
Dating the End of Colonialism in British MNEs in China and India: Competing Systems of Periodisation

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Abstract (in French and English)

A large body of literature demonstrates that Western imperialism had a pervasive impact on the evolution of business systems and business culture in the colonized and semi-colonized countries of Asia. The massive disparities in political, economic, and military power between Westerners and so-called "natives" in this region shaped how Westerners and non-Westerners engaged in inter-firm and intra-firm cooperation. These power disparities influenced the British behaviour of MNEs such as Unilever and HSBC. The recent rise of the so-called BRICs economies has led many writers to speak of the end of Western global primacy and the emergence of a post-American and/or post-Euro-Atlantic world (Zakaria, 2011; Serfaty, 2011). This paper will nuance our understanding of the environment of present-day MNEs by seeking to determine when British MNEs in the colonized and semi-colonized nations of Asia (e.g., India and China) made the transition from colonialism to a genuinely post-colonial state of affairs. It will do so by operationalizing a conceptual framework recently developed Academy of Management Review (Rowlinson, Hassard, and Decker, 2014), and by incorporating theoretical insights from other management scholarship (Decker, 2013; Kipping and 'Urdiken, 2014; Bucheli, and Wadhvani, 2014).

Keywords: Business History, colonialism, Asia, Britain

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