Franco-African summit in Paris in February 2003, in apparent defiance of the sanctions and travel ban imposed on his regime by the European Union, the United States and the Commonwealth (*Le Monde*, 20 February 2003). The re-emergence of rivalries between the former colonial powers may well presage future developments.

There is certainly evidence that France is taking unilateral action or seeking alliances from within continental Europe to plough a different furrow and not follow Britain's lead in wishing to stay in the slipstream of American foreign policy. The United States, in its turn, has felt under no obligation to respect the spheres of influence of the former European colonial powers, and has become increasingly interventionist in recent years. Following the trauma of its failed intervention in Vietnam, there had been something of a moratorium, during which it had been content, by and large, to exert its domination through client, puppet regimes and, indeed, to remain wary of direct military involvement in other countries. Of course, this reluctance to take military action had not extended to its own backyard in Central and South America, where it was heavily involved in covert or semi-clandestine operations, such as its support for the Contras in Nicaragua and the Pinochet regime in Chile, or overt actions, such as the invasion of Grenada in 1983. In the case of Grenada, a former British colony and member of the British Commonwealth, Ronald Reagan was prepared to put his alliance with Britain and special relationship with Margaret Thatcher in jeopardy by going ahead with this action without consultation or regard for the Queen's position of sovereignty with regard to the island. Moreover, from the beginning of the 1990s, America has become increasingly ready to contemplate direct military intervention further afield to protect or develop its economic and political interests, beginning with the first Gulf War in 1991.

Another consequence of the further developments undergone by global capitalism, is that 'North' and 'South' can no longer, if they ever could, be considered as monolithic blocs facing each other across a single clear divide. The cracks and divisions between the powers that collectively constitute the North, whilst never entirely absent, have begun seriously to undermine the whole edifice constructed upon the major global alliances. Similarly, the uneven development of global capitalism within the countries that could formally be considered part of the 'South', or the 'majority world', has dramatically changed the picture, with new and changing alliances the order of the day.

Postcolonial analysis has tended not to take these developments fully on board, although its stress on the continuity of the postcolonial relation has also been

tempered by an emphasis on the evolution of that relation into new and changing forms, in what some would see as an overstating of the extent to which contradictions have been eliminated. To take into account the actual complexities of the power shifts and increasing, if uneven, involvement of the 'majority world' countries in the systemic functioning of global capitalism, a more complex analysis is needed. At the same time, any such analysis also needs to determine where the fault-lines currently fall between those who profit from such a system and those whose sufferings are largely due to it.

As well as an analysis of the economic relations, labour and trading issues, operations of international finance and so on that this would require, but which is outside the scope of this book, the importance of looking more deeply into the type of thinking that is dominant at the present time should not be neglected. This relates not just to theoretical analyses of the problems and their possible solutions but also to the use of ideology, by which is meant here credible representations for the rationalisation of the status quo or future enterprises and ventures.

Before moving on to a discussion of some of these theoretical issues, it will probably be useful to sum up the various stages in the development of postcoloniality to arrive at a clearer understanding of the present situation.

Since decolonisation, the configuration of international relations between the different powers has been subject to a series of important modifications. The predominance of the former great European powers, with their system of ad hoc bilateral treaties and alliances, was replaced with the emergence of the two superpowers in the wake of the Second World War along with their rival camps and allies. This meant that the period of decolonisation was closely overlain and interwoven with the ongoing confrontation between the Soviet bloc and the American-led alliance NATO.

However, even at the height of the polarisation of the conflict between the two blocs (Korean War, Cuban Missile Crisis, Cold War, Vietnam War), often played out through proxies in the former European colonies, it was never the only show in town. All over the globe, new multilateral alliances were being forged. Moreover, the polarity of the Cold War was never absolute, and the international communist movement was already showing signs of fission with the Sino-Soviet split in 1961.

At the global level, major international institutions came into being, not least of these being the United Nations itself, with its institutional structures reflecting the balance of global forces at the end of the Second World War, but also the so-called Bretton Woods international financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It was also the time for the emergence of new regional groupings, including the Arab League in 1944, the OAS (Organisation of American States) in 1948 and the beginning of the process of European construction from 1952, as well as military alliances, such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

The formal ending of the British and French Empires contributed to this process with the expansion of the British Commonwealth (formerly comprised of the old Dominions of Canada, Australia, etc.) to the 'new Commonwealth' countries and the more gradual growth of *La Francophonie* in the French sphere of influence. In the

process or wake of decolonisation, further groupings were initiated, notably the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) in 1963, ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) in 1967, UAM (Union of the Arab Maghreb) in 1989 and many others.

In the immediate aftermath of decolonisation, it became customary to articulate the divisions on the basis of the concepts of the First, Second and Third Worlds. The notion of the Third World, *'Tiers-Monde'*, appeared first in French, before being taken up in English. Its first use is generally credited to Alfred Sauvy in an article of *L'Observateur* of 14 August 1952, in which he made the specific connection with the Third Estate – *'ce Tiers-Monde, ignoré, exploité, méprisé, comme le Tiers-Etat'*, as in the Abbé Sieyès's pamphlet of 1789. The terms 'First World' and 'Second World' appeared much later (1967 and 1974, respectively) and then in English.

The reasoning behind this threefold division always appeared confused and confusing. On the one hand, it took the old division of French *Ancien Régime* society into three estates (the aristocracy, the clergy and the rest, grouped into the third estate) and superimposed thereon the clash of the different socio-economic models and power blocs represented by capitalism and communism. The result was a hybrid in which, in some versions at least, the First World represented the capitalist West, the Second the communist East and the third, broadly speaking, the formerly colonised or newly independent countries.

In effect, the division of the world along these lines was an ideological construct that could not possibly satisfy anyone, except possibly some denizens of the First World, who could wallow in their supposed superiority, and some supporters of Third Worldism. For the latter, the attraction lay in the justification it provided for their demands for the Third World to come into its own and achieve parity with the others, in some new version of the French Revolution.

The notion of the Third World has also been linked to the category of the 'non-aligned' countries. The Non-Aligned Movement, which emerged from the 1955 Bandung Conference of twenty-nine African and Asian countries, was formally established at its first conference, held in 1961 in Belgrade. The Yugoslavian leader, Tito, was one of its main instigators, along with Nehru, Nkrumah, Sukarno and Nasser. The idea was to encourage and support close cooperation between these countries, particularly as far as their development agenda was concerned, while avoiding the pitfalls of too close an alliance with one or other of the superpowers. The structures of the movement, which still meets every three years, were deliberately kept vague, in order to avoid infiltration and undue influence by the superpowers. In reality, however, many of these countries were allied, to a greater or lesser extent, to one or other of the blocs, which went out of their way to court them. Much of the work of the Non-Aligned Movement has traditionally been carried out at the United Nations, which, during the Cold War period, was not ineffective in maintaining some kind of balance between the two power blocs and keeping a watching brief over the (former) colonies.

Many in the so-called 'Third World', however, rejected this categorisation as demeaning and not in correspondence with their real potential economic and political power. In many ways, it seemed to reinforce the tendencies of the former

colonial powers to dominate their former colonial possessions, albeit in new forms, collectively categorised as neocolonialism, most notably by Kwame Nkrumah in his book N*eo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (Nkrumah 1965). Yet, for all its difficulties, the notion of the Third World did reflect at least the perceived need for the countries concerned to come together and cooperate in the face of the common problems they faced, in a process that transcended the old bilateral forms of domination and subservience characteristic of colonialism. To an extent, therefore, there was some counterweight to offset the continuing of the colonial relations under new forms. In reality, the support of the Soviet bloc, and later the Chinese communists, was of much more substantial help in terms of material and ideological support. Most of the former French colonies, however, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, with the singular exception of Sékou Touré's Guinea, were content to remain within the bilateral fold and relied heavily on French paternalistic patronage.

The configuration of global forces was dramatically changed by the collapse of Soviet power at the end of the 1980s. On the one hand, this led to the growing hegemony of US power worldwide, although, again, this was never absolute. The last two decades of the twentieth century were dominated by the assertion of American power throughout the globe and attempts to stamp the triumph of capitalism indelibly on the weaker economies of the world through the mechanisms of the international financial institutions. Nonetheless, however great the power of the United States during this period, other new forces were already emerging that would eventually challenge the existence of a single pole of dominance. The rise of new capitalist powers, not least the so-called Asian tigers, began to challenge the economic pre-eminence of the West. Moreover, new blocs, such as the enlarged and reconfigured European Union, came into being to counterbalance American power, not just on the economic front, but also potentially on the political front.

During this period, France pursued its own policies, in its own way and using those instruments available to it: cosy paternalism or outright military interventionism in its bilateral relations, struggles for influence and leadership in Europe, growing recognition of the potential of the *Francophone* movement and willingness to be involved. Increasingly, France has put itself forward as the champion of the wretched of the earth, presenting an alternative that is often couched in terms to the Left of the other options. In many ways, it is a position that is largely based on rhetoric, a rhetoric that has been associated with the vision of the 'good France'. Thus, de Gaulle could claim in his New Year message for 1968 that 'the objectives of our action are related to each other and, because they are French, correspond to the interests of humanity'. In his presidential inauguration address of 21 May 1981, François Mitterrand also spoke of 'a France standing for justice and solidarity, governed by the desire to live in peace with everyone, [which] may act as a beacon for the progress of the human race' (www.elysee.fr/instit/invests.htm).

The power of its rhetoric and its real effect in the world cannot, however, be denied. It is significant that, following France's support for the Palestinian cause and, specifically, its assistance to the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, over his last years, the only flag flown at his funeral at Ramallah, apart from the Palestinian national

flag, was the French tricolour, which was explicitly (re)claimed as the symbol of revolt and freedom (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 17 November 2004).

For the post-independence countries, this period was not a happy one on the whole, with a decline in their economic performance, a decrease in revenue from trade, growing indebtedness and loss of control over their own policies, with measures imposed on them from outside. The dawning of the new millennium, closely followed by the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, marked the inauguration of a further new phase in international relations.

On the one hand, the USA became even more determined to exert its global hegemony, with the launching of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in the name of the fight against terror. Yet again, the old dualism characteristic of relations between the imperial powers and those being subjugated has assumed a new form, though drawing on the same basic model that has been adapted from the dawn of the global capitalist age. The notions of an international law applicable on the same terms to all nations is once again challenged by the notion of the restriction of this law to a particular category of nation or state, with those considered to be beyond the pale no longer covered by the terms of international conventions and treaties. The idea that there are some 'terrorists' to whom the normal internationally accepted standards of human rights and war conventions need not apply can be traced back to the earlier beliefs that the heathen are not covered by the accepted norms of Christendom and that the barbarians can be subject to any treatment decided by the 'civilised'.

John Stuart Mill had already ridiculed the idea that international law should be applied to all:

> There is a great difference between the case in which the nations concerned are of the same, or something like the same, degree of civilization, and that in which one of the parties to the situation is of a high, and the other of a very low, grade of social improvement. To suppose that the same international customs, and the same rules of international morality, can obtain between one civilized nation and another and between civilized nations and barbarians is a grave error, and one which no statesman can fall into, however it may be that those who, from a safe and unresponsible position criticize statesmen ... To characterize any conduct towards the barbarous people as a violation of the Law of Nations, only shows that he who so speaks has never considered the subject. (John Stuart Mill, 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention', in *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. 3, London, 1867, pp. 153–58, quoted by Mazrui 1990: 19)

At the same time, new tendencies began to emerge. Amongst these was the growing realisation that something had to be done about the plight of the world's poor if the global system was to continue to function. Thus, the early years of the Third Millennium have seen a number of initiatives, ranging from non-governmental campaigns to cancel the debt of the world's poorest countries (Jubilee 2000) to government-sponsored initiatives, such as Britain for Africa. France's contribution to

this process has been to continue to work through the organisations of *Francophonie*, as well as to investigate new methods of financing aid, notably through international taxation (see Chapter 8). In all of this, there has been a certain amount of possibly healthy rivalry for influence as prime benefactor of Africa's neediest states. There has been much promotional coverage and star-studded publicity for these initiatives.

At the same time, and largely unannounced in the Western press, the African countries themselves have been getting together and putting together their own initiatives for dealing with the problems they face. One of the most significant of these initiatives in recent times has been the setting up of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) by the African Union. The five initiating heads of state of Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa were given a mandate to develop a strategic framework for development, which was formally adopted at the 37th Summit of what was then still the Organisation for African Unity in 2001.

It stresses as its primary objectives: (1) to eradicate poverty; (2) to place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development; (3) to halt the marginalisation of Africa in the globalisation process and enhance its full and beneficial integration into the global economy; and (4) to accelerate the empowerment of women (http://www.nepad.org). To achieve these goals, it has laid down a number of principles that are intended to guide the strategy. First among these is that of 'good governance', posited as 'a basic requirement for peace, security and sustainable political and socio-economic development'. To achieve this good governance, a number of principles and novel practices have been proposed, such as the monitoring and evaluation on a reciprocal basis, in a type of peer assessment, of progress made in improving the quality and transparency of government and administration, as well as the fight against corruption.

Absolutely central to the strategy is the idea of 'African ownership and leadership', the full use of all African resources and the participation of all Africans, as well as Africa-wide cooperation in the effort to achieve development, in which the transformation of the 'unequal partnership between Africa and the developed world' does not just constitute an objective in its own right, but is also an integral part of the process (http://www.nepad.org). The reclamation of the right and responsibility for self-evaluation is a crucial part of the aim to take back control from the 'donor' nations and international financial institutions. Twenty-four African countries signed up to the MAEP (*Mécanisme africain d'évaluation par les pairs*), set up in March 2003. Of these, four countries (Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius and Rwanda) were due to be appraised at the beginning of 2005, and Algeria at the end of the year (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 17 November 2004).

The initiative to set up NEPAD appears to have inspired a number of new groupings, often on the basis of specific alliances to achieve particular pragmatic goals linked to development, on a bilateral or regional sub-grouping basis, such as the South Africa–Algeria Binational Commission and the South Africa–Algeria Business Forum. These new associations are concrete evidence of the expression of a new determination for African countries to take back the reins and regain control of their own development in partnership with their neighbours.

Given the immensity of the problems, the extent of the obstacles posed by the world economic and political order and its inbuilt inequality and exploitation, the scale of indebtedness, the material shortages, the lack of infrastructure, the prevalence of disease and armed conflict, together with an entrenched culture of profiteering by unaccountable leaders and the extent and intensity of previous disappointments, it remains to be seen whether a turning point has indeed been reached and, if it has, whether such efforts will be allowed to make progress happen without being stymied from either within or without.

There is, however, considerable evidence that these developments are marking a new phase, or at any rate a new discourse, a new will to bring in this new phase, which is, in any event, a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of its coming into being in reality. The assertion that 'where there is a will, there is a way' may not always be founded on fact; however, where there is no will, there is certainly never going to be a way.

Not only are the new approaches and initiatives a sign of a new pragmatism, a determination to employ those means that are likely to prove effective in kick-starting the process of development and making eclectic choices from a variety of possibilities, but they may also be described in terms of a process of 'normalisation', or the beginnings of a process to move towards normalisation.

Normalisation and Order

By normalisation is meant a shift away from the parameters of the colonial or postcolonial relations, in which the status of the post-independence states is determined in relation to their former status as colonies. It means engaging with other countries, including the former colonial power, without the colonial history being the primary factor defining the terms of the relationship, whether this has been to make colonialism the cause of current ills or to lock coloniser and colonised in a never-ending regurgitation of old sores or disabling dependency.

One of the effects of these developments has been to ensure that the opportunities for alliances and cooperation are now greater than they have ever been for the post-independence states. Increasingly, they are realising the advantages of playing the field, rather than tying themselves too closely to any particular ally or patron. Those countries involved in the NEPAD initiative do not rule out cooperation with initiatives coming from elsewhere. Indeed, these opportunities have been welcomed so long as they are in line with the basic principles of African self-development (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 1 December 2004). Algeria has become adept at taking advantage of all the possibilities open to it over the last few years and is consequently courted by France and the US, while it is increasingly active within the African continent, the Arab world and the Maghreb. Investment has been sought and obtained from a wide variety of countries outside the postcolonial orbit of previous years. China, Turkey, Japan all have an important role to play and plans have been announced for the Indian steel magnate, Lakshmi Mittal, to take over much of the former state-owned steel industry (*Liberté*, 20 December 2004).

Normalisation in this sense, then, implies finding a new basis for international relations that is not founded on the previous colonial order. It seems opportune at this point to look a little more closely at the concept of 'order' and the role it has played in global capitalist imperialism.

It has already appeared as part of the rationale for imperialism put forward by the imperialist powers, which were wont to portray their colonial endeavours as bringing 'order', in economic, political, social and cultural terms, to the benighted regions of the globe. However, it has also played an important, though less discussed, part in anticolonial discourse.

First, it plays a part in the analysis of the colonial period itself, which is seen as an aberration, a departure from normality, a disturbance of the proper balance of things, a disruption or a state of disorder. Fanon, for instance, spoke of Europe's 'disorder', its 'mad rush to the abyss'.[2] For Césaire, it was the relations between Europe and the non-European peoples that were marked by disorder and abnormality. He saw the end of colonialism as the premise of a return to order. Speaking of the importance of the 1955 Bandung Conference, he made it clear that it was not Europe or European civilisation that was condemned at this event, it was the 'intolerable form that, in the name of Europe, some people thought they had to impose on the relations that should normally be in place between Europe and the non-European peoples'. The Bandung Conference marked the moment when it was made clear to Europe that 'the time of European imperialism was over and that, for the greater good of civilisation, it was necessary for Europe to return to the common order'.[3] This was not posited as a return to some golden age in the past. For Césaire, it implied a return to a normal state of affairs, how things should be in the proper order of things.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, Césaire was well aware that the process by which it would be achieved would be characterised by disorder, even the violent whirlwind of revolution. For Fanon too, there had to be a process of disorder. 'Decolonisation', he said, 'which proposed changing the order of the world, is, as you can see, a programme of absolute disorder' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 25). This may mean violence or disruption of traditional social divisions and cultural practices, as for instance with the participation of women in militant activity of one type or another. However, not all anticolonial fighters have seen the process of liberation as necessarily entailing disorder. The struggle itself may create its own kind of order, or discipline, as M'hamed Férid Ghazi remarked, in connection with women and old people participating in the nationalist demonstrations (Ghazi 1956).[4] Indeed, some advocates of the Gandhian theory of non-violence, *satyagraha*, have seen the struggle itself as the articulation of order or discipline. This was in stark contrast to the perceived lack of order on the part of the British Raj. When asked what he thought about Western civilisation by a British journalist in 1931, Gandhi famously replied that 'I think it would be a good idea' (http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/society_culture/multicultural/).

As for the objectives of the anticolonial struggles, the notion of a return to order or a movement forward to establish a new order had figured high up on the agenda. Moves to establish a new order have often taken the shape of a future utopia or ideal society, whether this be one based on socialism or communism, secular nationalism

or Islamic law, or indeed a neo-conservative paradise, in which the all-embracing powers of the state are used to 'roll back the state'.

Fine though some of these ideal societies may sound, there is a conceptual problem that is common to them all. All are based on a conception of the world that implies that there will be an end to struggle, an end to contradiction. Whether this be in the form of the classless society, the stateless society, the conflict-free society, all imply the end of history as a dynamic process based on struggle and a static conception of the new order.

This is where the problem arises, for, in fact, ongoing critique and struggle will always be a vital part of any new order. There can be no once-and-for-all new order that will make everything right for all time. New problems will arise, which will require new solutions. There will be a constant need to challenge the status quo, to carry out new analyses, to redefine and adjust goals and objectives in the light of new circumstances and developments. New strategies for dealing with problems will be required. The new order will never be in stasis, but will present a number of interacting dynamic, dialectical processes, offering the potential for new ways forward, as well as the risk of regression. Rather than seeing this as the unavoidable failure of utopian solutions or as an inevitable source of disappointment and disillusion leading to inactivity and resignation, there is a more positive way of seeing how this opens up opportunities to engage with history in a more responsible, critical and mature way.

Returning to the issue of 'normalisation', it is time now to sum up how far one can describe the relations between France and her former empire as still characterised by postcolonialism, and how far they can now be seen as 'normalised' in the sense used above. What is clear is that there is no single paradigm, but rather a number of different patterns, ranging from ongoing colonial relations in the case of the DOM and to a lesser extent the TOM, via the continuation of colonial-type relations between France and many of her former sub-Saharan African colonies, to the enduring vestiges of paradigms and attitudes deriving from colonialism in the case of the postcolonial diaspora living in France.

There are undoubted moves on the part of some former colonies, notably Algeria, to move away from the postcolonial framework. All this suggests that the transition away from postcoloniality may be under way, but these countries are still on the cusp of change and it will be some time before the transition will be complete. Indeed, there is a strong case that, so long as development remains the major issue for the former colonies, postcoloniality will remain a significant factor of analysis, though not necessarily a helpful element of any solution.

This transitional configuration may be viewed as an underlying set of processes: the ongoing processes associated with global capitalist imperialism are the most fundamental determinants; then the specific dynamics of the relations with the former colonial powers come into play; overlying these are the new processes and relations creating links and potentialities outside and on top of the former frame.

It remains to consider the discourses, ideologies and theories currently available for use in this transitional period and to articulate the relations which exist at the present time between France and her former colonies, as well as their role in relation to change.

Postcolonial Theory and the Francophone World

There appears to have been considerable resistance to postcolonial theory in the francophone world. The theoretical production of the anglophone world in this area has often met with indifference in French-speaking countries, and especially in France itself. Jean-Marc Moura has claimed that the reasons for this are, on the one hand, the political or ideological tenor of much of the debate in postcolonial theory, coupled with the fact of its 'Anglo-Saxon' origins (see also Britton and Syrotinski 2001; Moura 2003: 191).[5] However, if one takes a broader view, it will be seen that *Francophone* work in this area has often been at the forefront of what might come under the umbrella of postcolonial theory. One only has to look at the contribution to this theory by writers such as Césaire, Fanon and Memmi, all products of French colonialism, as well as the fact that French theorists such as Lacan, Derrida and Foucault are generally considered to be central to the writings of many postcolonial critics.

Some of this reluctance has no doubt stemmed from a general unwillingness to engage with theories or models that derive from the English-speaking or 'Anglo-Saxon' world. There are nonetheless inherent problems with much of what passes as 'postcolonial theory' that could diminish its appeal.

These include the limitations of the field covered by this theory, the object of which is usually restricted to the field of literature and 'cultural studies'. Yet, at the same time, the parameters set by its designation as 'postcolonial' necessarily imply a close connection to the objective historical realities normally associated with 'colonialism' and its effects. This is not the study of literature or culture in a vacuum, but one that posits its rootedness in the real historical conditions that have impinged on it. Thus, there may also be problems with the way in which these objective conditions are reflected or represented in the theory, not least in the term 'postcolonial' itself.

One of these problems is the ongoing assumption common to much of this theorising that the former colonies continue to exist in a binary relation with the former colonising power. In other words, it assumes that the parameters of colonialism continue to operate, albeit in a different form. The fact that a critique of binarism often forms a substantial part of 'postcolonial theory' does not necessarily detract from this. Although such critiques posit the change of the relation's form from a confrontational, oppositional one to a hybridised interaction between more equal partners, they continue to posit a relation based on the same two terms, the (now former) coloniser and colonised.

Not only is much of what passes as 'postcolonial theory' in fact 'colonial theory', discussing and analysing the parameters of the colonial relation, as expressed in the literature and other cultural forms of the colonial period, chronologically defined. Even when the object of theory is post-independence literature or culture, it tends to apply what is, in reality, an updated version of the colonial model.

Moreover, the fact that the main development of postcolonial theory has been the work of intellectuals in the former settler colonies of the anglophone world, notably Australia, the United States and Canada, requires some explanation. Part of the reason may very well lie in the ambiguities of the situation of such intellectuals,

some of whom resent, or have an inferiority complex in relation to, the 'mother country', as well as some sense of guilt at their own situation as part of the colonising community, responsible for the subordination, ousting or extermination of the peoples indigenous to those lands or the enslavement and forcible transportation of other peoples. The contradictions that these circumstances may present to people of good will may well inspire a desire to reconfigure the parameters of the relationship between centre and periphery, to give themselves a more adequate role, as well as to reformulate the relationship between coloniser and colonised in terms that are easier to identify with.

At the same time, many of those working within the problematic of 'postcolonial theory' have their origins in the former colonies, but now form part of the postcolonial diaspora, through migration to the former metropolitan heartlands or the white settler colonies. For these, the problems that have to be addressed relate to the ambiguities attached not just to their objective situation as part of two antagonistic worlds but also to their subjective identities. It is no surprise that questions relating to hybridity, voice and representation have come to the fore.

The view of reality obtaining in the world view characteristic of postcolonialist discourse implies a number of elements, some of which are at odds with each other. On the one hand, it implies a comprehensive view of a multi-centred globalised capitalism, in which the old divisions of the colonial period no longer hold sway; indeed, it also tends to deny or attenuate these divisions retrospectively. At the same time, it elevates a specific phase of global capitalist imperialism, colonialism, into the whole or, at any rate, the main element of its view of history. Yet this is a view of history that is extraordinarily static. It allows for no new dynamic to replace the dynamic of struggle between coloniser and colonised. Thus, it is not only the end of conflict but also the end of progress and, indeed, of any movement forward.

There are clearly some theories, ideologies or value systems that tend to reinforce the status quo, whereas others are more helpful in mobilising the human and other resources necessary for change. I believe that there are two problematic areas that deserve particular attention. These relate, on the one hand, to issues surrounding the notion of hybridity and, on the other hand, those associated with questions of voice and representation.

Hybridity and Creolisation

It has indeed become one of the key tenets of postcolonial theory to emphasise the hybridity and heterogeneity of modern cultures. In essence, both the theorisation of *Francophonie* and the development of theories of *créolité* and *créolisation* represent attempts to move away from the notion of a binary divide, particularly as far as the relationship between France and its former colonies is concerned. Hybridity is, of course, not a modern concept. Indeed, it has played a role in a certain liberal tradition of openness and tolerance at least since Montaigne, who described the *'honnête homme'* as 'a hybrid man' (*'un homme mêlé'*) (Montaigne 1962: 964).

Edward Said also stressed the hybridity and heterogeneity of all cultures (Said 1993: xxix), not just in the postcolonial world, but also in the colonial period: 'To

ignore or otherwise discount the overlapping experience of Westerners and Orientals, the interdependence of cultural terrain in which colonizer and colonized coexisted and battled each other through projections as well as rival geographies, narratives, and histories, is to miss what is essential about the world in the past century' (Said 1993: xxii–xxiii). Moreover, he stressed that what he called this 'interdependence of cultural terrain' was not a recent phenomenon, but was set in motion by the processes of imperialism, which by 1914 saw 85 per cent of the earth's surface under the colonial domination (in one form or another) of the Western powers. Now, while Said stressed that this globalisation united the world in a single, interacting whole on a scale never seen before (Said 1993: 7), he is also clear, following Fanon, that this process was part and parcel of imperialism and cannot be separated from the Manichaean division that characterised the hegemony of the imperial powers.

Yet much of the postcolonial theorising about hybridisation, in spite of its real insights, nonetheless explicitly downplays the historical polarisation of the experience of colonisation and slavery, as well as the ongoing effects of its legacy in the present global divide. The following quotation from an essay by Michael Dash on Jacques-Stephen Alexis and Wilson Harris is given as just one, but an early, example of this tendency. The essay has valid and important things to say about the process of survival and the power of a counterculture of the imagination, as well as the emergence of an aesthetic based on literary, rather than political, values. However, referring to the engagement of 'Third World' writers with history, involving either a 'continuous and desperate protest' or the retreat into cynicism, he says:

> such attitudes to the continuum of history left out of account a significant and positive part of the history of the Third World. It made it difficult to see beyond the tragedy of circumstance to the complex processes of survival which the autochthonous as well as the transplanted cultures in the New World underwent. Such an investigation of the process of adaptation and survival in the oppressed cultures of the New World could well change the vision of the past which froze the New World writer in the prison of protest and reveal the colonial legacy as a positive and civilising force in spite of the brutality and privation which cloud this historical period …
>
> Of what importance can the conception of such an 'inner corrective' on history be to the contemporary writer? It means fundamentally that in the same way he can circumvent the ironies of history so can he avoid the negativity of pure protest. What can emerge is a literature of renascence – a literary aesthetic and reality based on the fragile emergence of the Third World personality from the privations of history. (M. Dash, 'Marvellous realism. The way out of négritude', *Caribbean Studies*, 13:4, 1974 in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995b: 199–200)

Whatever the other intentions of the author here, there is a clear implication that the history of empire needs to be rewritten in a way that seeks to transcend its negative aspects and reveal it in a positive light. There are clear resonances with the thought

of Glissant. Yet, unlike some who have seized on theories of hybridity and hybridisation, *créolité* and *créolisation* to argue in favour of the end of resistance, Glissant's notion of an open-ended set of relations is not the prelude to the acceptance of Western hegemony, but goes hand in hand with a new conception of what resistance might be.

Although this is sometimes framed in somewhat obscure terms, it could be argued that this has been done deliberately. For, in the face of what Glissant has referred to as *'l'universel de la transparence'*, he proclaims the right to 'opaqueness' on behalf of the 'annihilated peoples', who meet the West's imposition of universal knowledge with the *'multiplicité sourde du Divers'*.[6]

On the one hand, this is a cultural resistance through writing and other art forms that takes as its basis the silence to which the 'annihilated peoples' have been doomed by the hegemony of the Same.[7] While this silence can be turned back on the perpetrators and used as a weapon against their domination, there comes a point for the writer when he wants to escape from this 'obscure web where silence finds its expression' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 15). He wants to go beyond what he calls the *'cri'*, the cry of complaint, the negative reaction to oppression, to forge a *'parole'*, to articulate the collective voice of a people emerging from silence.[8] This will entail a positive opening up to the world, becoming attuned to its rhythms, assuming the 'Relation', i.e. the Relation between the Same, the norms of universalist 'Western' thought, and the Diverse, the diversity of emerging peoples.[9] This is an attempt to find a new way forward, abandoning the futile search to become the Same by attempting to follow the path of assimilation, as well as remaining stuck, wallowing, in the fixed particularity of individual difference.

However, this is not just a new poetics. It extends beyond this to a revalorisation of the different forms of resistance that have operated historically in the Caribbean. Confiant takes up this theme, contrasting the different forms of 'silent and multifarious resistance that has taken place on the margins of the omnipotence of the plantation', in which the people themselves have engaged and which are contrasted with the more overt, spectacular types of revolutionary action and revolt, linked to organised political action, of the type favoured by Césaire and the old anticolonialist intellectual Left, following the example of Toussaint L'Ouverture or Lenin,[10] when they have not simply looked to assimilation with France.

The people have always engaged in real or metaphorical forms of *marronnage*, often unspectacular stratagems to circumvent authority, survival strategies ranging from growing their own vegetables in their own, often hidden, plots and organising parallel economic activities outside the plantation economy, to the more direct resistance of the runaway slaves and present-day forms of dogged and often inventive resistance, in which authority is not taken head on but is undermined by any number of forms of silent, disguised subversion, often engaged in on an individual basis.[11]

We have seen that Glissant's *'identité de la relation'* is underpinned by what remains the axiomatic assertion of a fundamental divide between the Same and the Diverse, or the West and the 'annihilated peoples'. An appreciation of the processes of *métissage* or hybridisation does not of itself invalidate an analysis of the real

divisions operating on the global plane or the need to oppose them. However, there is always an inherent tendency within this approach to veer towards the acceptance of the power relations and accommodation with them in the name of realism. There is the danger that resistance becomes ineffectual and tokenistic.

These notions have not been confined to the Caribbean. Indeed, there are many instances of the phenomenon of métissage or hybridisation in the Mediterranean world, as between the Maghreb and Europe in particular.[12] It is a question of the ideological value that is attributed to them, as in the case of *Afrique Latine* in the 1920s and 1930s, and the selectivity of an approach that highlights a common Mediterranean culture, for instance, giving it higher priority than other elements that are not primarily to do with identity issues. For, in any analysis of global political and economic realities, the Mediterranean must figure as one of the key dividing lines: between North and South, West and East, rich and poor, those who control global capitalism and those who are controlled by it. The notion of the two shores – *'les deux rives'* – is not to be dismissed lightly.

There is no doubt that there is real fluidity of movements, through migrations, travel, intellectual exchanges, as well as through the operation of the global forces of the capitalist economy, involving economic production, financial dealings and transactions, advertising in the global marketplace, cultural globalisation, all of which involve interactions and encounters, leading to the emergence of hybrid forms. However, the importance of such hybridity should not be overestimated at the cost of an analysis of the real power relations that continue to operate on the economic, social, political, military and cultural planes, reproducing and indeed intensifying the binary divide that is the mark of the relations between those who control the forces of global capitalism and those who are controlled by it.

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, we heard much about the death of ideology. However, it appears, on the contrary, that ideology is very much alive and kicking and, in accordance with one of the key characteristics of ideology, assuming the mantle of common sense or natural truth. When used as an absolute principle, with assumed moral value, rather than as a tool of analysis, theories of the processes involved in the creation of hybrid forms can become something of a misplaced crusade. For there is nothing inherently superior about a hybrid or creolised entity. Value is a matter to be added by a moral or political agenda and will depend on the particular context and set of circumstances.

It is often the case that notions of hybridity have been assumed within an ideological stance, which would have us believe that there are no fundamental differences and oppositions any more, that everything is on a par, of equal value, and that the divisions between 'us' and 'them' are no longer credible, if they ever were. The history of the colonial period is rewritten to emphasise mutual influences and interactions and to downplay the binary dialectic of opposites as a figure of the colonial relations of domination and struggle.

At the same time, this has involved a new emphasis on resistance by the colonised to the colonising powers to mitigate the one-sided nature of the domination. This in itself is no bad thing; resistance had indeed been an ongoing

phenomenon in a variety of forms and re-evaluation here is no doubt long overdue. However, what is somewhat suspect is, first, the customary restriction of this process of re-evaluation to the cultural domain, whilst instances of political or military resistance are not highlighted in the same way. Indeed, there is often an implicit, or explicit, critique of the problematic of the anticolonial liberation struggles and the binary oppositions that underpinned them.

The corollary of this is that this cultural resistance is thereby elevated to the status of prime factor in the colonial/postcolonial relationship in a move that inevitably downplays the ongoing reality of colonial/postcolonial domination and exploitation. It is all very well to conclude that colonial society was as profoundly affected by the colonial experience as were the colonised. The reality of the experience was, however, quite strikingly different for each of the sides and this remains the case in the present divided world. The emphasis on two-way influence inevitably downplays the reality of the power relations involved, as does the one-sided glorification of resistance to imperialism, which misses the point of the reality of empire and its ongoing survival in new forms and with new protagonists.

In a sense, some of the problems of this approach are related to the object of postcolonial studies, which has tended to concentrate on one extreme of what is a wide spectrum of very different experience. At one end of this spectrum, it takes as its object developments relating to some of the most fluid sections of global society, in which reality is characterised for large numbers of individuals by their experience of transient, migratory phenomena and a complex existence based on fluctuation, interaction and a heady cultural brew of heterogeneous elements and relations. At the other end, there are the modern-day, largely ignored wretched of the earth, existing in societies that are often locked in a mostly repetitive cycle of grinding poverty and exploitation and for whom the binary divide is still very much the defining factor. For these societies, which may not even have reached modernity, some of the wildest fancies of the postcolonial and the postmodern have little to offer, to say the least.

These two poles appear to reflect a new duality of the 'postcolonial' experience: on the one hand, the mobility that is characteristic of those who belong to the mobile diaspora, for whom theories associated with hybridity and *métissage* may indeed have much to offer as part of an explanatory theory of their own cultural experience; on the other hand, the immobility that is characteristic of the vast majority stuck in poverty, squalor and disease, and for whom manipulation of crude identity politics is often the basic fare on offer.

In both cases, history appears to have come to a standstill. It is a world in stasis, where real possibilities of struggle to bring about change are discounted and discredited. Yet the idealised visions of a hybridised world, like the rhetoric of *Francophone* discourse, come up against two stark realities: on the one hand, the real consequences of the global divide on the lives of the people of the 'majority world'; on the other, the barriers that are erected in the 'minority world'. These include not just the concrete barriers set up at external frontiers to keep out those who attempt to flee from poverty and persecution, but also the internal barriers operating within

societies to maintain distinctions of class, caste, religion, race, gender and culture, and which are shored up by institutions, ideologies and political movements, not just of the extreme Rght, but also by the mainstream political consensus.

Representation and Voice

None of the above is intended as a critique of theories of hybridity and hybridisation per se; it is a case of the ideological uses and abuses to which they may be put. This is also apparent in the case of certain 'theoretical' excesses that attempt to deny even the possibility of a voice to those who are exploited and oppressed.

On the one hand, an uncritical adoption of hybridity as an all-embracing, organising principle of the colonial/postcolonial world leads inexorably to the denial of a voice of their own to the most oppressed, who are presumed incapable of existing in an autonomous sphere. They are doomed not to exclusion but to inescapable inclusion within the interrelations of hybridity, where self-expression is conceived in terms of imitating the ideas and behaviour of those who are most powerful. Although hybridity is seen as the possibility of reciprocal interaction and influence, the realities of the balance of power preclude this in all but the most exceptional cases. Where the theorists of national liberation saw the re-appropriation of the voice of the enslaved and the colonised as a necessary step in the struggle, this has become a problematic area in postcolonial theory, inevitably linked to problems and issues surrounding the question of representation and the right to representation.

One of the most extreme articulations of these issues has been through the controversy provoked by the issue of the 'subaltern' voice and, in particular, an essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak ?' (Spivak 1988), where it was not even a question of the right to a voice but its very possibility for those who are categorised as 'subaltern'. Spivak took as her example an Indian widow attempting to commit suttee and discussed whether this could be interpreted as an attempt at self-representation. Her conclusion was that her position as subaltern excluded her from the hegemonic discourse as a discursive subject, where she could only be defined as Other, object of the discourse. It is this that defines her status as subaltern. As such, the subaltern is condemned to silence. For her to gain a voice, she would have to lose her subaltern status by joining, if it were possible, those elites who shared in the hegemonic culture, albeit as junior partners, for ever deprived of an 'authentic' voice and doomed to mimicry of the hegemonic discourse, behaviour and culture.

Spivak has claimed that she has been grossly misinterpreted over this essay, particularly by critics who chose to argue that her position denied absolutely any possibility of voice to the subaltern, whereas her case is that the subaltern who speaks is no longer subaltern. The fact remains that in her theory hegemonic discourse is all-encompassing and no space is allowed for dissident discourse. Even those critics, like Homi Bhabha (Bhabha 1994), who argue that mimicry of the dominant discourse may have a subversive, transformational effect on that discourse and even, possibly, on the relations existing between the dominant and the dominated are not proposing a theory of effective resistance, since the dominated will stay for ever blocked in the

hegemonic relation, whatever tinkering may take place at the level of discourse. Indeed, it is a step backwards compared with Fanon's interpretation and rejection of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the servant, which he rejected as irrelevant to the struggle of the colonised for their own autonomous space.

For all the insights that subsequent theorists, working in the anglophone or the francophone world, and even in France itself, may have had into the actual workings of hegemonic power systems and discourses and their deconstruction on the theoretical plane, both during the colonial period and thereafter, there is little here that is going to be of much help to those wishing to develop meaningful strategies of change.

Before we conclude, we shall make a short detour back into history to discuss the very different place that India has occupied in the French postcolonial memory, not least for the light we believe this will throw on current French strategy and discourse within the francophone world and further afield, in a situation where it has similarly to assume that of a subordinate, junior partner.

India without the English

French perceptions of India have been profoundly marked by the history of rivalry with the British for control of the country and the early relegation of French aspirations to a very minor, subordinate role in its colonisation. When the French lost out to the British in the battle for hegemony in India in 1763, they were left with only the handful of trading posts, famously enumerated in the song recorded in 1957 by Juliette Greco, which, for all its suggestiveness of the woman who had *un Chandernagor de classe*, *deux Yanaon ronds et frais*, *le Karikal mal luné*, *un petit Mahé secret*, *le Pondichéry facile*, is a lament for their loss.[13] Of these, Chandernagore had been the most important commercially, although Pondicherry had come to assume greater importance as the administrative capital of French India and today appears to have retained far more signs of the French presence in terms of architectural and cultural residues. This presence was maintained until 1949, with the formal transfer of the territories in 1954 to the new Republic of India. Most were then grouped in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, in spite of the geographical separation of its constituent parts. Chandernagore, however, was an exception, opting to become part of the Indian state of West Bengal.

The existence of the French enclaves throughout the time of the British presence in India gave France a quite original position, not least through the deliberate exploitation of the mobilising power of their ideology of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' to influence the Indians to rise up against the British overlords. This was a process that went back to the time of the French Revolution, and even before, and there is no doubt that some Indians found these ideas appealing. However, once the possibility of France becoming the major colonial power had been excluded, the French presence became a residual, marginalised one in relation to the dominant British rule. On the one hand, it inspired a certain resentful nostalgia for what might have been in much of the writing of the colonial period, most notably in Pierre Loti's

L'Inde (sans les Anglais) (1903/1992), which was translated soon after and published in 1906, not only in an English but also in a Bengali version, translated by Jyotirindranath Tagore, brother of the Bengali writer and Nobel prize-winner Rabindranath, and published in Calcutta.[14] For the subversive uses to which the French presence could be put were also an important part of the picture. Thus the French enclaves provided a sanctuary for Indians involved in the independence struggle, notably Aurobindo Ghosh, who sought refuge in Chandernagore in 1910 before settling in Pondicherry and founding the ashram to which he gave his name. There was a thriving French-language press in Chandernagore and a French-language paper, *Le Petit Bengali*, was published from 1880. This provided an outlet for much anticolonial material published in the first half of the twentieth century.

The tendency to portray India as the absolute Other of the Western, as represented by the British, has been characteristic of French readings of India. Without the constraints of official colonial policy to contend with, the dominant French view of India has been an extreme form of orientalism, without the accretions of assimilationism typical of much of French colonial policy elsewhere. In 1967, Louis Malle was still portraying India in this way, with his series of films, *Phantom India*, recalling with its title Loti's *Fantôme d'Orient* (1892/1990). The fundamental problematic of Malle's view of India was the orientalist gaze, which he assumed fully despite the discomfort and malaise that it provoked. It was the gaze of the Western outsider, looking at an Other, who not only was represented as the West's absolute antithesis but was stated to be intrinsically unknowable. As Malle said in an interview with Philip French, 'India was impossible to understand for a foreigner – it was so opaque' (French 1993: 90). India is thus presented as the absolute Other: 'Everything in India – their way of life, relationships, family structure, spiritual needs – is so opposed to what we in the West are used to and take for granted, that living there constantly provokes your mind, and your heart' (French 1993: 91).

The experience of India had a profound effect on Malle himself, which he likened to being 'brainwashed': 'India was the perfect tabula rasa: it was just like starting from scratch' (French 1993: 91). In particular, the rational approach is dismissed as totally inapplicable to India. Malle tried this way:

> I also met a number of Westernised intellectuals and artists and, like a good Frenchman, I tried to understand Indian culture and Indian religions rationally. Of course, in a matter of days I realised how silly it was. Indians have such a completely different approach to everything – for instance, how they deal with death. The Indian way is the opposite of our Judaeo-Christian tradition. (French 1993: 91)

He then rejected it in favour of an approach that was content to just observe from the outside, accepting the status of the film-maker as that of the ultimate *voyeur*. When his cameraman Etienne Becker complained that the objects of their gaze were looking at them and asked Malle to tell them not to look, Malle refused, noting that they had every right to look at them since they were the ones who were the intruders:

And Etienne said, 'But they're all looking at me, it's not right, tell them not to look.' I said, 'Why should I tell them not to look at us since we're intruders. First, I don't speak their language; just a few of them speak a little English. We're the intruders, disturbing them. They don't know what we're doing, so it's perfectly normal that they look at us. To tell them not to look at us, it's the beginning of *mise-en-scène.*' It's what I resent about so many documentaries where film-makers arrive from somewhere and start by telling the people, 'Pretend we are not here.' It is the basic lie of most documentaries, this naive *mise-en-scène*, the beginning of distortion of the truth. Very quickly I realised that these looks at the camera were both disturbing and true, and we should never pretend we weren't intruders. So we kept working that way. (French 1993: 93)

Although he accepts the right of the observed to return the gaze in their turn, none of this questions the right of the observer to direct his gaze on the people concerned in the first place. In a number of cases, the objects of the gaze, particularly the village women in the fields at the beginning of the film, are manifestly uncomfortable with it and regard it as an imposition, although Malle claims that he did not film when people did not want them to or, at least, when they were able to get the message across the assumed absolute communication gap.

As with Loti and others, Malle steps outside the frame of the relation of the major colonising nation to the colonised, to adopt the position of the third person, that of the French in India. It is emphasised at different points in the film that not only had India remained untouched by the experience of British colonisation under the Raj, except for a minority elite and political class, whose views were dismissed as irrelevant to India's needs, but the English, as ever, had failed to understand its essence.

When divested of its romantic mysticism, the French perspective on India can emerge as a model for the current *Francophone* discourse, where the French, or *Francophone*, way is presented as a subversive alternative to the dominant American hegemony. This had already happened to some extent in relation to French colonial involvement in Indochina, where the French involvement in a triangulated relationship with the United States, which took over their role as dominant colonial power, allowed them to appear less tainted and even to take the side of the underdog. In their role as former, now subordinate, colonial power, France was well placed to play the role of honest broker in the Vietnam peace negotiations, which took place in Paris from 1968 to 1973.

Within France, on the other hand, there has been some soul-searching about the role of France on the global plane. This is often described in terms of a malaise, as by Jon Henley (*Guardian*, 27 March 1999), who writes of the *malaise* as 'a growing doubt about France's place in the global order, a fear that in a technologising, Anglicising, homogenising world, as Europe merges into a single economic and political bloc and Anglo-American culture sweeps the planet, France may not be able to remain France. It is stuck, the anxiety is, in its glorious past.' So he quotes the political scientist, Pierre Birnbaum, also analysing the problem in terms of a failure to modernise ('Our problem is that we have not found the way to modernise while

preserving our imagined community'), as well as Jean Baudrillard, who makes clear the alternative mission of France ('We want to be an alternative, to show that if nobody resists America any more, at least we will. But because we are not sure what model to embody, we tend to offer simply inertia').

Things appear to have moved on since then and France offers a number of different models adapted to different constituencies. At home, there is little sign of relaxation of the dominant mode of Republican secularism, which continues to promote an unyielding homogeneity and has been reinforced by the 2004 law on secularism in education (see Chapter 10) outlawing Muslim headscarves and other visible religious signs or apparel in public schools. On the world stage, France has continued to present itself as the champion of other, alternative, solutions, in which to challenge, at least through its discourse, American power on the world stage. The discourse of 'multipolarity', in which France argues against the hegemony of a single planetary superpower, has been revitalised through the rhetoric and actions of Jacques Chirac, taking up de Gaulle's mantle in this respect. At the same time, in Africa, France continues to pursue a special relationship in what it regards as its prime area of influence in the world today, along with the Arab world.

The French Ideology

To sum up, we shall return to the specific arena of the francophone world, where, as we have seen, the French discourse associated with *Francophonie*, with multipolarity and the defence of diversity on the global plane, can have considerable appeal, not least through its subversive pretensions. France, particularly under the presidency of Jacques Chirac, has appeared to grasp the significance of the new developments and to have found a way of turning them to its own advantage. Again, this is above all a question of finding the right rhetoric, the right discourse, using buzzwords such as 'multipolarity' to reflect the new scenario and the mood it has evoked, or rather reinventing the Gaullist discourse of the 1960s and giving it new clothes. The promotion of multipolarity in the world may be light years away from the universalist rhetoric of the colonial and immediate postcolonial period. In essence, however, it serves the same function, which is to promote and preserve the influence and global power of France in the modern world. As we have seen in Chapter 7, the attractions are there for the former French colonies, as well as for countries that have no colonial connection, such as those countries in Eastern Europe that have been under the domination of a single power bloc for too long not to appreciate the benefits of having several baskets in which to place their eggs. However, the impact of this 'French ideology' is limited, first by the fact of its own contradictions and, secondly, by the fact that it remains a discourse.

The contradictions have evolved over the course of time, along with the content of the discourse, to fit in with changing circumstances and strategies. At the present time, the main contradiction remains the discrepancy between the message of pluralism and diversity that has gone out to the wider world, and the determined defence of a supposed universal homogeneity at home in the Hexagon or in the DOM-TOM.

As a discourse, it suffers from the obvious disadvantages of being precisely that, a discourse. As such, it has no pretensions to the status of theory and does not claim to provide any instruments to further knowledge and understanding of the facts and underlying processes pertaining to the present reality or any strategies for change. It can and does propose a vision and a framework for a certain type of international relations, in which idealism ranks highly. However, its real force is in its capacity for self-representation as a vehicle of subversion of the hegemonic discourse of the US and its allies. It is largely through the force of its discourse and the associated credibility and prestige it maintains in the world at large that France has the capacity to punch above its weight on the international scene.

Can we therefore conclude that there is a specific French dimension to postcoloniality?

Clearly, the specific history of France's role in the process of global capitalist imperialism has left its mark in the modern world on its former colonies and on France itself. In particular, the way in which the relations between the metropole and the colonies were articulated in colonial policy and ideology, as well as the rationalisations of the whole enterprise, has been marked by characteristic forms and features quite peculiar to the French sphere. So, at this level, there clearly has been and continues to be a specifically French dimension to postcoloniality, notwithstanding the underlying processes that are global in nature and scope and the characteristics common to the various imperial undertakings and the challenges to them.

However, this specificity does not just derive from past history. It is also a demarcating feature in terms of the ways in which France and its former colonies have found new ways of articulating their relations in the postcolonial world today. There is also a very specific dimension to the problematic areas where the effects of postcoloniality are at their most conflictual, most notably those concerning the postcolonial diaspora within metropolitan France itself.

As for the future, any prognosis is necessarily speculative in nature. What we have seen as the beginnings of the transition away from postcoloniality may develop at a quicker or slower pace. However, there are two factors that seem to be reasonably certain.

One is that development will undoubtedly remain the primary issue for the foreseeable future as far as the majority of the former French colonies are concerned. Given the global nature of the underlying processes involved, as well as the necessity for solutions with, at least in part, a global dimension, there is likely to be a dilution of the particular relations that have their roots in the history of the French Empire. Solutions are likely to come from an intensification of efforts at the level of the local economies and societies, as well as through greater regional cooperation and action at the level of the basic structures of the global economy and power structures. All of this means that there will probably be a tendency for the French dimension to be marginalised.

The other factor is that France will almost certainly do everything in its power to avoid this marginalisation. While the ongoing development of the ideological armoury is certainly on the cards, it is not possible to predict what other means may be brought into play. It is reasonable, however, to conclude that it is highly unlikely that the French dimension to postcoloniality will fade into insignificance in the near future.

Notes

1. 'C'est la même chose dans le giron français: il y a un Etat qui ne marche pas comme on voudrait qu'il marche, alors on envoie des blindés faire un tour. Je ne peux pas accepter cela! L'Afrique ne peut pas accepter cela longtemps' (Laurent Gbagbo, quoted in *Le Monde*, 16 December 2004).

2. 'L'Europe a acquis une telle vitesse folle, désordonnée, qu'elle échappe aujourd'hui à tout conducteur, à toute raison et qu'elle va dans un vertige effroyable vers des abîmes, dont il vaut mieux le plus rapidement s'éloigner' (Fanon (1961)/1987: 236).

3. pas un des hommes réunis à Bandoeng qui ne fût conscient de l'immense importance de l'Europe dans l'histoire de l'humanité et de la richesse de sa contribution aux progrès de la civilisation. Ce qui a été condamné à Bandoeng, ça n'a pas été la civilisation européenne, ça a été la forme intolérable qu'au nom de l'Europe certains hommes ont cru devoir donner aux relations qui devaient normalement s'instaurer entre l'Europe et les peuples non européens.

    Eh bien, si un événement mérite le nom d'historique, c'est bien celui-là … Pour bien en comprendre la portée, je vous demande de réfléchir à ces deux dates: en 1885, l'Europe se réunissait à Berlin pour se partager le monde; en 1955, soixante-dix ans plus tard, le monde s'est réuni à Bandoeng pour signifier à l'Europe que le temps de l'empire européen est fini et d'avoir pour le plus grand bien de la civilisation, à rentrer dans l'ordre commun. (Césaire 1956: 1367–68).

4. 'L'ordre était parfaitement observé. Ces femmes et ces vieillards, longtemps habitués au désordre, apprenaient la discipline. De bonne grâce, ils s'y soumettaient; le nationalisme, en quelques mois, les avait habitués à l'ordre, et avait ouvert leur esprit sur le monde moderne' (Ghazi 1956: 1357).

5. 'Ni la francophonie littéraire ni la théorie postcoloniale ne sont des notions claires en France, l'une parce qu'elle a été engagée dans trop de débats idéologiques, la seconde en raison d'une origine anglo-saxonne assez récente qui ne lui a pas encore permis de s'acclimater dans notre recherche universitaire' (Moura 1999: 1).

6. Car la tentative d'approcher une réalité tant de fois occultée ne s'ordonne pas tout de suite autour d'une série de clartés. Nous réclamons le droit à l'opacité. Par quoi notre tension pour tout dru exister rejoint le drame planétaire de la Relation: l'élan des peuples néantisés qui opposent aujourd'hui à l'universel de la transparence, imposé par l'Occident, une multiplicité sourde du Divers. (Glissant (1980)/1997: 14).

7. 'nous sommes en marge, nous nous taisons. Mais tout ce mouvement fait un boucan de silences dans nos têtes' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 15).

8. 'Quitter le cri, forger la parole. Ce n'est pas renoncer à l'imaginaire ni aux puissances souterraines, c'est armer une durée *nouvelle*, ancrée aux émergences des peuples' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 28).

9. 'Du cri fixe d'ici, déroule une parole aride, difficile. Accorde ta voix à la durée du monde. Sors de la peau de ton cri. Entre en peau du monde par tes pores. Soleil à vif' (Glissant (1980)/1997: 27).

10. 'la résistance ouverte, spectaculaire, à la révolte de type Spartacus ou à la Révolution de type Toussaint-Louverture ou Lénine' (Confiant 1996: 147; see also p.148 and Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1989: 55).

11. 'un marronnage quotidien obstiné, silencieux, masqué mais inébranlable de l'espèce de chape de plomb qui pèse sur la Martinique depuis trois cent cinquante ans' (Confiant 1996: 171).

12. To quote just one example from the first editorial by Nadia Khouri-Dagher in *Yasmina*, a magazine for Maghrebian women: 'Nous savons aujourd'hui que nous pouvons appartenir, socialement et affectivement, à la fois à deux univers qui ne sont opposés que pour ceux qui connaissent mal l'un des deux' (*Le Monde*, 17 October 2002).

13.   Elle avait, elle avait le Pondichéry acceuillant.
        Aussitôt, aussitôt c'est à un nouveau touriste
        Qu'elle fit voir son comptoir, sa flore, sa géographie.
        Pas question, dans ces conditions,
        De revoir un jour les Comptoirs de l'Inde. (Juliette Greco, Chandernagor, recorded by Fontana 1957).

14. See also Farrère (1935)/1992; Droit 1989; Clément 1993; Assayag 1999; Airault 2000. For an extensive bibliography of such material, see Granger et al. 2002.