When we speak of political relations between nations, we are really referring to a power relationship. Nations with more or less equal military and economic power—whether the power belongs to one nation or to an alliance—establish an unstable equilibrium. Power faces power on terms of equality, and the resulting stalemate is euphemistically called peace. But there are weak peoples, and throughout history, as if by some natural law of politics, their existence has always attracted the attention of the strong, whose domination has taken different forms and created a whole vocabulary of dependence. So we have had protectorates, condominiumia, empires, satellites, and colonies.

I should like here to examine some aspects of the relations between ruling peoples and ruled peoples in the classic colonial situation. If I choose to concentrate on colonial areas, it is because these are where the clash of races has been most striking, and because this clash has been one of the determining factors of the present-day climate of race relations.

A colony is usually the product of the conquest of one people by another. It may happen that considerations of climate, or the exigencies of politics in the home country, make it impossible for the conquering vanguard to establish more than a structure of administration for the new territory. In that case the impact of the conqueror on the native peoples is temporary and may not affect all layers of the native population. But where ideas of expansion are in play, and where the invader wishes to get the full benefit of his victory, he may have to commit himself in a more comprehensive way to ruling the new land. The more thoroughgoing the process of domination the greater the conflict of interest between alien and native peoples. Where, as in North America and Australia, the newcomer has achieved mass extermination of the native, whether by design or accident, the conflict is settled in the most summary and complete manner. But these are the exceptions; genocide is difficult, time-consuming, and not necessarily profitable for the invader.

Generally, we have two main types of colonization, the settler and the non-settler, and they have produced differing, though not drastically distinct, types of race relations. Let us examine them separately.

The settler has a permanent stake in the colony; this gives him from the start a kind of independence of the mother country which distinguishes his situation sharply from that of the home-appointed administrator. As time goes on, and as contact with the mother-country becomes more and more tenuous, this independence becomes more real, and we see the beginning of an imperium in imperio. The conflict of interest between the settler people and the native people is therefore bound to be more bitter,
more intense, and longer drawn out than in cases where colonization has a more extractive character, so to speak.

However, we must beware of exaggerating the differences between the settler and the non-settler colony, so far as their effect on race relations is concerned. The ruling race in non-settler areas also predicate their behaviour on permanence of tenure. Individual members of the race may come and go, but collectively it develops attitudes that are in many ways indistinguishable from those of their brothers in the settled areas. On the one hand we have the material power and the racial pride of the ruling race, and on the other the self-esteem of the ruled.

Here we come to the crux of the misunderstanding that has led to so much rancour and so much bloodshed. For it has been the conviction, conscious or unconscious, of many colonizing powers that on the other side of the confrontation between ruler and ruled there is nothing. Too often they have failed to recognize that even the poorest people, even those whose way of existence is evidence of a complete inability to meet the challenge that nature poses to man, even people such as these can have their own human dignity and can be jealous of it. As recently as a few months ago a white resident of an African country is reported to have commented that the African in South Africa is materially better off than most other Africans in the continent. ‘I’ll grant you they don’t have human dignity’, he said, ‘but what use is that?’ It is this self-esteem—and the injuries done it by the rulers—that in the end has cut the Gordian knot of colonial domination.

‘Keeping the native in his place’

The basic distinction to be drawn between race relations in settler colonies and in non-settler areas springs from the differences in the aims of the two sets of colonizers. Because the settler is engaged in what he sees as a struggle for survival against the native, he uses every technique that can be devised to keep the native in his place, as the expression ironically goes. Hence all those systems of apartheid; only the word was an Afrikaner invention. In the non-settler areas, segregation is rooted not so much in the panic fear of the settler as in his ideas of superiority. But conventions can be enforced as effectively as the laws in settler colonies.

In the early days of British rule in India some members of the ruling race had, in part, adopted the Indian way of living. This was considered an aberration. Newcomers were strictly enjoined to toe the communal line and maintain their separate identity. In the eighties of the last century, a great jurist, Sir Courtney Ilbert, introduced a bill in the Indian legislature which would have placed British and Indian magistrates in the civil courts on a footing of equality. Non-official Europeans in India were horrified. The white community formed a defence league and collected money to carry out a furious campaign directed against the Viceroy; Englishwomen wrote home protesting against the inconceivable degradation which the entire white race would undergo if Europeans were to be tried by Indian magistrates. The campaign was successful; the bill was modified, and the honour of the British race was saved.

The theory of the racial superiority of ruling peoples goes back to the time of hand-to-hand combat and victory in the battlefield. Victory confers power and prestige, but this is sometimes interpreted to include moral superiority—though the Goths and
Vandals who destroyed Rome did not immediately put it about that they were morally and in other ways superior to the Romans by virtue of their victories. Until recently the theory of the superiority of the white races could be sustained by the strength of arms, as well as by extensive and powerful propaganda. The Japanese once conquered Korea. They still have a contemptuous attitude towards their former subject people, which has provoked anti-Japanese feelings among the Koreans. But race relations, like all relationships between people, are not static; and where you have had two forces, that of the material power and material ambition of the rulers and that of the self-esteem of the ruled, in constant conflict, it is inevitable that change must come. It is fortunate for the subject peoples of the world that history has ruled in their favour.

**Long-drawn-out struggle**

While the struggle between these two forces has been long-drawn out in some places and less so in others, in every case it seems to have been waged in three identifiable phases. From the point of view of the ruling race these have been: the building up of racial power, its consolidation, and finally its dissolution. From the viewpoint of the subject races they are acceptance, questioning, and revolt.

In India the colonial regime endured longer than in most other colonies. We can therefore distinguish the different phases of the evolution rather more clearly in that subcontinent than elsewhere. There are local variations: but in general the experience of India illustrates the life-cycle of a typical colony.

During the period of pacification the attitude of the ruling race towards the ruled is a mixture of benevolence, indifference, and ruthlessness. Some members of the ruling race are anxious to learn about the peoples they have subjugated. Others even criticize the regime, because it excludes indigenous peoples from power, trust, and emolument. But this group is unrepresentative, and their views are unintelligible to the generality of their compatriots. At best the attitude of most members of the ruling race is that of benevolent despotism. They may condescend to listen to the grievances of the subject people and try to remove them, but in no circumstances do they let the ruled think they are yielding to pressure.

The attitude of the ruled is by and large one of deference and submission to the ruling race. A small few are so overwhelmed by the impact of the new culture that they are prepared to alter their whole way of life in order to absorb it. Some see in the new foreign connection an opportunity to extend contact with the outside world and enrich their own culture. These few may also be passionately attached to the cause of social reform and the educational advancement of their own people; and they are ready, even eager, to co-operate with the more progressive among the ruling race.

So there is mutual respect between these sections of the two races, and for a time the prospect of their working as partners looks promising. But this interlude of good relations is short-lived. The vast majority of the ruling race are not interested in this kind of partnership. Most administrators consider their responsibility as not much more than the maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenues, while those who are in business have little interest outside making money and protecting their special privileges.
Two neuroses
If the dominant race is aloof because of its feeling of superiority, what they call the natives are also aloof but for different reasons. Generally speaking, they would be happy to co-operate with the invaders, provided it could be done with dignity. But this is not possible. Most of them suffer from an inner sense of inferiority—the neurosis of the conquered being as substantial as that of the conqueror—and they tend to view nearly everything the ruling race may do with considerable suspicion. Contact between the races is only such as cannot be avoided.

The second phase of the relationship is the stage of consolidation of power on the one hand and questioning on the other. The rulers begin to recognize that the ruled are not in fact irrevocably doomed to ignorance and savagery. The recognition is grudging, however; and opportunities for education and preferment open up slowly. In public service, appointments above certain ranks are closed to members of the ruled race. The attitude behind this discrimination was expressed by Lord Kitchener, who was once a distinguished commander-in-chief of India. ‘However well-educated and clever a native may be’, said Kitchener, ‘and however brave he may prove himself, I believe no rank we can bestow on him would cause him to be considered an equal of the British officer’.

The role of the native is to help run the administration according to the directions of the white rulers. ‘The British bureaucracy in India was not merely an officialdom’, says an Indian commentator. ‘It was a governing corporation, entrusted with the destiny of an India of its own conception’.

Another feature of this second phase is the increasing estrangement of the rulers from the elite of the ruled. This is almost inevitable. The novelty of the new culture has begun to wear off; they have learnt enough of the arts and literature of the alien race to distinguish between the values these embody and the attitude and behaviour of its representatives on the spot. While paying homage to the ideal, they are not necessarily prepared to do the same to the reality.

The assertion of national self-esteem begins to develop into a political movement. At the beginning the movement is moderate. It uses - strictly constitutional procedures to register complaints and to claim rights for its own people. The time is not yet ripe for head-on collision with the governing race. There is still a good deal of admiration for its qualities. Indeed, the attitude of the indigenous people is basically friendly, and their appeal is to the ruler’s sense of justice and his sense of his own history. This phase of the political movement may fairly aptly be called the period of petitions.

The rulers begin to make concessions, partly under pressure of public demand and partly out of a certain realistic fatalism. But concessions almost always come too late; and what is given is often given with bad grace. All the emphasis is put on the giver’s generosity rather than on the receiver’s rights; members of the ruling race affect to be shocked at the ingratitude of the ruled for charitable gifts already received and consider any demands for more to be outrageously premature. They balk at accepting the indigenous elite as spokesmen for the people; and underestimate the extent to which the political ferment is already at work among the masses. They first try to ignore and then proceed to denounce the political movement that has developed. They
call it—and perhaps even believe it to be—the machination of a disgruntled few, with no roots in popular sentiment.

Lord Curzon, an eminent viceroy of India, once said of the major Indian political party: ‘My own belief is that the Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions is to assist it to a peaceful demise’. The rulers ridicule the often flamboyant language in which the elite present their case, and belittle their sincerity. They seem almost to resent the fact that this elite employs political terms and concepts which their own leaders once used for exactly the same purpose. The rulers suddenly find themselves championing the cause of the indigenous masses against those whom they term an unrepresentative, disgruntled minority. It is a posture that never succeeds in being convincing.

This last phase of racial conflict, which has yet to be reached by subject peoples in some parts of the world, is usually short and tempestuous. By the time it arrives the indigenous leaders have generally lost all faith in change through constitutional action. The moderates among the popular leaders are still in favour of advance by constitutional methods, but the process of making demands and waiting for instalments of constitutional change becomes exasperating. Opinion begins to turn in favour of unconstitutional methods, violent and non-violent. In the beginning only a few resort to these methods, for there is a high price to be paid for their use. But even the many who for one reason or another condemn them publicly approve of them in private.

Since the rulers cannot in the nature of things afford to abandon the administration of the country, violence is answered by violence. The moderates begin to lose leadership to their more aggressive countrymen, and these involve the masses in their political protests and convert what was to start with a movement of the elite into a national movement. Thus self-respect tends to spread, and the honour of the nation becomes the concern of the individual; an insult to the individual is regarded as an insult to the nation. The struggle degenerates into an open trial of strength. Both sides now know what the outcome is to be; they differ only in respect of its timing.

During the first phase the ruling race has established its military power and created a structure for exploiting the country’s economic resources. People of different races, tribes, and religions have been brought under a common administration; different parts of the country have been linked to one another, and a common language, the language of the ruling race, imposed. Roads and railways have been built. The imposition of the foreign language has made administration easier. All these measures have tended to unify the country, physically and economically. But physical and economic unity have prepared the soil for the growth of political unity among the ruled races. This becomes an unforeseen, awkward, and not altogether welcome by-product of the efforts of the ruling race to strengthen its position in the colony.

The remarkable foresight which the colonial administration showed during the forward march to power seems to leave them when the time comes to beat retreat. This is basically due to the difficulty of abandoning their belief in racial superiority. The sense of superiority breeds a spirit of haughty aloofness, and when this as challenged estrangement and hostility follow. Hence every time a demand for advancement is made the ruling race is surprised and shocked. They look upon such
demands not as a natural expression of a growing force, but simply as a threat to established authority.

Unable to stem the tide of events, the rulers put themselves at the mercy of disruptive influences. Centrifugal forces are encouraged, and classes and communities are induced to believe that they will gain more by insisting upon their separateness than by cultivating unity with others. This attitude reduces the strength of the national movement. Those who in earlier days were proud of the unity they had brought to the peoples seem almost to take pleasure in the disunities they discover.

What I have said of India refers to the typical life cycle. Nowadays the tendency is to speed up the steps towards independence or self-government. Some newly independent states have skipped most of the painful stages. Almost all metropolitan powers have accepted the idea of change; the claim to majority rule is disputed only in a few settler colonies. But even here my impression is that compromises are inevitable.

None the less, it is hard for the newly independent states to take their place in the society of nations without harbouring the impression that difficulties have been created for them, and this impression lies at the root of the suspicion and distrust which sustain the anti-colonial campaign that we see directed almost entirely against former metropolitan countries and the West generally. The irony of this situation is that the bitterness seems to be directed against the very countries who have recognized and granted their demand for independence. It is not hatred but blinding suspicion which seems to make some newly independent countries willing to close their eyes to injustices within their own countries and elsewhere, and to avoid noticing the spread of Russian hegemony in eastern Europe and Asia and the territorial aspirations of China.

With the dissolution of colonial power, the loyalties that held together different racial and ethnic groups in the former colony prove less strong in the new state and begin to disintegrate; and this tendency encourages suspicions of neocolonialism. There is fear, amounting to panic, that outside influences will encourage dissident elements in the new society to undermine the newly won independence. This fear to a large extent accounts for the apparent preference for one-party states and the suppression of all forms of opposition. The discovery of these new countries that espionage and intelligence activities generally form part of the modern state apparatus has not helped to mitigate such fears.

It has been argued in some quarters that the democratic system which allows for a party in power and an opposition is not suited to the temperament of non-white peoples. It has even been pointed out that this is so because the word ‘opposition’ does not exist in the vocabulary of some of these communities. These views are very superficial. Colonial rule as we have described it cannot be expected to prepare any community adequately for democratic government. The new states have to grow out of a tradition of autocratic rule benevolent despotism, if you like. In fact they have inherited the trappings, the ritual and the daily routine of the former colonial administrative officials. When one visits a president in the former residence of a colonial governor one feels that little has changed.
Fortunately most of the leaders in the new territories, who waged their campaign for independence using the words of democracy and liberty, are apologetic about some of the drastic measures they have taken. Some claim that the one-party state provides an African form of representative government. I am sure, however, that they all recognize that if they are to avoid spending their limited resources on security forces they need governments in which all sections of the country are voluntarily and fully represented.

The colonial relationship has tended to breed antagonistic racial relations, and the movement towards political emancipation has generally aggravated them. We are left on the one hand with ex-metropolitan powers not fully adjusted to the loss of political power, and inevitably bearing traces of the superior racial attitudes that went with colonialism; and on the other hand with the newly independent countries often defiant and suspicious of their former masters, and harbouring some resentments left over from their previous situation. In an international community which is made up of independent countries of many races, the question is whether these feelings can be overcome on both sides. If they cannot, then international co-operation can never become as whole-hearted as the world needs.