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Introduction by Cindy Ewing, University of Toronto

In our current ‘age of anger,’ in which some decry the ‘end of the West’ and others lament devastation to the liberal international order, scholars have called for a reckoning with its structural foundations. Adom Getachew’s timely new book reminds us that the creation of the liberal international order was not only contested at its origins but also needs to be understood within a richer story of worldmaking and imagined possibility for humanity. This concept of worldmaking anchors her study of anticolonial nationalism in the modern era, and offers entry into the complex ways that critics of empire transformed self-determination into a lever for global political action. She argues that anticolonial nationalists were not only nation-builders fighting for the emancipation of national peoples, but also worldmakers engaging, critiquing, and redefining modes of interaction from within international society. For Getachew, the emergence of transnational Third World solidarities in the twentieth century was embodied foremost by the internationalism and intellectual activity of the Black Atlantic. She theorizes self-determination around a set of Anglophone Black Atlantic intellectuals, presenting a rich cast of key political figures such as Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Trinidadian writer George Padmore among many others.

Getachew’s account is at once theoretical and historical, itself an incisive exemplar of interdisciplinary scholarship that will interest readers equally in history and political science. The contributors to this roundtable all wholly agree that Getachew’s study is commendable on several levels, not only for its “analytical clarity and incisive distillation” in Priya Lal’s wording, but also for revealing the alternative narratives at work in familiar stories about remaking the world after empire, the creation of international institutions, and even the Wilsonian moment in the early twentieth century. Getachew accomplishes this by focusing her account around race and empire, and tracing its shifting relationship through different political and economic projects throughout the twentieth century. As a story of rise and fall, Getachew’s book delves into the persistence of hierarchy that drove unequal integration into the decolonization process. While the expansion of the nation-state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may have involved a far more narrow and parochial idea of self-government, it was one that anticolonial nationalists sought to expand towards global redistribution through their engagement with the international realm. Emma Stone Mackinnon, in her positive yet critical reading, raises questions about what this reading of decolonization tells us about the state-individual relationship along the long arc that Getachew traces. A deeper investigation into how the individual was conceived by anticolonial worldmakers, Mackinnon suggests, might better clarify how they traveled a path towards the limited victories of the 1970s.

By rethinking the naturalization of the nation-state, Getachew draws overtly on Hannah Arendt and Karl Marx to present a sophisticated interpretation of Third World solidarity, which is read by Michael Geyer as an arc of heroism given to tragedy. He expresses well-founded concerns about other historical instantiations of self-determination than those which are discussed in the book, which belie “the seductive potential of self-determination posturing as prelude to violence.” Nonetheless, Getachew provides at least one way to begin historicizing postcolonial sovereignty, specifically from within the Black Atlantic, threaded as it was by slavery across oceans. This racialized entry into the international system generated powerful critiques and new strategies of anti-imperial struggle. Decolonization was therefore not simply the final stage of Westphalian sovereignty’s universalization, but was also generative in its renewal of internationalism and black radicalism, not least in forums like the United Nations.

As the sustained imperialism of the new world body system energized anticolonial nationalists, they became increasingly committed to transforming international institutions into more egalitarian and democratic vehicles for global emancipation. Their efforts culminated in the declaration of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in 1974, as part of a familiar narrative that includes other worldmaking projects such as the 1955 Bandung Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, and various Pan-African Congresses of the previous decades. Though the NIEO was one of the most radical re-imaginings of the twentieth century, and Getachew designates it as one of the most important projects of anticolonial worldmaking, its promotion of economic redistribution still confined itself to the dominant structures of the liberal political economy, and thus, Getachew professes, was not radical enough. This stunning interpretation of the NIEO calls on scholars to move beyond a fixation with genealogies of the national form from how sovereignty changed within the international realm to how the expanded capacity of sovereignty to serve global justice changed the international itself.
Getachew thus makes a compelling case that Third World solidarity must be thought in terms of class politics and that the fall of self-determination was not simply demonstrated by the failure of the NIEO, but was evident in its very moment of becoming, in which it “departed from the black Marxist roots of anticolonial worldmaking” (145). Bonny Ibhawoh highlights that Getachew’s account importantly extends beyond the Black Atlantic and in effect, reinterprets the twentieth century world as a whole. This is where the book makes its sharpest critiques in Getachew’s key intervention on the welfare world, one that historians of human rights and political theorists of race and empire will have to grapple with for years to come. In characteristically eloquent prose, Getachew responds to all four review essays at the end of this roundtable.

Participants:

Adom Getachew is Neubauer Family Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Political Theory*, *Constellations*, and the *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Political Theory*.

Cindy Ewing is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Toronto. She is currently working on a book on human rights and postcolonial internationalism in the twentieth century.

Michael Geyer is Samuel N. Harper Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Chicago. His interest in a global history of the twentieth century is long standing and has led to a series of essays that hopefully will culminate in a study on Power in a Global Age.

Bonny Ibhawoh is a Professor of History and Global Human Rights at McMaster University, Canada. He has taught in Universities in Africa, Europe, the United States and Canada. He has authored several books including *Imperialism and Human Rights* (SUNY Press, 2017); *Imperial Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2014); and *Human Rights in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Priya Lal is an Associate Professor of History at Boston College. She is currently writing a book about the training, labor, and circulation of educational and medical professionals in and beyond southeastern Africa since independence. Her 2015 book, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press), tells the story of Tanzania’s socialist experiment, the *ujamaa* villagization initiative of the 1960s and 70s.

Emma Stone Mackinnon works on political theory and the history of human rights. She is currently a Junior Research Fellow at Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge; as of January 2020, she will join the History Faculty at Cambridge as a University Lecturer in the history of political thought. Her work has appeared in *Political Theory* and *Humanity*, and is forthcoming in several edited volumes.
Some fifty years have passed since the global wave of mid-twentieth-century secessions from empire produced the world we live in. Collectively, they did not achieve what they set out to do, which was to establish “the self-determination of the peoples” of the world and endow them with the ability “[b]y virtue of that right [to] freely determine their political status and freely pursue ... economic social and cultural development,” to quote Art 1 of the two 1966 human rights covenants. Nonetheless, they have come to shape the present.

Adom Getachew’s elegant and incisive study is a huge advance in setting the record straight about the mid-century secessions. In reflecting on this record, she rephrases and rethinksthe political theory of self-determination and sovereignty. There is much to admire about this book, including its superb story-telling and the way it addresses its main theme, “the rise and fall of self-determination.” It is a must-read across the social sciences and history. This is the story of the hopeful rise and devastating fall of the aspirations of a generation of anglophone African and Caribbean writers, activists and statesmen. Most prominent among them are George Padmore (Trinidadian activist and theoretician), Eric Williams (Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, 1962-1981), Michael Manley (Jamaican politician and Prime Minister, 1972-1980 and 1989-1992), Kwame Nkrumah (revolutionary, Lenin Prize winner, Ghanaian Prime Minister and exile in Guinea), Julius Nyerere (anticolonial activist, political theorist, Prime Minister and President of Tanganyika and Tanzania, respectively, between 1961 and 1985), Nnamdi Azikiwe (nationalist politician, Governor General and subsequently first President of Nigeria, 1963-1966), together with W.E.B. Du Bois (sociologist, civil rights activist and public intellectual), the most prominent U.S.-American social theorist and activist. They made history as activists and statesmen and as writers and thinkers, not on their own, of course, and against the constraints of their own thought and of a rapidly mutating imperialism, which they were unable to dislodge.

I read Getachew’s study, at least at first, as an unabashedly heroic and, therefore, also tragic history. It is, to be sure, a critical and deeply reflected study, with Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, John Rawls, and a galaxy of social science scholars as analytic sparring partners. But it is the “rise and fall” that seized my imagination, because it made clear that the drama of self-determination is one of the keys to unlocking crucial features of our time. It also made clear, in its careful reading and expert rephrasing of the project of self-determination, that the other key to our time is the dramatically metamorphosing—not disappearing!—nature of empire or (as I would rather like to see it) imperialism.

Getachew focuses on the mass secession from European empires as the determining ‘event’ of mid-twentieth-century history, which she sets against the background of preceding secessions, especially of the Americas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and, once again, in the 1920s. While no longer as exceptional as it would have been only a short while ago, the focus on the thought, and to some extent the action(s), of a group of activists, thinkers and politicians, in this case, (anglophone) African and Caribbean, fits nicely into the emerging field of global intellectual history. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (but not Stalin, as the other Bolshevik theorist of self-determination and class struggle) makes only an ephemeral

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appearance, thus underrating the power of international communism. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and the South African military leader, statesman and writer Jan Smuts play a more important role — not as lead actors and thinkers, as they are commonly portrayed, but as adversaries (!) of self-determination.\(^5\) The merely comparative background appearance of francophone writers and critics and the near-absence of their North African and Middle Eastern counterparts do not seem to make sense. Much, however, as the circle ought to be widened, Getachew makes the case that in fighting for secession from empire and in arguing for secession in terms of the right of peoples to self-determination, the African and Caribbean writers, activists and statesmen under consideration wrote themselves quite literally into history and this history is less well known, even in academia, than comparative francophone or Near Eastern histories. Not only do these figures “own” self-determination intellectually, they set in motion a revolution in human rights, spearheaded precisely by the push for self-determination. The fact that this rights revolution failed, and that self-determination is often denied its incontrovertible and preemptory (*ius cogens*) status as a human right\(^6\) should be seen in the context of the long history of human rights, a story of obfuscations, denials, and violent erasures and only brief moments of always embattled success.

At first glance, Getachew may appear overly eager to distance the project of self-determination from parochial and illiberal nationalism, and, for my German sensibilities, she underplays the seductive potential of self-determination posturing as a prelude to violence.\(^7\) But she argues convincingly, against the opinion of the best longitudinal studies on the subject, that the mid-twentieth-century Caribbean and African project of self-determination differed from previous thought on self-determination in seeing nationalizing revolutions as part and parcel of an internationalizing revolution.\(^8\) It was not ‘peoples’ separating themselves from empire, but ‘a people’ constituting themselves—or, more skeptically: being constituted—in a revolution of the international system. Short of transforming the international realm, sovereignty would remain distorted, encumbered with political, economic, social and legal constraints. One cannot happen without the other, which is why secession as mere nation-building amounts to failure. Revolutionizing the imperialist order was the prerequisite for a people to choose freely their economic, social, and cultural development. African and Caribbean nationalism was by necessity international.

In Getachew’s analysis, nation-making and world-making were inseparable. Secession from empire, independence, and the establishment of sovereign nations could only succeed, if ‘the world’—the global condition of racial, economic and cultural inequality—was radically remade. Nation-making was conditioned by the success or failure of a revolution in and of international affairs. Getachew shows convincingly that African and Caribbean thought on ‘self-determination’ captures the double-bind of self-determination—to secede successfully meant to transform (possibly, to revolutionize) the international order. It thus gives new meaning and, indeed, new life and luster to this much bemoaned and utterly defanged term. She also throws out—in sympathy with recent work by Jennifer Pitts\(^9\)—the idea that the proliferation of nations, created in the process of secession, was a mere expansion of the European society of nations or, even more dubiously, of the Westphalian

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System. These are canards that finally need to be abandoned in order to get a fuller understanding of an international order that accepts nations as legal equal but is rendered apart by invisible borders of economy and race that split the world into highly unequal fragments.

Two questions linger. The first empirical one is how verifiable and widespread was the logic of anti-imperialist self-determination? Who thought and acted this way beyond the in-group of indubitably influential, anglophone activists and statesmen? Who understood them quite the way Getachew interprets them? There is ample room for further research in the anglophone sphere and beyond. I don’t expect this kind of research to change her portrayal of this group of African and Caribbean nationalists as internationalist revolutionaries or challenge its centrality, but a widening of the circle would help us understand the fragility of the mid-twentieth-century anti-imperial secession and the fractures in the anti-imperialist struggle for a more egalitarian, anti-imperialist international order.

My main puzzlement, however, concerns the second, related question. Since I am a German historian of an older generation, it originated from recollecting Leonard Krieger’s *The German Idea of Freedom,* a work no longer read in German history. In a nutshell, Krieger argues that the German understanding of freedom was tied up with the German sense of dependence and subjection to a hostile international order of imperial powers that was catastrophically played out in the Thirty Years War. As a result, the German sense of freedom was externally directed rather than growing from within according to Krieger. State sovereignty displaced cosmopolitan popular sovereignty as its defining feature. Hence, the so-called ‘primacy of foreign relations;’ hence, a German illiberalism that privileged a protective and interventionist state over ‘the people.’ What matters here is not the analogy with the German case; these days we draw ideas from anywhere and everywhere. We even use Hegel to provincialize Europe. The puzzle in Getachew’s narrative and in her theory is where she might possibly place—that is, on the ground—the people and the peoples she analyzes. There is a lot about nationalist internationalists, but very little about advocates of national liberation in heir respective societies and how they hope to shape them into nations. I confess a certain fondness for the Swiss, which is why I miss any reference to histories of the people’s self-defense or to bottom-up, popular self-assertion, upheaval and resistance, be it social, cultural, economic or religious. This groundswell, be it in response to grievances or aspirations, is how human rights revolutions are made. This kind of experience and memory was no doubt powerfully present in both the Caribbean and in Africa, and yet it is not as central to the thought of Getachew’s nationalist internationalists as I would have expected. I wondered if there is more than a methodological disconnect.

Impressed as I was by the analytics of imperial and imperialist domination and its effect on the international politics of self-determination, as Getachew deployed them, the project of self-determination she describes appears too much like a ‘head-birth,’ the spirit not of the state (as would be the case in nineteenth-century German thought), but of international revolution descending to make national histories. The internationalism of this prominent group Caribbean and African nationalists is a staunch reminder that cosmopolitanism is not the preserve of European progressives and their second

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modernity. Cosmopolitanism’s new intellectual and political home has moved beyond Europe. Yet, nation-making as (revolutionary) world-making, while logically consistent and utterly compelling as a ‘project,’ appears to be a huge wager. It is, if I see this right, the creation of nations from the outside in, with nationalist internationalists standing at the thin membrane between the world and the many locales that made up the newly independent territorial states. This is not an enviable position to be in and it is not the only possible space to be in for secessionist leaders of new nations. But in the peculiar constellation of the sixties and seventies these interstitial positions proved to be remarkably powerful. What this power to compel the world consisted in would be worth further exploration.

The extent of this wager becomes evident in Getachew’s discussion of the efforts in the Caribbean and in Africa to fortify independence by federating new nations (chapter 4) and in the concerted political push to institute a New International Economic Order (NIEO, chapter 5). She contrasts these anglophone federation projects – the West Indian Federation and the Union of African States—with the francophone project of association with France (and indirectly with the European Community), the latter betting on overcoming dependencies from within, as it were, by recalibrating postcolonial hierarchies in a system of privileges and indemnities such as the (relative) freedom of movement, unfettered access to markets, or security arrangements. The Caribbean project was the more modest federation project, aiming to shelter the participating island nations from economic and social depredation. It foundered, because any such federation always rearranges social relations in all participating members (unless, of course, these effects are displaced by constitutional compromise, as was the case in the United States with dire consequences). Leveraging and un-leveraging the sovereignty of states is not for the faint-hearted, as Great Britain is currently discovering.

The African project in its most ambitious version articulated by Kwame Nkrumah aimed at federating the entire continent and, if successful, would indeed have “ensur[e]d Africa’s place in world affairs” (132). The rationale for such federations, though not necessarily of an all-continental union, is evident. Neither in Europe nor anywhere else does secession assure more than formal, legal sovereignty, though that is not a small thing to have. Getachew’s study speaks convincingly to the precariousness of postcolonial sovereignty within an imperialist frame for postcolonial existence. The formal equality of states was broken up by the informal inequality of the imperialist global condition. Getachew makes a convincing case for what she calls the encumbered sovereignty of postcolonial nations.

Very few secessionist nations can generate their security, wealth, welfare and identity from within. For a long time, the United States of America were exceptional in this respect. The Soviet Union was fully sovereign only by default. Size and scale matter, and a well-appointed polity matters even more in fending off depredations. (Again, the Swiss come to my mind,  


\footnote{16 Frederick Cooper, \textit{Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference : Historical Perspectives}, Lawrence Stone Lectures. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).}


dysfunctional as they sometimes appear. Most nations need each other in order to be sovereign, but this is where even the most well-laid plans for pooling sovereignty—and not all of them were—broke down.

Getachew finds it “unsettling” (117) that the anglophone anti-imperialists chose to take 1789 as a model and used the Federalist Papers to explore the pitfalls and potentials of federation. She compellingly sets out the limits and potential of “anticolonial appropriations.” At this point I would have expected a keener look at Latin America, but throughout the book the critical distance and, indeed, hands-off approach to Latin American is noticeable—and not just in terms of the contemporaneous dependency theory. In this case, I would have thought that the consequences of *uti possidetis* (the principle that territory and other property remain unchanged after secession or at the end of conflict) would have figured more prominently, because this is the entirely unrevolutionary principle that underwrote the anticolonial secessions. I was also struck by the civility and peacefulness of the Caribbean and African efforts at federation. Of course, I had the violence of the German, Italian and Serbian cases, not to mention the Soviet one in mind. Perhaps the violence of the old world can be taken for granted, but if so, the U.S. Civil War as the consummation of the U.S. federation project and Latin American violence would have deserved mention. The absence of recognizable ‘sub-imperial’ ambitions in her story is surprising, moreover, since anti-imperialist wars of national liberation were readily endorsed and fought with terrific ferocity in Africa and in Asia. This points on the one hand to a remarkable solidarity among the emerging nations, despite intense competition over prestige and influence, and on the other to a perhaps misplaced (as Getachew argues), but still impressive belief in the power of constitutional problem solving. The choice of 1789 may well be unsettling, but the state-centric, twentieth-century alternatives – Soviet Union? China?—might have been even more unsettling. They point to the violence of state-making, which the first generation of anti-imperial nationalists entirely seem to have shunned in their federation projects. This is somewhat surprising, because both the Soviet and the Chinese variants of expansive integration were very much in play and part of the debate.21

The all-out political mobilization for a New International Economic Order was a response to the disappointments with the initial effort to break out of “neocolonialism as the last stage of imperialism,” as Nkrumah put it programmatically in 1966. It came in a transitional moment, when neo-imperial world ordering was weakened (the Vietnam war, the collapse of Bretton Woods) and when a new generation of political leaders (Julius Nyerere and Michael Manley among others) and a new generation of political economists re-envisioned the struggle for political and economic equality. Despite a new literature on the NIEO, it remains difficult to narrate, let alone explain the initial success and, in the end, the abject failure of the demand for a new global political economy. Why did it fail, when it seemed to succeed? Was it a political bubble on the international scene, the last gasp of a politics of nationalist internationalism that appeared to be so successful in the revolutionary 1960s? Or was postcolonial nationalist-internationalism perhaps too successful, threatening or dislodging postcolonial hierarchies and setting in motion the neo-liberal counterrevolution that came to define world order in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries?


23 For a useful overview of debates on the NIEO, see the issue of *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development* 6:1 (Spring 2015).
In trying to understand what Getachew adds to the debate on the NIEO, I would want to put aside her calling the world of the NIEO a "welfare world," (142) a citation that comes from the same neo-liberal corner (Ernst-Ulrich Petersmann) that in the American context invented 'welfare queens.' Petersmann was a severe critic of the rights approach of Getachew’s national internationalists, but an eager advocate of a human rights defense of economic freedoms, property and intellectual rights and the uninhibited movement of capital, goods and services.24 By the same token, Getachew’s introduction of the term ‘welfarism,’ even if only to reject it in the end, also does not sit right, especially if Amartya Sen is not mentioned.25 It is also awkward to introduce Gunnar Myrdal, eminent European social engineer and model Scandinavian social democrat that he was,26 who had no apparent influence on the main African and Caribbean proponents of the NIEO. She mentions him, it seems, because his programmatic study, Beyond the Welfare State, provides some of the analytics – more cautiously: one kind of analytics -- for making sense of the NIEO as world ordering project.27

In light of Myrdal’s analysis, the first and most striking and surprising thing about the NIEO project (in Getachew’s interpretation) is its socialist ‘revisionism,’ if we use the term by analogy to the debates in the Second International. The very pursuit of the NIEO meant that “exit” as postcolonial strategy was rejected, the latter choice being most memorably articulated by Samir Amin.28 If the NIEO was to set off a revolution in international affairs, it would be a revolution from within —that is, “revolution” as incorporation into the world economy on equitable terms and, more radically, as a structural adjustment of the first world (!) that is “orderly and planned” (160). The revisionist Marxist theorist and politician Eduard Bernstein could not have put it any better.29

Assuming that it was revisionism, the problem still was how to use your “voice,” if indeed you had one and were heard.30 I was struck, following Getachew’s exposition, by how firmly the proponents of the NIEO believed that the revolution in international affairs could be legislated—one nation, one vote, with the United Nations (UN) General Assembly acting as a de facto world parliament. I was also struck and indeed moved, because we live in different times, by how powerful the sense of solidarity was among postcolonial nations and, here Myrdal comes in, how deep the support they gained in the ‘first world. (I would have liked to hear more about the ‘second world.’) In other words, this project was not still-born, as so many

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29 Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932) was a German Marxist theorist and politician, who came to argue that socialism could be achieved through legislative reform in democratic societies.

transnational projects were at the time and surely are in the present. But in the end, the project was killed and the UN as ‘voice’ in world economic affairs was muted. The project of legislating a new international order failed.

Getachew’s insistence on the internationalism of the project yields new insights especially when read with and against Quinn Slobodian’s study of neo-liberalism.31 She has Michael Manley and Julius Nyerere as her main witnesses. I found Manley’s argument more surprising, though perhaps I was simply too unsure about reading Nyerere’s African Socialism as a kind of trade unionism, if I understood it right.32 Manley is intriguing, because he so explicitly insisted that for small, raw-material producing and agricultural countries the only way up was the way in; that is, advancing international trade rather than delinking. He combined this belief in trade with the insistence that unfair trade practices – the U.S. and EU sheltering their agriculture behind high tariff walls, among other things -- would have to be removed and also, very sensibly in terms of macroeconomic theory, that raw material and agricultural prices would have to be buffered against cyclical downturns. The list of demands was considerably longer than that, but the bottom line was that the future of the world economy would have to be built around fair and equitable trade, the unfairness resulting—well let me put this somewhat provocatively—from market distortions with which advanced economies protected their dominant status. If “the world as one unit” were developed in a process of “regulated liberalization,” as Getachew’s (165) rendition of the main thrust of the NIEO holds, everybody would be better off.

This NIEO world would still be a capitalist world, in fact there would be more capitalism than ever before. It would be managed capitalism on a global scale, but a good part of the management would consist in removing unfair trade practices in the first world (with the second world oddly disappearing). It is difficult to reconcile this notion of the NIEO with Johanna Bockman’s argument about the NIEO as “socialist globalization,” unless we interpret “socialism” as social democracy.33 As macroeconomic theory, it holds out the possibility of economic growth not simply on a global scale, but across global space.34 It has no truck with “combined and uneven development,” Trotsky’s contribution to the subject, which lately has made a splash in International Relations.35 Marxists at the time (and thereafter) flat-out refused to believe that something like this could exist. But if it was a mere phantom that necessarily had to fall, the NIEO was a ghost that launched a “counterrevolution.” What failed, Getachew argues, is not simply the NIEO, but the “aspiration for an egalitarian global economy” (175).

For a moment, though, it looked like there might be a chance for a more equitable world order—a world of self-determining nations whose sovereignty—security, wealth and welfare—was backed up by all. This was a utopian state of affairs, but it is the utopia for a global condition in which even the most powerful nations will discover that they cannot reproduce security, wealth, and welfare from within—or if they wish to do so, they will have to conquer the world.


Non-Domination, Epistemic Hierarchies, and the Post-Imperial World Order

In Worldmaking after Empire, Adom Getachew makes two compelling arguments. The first is a theoretical treatise that invites the reader to rethink classic critiques of nationalism as parochial, counter-cosmopolitan, and anti-universal. Rather than foreclosing internationalism, Getachew argues that twentieth century anticolonial nationalism fostered a reimagining of state sovereignty and the international world order. Anticolonial nationalism inspired the reconstitution of a postwar international order grounded on a vision of non-domination, equality, and global reintegration. Anticolonial nationalism was therefore not antithetical to cosmopolitan internationalism.

The second argument Getachew makes is a more specific one that addresses the role of ex-colonized "subalterns" in forging new nations while remaking the world around them. As a legal historian interested in counter-hegemonic narratives of global human rights, I find this more empirical argument quite fascinating. The proposition is that African and Caribbean anticolonial nationalists were not just myopic nation-builders; they were also visionary international actors and impactful worldmakers. Their independence struggles, and state-building and regional integration initiatives were as much projects in global reordering as they were endeavours in national liberation. What makes this claim so compelling is the way Getachew supports it with an intricately woven narrative that seamlessly connects African and Caribbean anticolonial nationalist reimaginations of the post-imperial world.

Black anglophone anticolonial critics and nationalists such as the American civil rights activist W.E.B. DuBois, and anticolonial nationalists such as Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Michael Manley of Jamaica, George Padmore and Eric Williams of Trinidad envisioned nationhood within a reordered non-hierarchical world. The restructured world they imagined was a domination-free and egalitarian one that stood in contrast to the unequal, racially hierarchal imperial world order that sustained colonial domination and neo-colonial dependence. In framing anticolonialism as world-making, Getachew positions African and Caribbean nationalists as global statesmen who shaped the post-imperial world rather than as insular state-builders in decolonization processes. Through their discourse of self-determination, the formation of regional federations and demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), these anticolonial nationalists challenged global structures of unequal integration and sought to undo the hierarchies that maintain Eurocentric power and domination. They hoped that such reordering would create the legal, political, and economic foundations of a more equitable and egalitarian world.

The claim that African and Caribbean anticolonial critics and nationalist statesmen remade the world as they forged new post-colonial nations, should not be contentious. Given the global ramifications of anticolonialism and decolonization, the pivotal role of "Third World" nationalists should be well-established in conventional accounts of post-imperial internationalism. The fact that it is not is what makes the arguments in Worldmaking after Empire so obvious, yet so paradoxically essential.

Here, epistemological hierarchies are evident. We take it for granted that nineteenth-century European nationalists who imagined and crafted modern states out of old empires were engaged, not only in parochial state-building but in the more monumental task of remaking the post-Westphalian world order. Conventional histories and political theories represent European statesmen who engineered the unification of the German and Italian states as nationalists and internationalists who at once forged new nations through ambitious amalgamations and restructured the global political economy. Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi not only made the Italian republic, they also remade Europe and the world.36 Otto von

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Bismarck’s consolidation of the German-speaking states of central Europe into a German Confederation had global ramifications far beyond Germany and Europe. Conventional accounts of global state formation document how the “German Question” changed the world. This mid-nineteenth century question was not just about conflicting visions of unified Germany and how to incorporate Germanic peoples in Austrian and Prussian territories; it was also about changing the political map of Europe, restructuring the global political economy through New World migrations, and remaking the imperial world order. Von Bismarck’s role in convening the 1884 Berlin Conference amidst the European colonial scramble for Africa underscored the worldmaking ramifications of the German unification project.

Writing in the 1960s, the American political scientist Rupert Emerson framed the transition from empires to nations by Asian and African peoples as an expansion of the European nation-state paradigm. He argued that through global conquests, the dominant Western powers worked to “reshape the world in their own image and thus roused against themselves the forces of nationalism which are both the bitterest enemies of imperialism and, perversely its finest fruits” (16). Emerson was one of several conventional scholars who argued that anticolonial de-legitimation of alien rule was itself a product of the gradual Westernization of the world. These scholars assumed that European imperialism fueled principles like self-determination and democracy which indigenous anticolonial nationalists simply appropriated to critique colonial rule and demand independence. If we can agree that the European statesmen who envisioned the German and Italian states remade the world, why not the African and Caribbean statesmen who forged post-colonial states and reimagined a post-imperial world order? If the German unification wars of the nineteenth century that ushered modern Germany transformed the world, why not the twentieth century anticolonial liberation wars that ushered several independent African states? If German unification remade global realpolitik, why not the post-colonial regional federation projects in the West Indies?

These are some of the implicit questions that Worldmaking after Empire addresses. Getachew’s book highlights the black anticolonial nationalist challenge to the sovereign inequality and racial hierarchies of the post-imperial world. But the book does more than this. It also highlights epistemic hierarchies and inequalities in knowledge production about the making the twentieth century world. Conventional accounts of global history, international politics, and laws tend to minimize the roles of “Third World” leaders and intellectuals in shaping the post-imperial world. Dominant grand narratives often take as their normative reference points events that occurred within the boundaries of the European and neo-European world. Political developments in the Global South, including transformative anticolonial movements and decolonization processes with worldwide ramifications, are deemed to have had little or no autonomous impact on the chronology, substance and precedents in global politics, human rights or international law. This approach sidelines histories of imperial violence, oppression and domination. The result is that the contributions of non-Western intellectuals and statesmen have been relegated to footnotes in the grand narratives of the making of the post-imperial world.

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019); Roy Palmer Domenico, Remaking Italy in the Twentieth Century (Lanham; Littlefield, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002).

57 Several historians make the point that Bismarck’s role in the Prussian War remade Europe and shaped American diplomacy in the nineteenth century and beyond. See for example, Williamson Murray, War, Strategy, and Military Effectiveness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 185ff.


The role of Caribbean and African anticolonial nationalists in shaping the post-imperial world is minimized when decolonization is celebrated not in terms of indigenous initiatives but as evidence of the gradual Westernization of the world. The place of the black Atlantic intelligentsia in modern state-building is diminished by narratives that frame anticolonial nationalism as a bad imitation or unfaithful copy of the original and normative form of the democratic state as it emerged in Europe. The place of African anticolonial nationalists in the pantheon of modern nation-builders is minimized by arguments that their struggle for self-determination was not a human rights movement because it does not neatly fit within presumably paradigmatic notions of possessive individual rights that emerged from the mid-twentieth century crisis of nationalism in Europe. Possessive individualism and restraint on state power, not the collective rights of peoples or the sovereign equality of nations, remain the normative essence of human rights. Thus, the metropole, not the periphery, remains the epistemic reference point.

Worldmaking after Empire re-inscribes black anticolonial nationalists into a global narrative from which they have been largely excluded. By locating colonial rule within international structures of unequal integration and racial hierarchy, the book draws attention to their defining roles in fundamentally remaking the post-imperial world order. Because the persistence of international hierarchy demanded new efforts at making a world after empire, their articulation of the right to self-determination could not simply replicate existing hierarchical Westphalian regimes of sovereignty. For these black nationalists, self-determination required a radical break from the Eurocentric model of international society and a shift toward a new world order anchored on non-dominance and sovereign equality. By building regional federations, they hoped to address the postcolonial predicament of political fragmentation and economic dependency. By demanding a New International Economic Order, they aimed to enhance the bargaining power of postcolonial states in the global political economy and democratize decision making. Getachew insists that these initiatives marked a fundamental repudiation of the Eurocentric character of the international order and should be read on their own terms, as projects in radical global reordering.

The fall of self-determination that is charted in the book’s epilogue is a cautionary tale. Getachew traces the normative erosion of self-determination to the increasingly critical orientation of Western intellectuals and politicians toward the right to self-determination and the diminution of international institutions like the United Nations where anticolonial nationalists staged their worldmaking. The collapse of anticolonial worldmaking continues to structure the contemporary global political economy, setting the stage for the more forceful resurgence of international hierarchy and a new era of unrestrained American neo-imperialism. The critical orientation of Western intellectuals and politicians toward the right to self-determination, and the collective sovereign rights of peoples more generally, raises important questions about epistemic gatekeeping and entrenched hierarchies of knowledge production. Worldmaking after Empires tells the story of the concerted but ultimately futile efforts by black anglophone anticolonial nationalists to redress global structures of domination, sovereign inequality, and racial hierarchies. The story ends with the collapse rather than the triumph of anticolonial visions of self-determination and sovereign equality. But in some ways, the book contributes to this counter-hegemonic intellectual tradition by challenging conventional accounts and re-casting black anticolonial statesmen as nation-builders and veritable worldmakers.
The title of Adom Getachew’s book, *Worldmaking after Empire*, immediately evokes Christopher J. Lee’s 2010 edited volume, *Making a World after Empire*. With its retelling of the decolonization story through a focus on Afro-Asian internationalism, the latter explored what was still relatively uncharted intellectual territory at the time of its publication. The subsequent decade has brought a surge of scholarship taking up the interconnected themes of decolonization and transnational Third Worldism activism from a variety of angles. Similarly, recent years have seen a new interest in the diverse and complex political visions circulating in the decolonization era, forcing us to move beyond one-dimensional understandings of the nation-state and modern international society. Yet Getachew’s excellent study illustrates how much we still have to learn about these topics. *Worldmaking after Empire* showcases a set of Anglophone leaders from North America, the Caribbean, and Africa who grappled with how to remake their countries and the world in the wake of European imperialism, proposing alternative definitions of established global principles, unconventional political forms, and new international norms and institutions in the process. The book offers a sophisticated treatment of their ideas and efforts that opens up prevailing narratives of decolonization and theories of nationalism to include a larger cast of characters and a wider range of global engagements. *Worldmaking*’s analytical clarity and incisive distillation of sometimes nebulous concepts make its account of anti-colonialism an invaluable resource for scholars of the twentieth-century world. Although Getachew’s study sits at the intersection of history and political theory, staging interventions into both disciplines, the following discussion will concentrate on its implications for historians.

As I have suggested above, we now know quite a bit about diverse efforts to remake the world after empire. Getachew’s “worldmakers” are distinguished as a unique multigenerational cohort by their direct historical experiences with racism in slavery’s wake, their interconnectedness through intellectual and political networks spanning the Atlantic, and their shared understanding of national self-determination as contingent on pan-Africanist integration and “non-domination” in international society. These individuals—including the American W.E.B. DuBois, Trinidad’s Eric Williams, Jamaica’s Michael Manley, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, and Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere—responded to varied historical contexts with different political prescriptions. Nonetheless, Getachew argues, they shared a specific set of concerns and ambitions that they exchanged, debated, and refined through transcontinental dialogue and institution building.

The book begins with a chapter that sets the stage for the interventions of Getachew’s worldmakers. This section examines the founding of the League of Nations, describing the political thought of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts as a counterrevolutionary exercise in defanging Bolshevik notions of self-determination. Through a strategic “reassociation,” these architects of the League “recast self-determination as a racially differentiated principle, which was fully compatible with imperial rule” (40). Getachew illustrates this point with the cases of Ethiopia and Liberia, whose membership in the League secured their international subordination rather than equal representation in a global community of nations. The implications of this careful analysis become clear in the next chapter on the early years of the United Nations, which shows how DuBois, Nkrumah, and Trinidadian George Padmore, among others, insisted on a definition of self-determination that significantly departed from the way in which that principle was embedded in the League of Nations. Getachew asserts that these actors metaphorically rendered empire as a condition of enslavement and accordingly promoted a more robust and radical conception of self-determination that took partial form in the institution of the United Nations’ General Assembly. In doing so, she critiques the notion that decolonization represented the organic, inevitable extension of Westphalian sovereignty around the globe, and she challenges readings of postcolonial nationalism as narrow and parochial. These arguments are not wholly novel, and they are not what make these the richest chapters of *Worldmaking*. Instead, what stands out as especially innovative here is Getachew’s centering of issues of race and racism in midcentury theorizations of empire and global society, drawing as it does on the distinctive intellectual heritage and historical experiences of her African and Afro-descended activists. Her discussion of the relationship of anticolonial

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understandings of self-determination to emergent human rights ideology is also particularly sharp and insightful. For her worldmakers, the ‘right to have rights’—the ability to belong to a national community in order to secure individual human rights—depended on the existence of an overarching right to have the right to have rights: the ability to belong to an equitable and non-hierarchical international community.

*Worldmaking after Empire* then explores early 1960s projects of regional federation in the Anglophone Caribbean and on the African continent. Getachew explains that regional federation offered a means of securing more substantive sovereignty for small countries that were vulnerable to external political intervention and economic dependency. Identifying compelling twentieth-century alternatives to the political models of empire and the nation-state is not in itself a new analytical move. However, Getachew’s linking of this discussion to the other “projects of worldmaking” her book explores is illuminating, as is her close reading of debates over the precise terms of Caribbean and continental federation. We thus see “federation as a spatial and institutional fix for the postcolonial predicament” (108) that responded to the same wariness about persistent legacies of empire held by her worldmakers in earlier and later historical moments. We also learn how and why these parallel initiatives ultimately succumbed to disagreements about the location and extent of federal authority, as well as to the challenges of uneven development and political and ethnic pluralism within would-be federal units. Getachew’s comparative analysis here helps cast both Caribbean and continental projects in a new light. However, we miss several opportunities to explore alternative templates for or contemporaneous initiatives of regional integration that would have implicitly influenced or informed the endeavors under examination. These include earlier projects of Latin American regionalism, Black Atlantic efforts to transform the French Empire into a cosmopolitan post-imperial polity, pan-Arabism, and subcontinental African regional unions. In particular, Nkrumah’s diagnosis of and response to the perils of “balkanization” could be fruitfully situated in conversation with Senegalese leader Léopold Senghor’s reckoning with this problem, and not simply opposed to it. One also wonders about the relationship of smaller-scale African regional organizations to larger-scale efforts to create a continent-wide Union of African States. How did the United Arab Republic (1958-61), West African Union of African States (1958-63), and the attempted East African Federation (1963) overlap with, diverge from, and reciprocally shape Nkrumah’s grander dream of a continental African federation?

*Worldmaking* concludes with a chapter on the call for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the mid-1970s, which it approaches through the political thought of Manley and Nyerere (a pairing Monique Bedasse has also recently explored). Getachew convincingly presents the NIEO as both the most radical version and final hurrah of self-determination on the global stage. Two metaphors anchor her analysis: the G-77 as an international trade union, and the NIEO’s vision as a ‘welfare world’ extending welfare state tenets and policies to the planet as a whole. She locates the first in Manley’s and Nyerere’s own discourse and the second in Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal’s late 1950s writing. The focus on Myrdal sits awkwardly here, since “neither Manley nor Nyerere cited” him; the notion that “his idea of a welfare world captures their vision” somewhat flattens Manley’s and Nyerere’s evolving political thought and implies the kind of Western authorship of postcolonial imaginaries that Getachew takes pains to discredit elsewhere (160). Similarly, *Worldmaking’s* theorization of a “welfare world” obscures other elements and genealogies of the NIEO. Recent scholarship has pointed to an overlooked longer history of Latin American activism in the name of meaningful economic sovereignty, for instance, but more prominently recognized NIEO advocates such as Algeria are also missing from *Worldmaking’s* pages. However, Getachew’s narrower framing also has significant advantages. Above all, it takes seriously the concerns of the Anglophone Black Atlantic political tradition she identifies, and it integrates pan-Africanism into a much larger and longer global story of

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anti-colonialism instead of rendering it as an exception. What Getachew demonstrates so effectively is that for many former colonial subjects the end of empire required far more than the simple severing of relations of dependency and domination between metropole and colony; achieving self-determination mandated a reworking of international society as a whole to ensure equal terms of membership and equity of resource distribution. In other words, decolonization had to take place on a global rather than national scale, and the NIEO was a logical extension of that principle.

By any measure, *Worldmaking after Empire* is a major achievement. Like any serious scholarly accomplishment, it also leaves the reader pondering further questions. One of these concerns other projects of worldmaking that overlapped with the ones Getachew features—in particular, that of socialism in its many twentieth-century forms. *Worldmaking*’s engagement with Nkrumah’s and Nyerere’s political philosophies brings out new dimensions of these leaders’ ideologies, but it is necessarily selective. One strand of thought that largely drops out is African Socialism, which was central to many postcolonial African political initiatives. As Getachew herself points out, socialism in its various iterations is premised on the inextricability of national development and internationalist revolution; the socialist states of the twentieth-century world were therefore also obviously “worldmakers.” Returning to Lee’s *Making a World after Empire* reminds us that some of these, like the People’s Republic of China, infused socialist worldmaking with a specifically anticolonial agenda. Such ambitious leftist projects were countered by equally ambitious worldmaking efforts on the right—as Quinn Slobodian’s recent work on neoliberalism describes, for instance.45 Analyses that more comprehensively synthesize these multiple globalisms have yet to be written, but Getachew’s terrific contribution has undoubtedly secured a key role for her Black Atlantic thinkers and leaders in such future studies.

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Adom Getachew’s *Worldmaking after Empire* provides a robust and necessary challenge to dominant historical narratives of decolonization and anticolonial nationalism. According to that dominant narrative, twentieth-century decolonization can be understood as the gradual universalization of the nation-state form. Whether understood as Westphalian or Wilsonian, such accounts are often premised on the idea that empire and nation are incompatible, rather than overlapping forms, telling a story of the gradual accession into European modernity of what had been territories, colonies, or trusteeships. As part of this story, anticolonial nationalism is often treated as a kind of vulgar nationalism that is both politically unfortunate and intellectually boring—a misapprehension at best, which, the book roundly demonstrates, is far from accurate.

The book moves elegantly through an argument that the Wilsonian moment of ‘self-determination’ was not a beginning, but, per Chapter 2, a “counterrevolution”; in contrast, the leaders who advanced ideas of self-determination in arguing for independence from empire were not simply applying and expanding a prior concept, nor were they nationalistic in a narrow sense. Organized around different moments of what Getachew describes as “anticolonial worldmaking” (12 and throughout), the book traces how the problems of empire were theorized and confronted by a constellation of different thinkers, and the various projects through which they attempted to make a different world. Throughout, Getachew weaves together (without trumpeting that she is doing so) an impressive amount of archival research conducted in Barbados, England, Ghana, Switzerland, and Trinidad, along with published work.

Empire, Getachew emphasizes, was itself worldmaking—‘world’ here carrying both Marxian and Arendtian tones. She follows what she casts as two distinct generations of Anglophone anticolonial thinkers. Central to the first, which she describes in Chapter 3 as the “1930s university generation,” with overlapping ties to Howard and Lincoln Universities, are Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, and Eric Williams; to the second generation, Michael Manley and Julius Nyerere. She traces their efforts to come to terms with, and respond adequately to, the world that empire made, in part through worldmaking projects of their own. In doing so, she brings forward an account of empire not as alien rule, but as “unequal integration” (2 and throughout). Understanding empire this way allowed the anticolonial thinkers she tracks, and the book itself in turn, to make sense of empire as a project not only of political institutions but of economics and race as well, without reifying those as distinct or natural categories. Understood through that frame, the titular “rise and fall” of anticolonial politics is not a reference to the expansion and failure of the nation-state form, but a story of the persistence of imperial forms, even after national independence, and of imperialism’s perseverance in the face of competing worldmaking projects.

Getachew’s account is richly historical, while also understanding that historical narrative as itself political. As she underscores, the usual story of the gradual expansion of national self-determination, taking President Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen points or the Atlantic Charter as twentieth-century starting points, can obscure the intellectual creativity of those helping to found and give shape to newly independent nations. Here, *Worldmaking after Empire* joins other calls, from authors like Todd Shepard and David Scott, for alternative narratives of so-called decolonization.46 For Getachew, like those others, the story she tells is not a story of the end of empire, but of its endurance, including in how we narrate its supposed ending.

In the narrative that Getachew is writing against, the one which understands ‘decolonization’ as the universalization of the nation-state form, the failures or disappointments of supposedly postcolonial states are, ironically enough, often explained as the result of new leaders taking the idea of the nation-state too far. In particular, they are charged with using a supposed right to non-interference, either as principle or as pretext, to ward off outside scrutiny. As Getachew discusses in the book’s

epilogue, such charges often rested on a claim that postcolonial leaders had hijacked principles in the name of self-interest; in
the versions she traces, the accusation of bad faith was at times paired with the claim that new nations were not yet ready for
independence.

Getachew resists this narrative, though she does describe the moments of “closure” and “dead ends” of self-determination’s
fall (181, for example). Unlike David Scott, whose critical vocabulary she draws upon elsewhere, Getachew never refers to
this as a tragic narrative; the closest she gets is to note that Michael Manley considered the failure of the New International
Economic Order (NIEO) as itself a tragedy, before he was corrected by an interlocutor who reminded him that it was not a
matter of the rejection of ethical argumentation but of the defeat of political claims to rights. Perhaps in keeping with this,
she simultaneously resists any temptations to romanticize, both by showing the multiplicity of, and internal disagreement
among, anticolonial thinkers, and by pointing to places where they may in fact have gone wrong.

As a result, while it does seem like the “fall” of the book’s title was perhaps overdetermined, there are key points where
Getachew points to the importance of both contingency and fallibility—that anticolonial thinkers may have set themselves
up for trouble. One of the quarrels she has with even the first generation of anticolonial political thinkers she describes, and
with Nkrumah in particular, is about the affinity he asserted between self-determination and territorial integrity. In addition
to removing certain critical resources for a critique of settler imperialism, and so also obviating the senses in which the US
was not merely a federal model but one that merged empire and federation (119), she argues this led Nkrumah into an
untenable position on the Katanga crisis, and again on Biafra (102-103). Yet even here, the failures she tracks are not
straightforwardly intellectual, but arise within the problem-spaces in which thinkers find themselves. While Getachew does
justice to the intellectual creativity and resources of the thinkers she tracks, part of the point, I take it, is that there may not
have been any good answers to the sorts of questions they faced.

But here again the book resists telling a straightforwardly tragic story. After all, Getachew does highlight, and thematize, two
possible answers, as distinct ways of navigating the dilemmas of postcolonial sovereignty. She summarizes at one point “the
two different approaches to the relationship between nationalism and internationalism anticolonial worldmakers pursued.
In the first, internationalism restructured sovereignty and created political authority that transcended the state. In the
second, international institutions reinforced the state” (135). Or, as she describes on page 175: “In the first iteration,
international institutions were mobilized to secure and underwrite the nation-state, while in the second account,
international institutions were to transcend the state.”

Those two accounts both responded to the question of how to conceive the relationship between national and international
institutions, premised on the constitutive interconnections between those two categories, in response to the problems of
unequal integration and the challenge of worldmaking. In this sense, the two approaches were not neat or discrete
alternatives. She writes: “With the NIEO, these visions of the international as a supplement to and transcendence of the
nation-state were neither fully reconciled with each other nor decisively adjudicated in one direction or the other.” Nyerere’s
1980 Arusha Initiative, she argues, was a late-breaking effort to respond to this same problem. But, she continues, “by the
1970s, nationalists had abandoned the efforts to delegate and disperse sovereignty embodied in the federal moment for the
more minimal internationalism of defending the nation-state” (170-171). The “fall” of anticolonial worldmaking came in
part from the “displacement by appropriation” of “structural reform” she describes in Chapter 5. In parallel, anticolonial
nationalism shifted from an emphasis on self-determination as a problem of worldmaking to an emphasis on self-
determination as national sovereignty.

As Getachew mentions, simultaneous with that shift among anticolonial nationalists came what she refers to as the
“disillusionment with postcolonial sovereignty” (105) among European and American activists who were part of growing
movements for human rights and humanitarianism. Those movements, as Eleanor Davey and Samuel Moyn have both
argued, were marked by a focus on the individual as the object of international concern—a direct repudiation of many
activists’ previous Third Worldist sympathies. Getachew, in Chapter 5, traces a somewhat parallel turn among academics; the book presents Charles Beitz in particular as an inheritor of earlier anticolonial concerns over global justice, even as he took those concerns in different directions (174-175). (Moyn, in Chapter 6 of Not Enough, provides a more detailed intellectual history of the academic interest in “global justice,” again focused on Beitz, that is helpful here too.)

In some sense, it can seem as though Getachew is agreeing with the disillusioned bunch: anticolonial nationalists made a turn toward more strict nationalism. But where the 1970s European and American movements around human rights and humanitarianism voiced concern about the prioritization of the state at the expense of the individual, Getachew argues compellingly that the real loss was the prioritization of the state at the expense of the world. This is an important point, one that reframes and historicizes much of the critique of postcolonial nationalism.

It does also make one curious about the place of the individual in that earlier version of anticolonial worldmaking—about how, in the alternative approaches to the relation between national and international, the relation of each to the individual was understood. Here, Getachew argues that anticolonial nationalists did not make individual rights central to their visions of worldmaking; a stance she suggests was a good one. Human rights language, she argues, was present, but not particularly salient; to the extent Nkrumah and Azikiwe used it, she argues, “this mobilization of human rights discourse was always situated in a broader account of empire as enslavement” (93). But her account suggests this was an uneasy combination: when self-determination was defined as a right, rather than a principle, in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514, she recounts, this was a hard-fought but ultimately a “limited victory,” as the “delimitation of enslavement to rightlessness meant that the new right to self-determination had only a tangential connection to the economic critique central to the empire-as-enslavement framework” (91). In the NIEO, she argues, the state was treated as analogous to the individual, and specifically to the individual worker—an analogy that, in this context, helped make the case for global redistribution a matter of fairness rather than charity (158-59). Now, neither of those is strictly an argument just about the status of the individual: the former is in part about the compatibility of ideas of rights and rightlessness with a republican approach to nondomination, the latter also about the nature of work and the relevance of past exploitation for present arrangements. But if part of the underestimation of anticolonial nationalists that Getachew seeks to correct arises from the charge that anticolonial nationalists focused on the state to the exclusion of the individual, this points to a question of how the status of the individual in earlier anticolonial nationalism was understood, and whether this was also, like the relation between national and international, a matter of ambiguity and challenge.

The analogization of the relationship between individuals to that between nations is a common one in international political thought—and one that has, elsewhere, attracted criticism. In her recent Boundaries of the International, for instance, Jennifer Pitts criticizes the use of this analogy by Emil Vattel, noting that it:

rendered theoretically opaque the fact that some of Europe’s most important powers were global empires rather than simply territorially bounded communities…and it largely disregarded the violence of European commercial and imperial expansion. It thus effaced the features of hierarchy and imperial extension that characterized the world system in Vattel’s day, and from his day through the present.49


A similar kind of analogy appears in at least two places in Getachew’s story: once, as mentioned, in the analogy of nations to workers in the NIEO, and second in the broader framework of empire-as-enslavement. In both cases, the analogy would seem to be doing precisely the opposite of what Pitts describes in Vattel’s thinking (though perhaps the concern Getachew raises about Nkrumah’s linking of territorial integrity to national self-determination could be understood in part as a product of a similar logic). If Getachew’s anticolonial nationalists were remaking the idea of “self-determination,” and doing so in new and changing problem-spaces, we might say that they were doing something similar with this particular analogy (that between individuals and nations) as well. And not just with this one: the empire-as-enslavement approach is described by Getachew as republican, and I take its consonance with more recent republican political thought as also a matter of a shared analogy. Writing on Frederick Douglass’s republicanism, Robert Gooding-Williams describes the relation of master to slave as “paradigmatic” for republican political thought, particularly in Philip Pettit’s reconstruction of it—and his discussion also highlights the ways in which slavery itself takes more literal meanings in some treatments than in others.50 What stands out in both cases—slavery as paradigmatic analogy for republicanism, and the individual as analogy for the nation in a good deal of thinking about international relations—is that, as with self-determination itself, the thinkers Getachew tracks were not merely taking an abstract and universal form and applying it to yet another particular context. Instead, they were insisting that, in those analogies as they had been developed and deployed, hierarchy and empire were already present.

Over the last two decades, historians have recast the global history of decolonization to reveal the divergent political projects of anticolonialism and the contingent and contested processes by which the end of empire resulted in the consolidation of the nation-state as the universal political unit of international politics. Drawing on this body of scholarship, the ambition of *Worldmaking after Empire* was two-fold: First it sought to reconstruct Black Atlantic accounts of empire as a structure of racial hierarchy with origins in the transatlantic slave trade. It showed how W.E.B. Du Bois’s oft-quoted line “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” was less a metaphor than an analytic taken up during the interwar period by African and Caribbean anticolonial critics to recast the meaning of empire. What emerged from the critique of empire as international racial hierarchy, I argue, were novel projects of building an anti-imperial world order that ranged from securing the right to self-determination to transforming the global economic order. Second, given my disciplinary location as a political theorist, *Worldmaking after Empire* sought to mobilize the intellectual and political histories of decolonization in the Black Atlantic and offer alternative framings of contemporary dilemmas in international politics. I tried to show that debates about global justice, regionalism, and the role of international institutions have historical analogues in anticolonial worldmaking that have yet to be mined for their critical and normative implications. I am grateful to Cindy Ewing for organizing this roundtable, and to Michael Geyer, Bonny Ibhowah, Priya Lal, and Emma MacKinnon for their careful engagement with the arguments of the book and for the generative directions their questions open.

Implicit but central to *Worldmaking after Empire*, Ibhowah notes, is an effort to circumvent the “epistemological hierarchies” that obscure the global visions of African and African diasporic intellectuals. In accounts written during the high point of decolonization and in more recent treatments, anticolonial nationalism is often viewed as the product of the diffusion of European norms and institutions. In these accounts, the global recurrence of the principle of self-determination is taken to be a sign of repetition and mimicry. Anticolonial nationalists are thus rendered passive recipients of and vectors for the globalization of a Wilsonian principle of self-determination. *Worldmaking after Empire* does not deny that Black Atlantic intellectuals, anticolonial critics and postcolonial statesmen like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Du Bois, Michael Manley, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, George Padmore, and Eric Williams operated within the terms—institutional and discursive—set by imperialism. They were, to use David Scott’s phrase, conscripts of modernity. Yet in their self-conscious effort to appropriate and reinvent the language of self-determination, they “[turned] a colonial inheritance inside out.” From within the hierarchical world imperialism built, they sought to make an egalitarian international order that would guarantee the necessary legal, political, and economic conditions for self-government.

Both Geyer and Lal call for situating this cohort of anticolonial nationalists in the broader milieu of decolonization. Geyer asks “Who thought and acted this way beyond the in-group of indubitably influential, anglophone activists and statesmen?” I take the Black Atlantic worldmakers of this study to be representative of a broader Third World politics and at the same time a distinctive iteration of its wider contours. The limits of postcolonial sovereignty were debated throughout the Third World and fostered different internationalist visions. From Mexico’s pioneering role in articulating what would become the

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New International Economic Order (NIEO; recently excavated by Christy Thornton) to India’s early efforts to mobilize the United Nations for anticolonial and anti-apartheid struggles, a range of Third World actors saw worldmaking as a necessary supplement to securing national independence.54 Two of the worldmaking projects I survey—the institutionalization of a right to self-determination and the NIEO—emerged from a shared critique of colonialism and a much wider network of intellectuals and statesmen than I cover. Vis-à-vis these two projects, the actors at the center of Worldmaking after Empire are arguably not the primary players. However, the argument of these chapters rests less on the claim of centrality than on the ways in which the Black Atlantic sphere of intellectual exchange and political collaboration furnished a distinctive set of arguments which emerged from locating the transatlantic slave trade and New World slavery as the founding moment of the modern imperial world and its structures of unequal integration. Figures like Du Bois, Padmore, and Nkrumah critiqued and sought to transcend not just international hierarchy, but a racialized international hierarchy, born from slavery.

Still, even within this frame I have drawn the circle tightly. As Lal mentions, Leopold Senghor and others of the Francophone African world articulated an overlapping set of concerns. I might have also included, as she notes, subcontinental federalist projects like the United Arab Republic, West African Union of African States and the East African Federation. Situating Nkrumah’s pan-continental union in this context and also alongside subnational projects of federation would give us a broader framework for deepening our understanding of the “federal moment” in Africa and accounting for the failures of federation.55 In particular, a more comprehensive account of federal projects would illuminate the extent to which state forms were debated and negotiated during decolonization. I focus on the debate between centralized federation and more confederal arrangements, but underlying this conflict was a deeper one concerned with the limits of the unitary state organized at either the national or regional level.

The Anglophone emphasis was not intended to dismiss the efforts of Senghor and other Francophone figures, but rather to show how even when the reconstitution of empire did not appear as a viable option, the institutional imagination of anticolonial nationalists was not limited to securing the nation-state. This context of the British Empire and the Anglo-American sphere adds another distinctive dimension to the political thought of Manley, Nkrumah, Nyerere, and Williams. Within the broader empire, the examples of the Irish Revolution and the Indian National Congress as well as the explicitly racialized character of imperial federation among proponents of Greater Britain suggested early that the route out of empire was through national independence. As late as 1933, C. L. R. James espoused as commitment to the civilizing mission of the British Empire and the prospect of a democratic West Indies within its orbit.56 Still, the prospect of imperial citizenship was off the table much earlier than was the case in the French context, as Frederick Cooper’s work has shown.57 But this does not mean that national independence was imagined wholly outside of the British Empire’s intellectual circuits. As the example of supranational federalist projects in the Caribbean and Africa suggests, the Anglo-American context also supplied models for combining nationalism and internationalism. The example of the United States and the 1787 constitution not only enabled

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Nkrumah’s and Williams’s arguments for embedding independence in federal union, but also reinforced the view that federation was a mechanism for aggregating and centralizing authority.

My accounts of federation and the emergence of a right to self-determination attend closely to the interplay of appropriation and reinvention. Against this context, Lal and Geyer are right to question my use of Gunnar Myrdal’s concept of the “welfare world” to describe the NIEO. Given that neither Manley nor Nyerere used term, Lal notes it “sits awkwardly” and Geyer worries that I have adopted the language of the NIEO’s neoliberal critics. I take the point that my use of the term “welfare world,” as Lal argues, “implies Western authorship of postcolonial imaginaries” and “obscures other elements and genealogies of the NIEO.” At the same time, it captures what I took to be a neglected dimension of the NIEO—namely the ways the welfare state of the postwar period shaped arguments for global redistribution. Striking in both Nyerere and Manley’s arguments for the NIEO and in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development documents are the ways analogies to the domestic division of labor and the welfare state’s bargain between capital and labor are mobilized to ground the demands for the NIEO. According to Manley, postcolonial states were analogous to the rural sector within a domestic economy and should be thought of as the farmers of the world. For Nyerere, in terms that were quite similar to those Myrdal deployed, the “development of real and equal partnership between the rich and poor” through the NIEO was offered up as a means of warding of the impending threat of “international class war.” Both here and in his comparisons of the international “Trade Union of the Poor” to the “first trade unions … in Europe,” Nyerere’s effort to recast the relationship between global North and South as analogous to the domestic relationship between capital and labor was not merely rhetorical. Instead, the analogy’s analytical purchase rested in the ways it transformed global justice from a moral question of aid and charity to a political claim of a fair share of the world’s wealth. At the same time, as Marxist critics of the NIEO like Samir Amin and Immanuel Wallerstein pointed out, this was an argument that foreclosed the possibility of postcolonial exit. As Geyer notes of my account, the NIEO was a revolution from within. This may not fully capture the entirety of the NIEO’s intellectual origins and ambitions, but it suggests that its promise and limits stemmed from the same source, namely its commitment to the world as one unequally integrated economic unit.

For Mackinnon, the casting of postcolonial states as the workers of the world and the empire as enslavement thesis illustrate how in reinventing self-determination, anticolonial nationalists also remade and redeployed the state as individual analogy. While in its Vattelian formulation, which is critically assessed in Jennifer Pitts’s Boundaries of the International, the analogy “rendered [empire] theoretically opaque,” Nyerere, Manley, and others mobilized it to make visible the mechanisms and consequences of unequal integration. This leads Mackinnon to ask “how the status of the individual in earlier anticolonial nationalism was understood, and whether this was also, like the relation between national and international, a matter of ambiguity and challenge.” Hinted at in the book’s brief discussions of Biafra and Katanga, my view is that answering this question requires examining the challenges from below to the postcolonial state. If the right to self-determination was premised on the claim that individual rights had to be nested in collective self-rule, the precise location of this nexus was deeply contested. From the Ashante slogan “No Federation, No Self-Government” in opposition to Nkrumah’s unitary state to Tshombe’s vision of a confederal Congo, subnational claims to autonomy offered decentralized models of self-rule as a more appropriate model for the combination of individual rights and self-government. Similarly, regional federations were also sometimes positioned as better safeguards of individual rights. While Arthur Lewis backed Williams’s centralized West Indian Federation, arguing that it was better suited to the challenges of economic dependence, he also endorsed federation for its capacity to disperse authority and provide “aggrieved citizens [with] multiple sources of appeal.”

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emphasis of *Worldmaking after Empire* is on the nexus between the national and international, debates about state form were intimately tied to competing accounts of the relationship between the individual and the collective.

For Geyer, this emphasis on “nationalist internationalists standing at the thin membrane between the world and ... the newly independent territorial states,” makes the politics of self-determination appear “too much like a ‘head-birth’ ... of international revolution descending to make national histories.” This reinforces my view of the dominant role of international politics in the formation of postcolonial sovereignty. Especially in the context of the Caribbean, Williams and Manley conceived of the island-states as entirely produced out of imperial domination. From the peopling of the islands, after the extirpation of native peoples, to their entrapment in dependent economic relations, the “national” of the Caribbean was also always the international and imperial. Anticolonial worldmaking emerged, in my view, from a reckoning with the consequences of this extreme form of extraversion. Yet, despite my focus on high institutional politics at the UN and in regional institutions, elite political actors were not the only ones to recognize these entanglements and to work toward their transformation. A fuller history of anticolonial worldmaking would have to include internationalisms on “a lower frequency” that were articulated and debated in the popular politics of decolonization. On this point, the recent work of Jeffrey Ahlman, Monique Bedasse, and Priya Lal are indispensable for illuminating how ideals of Pan-Africanism were lived and enacted in the everyday.61

In its emphasis on spaces like the United Nations, one might expect a closer engagement with the dynamics of the Cold War but *Worldmaking after Empire* does not take up the role of the Soviet Union and the second world in the international politics of decolonization. More broadly, as Lal notes, simultaneous visions of socialist worldmaking and especially its Third World iterations including African Socialism drop out. My framework in the book was perhaps too wedded to the global color line and the Atlantic as the space and site of exchange and collaboration. These orientations emphasize the bifurcated character of international politics rather than its tripartite division. They also unwittingly obscure other spaces of intellectual and political circulation including Afro-Asia and the nexus between second and third world.

I initially conceived this project as a counterpoint to the unipolar world of American empire that came to dominate after the collapse of anticolonial worldmaking. The prospectus for the dissertation from which *Worldmaking after Empire* emerged was written against the background of the NATO intervention in Libya and began by wrestling with the then decade-long American ‘war on terror.’ Though these initial preoccupations are no longer front and center in the book, it still bears the imprints of its first formulation. To America’s North Atlantic, it positioned the Black Atlantic as a geopolitical site from which an alternative vision of an egalitarian global order emerged. Yet in working through this antagonism, it is inattentive to socialist worldmaking as an at times overlapping counterpart and vision for international equality. The result is that, as Geyer puts it, “the second world oddly [disappears] from view.” Grasping the full scale and ambition of anticolonial worldmakers will require “analyses that more comprehensively synthesize these multiple globalisms” (Lal).

The fall of anticolonial self-determination and the rise of American power raises the theme of tragedy, which appears in the reviews of Geyer, and Ibhowah and is given extensive discussion in Mackinnon. For Geyer, it is a “tragic history” and, for Ibhowah, black anticolonial nationalists’ efforts to transform the global order were “ultimately futile.” Mackinnon, however, notes that I never use the language of tragedy. She writes, “while it does seem like the “fall” of the subtitle was perhaps overdetermined ... the book resists telling a straightforwardly tragic story.” Looming over this discussion, as Mackinnon notes, is David Scott’s critically important rereading of C.L.R James’s *Black Jacobins in Conscripts of Modernity.*62 I take Scott

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to be offering two distinct, but not unrelated conceptions of tragedy. The first situates Toussaint’s impossible choice to be both part of France and independent in his conscripted relationship to the Enlightenment. The second, more fully developed in *Omens of Adversity*, which reconstructs the collapse of Grenada Revolution, takes up the non-sovereignty of human action, its unintended consequences, contingency, and irreversibility.63

Scott has been a critical conversation partner in the various iterations of this project. Following his interventions, there is a sense in which I could not have written anything but a tragic account. At the same time, I was interested in highlighting the range of political possibilities imagined in the context of very concrete limitation. For instance, as is clear from the citation above, I take the view that the political actors at the center of *Worldmaking after Empire* can also be thought of as conscripts of modernity. What I was interested in exploring and illuminating, however, was the ways in which anticolonial nationalists fashioned a creative relationship to their conscription. I tried to show how much conceptual and political space anticolonial nationalists opened even in contexts like the United Nations where, to quote Azikiwe, “there was no new deal for the black man” (72). To be sure, conscription entails limits and as I explored throughout the book, anticolonial appropriations and reinventions were not free from the legacies of their inheritance.

Still, even with these limits acknowledged, anticolonial nationalists made self-determination a global norm in the twentieth century and sought to realize its promise of equal self-determining states. Though this might appear as a minimal and limited vision of the end of empire, it turns out to have entailed a radical transformation of international politics. This was an ambitious and utopian vision—one whose scale might be viewed as a sign of the hubris of the tragic hero. But here too we can tell another story. What I tried to draw attention to is the ways anticolonial nationalists were deeply attuned to the odds against which they endeavored to transform the world. Their keen and prescient sense that the postcolonial predicament was one of a distorted and fragile independence might itself be characterized as a tragic sensibility. Yet, rather than generating political resignation, this encounter with the limits of formal decolonization formed the basis of a transformative vision. Writing about Michael Manley, Scott has described this interplay between acknowledging a political crossroads where “it was impossible to choose well” and yet staking out a direction and path for political action as the “the problem of postcolonial political will.” Anticolonial worldmaking was in this sense a risky gamble—one in which Manley and others had to contend with “the prospect of success [and the] hazard of failure.”64 Though their most ambitious vision of a world after empire was unrealized, their efforts were not futile. In three decades, anticolonial nationalists had largely defeated formal empire, making alien rule morally and politically illegitimate; in itself this was a major feat. Anticolonial worldmaking also inaugurated a critique of global inequality that remains with us in the demand for reparations, calls to cancel postcolonial debt, and the critique of the unequal burdens of climate change.

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64 Scott, “‘The Word is Love’: Michael Manley’s Styles of Radical Political Will,” *small axe* 23 (March 2019): 169-186.