

## Globalisation, Imperialism, and Non-Governmental Organisations: An Illustration With the Country Programme Belarus-Ukraine-Moldova of Civic Education Project\*

Yi-Lee WONG\*\*

### ABSTRACT

*Using ethnographic data on the country programme Belarus-Ukraine-Moldova (BUM) of Civic Education Project (CEP), an international non-governmental organisation, as an example, this paper seeks to challenge an assumption about the relationship between NGOs and the development of imperialism that their relationship is simple and direct. Contrary to this assumption, the evidence shows that the relationship between CEP and imperialism is neither simple nor direct in that CEP practices could be consistent with, contradictory to, or irrelevant to imperialism. I conclude that the development of imperialism does not necessarily follow a consistent logic that leads to some definite or irresistible outcomes but involves a measure of contingency or indeterminacy.*

**Keywords: Non-Governmental Organizations, Globalisation, Imperialism, Belarus-Ukraine-Moldova (BUM) of Civic Education Project (CEP)**

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\*\* Tohoku University

## Introduction

Despite its diverse meanings, it is commonly agreed that globalisation is a process involving the flows of capital, commodities, industries, information and technology, and people across borders (cf. Urry 2000). Globalisation could be considered a rather popular topic in the 1990s (e.g. Lindberg and Sverrisson 1997). One main focus of discussion is on how to understand and theorise the relationship between the so-called First World (or the developed countries) and the so-called Third World (or the developing countries). Marxist theories and concepts are of great relevance here, especially in theorising the relationship among the concepts of 'globalisation', 'imperialism' and 'colonialism'. Globalisation provides not simply an interface between the First World and the Third World but, as some argue, could be seen as a context for imperialism exhibited in the forms of economic, political, and cultural dominations of the First World over the Third World (cf. Bruff 2005; Hamm and Smandych 2005). Globalisation is not a new phenomenon. It began in the fifteen century (e.g. Robertson 1992). From then on until the second half of the twentieth century, globalisation coincided with colonisation: the growth of First-World (mainly European) empires and the inter-imperialist rivalry of these military powers for direct territorial and political control in the Third World (mainly Latin America, Africa, and Asia) (cf. Mehmet 1999). The end of colonisation partly overlapped the beginning of neo-liberal capitalism. In making use of the insights offered by Marxists in taking globalisation as a context, colonialism and neo-liberal capitalism could be seen as two forms of imperialism (cf. Lenin 1964; Owen and Sutcliffe 1972).

In the era of colonisation, what the European powers had in common was their use of military force to create a system of dependency and exploitation connecting themselves (the colonisers) and their subjects (the colonised) so as to secure conditions meeting their need for territorial expansion and political dominance. In applying a Marxist framework to understand colonisation, there are two conflicting views on the relationship between the development of colonisation and that of capitalism (cf. Szymanski 1981). First, colonisation was ultimately driven by political or economic motives and thus a result of the development of capitalism. Second, colonisation was driven by all kinds of motives and capitalism was just a side-product of the development of colonisation. It remained debatable whether colonisation was a cause or a result of the development of capitalism. But, economic motives were undoubtedly involved in a colonial pursuit and colonisation could be seen as playing a part in the development of capitalism. Colonial pursuits of nation-states in the Third World made it possible for capitalists back home to realise their desire for economic expansion (e.g. Brewer 1980).

On the side of distribution, capitalists had an insatiable need for finding markets to sell their products so as to generate greater revenues; the Third World then provided capitalists with new markets for their products and new investment opportunities: they could export their products to the Third World or even make investments there. On the side of production, capitalists had a constant need for minimising the cost; the Third World then provided capitalists with cheaper resources for production: they could import cheaper raw materials and labour from the Third World or simply move there to carry out some stages of production. The Third World somehow benefited from the economic dominations of the First World: while exploiting the cheap labour in the Third World, capitalists simultaneously promoted the development of the Third World through providing people there with job opportunities. Nevertheless, the benefits of the First World and the Third World in these exchanges are deeply unequal (cf. Evans 2000). In particular, the Third World can actually be seen as being integrated within a world system through simultaneous marginalisation: what makes the development of the First World possible is precisely the underdevelopment of the Third World (cf. Wallerstein 1974, 1980, 1988). Economic dominance of the First World continued despite the era of colonisation having come to a close; one form of its manifestation was the promotion of neo-liberal capitalism over the last century. In promoting neo-liberal capitalism, trans-national capitalists in the First World together with such international organisations as International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation could be viewed as working hand in hand to exploit jointly the Third World (e.g. Hobsbawm 1994; cf. Stiglitz 2002; Harvey 2003; Passavant and Dean 2004). And in this way neo-liberal capitalism could be seen as a new form of imperialism. At first glance, this form of imperialism seems less state-centric vis-à-vis colonisation. Nevertheless, nation-states still play a role in this movement towards neo-liberal politics: the movement would not have happened simply out of global economic forces but it has somehow been imposed by nation-states with their particular interests and ideologies (e.g. Fulcher 2000). Yet neo-liberal capitalism is still different from colonisation in two ways. The first is the primary form of domination. Colonisation is a competition among imperial nation-states primarily for military domination and territorial control, whereas neo-liberal capitalism could mean a co-operation of imperialist powers primarily for joint economic domination or systematic global domination of capitalism (cf. Hardt and Negri 2000; Pieterse 2004). The second is the nature of domination. Colonisation is a form of direct domination with responsibility: in exploiting the colonised and making them dependent on themselves, the colonisers are responsible for the colonised. In contrast, neo-liberal capitalism could be seen as a form of indirect domination without responsibility: in securing conditions for expansion and domination,

imperialists seek to achieve not direct military control, which is its last resort, but indirect economic, political, cultural, and ideological control (cf. Toye 1993; Putzel 2005).

Admittedly, a Marxist approach provides a useful theoretical framework and some insightful concepts for scholars to make sense of the ever-changing relationship between the First World and the Third World. However, many issues remain unsettled. Scholars continue to debate over many issues revolving around the relationship between the development of imperialism and that of capitalism, such as the ultimate motives behind imperialism, and the relationship between the nation-state and capitalists in the development of imperialism. Despite their disagreements, scholars seem to share the same desire of identifying the logic of imperialism holding an assumption that there exists the logic of imperialism, however defined, that co-ordinates smoothly a set of actors through a number of mechanisms leading to some definite outcomes that cannot be resisted or counteracted in any way. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are seen as one of these actors. Over the last three decades, NGOs have mushroomed in the Third World (e.g. Gudynas 1997). The emergence of NGOs could be traced back to the 1970s in Latin America: along with the promotion of liberalisation, privatisation, and deregulation, NGOs were set up there to organise grassroots people to fight poverty and foreign exploitation (cf. Edwards and Hulme 1996; Clarke 1998). Applying a Marxist framework to theorise the relationship between NGOs and the logic of imperialism, three views could be distinguished. First, NGOs work against this logic. This view is related to the successes and potentials reported for NGOs vis-à-vis the nation-state in social, economic, and democratic development in the Third World. Given their successes and potentials, NGOs are seen as a progressive force working with Third-World people to counteract the exploitation and influence of First-World capitalists and imperialists. However, some evidence indicates that instead of getting people out of poverty in the Third World, NGOs turn them even poorer (e.g. Petras 1997; cf. Pearce 1997). This leads to the second view: NGOs are doomed to fail and their failure is part of the logic of imperialism. Whether NGOs are doomed to fail is beyond the scope of this paper and this view remains open to further empirical scrutiny. But this view is very close to the third view: NGOs work for the logic of imperialism. NGOs, as with missionaries or charity institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are working side by side with First-World nation-states and capitalists: in securing the latter's expansion and domination in the Third World, NGOs are exerting ideological control in the Third World through imposing on them First-World values and attitudes (cf. Mercer 2002). In other words, NGOs play the part of wrapping up imperialism today in humanitarian clothes and the rescue of the oppressed masses

through the promotion of democracy and human rights (e.g. Mabee 2004; Prasch 2005).

In fact, NGO is an umbrella term embracing a wide range of organisations and their natures could be vastly different (cf. Hilhorst 2003). This could partly explain why three competing views on NGOs and imperialism are put forward. Despite their differences, what these views have in common is their same underlying assumption about NGOs that they play a definite role in the development of imperialism. What this assumption implies is that the relationship between NGOs and the logic of imperialism is simple and direct. The elements of contradiction, contingency, and indeterminacy which could play significant roles in the development of imperialism seem under-emphasised, if not ignored completely (cf. Mattausch 2003). It remains uncertain whether the logic exists in prescribing the development of imperialism. But, this paper seeks to challenge this assumption about the relationship between NGOs and the development of imperialism by referring to some practices of an NGO: the country programme Belarus-Ukraine-Moldova (BUM) of Civic Education Project (CEP). It seeks to illustrate the relationship between NGOs and the development of imperialism is neither simple nor direct; rather, it could be ambiguous and contradictory. This illustration not only casts doubts into the view that the development of imperialism follows a complete and consistent logic that leads to some definite outcomes, but also leads me to conclude that this logic, even if it exists, could be partial and contradictory and the development of imperialism involves a measure of contingency.

## **Background and Methods**

CEP (see <http://www.civiceducationproject.org>), mainly funded by the Open Society Institute, was an international NGO initiated by a few people in 1990 as a project to bring a handful of westerners to teach in Czechoslovakia (later the Czech Republic), then became an international network running a number of country programmes in two dozen countries within a decade, and finally ceased to exist but was merged with the Higher Education Support Program in 2004. During the fourteen years of existence, CEP had made its ultimate goal increasingly clear: that was, in defending civil society CEP strove to promote democracy in Central European and former-Soviet countries through the transformation of their systems of higher education. To this end, CEP devised two major components for each country programme: a local faculty fellowship programme (LFFP) and a visiting faculty fellowship programme (VFFP). Each country programme

was run by one director together with a number of administrative staff co-ordinating activities with local fellows (LFs) and visiting fellows (VFs).

According to assessments by CEP (Education for the Transition: Part I 1997), the systems of higher education across the region were characterised as centralised state-planned and they faced such problems as the ageing of lecturers, corruption, excessive bureaucracy, a lack of resources, limited academic autonomy, and ineffective teaching. In particular, in teaching social science subjects, most local lecturers taught with a so-called Soviet-style: they just read out the same lecture notes full of outdated and ideologically loaded material year after year but did not expect to engage students in dialogues in classes. Teaching at a local higher education institution was not an attractive job, especially to young people, because the pay was low (no more than US\$60 per month for a full-time position) with a heavy teaching load (ranging from 800 to 1000 hours a year for a full-time position). CEP assumed that the essence of the problem was a brain drain; LFFP was designed to combat this. CEP sought to recruit reform-minded young prospective committed local academics who had significant western educational experience. CEP then provided LFs, who had secured a full-time position in a local university, with support of two major kinds. The first was tangible: an annual stipend and allowances for buying books or making photocopies or using the Internet. With a CEP stipend, LFs did not need to take more than one full-time teaching position in order to make ends meet and thus had more time for teaching preparation; and with CEP allowances, they could afford to prepare notes and reading material for students. The second kind of support was intangible: information about scholarships, conferences, or workshops, and training of various kinds, usually related to teaching. VFFP was designed to play a supplementary part. CEP brought in well-established academics from the West and allocated them to teach for free in a local university for a year or two so that VFs could serve as resource persons providing professional assistance for LFs as well as other local lecturers. With professional support from CEP, LFs could introduce new courses and use new teaching techniques to make classes more interesting and stimulating and to enable students to think critically. In short, CEP expected LFs to become different local lecturers and also expected them to work closely with VFs to organise CEP events for local lecturers. The idea of CEP was to nurture LFs to become new generations of critically-minded social scientists, and then to enable them to establish their careers in local academia; they in turn nurtured their students and set an example for their local colleagues so that their students and colleagues would also become critically-minded individuals. It was hoped that one day when the number of critically-minded individuals got to the level of a critical mass, they would organise themselves to spread the ideas of civil society and democracy and

thus to bring changes to their countries from bottom-up, and this, in turn, would eventually lead to top-down changes; consequently, both bottom-up and top-down effects would transform these countries and make the realisation of democracy there possible (cf. Fisher 1998).

Material of this paper is drawn from two sources. The first is CEP documents. This includes some CEP publications and CEP internal documents such as profiles of LFs, evaluations of retreats, and country programmes' strategic plans. The most important CEP internal document that I heavily rely on is Kotkin Report (2001). It is a comprehensive internal evaluation of CEP by an independent external assessor Stephen Kotkin conducted in 2000. The second source is ethnographic data from my first-hand experience as a VF from 2002 to 2004 working for CEP-BUM. This includes my observation in some CEP events, involvement in evaluating a CEP project, involvement in the selection process of LFs in 2003 and 2004, experiences of organising and participating in CEP events, and interviews of various kinds (casual conversations, serious discussions, and taped interviews) with some CEP fellows and administrative staff. Material presented below is my own interpretation of these CEP documents and my own evaluation of CEP-BUM. I do not claim that mine is the only interpretation or that my experience is representative of other fellows. Neither do I seek to provide a comprehensive evaluation of CEP (or CEP-BUM) in relation to its strategies for educational reforms in the region. Rather, referring to some practices found in CEP-BUM, I seek to use CEP as an NGO to challenge the assumption about the relationship between NGOs and the development of imperialism.

### **CEP: Catalyst or Gravedigger of Imperialism?**

As was stated in its mission, CEP sought to promote democracy and civil society across the region through reforming the system of higher education there; its strategies were nurturing critically-minded social scientists and individuals in the region. This mission immediately gives rise to different interpretations and this thus poses a challenge to the view that the relationship between NGOs and imperialism is simple and direct. The relationship between CEP and imperialism could be considered rather ambiguous. One could well argue that CEP itself was imperialistic or was at least a catalyst of imperialism. Imposing the western ideals of democracy, civil society, and critical thinking on the region, CEP could be considered to be exerting ideological domination over locals. Alternatively, these ideals could be interpreted in such a way that they go hand in hand with free trade and neo-liberalism opposing state intervention. In this sense, CEP could be

viewed as serving as an ideological control for imperialism in that CEP was preparing individuals to become critical of a state-centralised planned system but receptive to western thinking or ideas of free market and capitalism. In spreading the ideologies that supported free trade and capitalism, CEP was no different from nurturing local collaborators who could speak the same language (of free market) and think on the same wavelength as First-World capitalists. What CEP did could therefore be interpreted as preparing the region for the First-World's future dominations. However, one could counter-argue that taking an academic approach to advocate democracy and civil society through critical thinking, CEP was actually a gravedigger of imperialism, if not completely self-undermining. In advocating critical thinking, CEP could be viewed as serving on an ideological front to guard against the invasion of imperialism in that CEP was enabling individuals to hold a critical view not only on state-centralised planned system but also on the ideas of free market and capitalism. In fostering critical thinking, CEP was actually nurturing local critics who would question basically everything: not only neo-liberalism but also CEP practices and even the idea of critical thinking itself. What CEP did could thus be viewed as preparing the region to resist the First World's future invasions. In sum, CEP's mission alone did not tell us a definite relationship between CEP and imperialism: it was equally plausible to interpret CEP as being imperialistic or self-undermining, as a catalyst or a gravedigger of imperialism. To realise its mission, CEP had two major strategies, namely, LFFP and VFFP. In other words, it was absolutely crucial for CEP to recruiting the 'right' fellows. Now let us turn to the recruitment of VFs and LFs.

### **Recruitment**

In looking for VFs, CEP aimed to bring in well-established academics from the West to stay in the region for a year or two so as to serve as resource persons for LFs and local academics. In practice CEP was rather flexible: it would also accept retired professors (who finished their academic careers) or prospective academics (who were about to begin theirs). Indeed, three-fourths of VFs were not well-established academics but fell into two categories (Kotkin Report 2001: 41): the elderly (retired professors) or the young (those having a master's degree or working towards a PhD or having recently received a PhD). This did not necessarily mean that these VFs were not serious about their academic works. But this suggested that most VFs were not ideal resource persons: the elderly lacked the enthusiasm whereas the young lacked the experience. What was problematic was that some VFs were simply professionally incapable, as indicated in the following quotation.

*'For some reasons, CEP didn't seem able to attract well-established academics. What was worse, in the past a few VFs were weirdos: alcoholics, drug addicts, and womanisers.'* (from my interviews)\*

Against CEP's wishes, CEP failed to recruit VFs who could serve as resource persons. This certainly could be explained in a commonsensical way: as with any recruitment, CEP's recruitment could fail by chance or by mistake. But this could be due to CEP's administrative concern. As expressed by some administrative staff, CEP gave priority to the characteristics of candidates rather than their academic profiles for the sake of smooth administration. Choosing VFs who were adaptive and could thus live independently in the region, CEP administrators could avoid potential troubles of handling VFs' complaints about their practical difficulties there. In addition, CEP actually realised that chances were slim that the package of VFFP – an annual stipend of US\$6700-7700 with local housing and a number of allowances – could attract academics who would uproot their established career in the West but join CEP for a year or two. Then why did CEP not make this package more attractive? Some administrative staff indicated that with its budget limit, this unattractive package was already the best that CEP could offer. Given a limited budget that did not attract well-established academics but the professionally incapable in some cases, then why did CEP not drop VFFP altogether? From my casual chatting with many VFs, I gathered that local universities actually took VFs as trophies that would gain them status in local academia. So, regardless of whether CEP could recruit the 'right' VFs, VFFP might serve two functions for CEP. First, VFFP might give CEP a better bargaining position to solicit the cooperation of local universities in order to get done what CEP wanted to in the region. Second, VFFP might serve as an attractive component for CEP as an NGO to appeal to its potential western donors for further funding. In other words, this discrepancy between its stated desire of recruiting VFs who were qualified as resource persons and its failure to do so was not purely out of chance or mistake but could be out of CEP's strategic concern.

In looking for LFs, CEP sought to recruit reform-minded and committed prospective local academics. To this end, CEP set a criterion that applicants should have significant western educational experience. In most cases, this selection criterion meant an applicant having a master's degree from the West. But, in practice CEP was rather flexible in operationalising 'significant

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\* In order to keep my informants unidentifiable, I would not indicate whether the interview was formal or not (taped or not), or state their identifiable attributes such as their post, country of origin, and gender.

educational experience' and 'the West'. 'Significant educational experience' could mean doing a non-degree exchange programme for three months, while 'the West' could mean non-Eastern countries such as Hungary. The profile of LFs (a CEP internal document) showed that about two-thirds of LFs had recently received a western master's degree in some professions but most of the rest had just joined some non-degree exchange programmes staying in Britain, the USA, or Hungary for no more than one year. While this profile of LFs did not tell us whether LFs were prospective academics, it definitely told us that most of LFs were prospective professionals. Choosing to go abroad and to expose oneself to a new culture might indicate that this individual was somehow different from an average person in terms of language skills, ambition, and openness to new ideas. However, it was unclear how this criterion could indicate in any way that this person was reform-minded and committed to local academia. Besides, given the economic hardship in the region, a LFFP fellowship with an annual stipend of US\$3000 – which was more than four times higher than a local full-time teaching position – was a very attractive alternative to many prospective LFs. In this sense, apart from committed prospective local academics, CEP might well recruit people who were only concerned about a CEP stipend and would leave local academia when a better opportunity came up. If this selection criterion might not be so effective in recruiting the 'right' LFs, why did CEP not opt for more effective ones? As was shared by some administrative staff, it was difficult or even costly to set up more complicated procedures in order to assess applicants' academic commitment whereas this current criterion was relatively easy to administer. But I suspected that using this criterion was also adopted out of CEP's strategic concern. This criterion denotes a sense of superiority of the West and CEP perhaps found it appealing to its potential western donors. In sum, CEP's recruitment of VFs and LFs made the relationship between CEP and the development of imperialism more ambiguous. But, even if CEP was ineffective in recruiting the 'right' fellows, it did not immediately lead to a conclusion that the recruited CEP fellows were unable to do what were expected of them. Nor did it tell us what VFs and LFs did would be working for or against imperialism. This brought us to what VFs and LFs did in the region.

### *Teaching*

While many VFs did not serve as resource persons, they did the teaching (as CEP required VFs to teach at least two courses a semester). But, the truth was that it was simply impossible for VFs to teach effectively largely because of language barriers (Kotkin Report 2001: 124). Most VFs were unable to teach in a local language. While nearly all VFs were teaching in English, only

a very small number of local students were able to understand English well. Some administrative staff expressed that it was a longstanding problem for CEP to gather enough English-speaking students for VFs. Even if there were enough students, VFs still needed to simplify their courses in that the courses were doomed to be very basic. In other words, VFs simply could not promote such western ideals as democracy, civil society, and critical thinking, however interpreted, to their students through teaching. This implied that VFs' teaching was actually irrelevant to imperialism. Not having enough students for their courses, some VFs were then asked to teach local students English. It could be interpreted as a kind of flexibility: CEP took advantage of what these VFs could offer. But it did not seem to make sense to bring expensive non-experts English-teachers to teach English; this somehow lent support to my view that despite its ineffectiveness, CEP kept VFFP out of a strategic concern. While the genuine intention of CEP keeping VFFP remained unclear, the act of asking VFs to teach English itself could be interpreted as CEP serving as more of a catalyst than of a gravedigger of imperialism: teaching students a language for international trade.

Whereas VFFP played a supplementary role, LFFP was crucial to realising CEP's set goal. To reiterate, CEP expected LFs to become different local lecturers: to introduce new courses, to use new teaching techniques, and to enable students to think critically. However, CEP seemed to underestimate the obstacles that LFs would encounter. There are centralised national standards set by the Ministry of Education in each country (cf. *Education for the Transition Part III 1997*). In practice, lecturers could perhaps risk ignoring the national standards and did whatever they wanted in classes. But, most LFs were the youngest faculty members, meaning that they usually had no choice but teach the subjects that they were assigned to teach. Given the strict demand that local lecturers had to comply with the centralised national standards, and that stiff resistance to anything new in local departments was the rule rather than an exception, LFs were simply not in a position to introduce officially any new courses or to introduce openly new teaching techniques.

In addition, CEP also seemed to underestimate the load of one full-time teaching position: 800-1000 hours a year. It required teaching more than 20 hours a week (if there were 17 teaching weeks a semester and two semesters an academic year). And a typical class size for LFs was more than 100 students. Then, understandably, LFs might not have enough time to do the teaching preparation for classes, let alone for making classes interactive by CEP standards (cf. *Education for the Transition Part II 1997*), as articulated in the following quotation:

*'Those who stay in (their home) country often revert to multiple teaching jobs after CEP stipend runs out, losing their ability to do Western-style active learning. And even before their stipend runs out, many LFs have too many students in classes to teach effectively with (inter)active methods and attention to individual students.'* (quoted in Kotkin Report 2001: 48)

What this quotation also revealed was that against CEP's expectations, some LFs, with CEP stipends, still took up more than one full-time teaching position. That was largely because some LFs felt insecure about economic situations in their home countries (Kotkin Report 2001: 48-50). Overwhelmed by such a heavy teaching load, LFs simply had no time to keep up with the latest literature, let alone to conduct their own research. Even if LFs used new teaching techniques by CEP standards, teaching without content or without backing it up with research was perhaps not so simulating vis-à-vis courses offered by local academics. In other words, contrary to CEP's expectation, LFs' teaching turned out to be not so different from a Soviet-style teaching that CEP had been campaigning against. The relationship between LF's teaching and imperialism could then be interpreted in two ways. First, if LFs' teaching, as with VFs' teaching, was unable to promote the western ideals, it could be considered irrelevant to imperialism. Second, if LFs' teaching was similar to a Soviet-style teaching and thus was supposed to be incompatible with capitalism or western ideals, it could be seen as ambivalent to imperialism: if LFs' teaching was taken as incompatible with capitalism, then it could be seen as working against imperialism; but if it was taken as incompatible with such western ideals as being critical about capitalism, then it could be viewed as working for imperialism.

### ***Organising CEP events***

As well as teaching, CEP encouraged LFs and VFs to work closely to organise CEP events for local lecturers so as to bring in elements from the West to local academia. These events were usually one-off four-to-five day teacher training workshops or academic events (such as seminars and conferences) organised for usually twenty-five local participants. Most often, LFs – who spoke a local language and were more familiar with local logistics – served as organisers or coordinators whereas VFs were trainers; but there were some cases where VFs organised a CEP event and LFs were trainers.

Given the small number of participants in each CEP event, even if every CEP event could successfully achieve its goal each time, one might still doubt the impact of CEP events on the region. But this was not critical: it certainly took time for CEP to have its impact felt in the region. From my experiences of organising and participating in CEP events, what was critical was the quality of CEP events and potential local resistance. To reiterate, most VFs and LFs were inexperienced teachers or novel academics in that they were not particularly knowledgeable about teaching or their disciplines. Surely, both VFs and LFs could still make contributions; local academics might benefit from their 'new' perspectives. But this did cast doubt into the quality of CEP events in which VFs and LFs were trainers. One might assume that being cut off from the outside world and lacking resources to organise academic events for themselves, local academics would find CEP events beneficial: they could be exposed to something new. It was true in some cases. But in other cases, participants, despite their agreement to join these events, were resistant to what was discussed there. This passive-aggressiveness may seem puzzling but could actually be explained in part by the context against which CEP events took place. Given the cold-war legacy, it was not difficult to see that potential tension would arise in CEP events between VFs and LFs representing CEP that symbolised the West on one hand and local academics representing the local on the other. This local resistance certainly cast doubt on the impact of CEP on local academics. In other words, regardless of whether CEP was working for imperialism, some local academics might have already taken CEP as part of imperialistic invasion to the region.

Organising a CEP event was not only expensive (around US\$3000 for one event, which was about the same as a LF's annual stipend), but also required a lot of time and effort on the part of LFs to co-ordinate and to administer them. What made it more complicated and time-consuming was LFs had to deal with departmental politics and local bureaucrats when LFs wanted to organise an event at their department. If CEP events could effectively spread ideologies that CEP wanted to promote and thus enable CEP to achieve its set goal, then it might still make sense for CEP to even overload LFs, who were already overwhelmed by teaching, with organising such events. However, given their cost and dubious quality and impact, together with potential local resistance, CEP still overloaded LFs with organising CEP events, when LFs as novel academics actually needed to make time and effort to equip themselves with their subject matters in order to become different local academics. What, then, kept CEP organising CEP events? This could be due to CEP's passion for bringing changes to the region: organising some events was better than doing nothing at all, even at the expense of achieving their goal of nurturing LFs to become different local academics.

However, this could also be due to CEP's strategic concern: in order to get further funding, CEP as an NGO had to have some activities, regardless of their effectiveness of achieving its ultimate goal, to report so as to impress its potential donors. In short, organising CEP events, out of passion or a strategic concern, contradicted its goal of running LFFP and/or led to its overall ineffectiveness. This meant that organising CEP events could turn its already ambiguous relationship with imperialism even more ambivalent.

### *LFFs and VFFs*

As an ideal set by CEP, LFs as local experts and VFs as western experts complemented each other and worked side by side to spread the ideas of democracy, civil society, and critical thinking in the region. As CEP claimed, CEP would not become successful with only LFs without VFs or vice versa (Kotkin Report 2001: 142). In linking the West to the region, CEP was an interface between VFs from the West and LFs from the local. Against this context, the relationship between VFs and LFs was usually manifested in two manners. The first was a parallel to the patronising West and the differential local: differential LFs and patronising VFs. The second was an opposite of this parallel: defensive LFs and arrogant VFs. Contrary to the CEP ideal, from the start the context of CEP already gave rise to an in-built rift between LFs and VFs.

This in-built rift, which could have been mended, was widened further by the fact that there was a huge discrepancy in packages offered to LFs and VFs. While both were CEP fellows, VFs were remunerated much more but worked much less than LFs. In addition to a number of allowances, the amount of an unattractive VFFP stipend was more than twice than that of an attractive LFFP stipend. However, an average teaching week was at most four hours for VFs but at least twenty hours for LFs. What complicated the situation was that in reality there were a diverse range of VFs and LFs that CEP recruited. To reiterate, by chance or luck, CEP might recruit some well-established western academics and committed prospective local academics; in reality, the majority of VFs were not well-established academics and most LFs were only prospective professionals. This partly explained why many LFs and VFs did not take each other seriously. This attitude was reflected in the way in which they identified themselves and the other group as 'them' and 'us', 'foreign' and 'local', 'good' and 'bad' (and its implied 'competent and incompetent'), as expressed in the following quotations.

*'We don't need losers here; why do VFs come to the region if they have a well-paid prestigious job in the West?' (from my interviews)*

*'Even if the foreigners are bad, it's good (to have them) – they show us we're not so bad.' (quoted in Kotkin Report 2001:146)*

*'Those LFs have no ideas about teaching. What do they mean by "interactive teaching"? We are university professors and we are not teaching at school.' (from my interviews)*

*'I have heard that their stipend is not attractive by western standards. But with that stipend, they could have a good local life here. And I don't know what those foreigners are doing here – they just hang around and do nothing. In contrast, we LFs work so hard – teaching a lot and organising CEP events.' (from my interviews)*

If CEP's success, as CEP claimed, depended on the co-operation between VFs and LFs, then the rift between VFs and LFs exactly worked against it. On the one hand, the rift itself could be viewed as a product of global inequality or even a manifestation of imperialism: this context predisposed CEP to offer discriminative treatments between foreigners and locals. On the other hand, the rift could be seen as weakening CEP's potential of achieving its set goal. What this implied was that the measure of indeterminacy regarding the relationship between CEP and imperialism was increased further.

### ***CEP and Fellows***

Regardless of the genuine intention behind CEP's mission, CEP's success was not simply contingent on whether CEP could make VFs and LFs fulfil what it had expected of them. Even if LFs and VFs actually did what CEP had expected of them, their outcomes and impacts would not necessarily be identical to what CEP had intended. Intention, action, outcome, and impact could somehow be viewed as rather independent of each other. Their relationships involve a substantial measure of indeterminacy. This measure of indeterminacy was widened further by the ways in which LFs and VFs took CEP.

Based on their motivation behind why LFs and VFs joined CEP and the way in which they took CEP, I devised a typology of three categories of fellows.

The first was idealists: they joined CEP out of their passionate ideals and they took CEP as a channel to achieve these ideals. Using CEP resources and/or opportunities, local idealists genuinely wanted to bring some changes to their systems of higher education, not necessarily the way CEP wanted, while their visiting counterparts somehow wanted to realise their ideals in a new country. The second was opportunists: they joined CEP out of a strategic concern and they took CEP as one of many opportunities and resources for advancement. In addition to CEP stipend, they exploited other kinds of CEP resources only for their own personal gains. Some local opportunists kept books donated by CEP in a room that no students could access while others used CEP funding to organise pointless CEP events for local lecturers. What concerned them was neither whether any students could access the books, nor whether there was any point of running the CEP events, but the fact that they had access to external resources (books and funding). This gave them power or prestige in their departments, which they as junior faculty found particularly attractive with regard to securing a better position there. Similarly, their visiting counterparts used CEP resources to organise some so-called academic events for local lecturers, established an academic-like network with people from the region, and even assigned themselves to be editors of so-called academic journals that they set up. What concerned them was not the quality of these activities but their engagements in such activities. This made them look good on their curriculum vitae. The third category was pragmatists: they joined CEP out of an economic concern and they took CEP as an employer. Given economic hardship and the lack of job opportunities in the region, local pragmatists applied for a fellowship largely because of its relatively attractive stipend. Their visiting counterparts, despite an unattractive package, still joined CEP because of their inability to find a job in their home countries. The boundaries of these three groups were not clear-cut: we would never know whether a classification of fellows was accurate unless the fellows themselves were willing to state honestly their genuine motivations. Devising this typology, I did not mean to label or evaluate fellows as such; rather, I used it for the purpose of illustration in the following paragraph.

At first glance, pragmatists and/or opportunists seemed to be better collaborators of western capitalists by comparison with idealists, because they were less likely than idealists to criticise neo-liberalism (and thus the ideas of free market and democracy). Alternatively, even if pragmatists and opportunists were critical about them, they were very unlikely to question the fundamental principles of the ideas. However, this did not lead us to the following view: what pragmatists and/or opportunists did was consistent with the development of imperialism whereas what idealists did contradicted it. This view is too simplistic to rule out the possibilities of

chance, contingency, or unintended consequences. For example, opportunists could be seen as the best collaborators of all of western capitalists because of their opportunistic nature. However, this very same opportunistic nature could also make them irrelevant to imperialism, contingent on the availability of other opportunities for their exploitation. Let me turn to the following two cases that were derived from my observation and experience of participating in some CEP events for further illustration. The first was that an opportunist used CEP funding to organise a conference on globalisation. Having a vague idea about globalisation, the opportunist did not care about the quality of the conference but just wanted to do something that would gain her prestige and power at the department. However, for some reasons, or simply by chance, this conference attracted some serious local academics to attend. Beyond the opportunist's expectation, these serious academics examined the ideas of free market and globalisation rather critically. In this case, the genuine intention of the opportunist could be viewed as irrelevant to imperialism, what she did consistent with imperialism, what actually happened in this event contradictory to imperialism, and the impact of what happened on imperialism unknown. The second case was that an idealist used CEP funding to organise a series of seminars on human rights. The idealist did a lot of preparation for the seminars, including inviting important speakers from various related fields in the hope that local participants could examine the concept of human rights from different angles. However, in order to make this event happen at her department, she had to make compromises with the department head or the faculty dean, sparing some sessions for local authority figures to give 'official' speeches on some themes irrelevant to the seminars. Against the idealist's wishes, participants did not have time for discussion on the concept of human rights, let alone examining it critically, but they vaguely got the conclusion that free market and democracy were the preconditions of securing human rights. In this case, the genuine intention of the idealist could be viewed as a challenge or resistance to imperialism, what she did irrelevant to imperialism, what actually happened in the event giving a boost to imperialism, and the impact of what happened on imperialism indeterminate. What this indicates is this: even if a logic of imperialism exists, it is not necessary internally consistent that offers us a definite complete version of scenarios of the future but it could involve a great measure of contingency and indeterminacy. In sum, whether CEP was a catalyst or a gravedigger of imperialism to some extent was contingent on impacts of outcomes, by plan or by chance, intentional or unintentional, anticipated or unexpected, resulting from endless battles among CEP, pragmatists, opportunists, and idealists. This view echoes Ruccio's (2003) notion of an imperial-machine:

*'Imperialism (...) is a multidimensional set of practices (economic, political, and cultural) with no necessary unity or inevitability about them. They may and often do work together, but with no singular purpose or organising entity. And just as they are set in motion, they can be resisted, deflected, and even stopped. (...) Imperialism (...) is partial and incomplete, a project that is both powerful and fragile, less a description of an entire stage of capitalist or world development than a project in that world, an attempt to make and remake that world.'* (2003: 86; cf. Rossi 2005)

## Conclusion

Using CEP as an example, I seek to challenge the assumption about the relationship between NGOs and the development of imperialism; in particular, I do it by highlighting the elements of contradiction, contingency, and indeterminacy that have been overlooked in that assumption. While many scholars assume that the relationship between NGOs and imperialism is simple and direct in that NGOs play a definite role, be it enabling or constraining, in the development of imperialism, I demonstrate that the relationship between CEP and imperialism is neither simple nor direct in that CEP practices could be consistent with, contradictory to, or simply irrelevant to imperialism. Whereas some scholars seem to imply that the development of imperialism follows a logic that is complete and powerful and involves a definite irresistible outcome, I doubt whether such a logic really exists and argue that this logic of imperialism, even if it exists at all, could be both complete and partial and both powerful and fragile in that the development of imperialism involves a measure of contingency or indeterminacy open to infinite possible reactions and re-reactions. In this sense, if a logic of imperialism does exist, my challenge can be seen as providing both a more optimistic and more pessimistic prognosis of the future (cf. Negri 2005). It is more optimistic in that the development of imperialism is not so deterministic but involves a measure of contingency or indeterminacy, meaning that we may still have room to manoeuvre. It is more pessimistic in that this measure of contingency or indeterminacy is already prescribed as part of the logic, implying that its development is beyond our control and thus room for manoeuvre is perhaps much more limited than what we would like to believe.

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