
Mason, Mike. *Global Shift: Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1945-2007*. Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. X + 349 pp. Cloth: \$100, Paper \$29.95

The United States has military bases in 150 countries, probably more than 1,000 of them. Three quarters of the nation-states of world (c. 150) could be classified as the Third World. The United States has bombed 27 of them since World War II, but hardly any of the 150 have been untouched by some form of military action, political assassinations, rendition (since the Clinton administration) and coups that are metaphorically stamped MADE IN THE U.S.. America has supported vicious dictators (in the name of democracy) and the denial of democracy (when the latter involves victors committed to social justice). At the beginning of World War II the U.S. army was smaller than Portugal's; at the end it had burgeoned to over 8 million. Undoubtedly the superpower of the post-1945 world is the United States, a nation whose hegemony rests more on coercion than consent, on terror more than cooperation. This hegemony has been more than political. When people talk of globalisation they often mean Americanisation, summed up by the term coca-colonization. Clearly this is an important element of the

Global Shift of the book's title.

Mike Mason, recently retired from Queen's University in Kingston, is strongly influenced by the underdevelopment/dependency school that was in vogue when he was younger, and in this reworking of his Queen's undergraduate lectures he endeavours to create an "album combining ... group photos... and portraits" (ix). In other words, the survey type textbooks that try to cover every nook and cranny of the political planet (such as the American-produced "neutral" world histories that inundate the Canadian undergraduate market) are eschewed in favour of a functional or conceptual approach. He admits there are gaps (for instance the chapter on Africa does not mention Zimbabwe, modern Mali, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt and many other nations on the continent) but it is refreshing that he does not undertake a Cook's Tour of the world.

Mike Mason's political economy approach emphasises colonialism, capitalism and class struggle. The cultural aspects of the postcolonial world are minimally covered in favour of what the author might call "hard history". While the chapters are cohesive, their theoretical underpinnings are taken as a given (as is the U.S. role in creating the global shift) and the book cries out for a conclusion (there is an epilogue instead) that tries to make some sense out of all the changes he describes, often with a touch of humour (the chapter on Japan is titled "The Sony Also Rises") and an eye for a pithy phrase. "The Vatican of developmentalism," he writes "was [is] the World Bank; it blessed, consecrated and beatified; its hymnals were its volumes of statistics and reports" (p. 228).

In tracing post-World War II developments Mason skips too quickly through what happened before. The chapter on India, for instance, does not deal with the structure of dyarchy and does not mention Mahatma Gandhi. There is no overview of decolonisation (as the focus on "group photos" and individual "portraits" fragments the process). Most of the chapters deal with individual countries and regions; only three engage in "group photos" – on Asian Tigers, what he calls Afpak (Afghanistan and Pakistan), and Vietnam/Indonesia – and it is difficult sometimes to grasp the connections.

Ostensibly this is fluent narrative on the impact of imperialism in its various guises. Those who study empire are, with few exceptions (Niall Ferguson, David Cannadine) left wing; the right either accepts empire as good (as in the defence "it is about time

we stopped apologising for the British empire” when no-one seems to have been apologising anyway) or as non-existent (as witnessed by constant U.S. denials that the country has ever been imperialist). But the great proportion of scholarship on empire is anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-war, and knows that empire feigns democratic values and pays only lip-service to social justice and human rights. For the lay reader or undergraduate who wants to understand the nature of power and inequality in the world since 1945, it is wise to start with *Global Shift* coupled with T.E. Vadney’s *The World Since 1945* (Penguin, 1999). No glossy illustrations, no primary document insets, no fancy marketing, no neutral “objectivity”, just good history written by Canadians.

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