

the isolated houses, even in the towns, no lights in any windows, except, again many miles apart, one light, upstairs or down: a solitary insomniac, a worker on the night shift, a terrorist, a poet, who? But in the long spells of driving through the dark, there begins to arise in me an exaltation. I cannot see where this will end. I still have the sense, how to put this, that the land, even the sleeping country towns, know

Empire States

by THOMAS MEANEY

In the fun-house mirror of the present, the contours of the twentieth century have assumed a strange symmetry. It begins and ends with imperialism. The century opens with the West plundering the Rest, until one Asian nation, Japan, joins the action and becomes an empire itself. In the century's last decade, the pattern repeats: the forces of liberal capitalism are again as dominant as ever, only this time China is the apt pupil of Western rapacity. The way historians speak of the present in terms of "imperialism," "anti-imperialism" and "the rise of Asia" makes the burst of decolonization after World War II seem like an interlude in a perpetual age of empire. The temptation to see Western colonials still lording it over hapless subalterns continues to guide our understanding of the relations between the "North" and "South" since the end of formal imperialism in the 1960s. But this perspective passes over the major structural changes in the history of the postwar decades, when the United States reconceived its mission in the world and new nations were no longer willing to support it on the same terms. Without grasping how this new configuration of forces reshaped the world order, we will continue to misidentify ways to change it.

It does not help that the best-known attempt in the twentieth century to forge a more equitable international arrangement without the blessing of the West remains mired in nostalgia. In 1955, a group of Asian and African leaders met in the city of Bandung in West Java, with the aim of strengthening economic and cultural cooperation. Though many of the participating states were aligned with the United States or the Soviet Union, their leaders made a show of rejecting the

of me. That they are aware that I am passing, whether they follow or not: one car, torn fender, missing rental sticker, bound, they cannot yet know for where.

Racing along with Kate in her getaway car, the language is free, generous, advancing with fluidity and grace. No need to ask whose voice it is. It's Adler's. It couldn't belong to anyone else. ■

After Empires

European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge From the Global South 1957–1986.

By Giuliano Garavini.
Oxford. 291 pp. \$125.

The Poorer Nations

A Possible History of the Global South.

By Vijay Prashad.
Verso. 292 pp. Paper \$26.95.

From the Ruins of Empire

The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia.

By Pankaj Mishra.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 356 pp. \$27.

The Impossible Indian

Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence.

By Faisal Devji.
Harvard. 213 pp. \$24.95.

polarities of the Cold War and ending colonialism and racism. They declared their right to have their voices heard in the UN Security Council and to pursue collective defense.

But there was another agenda at Bandung, less publicized and less savory. Anti-colonial lions like Jawaharlal Nehru, Achmed Sukarno, Zhou Enlai and Gamal Abdel Nasser were also intent on licensing each other's expansionary initiatives within and around their rapidly modernizing states. Nehru was determined to crush the peoples of highland Southeast Asia and absorb them into India; Nasser sought to extend the influence of Egypt into Syria and Yemen; Zhou Enlai wanted all parties to accept that Tibet, conquered six years before Bandung, was Chinese; and everyone agreed that West Papua belonged to Sukarno, who later declared that Greater Indonesia would "gobble Malaysia raw." But the third world's designs for internal harmony faltered quickly. Less than a dec-

ade after Bandung, China was fighting India in the Himalayas, while Nasser had Egypt on an uneasy footing with Algeria and Ghana. In retrospect, Bandung was not the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement founded in Belgrade six years later, but rather, as the anthropologist John Kelly has argued, the point where the third world accelerated its long march into the US-designed global system predicated on the consolidated nation-state. What remains of the Non-Aligned Movement's public ideals is today in tatters. Last year, Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi embarrassed Iran by using his speech at the Non-Aligned Movement conference in Tehran to point to Syria's growing isolation. In March, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad upset his own clerics by embracing Hugo Chávez's grieving mother in public, as if it needed to be underscored that Venezuela and Iran do not make good partners.

For an alternative to globalization under Anglo-American auspices, there is a less mystical place to look than Bandung. In 1964, the United Nations General Assembly established its Conference on Trade and Development, which was determined to revise Bretton Woods through the official channels of the UN. Led by the Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch and including many members of the Non-Aligned Movement, UNCTAD sought to renegotiate debt, change development policies, reclaim sovereignty over natural resources, and reduce the barriers of entry for third world goods on the Western market. In 1973, the organization announced plans for the "New International Economic Order," taking a stand against the industrialized world's protectionism and the austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund of countries to whom it made loans. UNCTAD was meant to be, in the words of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, "a trade union of the poor"—one which understood that, to negotiate effectively with the West, it would have to bargain collectively.

The New International Economic Order had a very short day in the sun. The United States and West Germany angled to break the alliance between OPEC countries and poorer nations that wanted to create similar cartels for raw materials. The oil crises of the 1970s ended up doing that work for them. By the time the Reagan administration went to war against domestic inflation in the early 1980s, debtor nations, which also had to pay higher prices for crude oil, were choking on stratospheric borrowing costs. ("The high-

est rates of interest since the birth of Jesus Christ,” as the West German chancellor put it at the time.) Meanwhile, OPEC countries, which might have channeled some of their cash surpluses into poorer countries or built up burgeoning Islamic banks, instead funneled their dollars through New York and London, in effect handing back the keys of the global economy to the United States.

In *After Empires*, his granular new history of UNCTAD, Giuliano Garavini, a historian at the University of Padua, recovers a golden opportunity in this ill-fated attempt by the third world to recalibrate world trade. In the 1970s, European officials, emboldened by their first steps toward economic integration, started looking to the Global South as a “most favored [trading] partner” in an effort to reorient the global economy in a new direction, against Anglo-American wishes. Two Dutch socialists—Sicco Mansholt, the president of the European Commission, and Jan Tinbergen, the Nobel Prize-winning economist—led the charge to pin the political identity of the European Union on improving the lot of its southern neighbors. Their program was swept away by the oil crisis, but Garavini’s superbly researched history shows how determined Europeans were in honoring the interests of the South—to the point of considering radical plans for the nationalization of Western industries and global financial redistribution.

Nixon and Kissinger may have fretted, but few American economists viewed the New International Economic Order as a threat to the basic structure of the liberal world order. If anything, it signaled that the third world was prepared to accept the benefits of mutual trade and foreign investment and put aside dreams of world revolution. When a socialist like Nyerere called for the third world to develop its own multinational corporations and insurance firms, these economists could only smile with approval. There is an additional phenomenon that has thwarted any revision of the world order: the push for economic liberalization that began in the early 1970s, first in Chile under Pinochet, followed by Anwar el-Sadat’s and Hafez al-Assad’s programs of *Infitah* in Egypt and Syria. By the end of the decade, China under Deng Xiaoping and Pakistan under Mohammad Zia ul-Haq were experimenting with foreign investment—not exactly an incentive for Western leaders to sit down with the band

of intransigents gathered around Algeria’s Houari Boumediene and *El Jefe*. As Vijay Prashad shows in *The Poorer Nations*, which covers the same territory as Garavini in a polemical key, the real turning point came when Western-trained economists in the Global South started calling for austerity in the place of Nyerere’s “growth with equity.” From the same quarters that gave rise to the New International Economic Order came third world technocrats willing to draft their own structural adjustment programs.



Rabindranath Tagore, circa 1917

Pankaj Mishra is a writer who has made a mixed career of reporting from the shadow line of the North/South divide. Born in 1969 to a down-at-the-heel Brahmin family in the city of Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh, where his father worked as a trade unionist in Indian Railways, he came of age just before India’s headlong rush into the global economy. During the magical years of his childhood, Mishra subscribed to Soviet magazines (commonly found in India at the time), owned a framed picture of Lenin and took Brezhnev’s death personally. His intellectual epiphany, recounted repeatedly in his books, centered on an unexpected encounter with the works of Edmund Wilson in a termite-infested library in Varanasi—which might be about the most irresistible thing that an editor in Manhattan could ever want to hear. In Wilson, Mishra found not only an attractive confidence of judgment, but also a writer willing to examine critically the ideological passions of his youth. In 1993, Mishra was asked by an Indian publisher to write a

travelogue of midsize cities in the country. The result remains Mishra’s most winning book, *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana*, in which he confronts his own pretensions and dreams along with those of India’s fast-emerging middle class. It’s a world of automatic-flush toilets, cramped buses, radical students, furtive lovers, sentimental novels and ham-handed pornography. Poor Mishra can barely find anyone to discuss Thomas Mann with him. But for the most part, his sense of wonder keeps his studied rancor in check, and the uncertain scribbler who began the journey stands before us as a writer at its end.

Amid the economic and religious upheaval of India in the 1990s, Mishra began asking a question that still preoccupies him: How can a people become authentically modern and selectively take on the best of the West without becoming culturally unmoored? Mishra has come to find new areas of darkness concealed behind the glitter of Indian modernity: the wealthy Indian elites who have exiled themselves from participation in civil society and live in gated colonies; the Naxalite movement that has raged for the last forty years against government policy; the massive influx of rural people into the cities, whose sense of drift is exploited by Hindu nationalist parties; the corrupt development schemes that seem to have made slums a permanent feature of the urban landscape. For all the talk of India as the next great global power, what has passed for political imagination there since independence seems to betray an intellectual failure, especially if one takes as a starting point Gandhi’s call for India to become a spiritual example to the world.

From the Ruins of Empire is Mishra’s investigation of that failure, which he sees as not confined to India but including Asia as a whole and reaching far back in history. His book does not revisit the possibilities of any postwar revisions of the Western world system, but instead plunges into the last decades of the nineteenth century. This is the age of formal empires, when for the first time intellectuals in Asia were faced with breakneck modernization, but before any of the standard forms of resistance were established. The dramatic rupture was the Russo-Japanese War of 1905—“World War Zero”—where, for the first time, an Asian power defeated a Western one and seemed to signal a turning of the tide. As Mishra stresses, this was a triumphal global moment for non-Westerners. Indian parents named their sons after Japanese admirals; Chinese revolutionar-

ies went to organize in Tokyo; shortly after the Russian defeat, the Chinese revolutionary Sun Yat-sen found himself being cheered by Arab dockworkers at the Suez Canal who mistook him for Japanese. At this charged historical moment, the major political ideologies of the twentieth century had yet to congeal. Ideas moved through Asia like free radicals, still yet to be assembled in practice. As Mishra sees it, there were three main postures available for those pitted against the West: outright embrace of Western methods and modernization (the course followed by Japan); outright rejection (the course followed by Muhammad Ahmad, “the Mahdi,” who tried to restore the caliphate in the Sudan); or the various attempts to synthesize Asian and Western traditions that can be found across the spectrum of Asian thinkers.

It’s this third, syncretic attitude that most interests Mishra. His book is a triptych of three Asian intellectuals who each experienced the onslaught of Western modernization and saw himself as a political reformer. The first of the group is the mysterious Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, who was born in a Persian village in 1838 and died in Istanbul in 1897. Early on, al-Afghani argued that while Muslims would have to adopt Western science, this did not mean they would need to

adopt everything else Westerners packaged it with. He was one of the first Middle Eastern thinkers to recognize the potential power of Islam as an international anti-Western political force. Through his tireless networking of Muslim leaders across the Ottoman lands, he became an anathema to Whitehall officials, who linked him to uprisings across the empire. Yet at least al-Afghani obliged future historians by taking time out to debate Western intellectuals. In 1883, in what Mishra bills as the first modern debate between a Muslim thinker and a European one, al-Afghani sparred with Ernest Renan. In his response to an article by Renan that condemned Islam for being an impediment to science and progress, al-Afghani tore through Renan’s prejudices. But the riposte is not quite as triumphant as Mishra makes it out to be. Al-Afghani’s syllogisms are almost equally facile: if modern science is the product of Christian society, he argues, and Islam was founded as a religion after Christianity, then shouldn’t modern science also issue eventually from Islam?

But it’s al-Afghani’s status as an intellectual hustler that makes him intriguing. He tried to persuade Muslim leaders of the necessity of protective modernization and the compatibility of nationalism and pan-Islamism, and to interpret Sharia according to the needs of a modern Middle East. Al-Afghani appealed to the scriptural principle of *ijtihad*—which holds that analogical reasoning could be applied to the law as new circumstances arise—in an attempt to convince the clerics of his day to make Sharia speak to the present. That al-Afghani was almost certainly a theological opportunist—a Shiite-born Muslim who passed as a Sunni—only sweetens the irony that he is now a revered figure among Islamists. Mishra reports that he was an inspiration for the Iranian intellectuals who plotted the downfall of the shah in Parisian cafes in the 1960s. In 2002, the US ambassador to Afghanistan pledged a donation of \$25,000 for the restoration of al-Afghani’s tomb outside Kabul—apparently under the impression that he was some sort of wholesome Muslim liberal.

Mishra’s second shadow man is better known. The Chinese anti-colonialist Liang Qichao was born a generation after al-Afghani, but he offers Mishra a parallel life both in his aims and frustrations. Like al-Afghani, Liang was a man who paid court everywhere, working under the assumption that if he proselytized hard enough, whoever was in charge of China would listen to his ideas. At first this was the empress dowager, whom, unsurprisingly, Liang failed to convince to unravel

the Manchu empire in favor of a modern state. Mishra has better sources for Liang and draws a good picture of him moving in the constellation of other Chinese reformers like Kang Youwei. Again like al-Afghani, Liang wanted to retrofit his country’s classics to suit modern needs. He attributed some of the most un-Confucian ideas imaginable to the sage: mass education, the emancipation of women and popular elections. But Liang seems to have changed his mind about everything every few years, finally settling on enlightened despotism as the best way forward for China. It’s fascinating to learn that Liang inspired the young Mao Zedong, who in Mishra’s account comes off as an ideological taste-tester with Lenin’s and Liang’s pronouncements swirling before him.

Mishra’s third figure is the best known among Westerners: the poet and novelist Rabindranath Tagore. He is a bit of the odd man out among the three. Like al-Afghani and Liang, Tagore was happy to denounce Western materialism at every opportunity, but he also thought that following its imperial tendencies would be a catastrophe for Asia. “You have been infected by the virus of European imperialism!” he told his Japanese contact, Toyama Mitsuru. For Tagore, the nation-state was a tragedy in the making for Asian peoples. “Now after [the Great War],” he told a Japanese audience, “do you not hear everywhere the denunciation of this spirit of the Nation, this collective egoism of the people, which is universally hardening their hearts?” At first glance, Tagore seems more contemporary than a figure like Gandhi, whom he took to be insufficiently rational. But it was Gandhi who was able to mobilize Indians on a massive scale with an idea that India was something greater than a mere nation, which Tagore could never convince them of.

The ultimate aims of the mahatma’s revolution are only more startling at a distance. Gandhi took his bearings for an ideal world order from the British Empire. But in his view, Indians should not aspire to the rights of Englishmen or to becoming an independent commonwealth like Canada. Instead, Gandhi envisioned Indians guiding the entire world into a giant commonwealth, where all parts would be equal and goods and peoples would move freely. “A reformed empire,” writes Faisal Devji in his rich and provocative book, *The Impossible Indian*, “could become an ideal arena for a purely moral and indeed rational politics, since neither the facts of nationality nor those of demography would be able to determine popular opinion and thus political decision-making there.” This version of Gandhi is considerably different from

Ways of Rebellling

Who needs to be at peace in the world? It helps to be between wars, to die a few times each day to understand your father’s sky, as you take it apart piece by piece and can’t feel anything, can’t feel the tree growing under your feet, the eyes poking night only to find another night to compare it to. Whoever heard of turning pain into hummingbirds or red birds—haven’t we grown? What does it mean to be older? Maybe a house without doors can still survive a storm. Maybe I can’t find the proper way to rebel or damn it, I can’t leave. I want to, but you grow inside of me. And as I watch you, before I know it, I’m too heavy, too full of you to move. Maybe that’s what they meant when they said you shouldn’t love a country too much.

NATHALIE HANDAL

those of recent accounts that have focused on the religious sources of his thought. The innovation of Devji's book is to treat Gandhi as a revolutionary on par with the major ideologists of his time—Stalin, Roosevelt, Mao and Hitler—rather than as a moralist outside the mainstream of twentieth-century politics. In one sense, Devji shows Gandhi was a good deal more radical than these contemporaries: his doctrine of “nonviolence” not only required violence but openly invited it, because violence afforded opportunities for redemptive suffering. Here Gandhi was inspired by the cries of Boer women in British concentration camps in South Africa, who elicited such a change of heart in the British press. The great irony is that Gandhi's vision of a deterritorialized world commonwealth seems closer to something like the Muslim *ummah* today than anything his followers took up.

Tagore was more right than he knew about the allure of the nation-state. In the wake of World War I, independence movements throughout the world sent delegates to Paris in 1919 to make their claims before Woodrow Wilson and the European powers. What Erez Manela has called “The Wilsonian Moment” has come to seem like a wasted chance for the West to start the process of decolonization early. The problem, however, is that we already know how the story of decolonization ends. This makes it easy to forget that Asians and Africans took from Wilson's promise of “self-determination” what they wanted to hear. Japanese imperialists thrilled to his words as much as Algerians hoping for a closer association with the French Republic. The ideal of “self-determination” was at the service of social and political reformations already under way, which somewhat relieves the historical burden Manela and others have placed on Wilson's shoulders. But it is also undeniable that the hopes dashed at Versailles—recall Ho Chi Minh renting tails in Paris to meet with the US delegation, only to be turned away—sharpened the demands of new nations at the next attempt to reach a settlement after World War II.

From the Ruins of Empire ends on a prolonged note of despair. “No convincingly universalist response exists today to Western ideas of politics and economy,” Mishra writes, “even though these seem increasingly febrile and dangerously unsuitable in large parts of the world.” He sees everywhere an ascendant Asia capable of challenging the West for resources, territory and market share. Where Mishra's ur-generation of Asian intellectuals seemed to agree on the necessity of Western

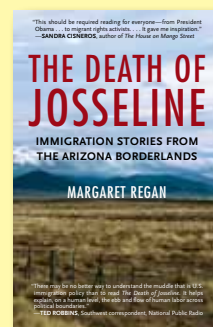
science, so their descendants seem to have settled on one-track Western-style economic development. “The Graduate Students Who Remade Asia” could be the subtitle for the yet-to-be-written history of those US- and UK-trained economists who undertook the market-centered reforms of the 1980s. For Mishra, “the revenge of the East” only means it will repeat the West's mistakes on a larger scale. This already appears to be happening: in March, the BRICS announced the creation of a development fund meant to be their answer to the World Bank and the IMF. It is unlikely to be a gentler civilizer of nations.

For all the fresh revelations of *From the Ruins of Empire*, Mishra ends up trudging over familiar ground. Like Francis Fukuyama, he sees liberal capitalism as the last ideology still capable of attracting adherents, and like his nemesis Niall Ferguson, he still clings to the constraints of East-West polarities. What separates him is less his perspective on the present than his orientation toward it—which is resolutely against any forward lurch of “development.” Here Mishra is at his most sympathetic. He is acutely aware that the stunning advances of the middle classes of India and China have not only left millions of peasants in worse conditions, but also added new psychological dimensions to their resentments. He recognizes well enough that the greatest beneficiaries of globalization are those most determined to defend it.

But more than a touch of the romantic also colors Mishra's arguments. Must he invoke the hopes of Mao's revolution to castigate today's Chinese elite? Are the pre-globalization days of India in the 1970s in any way worth returning to? And what does Mishra want us to glean from the lives of three interesting but ineffectual intellectuals who lived more than a century ago? That Asia too had its share of sages who were just as troubled by the march of modernity as the Slavophiles and German Romantics? There are times when talk of gauzy historical “alternatives” to the nation-state and liberal capitalism and modernity becomes a cover for complacency. Garavini's and Prashad's books show that many of the finishing touches of our world order are only thirty or forty years old. They hardly obeyed any ineluctable logic. The notion that intellectuals today should perhaps start cobbling together new world-embracing ideologies, rather than try to reclaim democratic political decisions from the spurious overseers of economics in our institutions, seems to be another one of Mishra's exercises in nostalgia. The choice is never between an ideal future and a bad one, but between a better future and a worse one. ■

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL

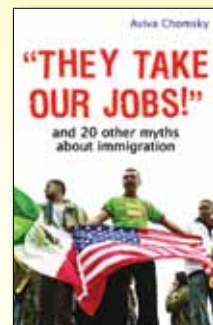
Required Reading on Immigration



“There may be no better way to understand the muddle that is U.S. immigration policy than to read *The Death of Josseline*.” —**Ted Robbins**, Southwest correspondent, National Public Radio



“Makes a powerful case for the centrality of ‘illegals’—of all nationalities—in the global struggle for economic justice.” —**Barbara Ehrenreich**, author of *Nickel and Dimed*



“An indispensable guide . . . If you are at all uncertain about how to deal with anti-immigrant arguments, you will find Chomsky's book a perfect response.” —**Howard Zinn**, author of *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*



www.beacon.org
www.beaconbroadside.com