

Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and Colonial Legacies. Edited by Nicolaïdis, Berny Sèbe, and Gabrielle Maas. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2015. Pp.420. USD \$28.00 paper/ \$120.00 hardcover.

The edited collection *Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and Colonial Legacy* brings together twenty-four authors of diverse backgrounds to analyze of the role of empire—both historically and in our contemporary world. An ambitious endeavor that spans diverse eras, geographies, and ideological approaches, it manages to shift Europe from the ‘centre’ of colonial discussions without minimizing its ubiquitous role. It does this by analyzing colonial endeavors emanating from outside Europe (generally positioned as the power-house of colonialism). The imperial aspirations of Japan, China, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire add a geographical and theoretical depth to the text. In doing so, this breathes fresh air into scholarly discussions of empire and the flow on effects of colonialism. Notions of hegemony are discussed and neither ‘the west’ nor the ‘the rest’ are presented in monolithic terms. Across four subsections, the reader is taken on a journey illustrating the way that colonial legacies nest within global, national, local, and gendered dynamics. Further, several essays also provide insights into the ways that colonial efforts were usurped, locally negotiated, and actively engaged in diverse ways. One finishes the book with a nuanced understandings of what drove diverse colonial expansions, the experiences of colonialism, and the relationship this past has in our current global configuration of nation-states.

Part I teases out the way European ideas about modernity were interpreted, co-opted, or brushed aside in various former colonies. Bose’s chapter, discussing India’s democratic system of government and the colonial legacy, is exceptional. Not only does it dissect the often repeated narrative that democracy was a ‘gift’ from the British, it analyzes the tensions between a

centralized form of government (which was partially inherited by the British) and regional power dynamics that had their own complex historical roots. It is a little curious that some of the smaller but violent regional power struggles are not mentioned. Exploring the relationship between colonialism, post-colonial shifts towards democracy, and violence would add an additional layer of analysis to an already strong piece. The chapter underscores that former colonies, like other nations, interact creatively with different strands of their history—creating contemporary dynamics to address current realities.

Part II inverts the focus of the earlier section, turning the reader's gaze to the imperialists. Harding's chapter on Japan's imperialistic acts throws up interesting questions regarding, what may be flexible, lines between nation-building and empire-building. In the context of Japan, the process of promoting an image of the 'civilized us' in opposition to a 'barbaric others' was perhaps driven by a need to preserve domestic ideas of what 'Japanese' identity entailed. While it is clear that colonial endeavors stemmed from a myriad of different ideological, economic, and political forces, this section balances diversity with coherence.

While each section is strong, Part III, *From Imperial to Normative Power: the EU Project in a Post-Colonial World*, provides particularly compelling insights. It maps the way that neo-colonial aspirations gain and lose traction domestically—the way local contexts can and do color international efforts. Trade relations and contemporary global economic relations are linked to the colonial past—a link that has been made before but still merits close examination. Nicolaïdis, in particular, presents a compelling argument that hierarchy and 'degrees' of sovereignty have not disappeared but still very much define our contemporary global relationships. Adding to this argument is the idea running through several of the other chapters regarding the way that 'post-

colonial' can be used as a political tool to legitimize economic or political disparity in the contemporary era.

Part IV explores the tensions that emerge when universal values or ideals move within a post-colonial framework. Rahul Rao's piece, 'Echoes of Imperialism in LGBT Activism', analyzes the way that sexuality becomes a political means to legitimize the intervention of more powerful countries into the 'bedroom' of the less powerful. This is not necessarily a new insight—polygamous pairings (among other acts) have long attracted concerned parties attempting to emancipate women from oppression. What sets Rao's chapter apart is how it illustrates that apparently opposed political groups utilize a similar 'rescue narrative'. Rao raises complex questions regarding the tension between Western hegemony and the protection of human rights. While most scholars of colonial encounters are well aware of the imposition of civilizing ideals, as well as the complex way people resist such incursions, this piece provides a timely reminder that power imbalances persist and manifest in diverse political arenas.

For a book that covers such a diversity of themes, it feels a bit foolhardy to suggest one has been neglected. However, many essays discuss the movement of people—either as colonizers or the colonized. This is an important issue in contemporary discussions of state sovereignty and nationalism that a focused chapter could illuminate. This would help develop and link some of the key threads running throughout this book regarding the role of culture, prejudice, morality, and identity. While some of the epilogues effectively provided comment and a sense of closure regarding the respective sections, a few are a bit less concise. This gives the impression that they are thought provoking pieces that did not quite fit with the section's theme. However, perhaps this was a more deliberate strategy of 'leaving the door open' on a particular theme. With the stronger epilogues this certainly seems to be the case.

The four sections link together, giving the book a sense of momentum (much appreciated in a 400+ word volume). This a book primarily geared towards specialists studying colonialism, history, and international relations. However, most chapters could also be read independently and several would fit into a wide variety of upper-division courses. Bernard Porter's provocative yet accessibly written *Epilogue: After-Images of Empire* could stir both lively scholarly and classroom debate. This book makes a valuable contribution to the field of colonial and post-colonial studies, as well as globalization discussions. The book forces the reader to examine how 'empire' continues to incarnate, particularly through an all too common positioning of the West as the only group capable of the colonial endeavor. For a book concerned about echoes, this both cautions against ignoring the way a colonial past reverberates into the present while remaining skeptical that the power of those echoes is absolute.

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