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## Why does imperial power still have such muscle?

**Renowned scholar Professor Partha Chatterjee will explain why the old colonial empires are not as dead as one might think.**

**UCT Vice-Chancellor's Open Lecture on Thursday, 1 August 2013**

Comparing the history of imperialism and nationalism in the former British colonies of South Africa and India, Professor Partha Chatterjee from Columbia University in the United States of America and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences in India will argue that the basis for exercising imperial power continues to exist today, despite the end of the old colonial empires. He will be speaking on "Modern Empires and Nations" at the University of Cape Town Vice-Chancellor's Open Lecture, on Thursday, 1 August 2013, at 18h00 in Lecture Theatre 3, Kramer Law Building, Middle Campus.

Chatterjee is a Professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies at Columbia University in New York, as well as an Honorary Professor of Political Science at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences in Kolkata.

"Empire and nation are familiar terms in India as well as South Africa. A common history of British colonialism also means that many specific institutions and practices of the British Empire are shared in the historical memory of the two countries," he says. While Professor Chatterjee will tell a story about an old empire, he will also pose questions that apply to the present day and age.

"Unlike the European empires in the Americas, colonial governments in Asia and Africa had to include within their structures both indigenous elites and indigenous practices of law. This had significant consequences not only for colonial societies, but for the metropolitan power as well," he says.

Professor Chatterjee is UCT's PERC (Programme for the Enhancement of Research Capacity) visitor for 2013. PERC refers to a cluster of support activities for academic staff and is part of a university-wide commitment to produce Africa-centred knowledge and Southern Theory which seeks to redress global historical knowledge inequalities.

PERC Co-ordinator Professor Robert Morrell says Professor Chatterjee was selected because of his well-known writings in subaltern studies which highlight global inequalities and which analyse the reach of empires into the present. "Much of the concern of this genre of writing is to draw attention to those who are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation, and to

give them a voice," says Professor Morrell.

**Editor's note:**

Professor Chatterjee graduated from the Presidency College in Kolkata, India, in 1967 and received his doctoral degree in Political Science from the University of Rochester, New York, in 1971. He joined the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata, in 1973 and, after serving as its director for 10 years, retired in 2009. Since 1997 he has held the position of Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University.

He is the author of several books, including *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, *The Politics of the Governed*, *Lineages of Political Society* and most recently, *The Black Hole of Empire*. He is an accomplished essayist and playwright in his mother tongue, Bengali.

***ENDS***

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