

Postcolonialism and the Quest for an Independent Self: Which Voice for the Subaltern?

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A dominated subject, it is difficult to think that the subaltern can speak. From colonial period to postcolonial era, his / her quest for a voice falls within the scope of language acquisition. Language, indeed, allows people to communicate, express their culture, and thereby their civilization. Its acquisition cannot be achieved easily. However, the new world context questions this acquisition. In the end, despite the evolution of mentalities and the gradual disappearance of traditional stereotypes over time, it appears that the subaltern still has no voice. He / she does not have an independent self.

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Industrial revolution brought about a rush toward raw materials. It led industrial countries, generally European, to conquer new territories with the view of exploiting their material resources for the benefit of their demanding industries. Known as colonialism or often imperialism – though there is some ambiguity in using the two terms interchangeably – this period made of the indigenous, the subaltern or the colonized, peoples who did not own themselves. They were imposed cultural, political, even economic structures and ideologies. The postcolonial era that followed the independences was one of great hope for these peoples. Postcolonialism, then, was a concept through which the former colonized would speak in his / her own name and handle the local affairs of his / her society without interference of a tutor country. However, in the new world global context the concept of postcolonialism needs to be reinterpreted. All the same, the term of subaltern must be rearticulated as it seems to reappear through the cooperation of diverse kinds between industrialized and non-developed countries. Today, though the subaltern is no longer that individual who is silenced as formerly, the relationship between developed nations and non-developed ones helps perpetuate other forms of dependence akin to that of the subaltern during colonial era. Really, because they are often imposed lines of conduct, non-developed countries are lands of the subaltern. This paper aims to examine the subaltern's voice in his / her country / community and the world at large.

Discussing the voice of the subaltern in a postcolonial context calls for a redefinition of the very term of subaltern. In the postcolonial context, the former colonized individual persistently seeks an independent voice. He / she wants to turn his / her silence into audibility, his / her invisibility into visibility. This process evolves in the deconstruction of old-fashioned perceptions and oppressive attitudes of colonial time. The colonial discourse that defined the indigenous as

an “other” to be civilized in the name of a so-called universal civilization, and which fed the relationship between colonizing and colonized countries must be revised and rearticulated. In this regard, the term “subaltern” loses its original meaning as the colonized is invited to speak as an independent subject.

In the foreword of the 2008 edition of Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Mask*, Ziauddin Sardar states that “to speak means ...above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization.” (xv) This statement questions language as the expression of the individual’s culture. Put differently, Sardar’s assertion entails language as a system of communication that enables humans to cooperate. Through this cooperation, they exchange their individual cultures and civilizations. This stresses the social functions of language and the fact that humans use it to express themselves.

Michel Foucault was one of the outstanding intellectuals to theorize about discourse and language. He acknowledged that as individuals, we mostly desire for words to be transparent for the truth to be revealed thereby. At the institutional level, however, the desire is to control discourse and give it a proper place. This is because danger inheres in the fact that people speak and that their speech proliferates. Consequently, he postulated, in every society, “the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality.” (1971: 216) Following Foucault, Dr. Clayton J. Whisnant, in “A Handout for HIS 389” states that discourse “refers to very specific patterns of language that tell us something about the person speaking, the culture that that person is part of, the network of social institution that the person caught up in, and even frequently the most basic assumption that the person holds.” (2012: 4-5) When applied to the focus of this paper, it can be said that the discourse of the former colonized peoples is meant to reflect their own cultures and civilizations rather than those of the colonizers. In other words, the former colonized individual wants to part from the old discourse of stereotypization and oppression – a discourse of exclusion then – that represented him / her as a pariah in the universal discourse about human beings. There is here a longing for freedom which manifests in the form of two dialectical forces at play: a dominant culture represented by the colonizer and a dominated one embodied by the colonized. But the attainment of this freedom is not possible unless the oppressed or the alienated realizes his / her oppression or alienation and that he / she must not definitely remain in this situation but strive to overcome it. Undoubtedly, Terry Eagleton’s essay “Nationalism: Irony and Commitment” in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* hints at this strive for freedom and consequently can apply to the quest that characterizes the approach of the postcolonial subject:

“Nobody can live in perpetual deferment of their sense of selfhood, or free themselves from bondage without a strongly affirmative consciousness of who they are. Without such self-consciousness, one would not even know what one lacked; and a subject that thinks itself complete feels no need to revolt. In this sense, the “negativity” of an oppressed people – its sense of itself as dislocated and depleted – already implies a more positive style of being.” (1990: 37)

It is only through the conviction that he / she lacks voice and that it is necessary for him / her to recover it that the postcolonial subject can achieve plenitude of language and selfhood. However, one needs mention that postcolonial discourse that is supposed to provide the former colonized subject with an independent voice is not one that turns colonial discourse upside down. It is a discourse that seeks to uncover the history of dominations and enslavements. For Ania Loomba, postcolonialism is not something “just coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism.” (1998: 16) Seen in this way, it refers to the concept of ideology and here again, we are brought back to Foucault’s assumption that all ideas and thoughts reflect social reality, and especially the economic interests of a dominant group or class of people. Both the colonizer and the

colonized are animated by a will of self-consciousness and self-determination even though in the case of the colonizer, the desire for self-determination and domination and show up as a master predominates, and is not jeopardized by an external oppressive power or force. The two subjects develop antagonistic perceptions of their social reality as they do not have the same interests.

Postcolonial concept is a commitment to self-determination. It is a process of decolonization through which the colonized determines his / her identity as he / she may wish. In this determination, as Eagleton puts it, “a politics of difference or specificity is in the first place in the cause of sameness and universal identity – the right of a group victimized in its particularity to be on equal terms with others as far as their self-determination is concerned.” (1990: 30) Here identity stands out as what permits the individual or group of individuals to express their specificity or singularity.

At this point of my analysis, two fundamental questions can be raised. In fact, I have already put them above; yet they need insightful inspection since this is the core of my argument and the substance of this paper. Thus, the first question relates to the type of subaltern in the new global context. Put differently, who is the subaltern today? The second question addresses the voice of this “new subaltern” if ever he / she has one.

In the new global context, there is a need to redefine the subaltern. The geopolitical and geostrategic environment of today imposes new inspection of the relationship among countries and among populations. The descending master / slave asymmetry that shaped the social systems and structures on a materialistic basis with the slave having no voice but had to comply with imposed norms must be reviewed. Similarly, the relation of power characterizing Marxist ideology is no longer valid with the development of global structures throughout the world. The former attitudes of violence and brutality once exercised by Western nations over the indigenous – mostly Africans, Asians and Latin Americans – to make them surrender and exploit their land and natural resources must be reexamined. Today, there is a new form of cooperation that seems to be the new leitmotiv of international cooperation between developed nations and non-developed ones. This approach extols a bilateral or multilateral cooperation profitable to all the countries under it. In the North / North as well as the South / South or North / South cooperation, there is this tendency for such collaboration. Apparently, under this approach, no country or partner is marginalized. Better, there is development of equality, mutual assistance, and partnership. On the whole, the social, political or economic environment is expected to offer a community of interests and shared opportunities.

At the cultural level, the notion of culture itself needs to be re-conceptualized. Here, it seems more difficult to build a universal culture due to the diversity of populations worldwide. Traditionally, culture has many different meanings. The term was first used by English anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871). Tylor said that “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society.” (http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture_1.htm, my italic) At first sight, Tylor’s definition seems to exclude women. I would therefore suggest reading “man” in the philosophical sense. As such, it will apply to human being at large, avoiding thus any debate that could prompt feminist activists for criticism. The fact that Tylor willingly or not avoids the word “woman” in his definition raises the issue of gender. It might be considered as a manifestation of his sexism to put forward the woman’s status of subaltern. But as social subjects, women possess and create culture as well.

Culture, in fact, is a powerful human tool for survival. But it is a fragile phenomenon that constantly changes and is easily lost because it only exists in our mind. Written languages, governments, buildings, clothes, music, food habits, and other man-made things are the products of culture. Most obviously, it is the body of cultural traditions that distinguish specific societies. When we speak of the culture of a given people, we are referring to the shared language, traditions, and beliefs that set this people apart from others. In most cases, those who share our culture do so because they have acquired it from parents and other family members who trans-

mited it to them.

In the new global world, this traditional conception of culture goes beyond geographical boundaries. In so doing, it creates a cultural melting perceptible in different sectors of human activities. For example, technology has now created the possibility and even the likelihood of a global culture. The Internet, fax machines, satellites, and cable TV are sweeping away cultural boundaries. Global entertainment companies shape the perceptions and dreams of ordinary citizens, wherever they live. This spread of values, norms, and culture tends to promote Western ideals of capitalism, bringing to light the necessity to redefine the subaltern. Hence, the following questions: Will local cultures inevitably fall victim to this global “consumer” culture? Will English eradicate all other languages? Will consumer values overwhelm peoples’ sense of community and social solidarity? Or, conversely, will a common culture lead the way to greater shared values and political unity? These questions are crucial and confirm my assumption that the subaltern today does not greatly differ from the one of colonial time when we consider how populations are caught up in cultural consumerism.

Today, the contact between Western and non-Western countries is not made of the same degree of violence and brutality as in colonial time. Though in many cases Western countries are suspected for their implication in different putsches occurring in non-developed countries (mostly in Africa) in the name of a universal democracy, the brutality and violence that they forced upon natives during their imperialist invasion is rarely perceptible in the new relationship with their former colonies. In that one-sided relation of colonial time, the subaltern was just an “object.” He / she was condemned to perform roles sometimes against his / her will. Only the interests of the colonizer were important. Today, the subaltern is not that kind of individual. With the advent of the independences and decolonization, the status of native populations has shifted from object to subject. These populations are expected to act as full human beings. They can intervene in their home affairs as well as in international debates. Their languages and cultures that were formerly not recognized are now accepted and some are even taught in Western academic institutions. However, despite this effort toward gradual recognition, many obstacles are still to be alleviated. Examples that testify to this reality are numerous.

In this sense, the subaltern becomes a subject evolving in an environment of which he / she has no control whatsoever. He / she is rendered dependent upon external forces, namely, developed countries and international institutions. The status of subaltern today is like a virus that infects a healthy body to destroy it from within. It is not as visible as formerly but it persistently overwhelms in every sphere of activity where former colonizing and colonized countries are permanently in contact. More precisely, it pervades such areas as politics, economics, cultures, arts, and so forth. As a consequence, the populations of non-developed countries are unable to decide for themselves though they are made to believe that they are independent. As subalterns, they have no sense of selfhood but perform, in some way, the traditional roles of the colonial subaltern. With new habits and behaviors imposed onto them and impacting on their living conditions, these new subalterns are not very different from former ones.

It is important here to insist on the term “new.” Obviously, this adjective could indicate a difference with the colonial subaltern. This difference seems to lie in the active presence of the two types of subalterns on the social arena of their community. For example, while the colonial subaltern has no active influence on the local affairs, the postcolonial one, somewhat, is associated with the management of these affairs. Also, while the former acts as an object, the latter is made to believe that he is a “subject.” But this difference is rather superficial. It is used to indicate the shift in the status of the former colonized to the supposed independent individual after independence. Otherwise, there is really no difference when we know that both characters are still imposed norms by former colonizing powers. Thereby, the term “new,” stands for this shift from “object” to “subject” while passing from colonial period to postcolonial period. Fundamentally, indeed, the two subalterns are manipulated and they lose their individual self and identity.

After identifying the new subaltern, it is now important to examine his / her voice if he /

she has one. This raises the issue of the acquisition of language and brings us back to Ziauddin Sardar's statement in the foreword of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Sardar writes:

"The black man speaks with a European language. He becomes proportionately whiter in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language; or indeed, any western language, nowadays most particularly English. So, almost immediately, the black man is resented with a problem: how to posit a 'black self' in a language and discourse in which blackness itself is at best a figure of absence, or worse a total reversion? The problem, however, is not limited simply to the use of language. When a black man arrives in France it is not only the language that changes him [...] At issue is thus not just language but also the civilization of the white man." (2008: xv)

If this statement addresses the black man, it applies as well to all the individuals who are caught in the biases of oppression and confinement. The word "white" is used as a generic term for European civilization and its representatives. Moreover, the fact that the black man speaks in European languages is an indication that he does not own himself. His language and consequently his cultural identity are jeopardized by European dominant culture. As such, he can hardly claim an independent voice.

Gayatri Spivak's article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) stands out as a founding text in terms of language acquisition. Relying on the works of authors such as Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze on desire and power, Karl Marx on capitalism or Jacques Derrida on deconstruction, Spivak finally comes to the conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak. She painstakingly discusses the social relationship between the dominant subject and the dominated one in a sense of desire and power. She inscribes most of her argument in the contemporary international division of labor to demonstrate that the capital provider (generally developed countries) has always an influence over the worker, the proletariat (generally non-developed countries). This relationship is in fact one of desire and power. Non-developed countries desire freedom and want to possess their selves whereas developed countries want to exercise their power over them. Even the will of developed countries to dominate is itself an expression of a desire. Conversely, the desire of the colonized countries to rule themselves is a quest for power. In the relation between both groups then, power and desire alternate depending on the position of each group and what it wants to achieve.

However, beyond Spivak's analysis, it is clear that the condition of subaltern is not definite. Once in this condition, the subaltern must engage both an essentialist and existentialist battle for a change. To exist, the subaltern needs to deconstruct what unjustly makes him / her an "other." And it is this ultimate and legitimate commitment that constitutes the very substance of Marx's theory and Derrida's approach. Unfortunately, in the international context of today where the capitalists are more than ever attracted by the surplus value of their investments to maintain or increase their domination over the working class, it is quite difficult for the subaltern to engage such a battle. Thus, in the same way the proletariat is made a subaltern due to his / her impossibility to control the means of production, Spivak indicates that the contemporary international division of labor also makes the postcolonial subject a subaltern. This situation perpetuates the chain of domination whilst maintaining the pattern of power and desire as human aspiration. Also, contrary to Marx's call to overthrow the bourgeoisie, this situation offers no perspective to the proletariat. Rather than helping form a coalition to resist or deconstruct former stereotypes that typified the colonial subject as an "other," the international context of today exemplifies that of the nineteenth-century which serves as ground for Spivak's argument. This demonstrates that despite the great hope sparked by the decline of colonization, the postcolonial subject, too, is a subaltern. He / she has no voice or, put simply, he / she cannot speak. In this regard, Spivak writes:

"The contemporary international division of labor is a displacement of the divided field of nineteenth-century territorial imperialism. Put simply, a group of countries, generally first-world, are in the position of investing

capital; another group, generally third-world, provides the field for investment, both through the comprador indigenous capitalists and through their ill-protected and shifting labor force. In the interest of maintaining the circulation and growth of industrial capital (and of the concomitant task of administration within nineteenth-century territorial imperialism), transportation, law and standardized education system were developed— even as local industries were destroyed, land distribution was rearranged, and raw material was transferred to the colonizing country. With so-called decolonization, the growth of multinational capital, and the relief of the administrative charge, ‘development’ does not now involve wholesale legislation and establishing educational systems in a comparable way. This implies the growth of consumerism in the comprador countries. With modern telecommunications and the emergence of advanced capitalist economies at the two edges of Asia, maintaining the international division of labor serves to keep the supply of cheap labor in the comprador countries.” (1988: 83)

This assertion perfectly applies to my point in this paper. By their avant-garde position, post-colonial intellectuals are expected to lead their populations. But how can they do this efficiently when they too are made subalterns? Seen in this way, my concern mainly focuses on the type of cooperation Western nations must build with non-Western ones in the global context. Not to be pessimistic, this type of relation is more beneficial to Western nations. When one carefully inspects the international relations, one can easily conclude that postcolonial postulation that posits former colonized as independent subjects is a fake one or a mirage. It is rather overshadowed by a “modern colonialism” that keeps the colonized peoples in a continuous dependence and a deferred hope. For these peoples, the possibility to decide by and for themselves is frustrated by a dominant oppressive other, a powerful nation or system that imposes its vision when it comes to decide for any issues of interest. The structural adjustment programs initiated by the Bretton Woods institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, The Paris Club, etc.) and intended to help indebted countries face their economic difficulties are also a mirage. Generally, these programs fail to reach their primary goals of getting the beneficiary countries out of poverty because they do not respond to the local realities. The notion of independence or of an independent voice for the subaltern becomes, therefore, crucial as it is an essential element in the quest for self-hood.

Today, one of the essential means by which developed countries maintain non-developed ones under their yoke is through the policy of military intervention. Generally, this is done on the pretext that the countries of intervention crucially lack democracy and human rights. Thus, after the attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001, the United States launched a vast international assault against Muslim fundamentalists with the view of fighting Al Qaeda and eradicating terrorism in the world. This brought them to increase their presence in Afghanistan, and to intervene in Iraq and in many other areas suspected to host terrorists. In Iraq, for example, Saddam Hussein was compared to a tyrant. He was accused of possessing mass destruction weapons and thereby an obstacle to democracy. In sum, he was regarded as a threat to world peace. On the other hand, the country was suspected to be a bastion for Al Qaeda. By the same token, Taliban in Afghanistan were accused of human rights violation. The same pretext was used in Libya. Moreover, if developed countries did not intervene directly in the wind of protest that exploded throughout the Arab Middle East and North Africa in 2011 and qualified as “the Arab Spring,” it is obvious that their declarations and positions during these events betray their innocence in the destabilization of the different regimes of these areas.

Most often, to give credit to their imperialist intervention, developed countries coalesce with partner countries or lean on international organizations such as the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, Global Witness, and local leaders or associations. Through these entities, they discredit the regimes they find as disrespectful of the international rules of democracy and human rights. Thus, the local leaders – generally the opponents to the regimes in power – who serve as their local allies are presented as the only credible interlocutors likely to save populations from their social and economic difficulties. Their images are polished in the international media to make them accepted; some sort of messiahs then. However, para-

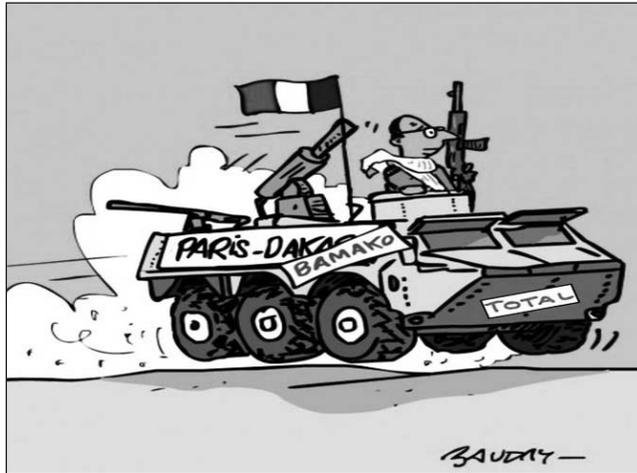
doxically, once the said anti-democratic regimes are overthrown and replaced by new leaders, the populations for whom these developed countries pretend to fight for do not profit from the new environment. In Iraq and Libya, for instance, when Saddam Hussein and Muammar Kaddafi were respectively overthrown, the oil wells were the first things the United States and France tried to secure, demonstrating implicitly that their prime concerns were rather the resources of these countries. In turn, as soon as the leaders they have helped depose the former ones no longer respond to their expectations, they automatically activate the same networks they used to help them come to power. In so doing, the cycle of domination perpetually renews whilst populations continue to wait for a better future that finally seems totally out of reach. Also, the concerned countries often engulf in an extreme violence. Today, in Iraq, Libya as well as in many Arab countries, the situation is rather chaotic with constant murder attempts and car-bombings.

My reference to the Arab areas does not mean that they are the only places where instability occurs. On the contrary, the scenes of violence as an expression of the populations' impatience to see their living conditions change also take place in many other underdeveloped countries. The political turmoil that happened in Côte d'Ivoire after the elections of November 2010 is a potent example. But given that only the former President is charged by the International Criminal Court (ICC) with crimes against humanity while the protagonists of the opposite side who were all the same accused of similar crimes in UN and other international human rights reports are not threatened, any objective analyst could imagine the interests at stake. This identification of the authors of the Ivorian drama helps understand that the main reason has little to do with the simple issue of electing a president for the country. Really, it relates to the geostrategic and geopolitical context of the international relations where developed nations seek to have a strategic position so as to assume their leading role in the world. And from this position, they can not only have a dominant voice in the world at large but mainly they can keep non-developed countries under their tutelage through more docile and submissive leaders.

France's present intervention in Mali responds to the same principle. It hints at this quest by developed countries for a geopolitical and geostrategic positioning to increase their influence in the world. But at the same time, they silence the populations of non-developed countries and prevent them from assuming selfhood, turning their quest for independent voice into a nightmare as they are spoiled of their land and resources. In fact, these populations have no choice. Like the proletariat in the capitalist system, they have no other major alternative than surrender to their oppression. Also, like the proletariat, if they want their freedom, they need to create the necessary crisis within this system to destabilize it. It is important to indicate that the crisis here is not a situation of chaos where nothing is possible because of destruction. On the contrary, it is a state of consciousness, where one tries to question a situation on which one crucially depends and ardently desires a change. Unfortunately, for these populations of non-developed countries, the status of proletariat – of subordination then – is so carefully conceived and imposed by the oppressor that it seems difficult to think of a change.

In his article "Mali: French army to repel Islamic groups...and defend the interests of 'Total?'" published on January 14, 2013 on "Fortune," a fedsouche.com economic blog, Sylvain, a political analyst writes: "But in the end, the intervention of France could also be due to major economic and financial issues, again amid a strong smell of oil and gas. Coincidence or remake of a scenario similar to that prevailing in Afghanistan?... Or even the implementation of a strategy of chaos led by the oil lobby and the U.S. military in exchange for financial support of U.S. campaign to prevent too much breakthrough of competing foreign oil majors? Who knows..." (<http://fortune.fdesouche.com/tag/guerre-du-petrole>, my translation). The similitude between American intervention in Afghanistan and French engagement in Mali is of crucial importance. It strengthens the assumption that though these superpowers hail that their intervention aims to bring democracy and protect the populations, they are rather concerned with a geostrategic positioning. In fact, from Afghanistan, Americans can for example counter Chinese economic breakthrough and keep an eye on Russia in the area. They can also have a look on Pakistan suspected for its

connections with terrorist networks and mainly Iran, for its desire to acquire the atomic bomb. From its part, France in Mali wants to reaffirm its presence in West African region that seems to get out of its control with the presence of Islamic groups and in Sylvain's words, "defend the interests of total." Interestingly, the following caricature of a French tank in Malian desert alludes to this assumption about the defense of the interests of Total:



Yet, the final sentence of Sylvain's statement "Who knows..." clearly shows the hidden motivation of these interventions. In fact, during American intervention in Iraq, the Bush administration gave the excuse that it was intended to destroy the mass destruction weapons that Saddam Hussein was suspected to have. It was later, when the conflict began getting bogged down with frequent attacks against U.S. troops that many ordinary people discovered that the Bush administration did not tell the truth.

The hidden reasons at the basis of the superpowers' interventions in non-developed countries are also hinted at by Benji, another political analyst. In a sound article entitled "Mali's mining sector, a rich but unexploited potential" (my translation) posted on January 16, 2013, he tries to give the most reliable reasons that might have prompted French intervention in Mali. Indeed, apart from the oil potential that has been listed since 1970, Benji underlines that Mali has huge quantities of natural resources: gold, uranium, diamond, precious metals such as garnets and magnetic minerals, pegmatite minerals, corundum, metamorphic minerals, quartz and carbonates, iron, bauxite, manganese, limestone, copper, marble, gypsum, kaolin, lead, zinc, lithium, shale bitumen, lignite, salt stone, and diatomite (<http://lesmoutonsenrages.fr/2013/01/16/le-butin-de-lintervention-francaise-au-mali-uranium-or-diamants-et-petrole/>). Therefore, French intervention could reasonably have more to do with controlling these natural resources than combating Jihadists and terrorism. More precisely, as the former colonizer of this country, this intervention could be explained by a strong desire to get control of this rich potential and thereby protect its geostrategic and geopolitical position that I have already discussed above. But while seeking to defend a position, the question is what benefits for local populations.

Another point of the new colonialism I have been discussing so far is the new international cooperation known as "win-win policy." Obviously, this is another manifestation of the continuous subordination of non-developed countries even though it is presented as a mutually beneficial cooperation. What is different about this colonialism is that countries readily allow themselves to be conquered. They can for example provide access to large farmland to foreign multinational industries. In this regard, to entice foreign investments, some governments make tax breaks and exemptions from labor laws. These efforts have two hopes in common: the hope of poor nations to achieve the development and modernization of their ailing agricultures and the hope that foreign investors will be able to produce enough food for the world's increasing

population. They will bring along all the things that poor countries have lacked until now, including technology, capital and knowledge, modern seed and fertilizer, and that investors will be able not only to double crop yields, but to increase them considerably. If the investors are successful, they could achieve development agencies' failure to reduce the hunger that now afflicts more people than ever. In this win-win cooperation, there is profit for the investors and development for the poor. Bankers and speculators as well as governments acquire land in other countries. As such, they reduce their dependence on the world market and imports. China has 20 percent of the world's population, but it has only 9 percent of the world's arable land. Japan is the world's largest corn importer, and South Korea is the second-largest (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/the-new-colonialism-foreign-investors-snap-up-african-farmland-a-639224.html>).

When we consider these data above, we agree that the subaltern is not only that individual who does not control the means of production and therefore is forced to comply with the will of the capitalist to survive. Or, he / she is not that individual who must rebel against the dominant structure to cope with his / her dependence. In fact, Chinese, Japanese and Korean dependence on foreign agricultural products extends the definition of the subaltern. Thus, beyond its traditional definition as a colonial or a postcolonial subject on whom norms are imposed, the subaltern may extend to any country or individual that depends on a situation that he / she cannot totally control. These measures can be imposed by other people or by nature. Despite their great economic capacities, China, Japan and Korea can ironically be considered as subaltern countries since they heavily depend on some basic food coming from abroad or they do not have enough arable land to grow the food they need. Moreover, if they get arable land in other countries, they may not fully control some means of production due to certain local regulations or situations they may not master well. This can add to their dependence.

The status of subaltern then goes beyond the former dialectics between developed and non-developed countries. In the new world context, any country under economic dependence can be regarded as a subaltern country. The 2012 economic crisis is a good example. Started at Wall Street, this crisis seriously destabilized the world economic system, forcing many countries to put into place drastic measures. Within the European Union, for instance, some countries were placed, so to speak, under economic infusion to avoid that their collapse engendered that of the whole monetary community. Greece, Portugal, and Italy, were forced to cut down their budgets and to give up some spending in order to benefit from the economic assistance of the Union. Yet, these countries played leading roles in the world. Ancient Greece was considered as the cradle of European culture and Western civilization. Portugal and Italy once owned colonies and the populations of these colonies were their subalterns. But because they are imposed measures now, these important countries metaphorically lose their status of dominant subject. And as they must submit to the decision of the other European countries, they no longer have voice and they become in turn, subaltern countries. This shift reinforces my argument that the status of subaltern is not definite. One can be a subaltern at a given time and change status at another. At this level, China stands out as a giant economically. Indeed, from the sixth world economy some time ago, it is now the second world economy.

The question of the subaltern's voice that is at the core of this paper has been examined as a quest for an independent self. My main concern was to know if the subaltern can have a voice in the new world global context. This interrogation helped analyze the relationship between colonizer and colonized, and from colonial time to postcolonial era. Throughout my argument, I tried to demonstrate that during colonial time, the colonized individual could not speak since the only relation existing between him / her and the colonizer was that of slave and master. It was also, in Marxist terminology, based on the relation between the capitalist and the proletarian. During postcolonial time when former oppressive conceptions and ideologies seem to have been replaced by more global ones, we could think that the subaltern can speak. Unfortunately, he / she is still deprived of his / her voice. Actually, his / her status has somewhat evolved but the fact that he / she must sometimes submit to norms and lines of conduct demonstrates the status

quo. I have given examples to justify this reality. In sum, the subaltern remains a subject who cannot speak. However, what is interesting is that the status of subaltern is not definitely acquired. It can change over time and someone who is not a subaltern may become one and vice-versa.

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