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ARTICLE

The Meanings of Anti-imperialism: Insights from the Global Edmund Burke

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Beginning in the late 1990s, a debate emerged whether Edmund Burke might be read as a significant critic of empire because of his impeachment of Warren Hastings. The debate that ensued, I argue in this article, revealed ambiguities and paradoxes in the category of anti-imperialism. Rather than imperialism and anti-imperialism representing a clean binary, anti-imperial projects, events, and figures may embody the very sorts of politics that many disciplinary debates about anti-imperialism wish to critique. Foregrounding "anti-imperialism" in the history of political thought, I conclude, may obfuscate as much as it illuminates—even when examining the twentieth-century experience of decolonization.

Introduction

Beginning in the late 1990s, a flurry of texts examining the relationships between major eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European thinkers and colonialism were published,[1] focusing on select thinkers' complicity with empire or recovering overlooked critiques of empire. Jennifer Pitts notes that political theory was "late" to the question of empire, which had dramatically reordered fields like anthropology, English literature, and comparative literature beginning in the 1970s. In contrast to comparative literature and English literature, in which rejection of a European canon was central to this research program, Pitts juxtaposes two broad categories under which the literature in political theory fell: "canonical political thinkers' reflections on conquest, or the theorization of politics in the postcolonial present."[2] These are not entirely

[1]Minimally, Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire* (Chicago, 1999); Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, 2003); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Cambridge, 2005); James Farr, "Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery," *Political Theory* 36/4 (2008), 495–522; Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society* (Cambridge, 2002); Karuna Mantena, "Mill and the Imperial Predicament," in Nadia Urbinati and Alex Zakaras, eds., *J. S. Mill's Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2007), 298–318.

[2]Jennifer Pitts, "Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010), 211–35, at 213.

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separate categories in her analysis, as she notes that some authors, such as James Tully, take up considerations of canonical authors and then use those insights to interpret contemporary politics.

In adopting an author-centric approach to problematizing the relationship between European political thought and empire, these contemporary theorists challenged readers: could close study of these thinkers serve as synecdoche for critique of the European imperial project (as earlier critics claimed[3]), or might they offer resources for thinking *against* the imperial project? Critiques of Mill or Locke might demonstrate that central concepts in their corpus are indelibly imperial—perhaps other canonical political thinkers might offer the opportunity to construct a longer tradition of anti-imperial thought.

The reinterpretation of Edmund Burke in the period of anti-imperial ascendancy in political theory is the most dramatic of any of the (perhaps) anti-imperial thinkers examined. This new generation of scholars—centrally, Uday Mehta, Jennifer Pitts, and David Bromwich—focused on Burke's writings on India, finding in him a contemporary foil against liberal imperialists. Importantly, these revisionist accounts of Burke were not simply artifacts of intellectual history: they were a reaction to the post-Cold War dominance of interventionist liberalism in political theory and global politics, but simultaneously did not seek to reinvigorate Marxist traditions of anti-imperial thought. Burke, these theorists contended, offered an alternative vision, one critical of empire. Thus the embrace of Burke is indelibly tied up with a question of what it means to study politics from an anti-imperialist perspective.

Reaction to this wave of scholarship was swift: while critics challenged some of the readings of Burke on India, several theorists—most prominently, Iain Hampsher-Monk, Sunil Agnani, and Daniel O'Neill[4]—drew on Burke's writings on intervention as well as the New World to cast him as an unambivalent imperialist. The critique of the revisionist account of Burke was also made in the name of anti-imperialism.

Attention to this debate on Burke reveals tensions in the concept of anti-imperial; is anti-imperialism in the history of political thought a consistently held and enunciated political stance? Is it a (series of) philosophical commitment(s)? In contrast to "postcolonial," which has a clear genealogy in comparative literature, I hold that "anti-imperial," whether as a category or as a concept, may itself be an ambiguous and at times paradoxical framing, and close attention to the "global Burke" scholarship allows us to see these paradoxes and ambiguities more clearly. Further, in some cases, "anti-imperial" may ultimately be anachronistic; "anti-imperial" and "critic of empire" become our modern ways of classifying a broad range of positions regarding hierarchy, commerce, and other concerns contemporary to the relevant thinkers. This has relevance for thinking about the twentieth-century experience of decolonization as well; as the field of political theory has expanded dramatically, numerous explicitly

[3]E.g. Christian Neugebauer, "The Racism of Hegel and Kant," in H. Odera Oruka, ed., *Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate on African Philosophy* (Leiden, 1990), 259–72.

[4]Richard Bourke's exclusion from this essay is intentional; because of his vociferous denunciations of "presentism" in the history of political thought, an engagement with the *politics* of his interpretation of Burke would require an article unto itself. While Pitts shares this suspicion of presentism, Pitts's book has been much more influential on the arc of Burke interpretation in recent political theory.

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anticolonial and anti-imperial thinkers and texts are the subject of recovery and reinterpretation. Interpreting these texts primarily through the lens of anti-imperialism, I hold, flattens our understandings of the dialogues in which these figures, as political agents, were engaged.

In the first section, I lay out the context of the anti-imperial moment in political theory, and define its political stakes. In the second section, I offer close readings of three theorists—Mehta, Pitts, and Bromwich—and carefully reconstruct both their readings of Burke and the politics of their interventions. In the third section, I reconstruct the most prominent challenges to the anti-imperial Burke—in the work of Hampsher-Monk, O'Neill, and Agnani—with an eye towards what an anti-imperial critique of an anti-imperial recovery might mean. In the fourth section, I investigate how this recovered Burke has been used outside niche debates within the history of political thought. In the conclusion, I draw lessons from this recovery of Burke on India for challenging how the history of anti-imperial thought in the twentieth century is recovered and reconstructed by contemporary political theorists.

Anti-imperialism: a tradition renewed?

Political theory's "imperial turn" recovered the (at times questionably) anti-imperialist writings of some already canonical thinkers, elevated some who were previously relegated to lesser stature, and added previously overlooked non-European voices. This act of recovery sought to upend traditional narratives about the politics of historical thinkers—Burke and Diderot might become heroes to anti-imperialists, with Mill and Tocqueville reviled by the same crowd for their complicity in imperial administration and expansion.

A pressing political reason for recovering an anti-imperialist tradition of political thought is to counter the proliferation of rationalizations for violating the sovereignty of former colonies—whether it is "spreading democracy," "managing transitions," the specter of an "imminent" threat to Western hegemony, or the democratic election of parties found objectionable by Western alliances—the postcolonial period has not seen a significant decrease in the expression of Western power over formerly colonized peoples, with international law intermittently employed to justify these endeavors.[5] As late as 2004, Alan Ryan could write, "Consequentialist liberals ought … to be tempted by imperialism—but under most conditions, they should resist."[6] For Ryan, the normative logic of liberalism impels us towards imperialism—we should aim to create more liberals and liberal peoples in the world—and the only check on this is prudence.

What the anti-imperial moment in political theory sought to do was to articulate a countertradition which treated imperialism as normatively bad, rather than merely (sometimes) unfeasible. These theorists, furthermore, forcefully contended that articulating theories of freedom, egalitarianism, non-domination, or the like could not begin *from* texts and thinkers that were part of the European imperial project—to rationally

[5] Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge, 2005), offers a foundationalist account of international law's role in facilitating domination over former colonies.

[6] Alan Ryan, "Liberal Imperialism," in Ryan, ed., *The Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton, 2012), 107–23, at 122.

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reconstruct Millian or Lockean theories of freedom or justice to be anti-imperial would simply center imperialist thought in emancipatory projects. This would also indict the Marxist tradition because of Marx's positive attitudes towards the British Empire in India.

Articulating a competing tradition of international thought which rejects the assumed prerogatives of powerful states is a way of redefining precedents and norms of behavior in world politics. Perhaps if modern liberal thought owed more to Diderot's *Histoire des deux indes* than to Locke's *Second Treatise*, we would have no remnants of the attitude that "In the beginning all the world was America," and thus to be "improved" upon—both its land and its people.

Burke on India and Hastings: the makings of a non-Marxist anti-imperialism?

Burke's engagement with India was not unknown prior to the anti-imperial moment in political theory; for some, it was a biographical detail,[7] while for others the pursuit of Hastings notably embodied a Burkean hatred of tyranny.[8] But many of these theorists did not treat these events as intellectually generative in themselves. C. B. Macpherson is instructive on this point: "England's Indian empire was indeed, in Burke's view, a proper white man's burden, but he took strong exception to the way Parliament had allowed that burden to be exercised, with inadequate oversight or control, by the chartered East India Company."[9] For Macpherson, then, the "Indian question" in Burke is centered entirely on Parliament.

As a figure of revision, Burke is far more interesting *politically* than other subjects of anti-imperial reclamations because rereading him through this lens is neither merely speculative (as are Timothy Brennan's readings of Vico and Hegel[10]) nor narrowly theoretical (as Sankar Muthu's readings of Kant and Herder are[11]). Rather, studying Burke the politician and orator who directly engaged British political fights over its empire makes *his* struggle—rather than *our* projections—central to any revisionist account of his work. There was no overseas German or Italian empire that Kant, Hegel, Herder, or Vico fought, and in the absence of such a direct political conflict the drama of rereading their work "against empire" withers. The focus on Burke also moves past the question whether theory is simply epiphenomenal—as a politically active agent, we can read Burke's writings and speeches in the context of his political actions and direct influence, rather than positing (or projecting) a supposed influence onto world events.

Such interpreters do not necessarily read Burke himself as anti-imperialist, but rather read his criticism of the British Empire in ways that support an anti-imperialist project. The three most prominent recoveries of Burke as a critic of empire are Uday Mehta's *Liberalism and Empire*, Jennifer Pitts's *A Turn to Empire*, and several texts from

[7]E.g. Connor Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography of Edmund Burke* (Chicago, 1992).

[8]E.g. Stephen K. White, *Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics, and Aesthetic* (Thousand Oaks, 1994). It is instructive on this point that the index of White's book contains no entry for "India," but several entries for "Indianism," Burke's term for the corruption of British virtues by the East India Company.

[9]C. B. Macpherson, *Burke* (Oxford, 1980), 30.

[10]Timothy Brennan, *Borrowed Light: Vico, Hegel, and the Colonies* (Stanford, 2014).

[11]Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*.

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David Bromwich. Their overall arguments are subtly different; however, as illocutionary acts, all three arguments morally elevate Burke above his political opponents and liberals of many stripes. They all deny a defense of nineteenth-century liberalism on the grounds of an historical–moral relativism: that "in those days" no one thought in a particular way about a given subject, thus we cannot expect certain historical figures to hew closer to our modern sensibility. "For an understanding of the philosophically rich and politically engaged critique of empire that was possible in eighteenth-century Britain, then, we can do no better than to turn to Burke."[12] Fittingly, this mirrors Burke's own attack on Hastings's relativist defense of his actions in the name of "oriental despotism." For modern readers, these critics charge, it is impossible to excuse James and John Stuart Mill (among others) their imperial passions because Burke (allegedly) understood its barbarity. Though Pitts eschews direct modern political relevance, Bromwich and Mehta both present Burke's politics as an alternative for modern interactions between First and Third World states.

Mehta treats the imperial impulse as intrinsic to liberalism. Tracing this to Locke, Mehta argues that the central role of education and improvement in liberal theory bred imperial projects—administration and education for the improvement of the world. "Reason may in a Lockean view be a natural capacity, but the specific form in which it services a liberal program requires an elaborate pedagogic scheme."[13] Burke's appreciation of experience and distance, rather than reason which must be taught (to children and the darker people of the world), allows "a deeper conception of how different realms of experience can and should relate to each other. It is one that I have called conversational because it does not presume on the transparency and the foreknowledge of other people's destiny."[14]

Against Macpherson and other skeptics of a possibly "anti-imperial" Burke, Mehta writes,

> Much of what [Burke] says about the British rule in India is squarely within the framework of a plea for good government; none of it is a plea for Indian self-government … But to conclude from all of this that Burke was merely an enlightened imperialist, an apologist laboring to secure the empire on surer and more commendable foundations, would be to thoroughly miss the tenor of his thought and the significant challenge that he presents to the empire and to the ways of thinking and acting that sustained it.[15]

What is Mehta *doing*, what is the illocutionary force, in reviving Burke in this light? For Mehta, the politics are stark; he begins his work by asserting, "The claims I make about liberalism are, I believe, integral to its political vision and not peculiar amendments or modifications imposed on it by the attention to India."[16] Before this

[12] Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 60.
[13] Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, 198.
[14] Ibid., 192.
[15] Ibid., 158.
[16] Ibid., 9.

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1999 book, he notes, there were almost no English-language works in political theory specifically dedicated to the question of the empire. To the extent that empire's cruelties and paternalism were considered, they were thought an aberration from liberal principles. Indeed, in the decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, liberalism assumed a triumphant posture—though communitarianism, feminism, and Marxism all continued to challenge liberal principles, liberals were patronizingly dismissive towards some or encouraged a liberal hybridity. Mehta, on the other hand, stands athwart this triumphalism and declares that there can be no hybridity between liberalism and anti-imperialist recognitions of oppression.

A second important contemporary political intervention that Mehta makes is the recovery of a conservatism that is appalled by universalist principles[17]—both universal reason and universal history—which prejudice any meaningful engagement with the unfamiliar:

> [Mill's] conflation of custom with the absence of history is significant. It suggests a picture of automatons so completely corseted by customs that with respect to experiences—in effect to life—this stage of human development must refer to something prior to human history … The further conflation of this condition with despotism is also revealing. It points to the fact that this condition, by being already political, has its redress in an alternative form of political intervention … that clearly must be exercised by someone other than the automatons.[18]

By contrast, Burke's elevation of experience and custom allows for respect and engagement with the unfamiliar without attempting to make sense of it through an ostensibly universal frame.

For Pitts, the relationship between liberalism and empire is more equivocal. Reading Burke as an early liberal (granting that the party designation did not yet exist), she argues that British and French early liberal thinkers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as Burke, Smith, and Constant, opposed or were ambivalent about imperial expansion, whereas mid-nineteenth-century liberals like Tocqueville and Mill embraced it wholeheartedly. Pitts argues that "a strand of British and French political thought appeared … to hold the promise of a critical approach to European expansion," but it was displaced "by an imperial liberalism that by the 1830s provided some of the most insistent and well-developed arguments in favor of the conquest of non-European peoples and territories."[19] She concludes that there is nothing inherently imperial about liberal politics; as with many other ideologies, liberalism may be put in service of contemporary politics. By the mid-nineteenth century, the imperial expansion was the status quo. Thus liberals accommodated it in their worldviews, resulting in a "liberal turn to empire."

[17]Though Mehta claims that Burke "anticipates" Rorty's cosmopolitanism, this is *not* a claim that Burke is a Rortyan liberal. Rather, Burke's peculiar conservatism becomes a model of cosmopolitanism to be contrasted against liberal universality. Ibid., 21.

[18]Ibid., 213.

[19]Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 2.

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It is in this sense that Pitts refers to "imperial liberals," as opposed to Mehta's "liberal imperialists"—rather than classifying nineteenth-century British and French imperialism as liberal, she reads certain liberals as imperialist. This nuance is quite important for Pitts's project—it changes the question from whether liberalism should be reclassified as itself normatively bad (as imperialism is considered), and also gives reason to continue studying the era from an historical-theoretical perspective. This is where Pitts's Cambridge historicist allegiance comes through most strongly—rather than identifying liberalism as a unified arc from Locke through the nineteenth century to today's liberal interventionists, she examines how liberalism and its exponents interact with their political condition.

Pitts emphasizes the role of sympathy in Burke's political critique, arguing "that in order to remedy the injustices endemic to British rule over colonial subjects, it was not enough simply to recognize that oppression took place. Such oppression must be *resented*, and this could occur only with genuine moral respect for the victims as equals."[20] Resentment alone could not build this moral respect:

> Burke recognized that pity, contempt, and certainty about one's own superiority cannot serve as the basis for sympathy, even for an adequate recognition of a victim's suffering. His speeches sought to convey not simply the extent of Indian suffering … but an idea of Indians in all their humanity, which for Burke meant an understanding of their complex social conventions, hierarchies, and values.[21]

Building that sympathy in the British public was also strategic. Admitting that Burke's tales of Indian families and peoples ruined by the East India Company (EIC) focused on the well-born, Pitts argues that Burke's "frequent recourse to tales of the nobility had a broader rhetorical function, for he believed audiences identify more readily with the suffering of the great than with that of ordinary people."[22] Thus modern readers would be remiss to conclude from Burke's examples that he simply cared about the displaced royalty of Indian society.

Consistent with her more nuanced view of the history of liberalism, Pitts does not present Burke as an outright anti-imperialist as Mehta does. Rather, Burke's stance was "a critique of what he saw as some of the most destructive strands of political practice in the Britain of his day … Burke opposed not the imperial relation per se but rather the spirit of domination, oppression, and exclusion that often characterized British imperial conduct."[23] Burke, she argues, saw these problems as systemic—so Burke's position on her reading is still a significant critique of the British Empire, but not an absolute rejection of the *idea* of empire.

David Bromwich plays multiple roles in the rehabilitation of Edmund Burke. In the year 2000, he edited a volume of Burke's speeches which contained at its center lengthy extracts from Burke's speeches against Hastings and in support of Fox's

[20]Ibid., 244, original emphasis.
[21]Ibid., 74.
[22]Ibid., 75.
[23]Ibid., 60.

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East India Bill, and correspondence related to India.[24] Bromwich's explanatory essays hold the Hastings impeachment and the problem of India at the center of Burke's career. This was one of several edited volumes of Burke's work that were released in a three-year span. David Womersly's 1998 volume of pre-Revolutionary writings and speeches contained nothing of Burke's work on India;[25] Isaac Kramnick edited a volume with extracts from three speeches on India, totaling merely forty pages out of 573;[26] David Fidler and Jennifer Welsh included brief extracts from the "Speech on Fox's East India Bill" and the Hastings impeachment;[27] and Liberty Fund reprinted E. J. Payne's *Select Works of Edmund Burke* with an additional volume simply titled *Miscellaneous Writings*, compiled by Francis Canavan with an extract from the speech on Fox's bill.[28] Of all of these edited volumes, only Bromwich's held India as a central issue for Burke.

If, as Henry Louis Gates put it, "A well-marked anthology functions in the academy to create a tradition, as well as to define and preserve it,"[29] then edited volumes play an important role in curating and defining a political theorist's relation to a tradition. For Burke in particular, edited volumes are particularly important; writing in 1980, C. B. Macpherson noted that "none of the several nineteenth- and early twentieth-century editions of his works has been kept in print … only his most famous work, the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, is now readily obtainable."[30] The subject of India, in particular, took up an enormous portion of Burke's attention: "His speeches and reports on India take up seven volumes of his sixteen-volume collected works."[31] Yet in a 1993 volume for Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (perhaps the leading academic series presenting scholarly editions of the history of political thought), only one extract related to India—totaling twenty-eight pages out of 330—was included by editor Ian Harris.[32]

Bromwich's volume has been cited by many of the political theorists focused on rereading the history of political thought through the history of empire (including Sankar Muthu, Anthony Pagden, Duncan Kelly, and Margaret Kohn, among others), while the Fidler and Welsh volume (the only other volume with substantial content on India) is not cited in any unambiguously anti-imperial articles or books.[33] Thus we can conclude that Bromwich's volume is the leading modern edition presenting Burke on India.

[24]Edmund Burke, *On Empire, Liberty and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, ed. David Bromwich (New Haven, 2000), 282–400.

[25]Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful: And Other Pre-revolutionary Writings*, ed. David Womersly (London, 1998).

[26]Edmund Burke, *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (London, 1999), 37–77.

[27]Edmund Burke, *Empire and Community: Edmund Burke's Writings and Speeches on International Relations*, ed. Jennifer Welsh and David Fidler (Boulder, 1999), 165–231.

[28]Edmund Burke, "Speech on Fox's East India Bill" (1 Dec. 1783), in *Select Works of Edmund Burke: Miscellaneous Writings*, vol. 4, comp. Francis Canavan (Carmel, IN, 1999), 59–118.

[29]Henry Louis Gates, *Loose Canons* (Oxford, 1992), 31.

[30]C. B. Macpherson, *Burke* (Oxford, 1980), 2.

[31]Ibid., 30.

[32]Edmund Burke, *Burke: Pre-revolutionary Writings*, ed. Ian Harris (Cambridge, 1993), 270–97.

[33]According to Google Scholar, accessed 11 April 2021.

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What of Bromwich's Burke? Bromwich has published a first volume (which does not cover Burke's engagement with India) in a planned two-volume intellectual biography of Burke, a chapter in an edited volume examining why Burke impeached Hastings, and several short essays on Burke. The Burke who emerges foremost from this portrait is a consummate statesman, one who refused to bend to popular will even at the risk of losing his parliamentary seat, and guided by a "suspicion of unlimited power as such."[34] In stark contrast to Mehta's Burke, who rejected the universalism so common amongst liberal imperialists in favor of a conversational interaction between cultures, Bromwich's Burke appeals to universalist principles. But it is an aesthetic and sentimental universalism, not a philosophic or juridical one. "Burke chooses not to refer to the letter of the law regarding the Company charter … His appeal … is rather to 'the natural feelings of mankind.'"[35]

This universalism allows for a degree of continuity between Burke's political passions—in particular, the revulsion at "being a judge in one's own cause." In a 2015 lecture entitled "The Consistency of Edmund Burke," Bromwich previewed an argument in his as yet unfinished second volume on Burke, asserting,

> There's strong rhetorical, and links of moral analysis, too, between what he finds wrong in the exploitation of that subcontinent by the British East India Company, let to do it by the House of Commons, and what's happening in France. If [Burke] hadn't been so engaged in investigating the abuses of power in India throughout the 1780s he would not have written against the French Revolution as he did.[36]

For Bromwich—as for Pitts and Mehta—Burke's political campaign against the East India Company is intellectually formative and of theoretical significance, not merely a biographical detail or the embodiment of existing principle.

Is it possible to contextualize Mehta, Pitts, and Burke without reducing their work to historical determinism? In researching the evolution of political science in the twentieth century, Ido Oren documents that many central concepts like "democracy" and subfields like public administration evolve dramatically in response to changing geopolitical realities: "changes have been driven as much by America's changing rivalries as by the emergence of new facts."[37] This is not historical determinism—it is not that things could not be otherwise or that people could not think differently. Rather, in examining how "democracy" was redefined after World War II to exclude prewar German political forms, and the decline of public administration as the dominant subfield in political science (too "German" an approach), Oren strips away the dispassionate veneer of science and situates human actors in political contexts where their theories have real political stakes. While Mehta, Pitts, and Bromwich would not claim the authority of objective science, attention to the role of American liberalism in both academic and

[34]David Bromwich, "Why Did Burke Impeach Hastings?", in Akeel Bilgrami, ed., *Democratic Culture: Historical and Philosophical Essays* (Abingdon, 2013) 166–86, at 167.

[35]Ibid., 177.

[36]Lecture available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFpFRinxoQU&t=1844s, at 23:23.

[37]Ido Oren, *Our Enemies and US: America's Rivalries and the Making of Political Science* (Ithaca, 2003), 10.

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world politics reveals patterns that, while not *determining* their different approaches to Burke, may help distill an overlooked aspect of influence.

Despite all three books appearing in a fourteen-year span, the political moments in which Pitts's, Mehta's, and Bromwich's works were *received* were all significantly different. The year of Mehta's book, 1999, was the year the US bombed Serbia over Kosovo, which followed at least half a dozen other either ground interventions or aerial bombings during the Clinton administration. The previous Republican president, George H. W. Bush, had a very different perspective on the use of force by a superpower; the Persian Gulf War was in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. George H. W. Bush ordered troops to stop short of Baghdad, declining to remove the reigning government. Republican nominees for president in both 1996 and 2000 declared their opposition to using the US military for nation building, which had been a keyword surrounding the Clinton interventions of the 1990s. There were certainly conservatives in America who supported a "muscular" interventionist stance (the Project for the New American Century was established in 1997), but this diversity of opinion among conservatives appeared absent amongst liberals. Thus it was reasonable in the late 1990s to view conservatism as a potential antidote to the plethora of interventions since the end of the Cold War. In reading Burke as a conservative in his engagement with India, Mehta critiques liberal imperialism across historical boundaries and offers a serious alternative.

Pitts's 2005 book poses a different interpretive challenge, and presses us to think about perlocutionary force—though she, following Quentin Skinner, would likely reject the relevance of perlocutionary force. Perlocutionary force relates to the reception of a text, rather than an author's act. However, I hold that because traditions are necessarily presentist, examining the perlocutionary force of a text in a tradition is important for understanding the *politics* of the tradition. *A Turn to Empire* was published (though not initially drafted) in the wake of the conservative-led invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan—on which liberals were split—as well as much blustery rhetoric about "transforming the Middle East," invading and replacing one dangerous regime after another, and letting democracy spread with dictatorships falling like dominoes. Conservatism was no longer an easy response for those wary of interventionist policies. Further, liberals across the West were split over the Iraq invasion in a way they hadn't been during the Clinton administration—while Tony Blair, Hillary Clinton, and many other prominent liberals were (initially) staunch supporters of the war, there was no unity on the question in the UK Labour Party or in the US Democratic Party, while the French center right government (hardly conservative in an Anglo-American sense) and the German Social Democratic government were vehemently opposed. Thus it was impossible to treat the question of ideological support for interventionism as black-and-white.

The *reception* of Pitts's work reveals an anglophone liberalism eager to resist narratives of imperialism. Reviewing Pitts's book, Anthony Pagden proclaimed,

> As more and more is said, much of it delusional, about globalization as "Empire" and of the United States as the heir presumptive to the British Empire, an understanding of just what empire actually was, and how it was perceived when the European powers truly did control over nine-tenths of the world's populations,

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> is of immense and pressing importance. *A Turn to Empire* has made that task a great deal easier.[38]

Relying on tropes from the 1990s canon wars, Peter Cain rejoiced that "Pitts has written a very innovative book and one mercifully free of the postmodern assault on the English language."[39] For liberals like Pagden and Cain, Pitts's book was an opportunity to push back against postmodernists and postcolonialists who would treat liberalism as normatively bad because of a supposed complicity with empire.

Pitts's analysis of the evolution and variation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French and British liberal responses to empire is attentive to ways in which empire itself was a political phenomenon which was not static; thus responses to it were not static either. This is not to say that Pitts's interpretation was *determined* by her political situation, though I would certainly hold that some of its reception was influenced by a political moment that showed a split amongst liberals against a united conservative passion for international adventurism.

Bromwich's recent work on Burke is the most explicitly political of the anti-imperial attempts to rehabilitate Burke. He situates his own reading of Burke, noting,

> It is possible to be democratic without being enlightened. I say this with clarity as a citizen of an increasingly democratic but decreasingly enlightened country in which majorities in both houses of the legislature have, since 2001, twice voted to reverse a time-honoured constitutional practice that protects the rights of prisoners … No man has arbitrary power to take, said Burke, because no man has arbitrary power to give; but we have seen in our time the president of a major democracy assert such unchecked power.[40]

Burke is a beacon of rectitude during a moment of democratic, imperial decadence. Bromwich admits Burke's antidemocratic tendencies and that his critique of Hastings and the EIC did not extend to a rejection of dominion over India (as well as supporting the "gradual emancipation" of slaves, which Bromwich sees as laudable rather than problematic), yet it is Burke's statesmanship and attack on absolute power which Bromwich finds so compelling in our political moment. As an essayist, Bromwich used Burke to critique the "imperial presidency" of Barack Obama. Burke, then, it seems, can be deployed in a critique of any US administration, Democratic or Republican, or even—in Obama's case—against a self-described admirer of Burke.

Revising the reclaimed Burke

In focusing on Burke's pursuit of Hastings and his critique of the EIC, Mehta, Pitts, and Bromwich effectively introduced a "globalized" Burke, expanding interest in Burke's work beyond histories of conservatism, English parliamentarism, aesthetics, and the

[38] Anthony Pagden, "A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France," *Perspectives on Politics* 4/3 (2006), 574–6, at 575.

[39] Peter Cain, "A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France," *Journal of British Studies* 45/2 (2006), 426–7, at 426.

[40] Bromwich, "Why Did Burke Impeach Hastings?", 183.

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French Revolution. But in looking at Burke's engagement with the globe beyond India, several scholars challenged the use of Burke for anti-imperial political projects by emphasizing his views on military intervention, Amerindians, black slaves in America, and the Haitian Revolution. In this section, I draw on Iain Hampsher-Monk, Daniel O'Neill, and Sunil Agnani's challenges to the Burke of Mehta, Pitts, and Bromwich.

Suppose we accept Mehta's generous reading of Burke on India; why *not* simply read Burke's writings on India in isolation while letting his other works wither? Indeed, Burke himself believed that if he were to be remembered it would be for his work on India.[41] It would be difficult to understand how one could adopt a Burkean approach to global relations that excluded his thinking on intervention, slavery, or race. By such logic, why not simply focus on J. S. Mill's participation on the Jamaica Committee and ignore his imperialist assumptions that affected his philosophy (such as the "people in their nonage" exception in "On Liberty") as well as for his lifelong work for the EIC? There is certainly a large difference between Burke's decade-long pursuit of Warren Hastings and Mill's role in the Jamaica Committee's pursuit of Edward Eyre, but both appear as exceptions born out of revulsion for cruelty to a larger acceptance of empire. Furthermore, interventionism is perhaps *the* most overtly threatening policy opposed by anti-imperialist politics in the modern world. It is not clear that embracing an outspoken interventionist for his views on colonialism would embody anti-imperialist politics.

The question of invasion is perhaps the most fraught for defenders of Burke; Mehta in particular poses Burke as an antidote to liberalism's interventionist spirit. But Burke was not opposed to intervention per se, and campaigned vigorously for Britain to intervene against France's revolutionary government. Burke probably did not imagine that England would occupy Revolutionary France longer than it would take for aristocratic exiles and other members of the old order to reestablish the traditional French institutions which the revolution had deposed. Perhaps Britain would have withdrawn once the old order was restored—however, interventions find reasons to extend their durations again and again.

Hampsher-Monk argues that Burke's justifications for intervention in France evolved to fit his conviction that intervention was necessary, not from a dispassionate reading of the law of nations. "Although Burke was early committed to intervention, the development of a justification for it took time, and was interwoven with political considerations deriving from the course of the revolution, military developments, and Burke's own position within British politics."[42] First, the importance of Burke's conviction to intervene cannot be overstated—it goes to the heart of the debate regarding whether international laws, norms, and institutions are established as justificatory mechanisms for great powers to act with impunity. That Burke's justifications evolved not simply in response to domestic concerns but with reference to varying bodies of law suggests that he had an instrumental view of the law of nations.

[41] Iain Hampsher-Monk, "The Spirits of Edmund Burke," *Modern Intellectual History* 15/3 (2018), 865–77, at 875.

[42] Iain Hampsher-Monk, "Edmund Burke's Changing Justification for Intervention," *Historical Journal* 48/1 (2005), 65–100, at 72.

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It is worth examining the particular justifications put forward by Burke. His first justification for intervention included an unlikely reading of Emer de Vattel.

> In this state of things (that is in the case of a *divided* kingdom) by the law of nations, Great Britain, like every other power, is free to take on any part she pleases … The law of nations leaves our Court open to its choice. We have no direction but what is founded in the well-understood policy of the King and kingdom.[43]

This loose reading of Vattel reduces him to acting on mere interest in the case of a "divided kingdom." This is not to say that Burke saw intervention in any nation's civil unrest as in the interest of Britain—rather, Burke drew a special distinction based on the "doctrine and theoretick dogma" he saw guiding the internal struggles afflicting France. Hampsher-Monk notes, "Unlike traditional political conflicts, driven by local considerations, those fired by doctrines claimed to be true at all times and in all places. Consequently, thought Burke, their very existence—quite apart from any foreign policy inspired by them—posed a threat to Britain and *ancien regime* Europe."[44] A Burkean-influenced leader in the nineteenth or twentieth century could have easily argued that anticolonial struggles were led by similar "doctrine and theoretick dogma," given the internationalist claims made by many of the struggles. Should Britain have intervened to stem the tide of anticolonial revolutions, even when it was not her colony? Echoes of this rhetoric were audible in America's War on Terror, in which "radical Islam" became a transnational target precisely because its doctrine and dogma were internationalist.

Burke's second justification for intervention in France, rooted in Roman law and viewing Europe as a unified *ius gentium*, is even more problematic for his modern anti-imperialist defenders. Effectively, Burke denied the sovereignty of France as a separate state:

> Although international law provided no clear grounds for the kind of ideological campaign against a particular regime that Burke sought to pursue, conceiving of Europe as a single juridico-cultural entity made it possible to conceive of relations between national entities within it, not as part of international law—the law of nations—but as *domestic* relations … Individuals within Roman law … possessed several remedies against neighbours engaged in the prejudicial use of their own private property, remedies which might be analogously applied to states of a European commonwealth.[45]

While some anti-imperialist goals have been achieved by denying sovereign boundaries as limits to codes of law—Baltasar Garzón's claim to universal jurisdiction as authorizing the arrest of Augusto Pinochet—powerful nations have more commonly used such constructions against former colonies.

While Burke's thoughts on intervention may have been less known, his thoughts about the French Revolution were not. That he might advocate employing extreme

[43] Ibid., 73, original emphasis.
[44] Ibid., 74.
[45] Ibid., 97.

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measures against the greatest threat (in his mind) to civilization might simply mark an exceptional moment, and might not challenge the picture of Burke pressing for broadened sympathies to those oppressed by colonial domination. Though Agnani and O'Neill offer alternative readings of Burke on India, it is their recovery of Burke's writings on the New World that most devastatingly challenges a reading of Burke as compatible with an anti-imperial politics.

O'Neill holds that it is important to recognize that in his defense of Indians against the EIC, Burke does not abandon the language of barbarism and civilization—he simply insists that India is not barbarous:

> This multitude of men does not consist of an abject and barbarous populace; much less of gangs of savages, like the Guaranies and Chiquitos, who wander on the waste borders of the river of Amazons, or the Plate; but a people for ages civilized and cultivated; cultivated by all the arts of polished life, whilst we were yet in the woods.[46]

Against Pitts's insistence on its being primarily a rhetorical strategy, O'Neill reads Burke's attempts to rally sympathy for dispossessed members of high castes as reflective of a broader Burkean reverence for hierarchy. Quoting Burke, "there is not a *single* prince, state, or potentate, great or small, in India, with whom they have come in contact … who is not utterly ruined; and that none are in any degree secure or flourishing, but in the exact proportion to their settled distrust and irreconcilable enmity to this nation."[47] It is O'Neill's recovery of Burke's New World writings that strengthens his interpretive claim.

Theorists (e.g. Connor Cruise O'Brien, Isaac Kramnick, and Harvey Mansfield) have long engaged with Burke's writings on (white) settler revolutionaries. However, O'Neill looked beyond Burke's urging of "conciliation" with the colonists, instead focusing on Burke's treatment of Native Americans and black slaves—which made clear his disdain for peoples who were not organized in an immediately recognizable hierarchy. O'Neill argues that "during the American crisis Burke would come to believe that [a] civilizing mission against the Amerindian Other was an essential mechanism for holding the British Empire in the New World together."[48] Burke objected to arming black slaves and Amerindians to fight the colonial rebellion, expressing "'shame' to the Americans that 'the African slaves, who had been sold to you on public faith, and under the sanction of Acts of Parliament, to be your servants and guards, [were] employed to cut the throats of their masters.'"[49]

Even before the American crisis, however, Burke's *Account of the European Settlements in America* (1757) was "aimed at raising awareness of the importance of maintaining well-regulated British colonies in the wake of the French and Indian

[46]Daniel I. O'Neill, *The Burke–Wollstonecraft Debate: Savagery, Civilization, and Democracy* (University Park, 2007), 85.

[47]Ibid., 87, original emphasis.

[48]Daniel I. O'Neill, *Edmund Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire* (Oakland, 2016), 68.

[49]Ibid., 80.

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Wars."[50] Of the Amerindians, Burke denied that they had any societal organization, and even denied that they had a recognizable religion. For both black slaves and Amerindians, then, in "Burke's view of the civilizing process, religion was the key to this endeavor of marrying lack of liberty with happiness … it was Christianity that Burke believed should play the crucial role in disciplining and channeling the untamed and dangerous savage commitment to liberty and equality by shaping it in a civilized fashion."[51] Burke proposed such a "civilizing mission" in his attempt to foster "conciliation" with the American colonies two decades later.

For O'Neill, more is at stake than simply whether Burke can rightly be called a "critic of empire." Centrally, "the contemporary scholarly focus on the theoretical relationship between liberalism and empire has prevented interpreters from seeing the full range of ways that modern empires have been conceptualized, justified, and defended."[52] Defending an account of Burke as an (early) conservative, he charges that "recovering 'anticolonial' European Enlightenment thought helps us understand what later anticolonial revolutionaries rejected or adapted."[53] An irony, however, is that canonizing an author opens their entire body of work to interpretive possibility. Thus Burke's recovery in the anti-imperial moment of political theory made his works on race and the New World relevant in a way that they were not when he was relegated to other traditions, such as conservatism or English parliamentarism. If interpreters are self-consciously aware of their own illocutionary force, the process of canon re-formation and disputation—what O'Neill critiques—opens interpretive possibilities rather than closing them off.

For Sunil Agnani, a critical study of Burke on empire opens very different research possibilities by intentionally seeking out "moments of inconsistency and contradiction."[54] Instead of thinking about Burke's legacy in Europe, Agnani posits that

> reconceiving anticolonial thought in the Enlightenment might allow for a more complex understanding of the negotiations with it later taken up by thinkers such as … Naoroji, Ambedkar, and Gandhi. Not that they carried it forward, but it might allow us to understand what their object of critique was, what they disliked, even "hated" in this legacy, in addition to what they preserved, retained, or redeemed.[55]

In this way, his project is an inversion of Brennan's readings of Hegel and Vico: both Agnani and Brennan recover colonial ambiguities in canonical European thinkers, but Brennan does so to posit continuity whereas Agnani seeks to better reconstruct what anticolonial revolutionaries read and critiqued. He also differs from Pitts, who closes her study by stating, "Ultimately, the still unfinished project of securing such respect

[50] O'Neill, *The Burke–Wollstonecraft Debate*, 82.

[51] O'Neill, *Edmund Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire*, 77.

[52] Ibid., 169.

[53] Ibid., 175.

[54] Sunil Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly: The Two Indies and the Limits of Enlightenment Anticolonialism* (New York, 2013), xv.

[55] Ibid., xxii.

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was to emerge not out of such hesitant concerns from within Europe but from political mobilization, and determined and at times violent resistance, on the part of the colonized."[56] For Pitts, that political mobilization is unconnected to the liberal thinkers she examines, whereas Agnani sees (in South Asia, at least) a legacy of anticolonial critique that did engage such thinkers.

While Agnani does contribute rereadings of Burke on India, his signal contribution is recognizing the role of the Haitian (St Domingue) Revolution in Burke's work. The Haitian Revolution was largely written out of history in the twentieth century.[57] Agnani notes that Connor Cruise O'Brien, in a 1992 750-page biography of Burke,

> fails to appreciate the significance of the fact that the key rift between [Burke and Charles James Fox] was also over St. Domingue (indeed he removes Burke's remark that one ought to "let this constitution be examined by its practical effects in the French West India colonies"); [O'Brien] puts it down solely to the French constitution, but the real radicalism and threat of those principles is felt only by turning to its effects on the subversions of hierarchies in the colonies.[58]

In this case, reference to Haiti is literally excised from historical biography.

In 1793, Burke warned that the killing of white masters in St Domingue "exceeds the late massacre of Paris. The systematic plan of extermination the Jacobins have pursued in that fine island, and which they intended for every other island, seems to me to form the top of the climax of their wickedness."[59] Contemporaneous to his involvement in the impeachment of Warren Hastings for abuses in India, Burke sided with the *planters* in St Domingue. This leads to an apparent contradiction, but that "can be understood only in terms of Burke's overlooking native resistance in India. It is evident he would have been shocked at the violence committed by any native 'Indian Jacobins,' but he chose not to emphasize this."[60] For Agnani, it is the perceived lack of indigenous resistance, perhaps even agency, that allows Burke to extend sympathy to India while withholding it from literal slaves in St Domingue.

Hampsher-Monk, O'Neill, and Agnani challenge central claims made by the early "Burke as critic of empire" interpreters. At the same time, the Burke revival gave these interpretations greater urgency. This draws attention to contextualizing the interpreters themselves, and asking what they are *doing* in these interpretations—returning us to speech acts and illocutionary force.

Thinking *with* the recovered Burke

I turn now to how the recovered Burke is used by twenty-first-century democratic and international theorists. Two in particular—Lida Maxwell and Jennifer Welsh, both of whom acknowledge Pitts and Mehta as interpretive guides—illustrate how the Burke

[56] Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 257.

[57] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA, 1997).

[58] Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly*, 139.

[59] Ibid., 140.

[60] Ibid., 145.

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of the Hastings trial can now be thought of as a central reference point for political theory beyond a niche within history of political thought.

Maxwell investigates the role of the theorist as democratic critic through the process of public trials, examining Burke's speeches against Hastings alongside Hannah Arendt at the Eichmann trial and Émile Zola's involvement in the Dreyfus affair. Positioning these figures as ultimately sympathetic to democratic publics that are misled by a trial, she introduces the idea of "lost causes" as distinct from fatalism or pessimism about democracy. "Lost cause narratives … narrate and enact democratic failure as a contested *part* of democratic politics, rather than as the harbinger of democratic death that must be remedied by laws and expert guidance for democracy to survive."[61] Burke, by this reading, is untimely, anticipating a "belated public"[62]—which, given the dearth of attention that his pursuit of Hastings received from the second half of the nineteenth century until Mehta's book, seems to be us.

Burke's appeal to the sympathies of an ultimately unsympathetic public, Maxwell concludes, carries "lessons for contemporary democratic theorists and actors … who must turn to an unpredictable, possibly failing public on behalf of doing justice to wrongs (like empire) that cross national boundaries and exceed existing laws."[63] Far from the searing critic of democratic mobs whom conservatives venerate, he emerges as the chastened interlocutor of the *demos*, a gadfly pleading not his own case but that of those unable to speak on their own behalf. Maxwell is not *wrong* in thinking through this approach to Burke—her book points to the surprising interpretive possibilities that emerge when the recovered Burke is taken up as a guide to thinking about politics. Whether we are comfortable with Burke as democratic theorist and guide, her work demonstrates the ways in which the anti-imperial moment reorders our thinking about political theory more generally.

Welsh uses the ambiguity of Burke's approach to international affairs as a way of challenging contemporary international theory to think more critically about engagement with "the other" abroad. What "does one do with the 'other,' which stands outside the reigning consensus? … Burke confronted this problem in his efforts both to reform British imperial policy in India and to respond to the revolutionary challenge in France."[64] Drawing explicitly on Pitts and Hampsher-Monk (as well as Welsh's own 1995 monograph on Burke), Welsh offers a Burke who works to recognize an Other as well as that Other's place in the family of nations. Though he adopted the view that India lay outside the *ius gentium*, it "was nonetheless to be approached with respect and informed by a morality that knew no geographical boundaries."[65] She sees this as a model for how modern Western nations can approach questions pertaining to international actors who are outside international institutions or norms and as a

[61] Lida Maxwell, *Public Trials: Burke, Zola, Arendt, and the Politics of Lost Causes* (Oxford, 2015), 9, original emphasis.

[62] Ibid., 14.

[63] Ibid., 41.

[64] Jennifer M. Welsh, "Edmund Burke and Intervention: Empire and Neighborhood," in Stefano Recchia and Jennifer M. Welsh, eds., *Just and Unjust Military Intervention: European Thinkers from Vitoria to Mill* (Cambridge, 2013), 219–36, at 234.

[65] Ibid., 220.

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useful riposte to culture-based arguments like Samuel Huntington's thesis of a "clash of civilizations."

Of Burke's abuse of Vattel and Roman private law, Welsh takes Burke to be sincere in his view that Europe was a single community, with criminals at the helm in France, justifying a pan-European right to intervene in France. Thus, *contra* Hampsher-Monk, Welsh's Burke was engaged in creative rethinking, rather than bad faith or cynical instrumentalism. "The implications of Burke's understanding of the Commonwealth of Europe lead directly to support for interventionism." The threat that revolutionary France posed to this vision of Europe and the mixed constitution of Britain "quickly overrode the rules and procedures for mutual recognition that were espoused by international lawyers such as Vattel. Seen in this way, Burke's emphasis on preserving the homogeneity of Europe's political orders was not purely instrumental to his anti-revolutionary campaign."[66]

Burke emerges, in this reading, as a culturally tolerant liberal interventionist—ironically, an inversion of both the biography and the politics of Mehta's first effort to recover an anti-imperial Burke. More importantly, Welsh recovers this tolerant interventionist Burke explicitly in service of (re)constructing a canon of international theory. In the introduction to the volume, she writes, "The authors analyzed here … are not solely epiphenomena of the issues and tensions in their own societies, but offer insights and models of argumentation that can assist contemporary scholars."[67] Rejecting the contextualist *diktats* of both Quentin Skinner and Stanley Hoffman, she counters, "While contextualists would deny the very existence of any enduring issues or questions in international politics, we contend that the debate over intervention, both then and now, pivots around two central issues: first, what is a legitimate basis for intervention? Second, what is the likely impact of intervention and what are the associated risks?"[68] Here, Welsh moves closer to the idea of "permanent questions" than the other interpreters examined in this article do.

Burke as democratic theorist or tolerant interventionist are not necessarily unwarranted interpretive moves. What is significant for my purpose is the emergence of the recovered Burke as a figure with which to interpret the modern political horizon. Burke as pursuer of Hastings, or, more ambivalently, Burke as critic of empire in India, is now central to contemporary political theory beyond work in the history of political thought. Is this a development that is ultimately compatible with an anti-imperial politics, or does the recovered Burke limit the political horizon of a postcolonial moment?

Conclusion: what *is* anti-imperial?

However one ultimately interprets Burke, it is important to understand and critically reflect on how *readings* of Burke shaped political theory's own "postimperial moment." A broad movement within political theory emerged that—contrary to

[66]Ibid., 229.

[67]Stefano Recchia and Jennifer M. Welsh, "Introduction: The Enduring Relevance of Classical Thinkers," in Recchia and Welsh, *Just and Unjust Military Intervention*, 1–20, at 6.

[68]Ibid., 8.

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canon-rejectionists in literary studies—sought to offer nuanced recoveries of certain major European thinkers who might be read as critics of empire. Diderot, Herder, Burke, and others became central figures in an anti-imperial conversation that did more to decenter Millian and Tocquevillian liberalism than to decenter Europe.

Critiquing what he termed "the myth of tradition" a generation earlier, John Gunnell wrote,

> What is presented is not so much intellectual history as an epic tale, with heroes and villains, which is designed to lend authority to a diagnosis of the deficiencies of the present. The past is often used in very much the same manner as a dramatist might use events of everyday life to construct the world of the play … the question here is not simply one of the historical truth of the claims but rather what kind of activity is engaged in and what intentions inform it.[69]

The disciplinary construction of an anti-imperial (counter)tradition runs the risk of similarly constructing heroes and villains. It is not that we should not define imperialism as normatively bad; rather, anti-imperialism, when defined loosely, may make certain broad political commitments obfuscate fuller accounts of figures and events.

The questions raised in the disputations about Burke must destabilize our understandings of anti-imperialism. Mehta's initial theoretical intervention—positing conservative "restraint" against liberal imperialism—was not a contrast that could meaningfully illuminate the contours of anti-imperialism, in part because Burke (as subsequent scholarship demonstrated) turns out to be both. By being both he is intellectually richer than Macpherson gives him credit for. There is a risk in resolving this paradox too neatly as well; if Burke's invocation of Indian princes robbed of their dignity is merely a defense of hierarchy, the significant reconstructions by Mehta, Pitts, and Bromwich may be carelessly swept aside in the pursuit of finding consistency in Burke.

As the field of political theory has turned away from "canonical" authors and focused increasingly on non-Western texts, thinkers, and events, anti-imperialism remains a dominant theme in the discipline, but "recovery" of anti-imperial moments and texts may be more complicated than the field has treated them thus far. On the one hand, many of the interpreters of Burke in this article have used "imperial" and "intervention" in close to an interchangeable fashion. But resistance to European imperialism may not, by itself, be anti-imperialist. Partisans of the Mughal Empire who opposed British rule might only be "anti-imperial" in an impoverished sense, and indigenous groups such as the Tlaxcaltecas who allied with Spanish conquistadores to overthrow New World empires like the Aztecs are caricatured if described as merely collaborators with imperialism. In Sudan, Dinka people who welcomed the return of British rule in 1898 were celebrating the end of slave raiding that was institutionalized under the Mahdist state. In none of these cases is European imperialism normatively *good*; however, imperialism is sometimes simply part of a political calculus of power, and the elevation of "anti-imperialism" may flatten these dynamics.

[69]John G. Gunnell, *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation* (Boulder, 1979).

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Political stances may simply be political stances, not emanations or manifestations of consistent principles; if Burke's pursuit of Hastings is not necessarily anti-imperialist, then attacks and critiques of agents of empire in other times and places might not be anti-imperialist either. One of the key "anti-imperial" moments being reconsidered in twenty-first-century political theory is the Bandung conference,[70] a moment of Afro-Asian cooperation and resistance against an international structure divided between two imperial poles. Yet Antony Anghie highlights how Indonesia—the host country—aimed to use the conference to revive the idea of a "protectorate" and legitimate its territorial claims to West Irian. The UN had refused to adjudicate the competing Indonesian and Dutch claims to the territory, and the Indonesian government sought to legitimate its position through a Bandung conference proclamation. However,

> Indonesia argued that the people of West Irian were too "primitive" to exercise the right of self-determination in a conventional way; the conditions were such that self-determination in the Irian context required consulting the appropriate elders. Many African states were disturbed by this argument … and accused Indonesia of behaving like a colonial power and betraying the sacred principles of Bandung.[71]

Just as over the next two decades the postcolonial states India, Vietnam, Tanzania, and Cuba would pioneer new rationales for overriding the principle of nonintervention,[72] self-determination and nonintervention proved to be more contentious than a simple declaration of a sacred principle.

Nor is it clear that anti-imperialism is easily translated into other broad concepts such as non-domination. Adom Getachew argues that non-domination—a major theme in recent political theory—was a central concern in innovations in sovereignty and global institutions from below after decolonization.[73] While she does not seek to "reestablish" any specific institution or state form, in her account anticolonial nationalists' normative commitments are closer to those of present-day political theorists. Yet in reading anticolonial economic and political projects as attempting to secure the terms of non-domination, Getachew arguably sets up a contrast like Mehta's—neo-imperial (and ultimately liberal) domination versus anticolonial non-domination. In Getachew's rendering, Kwame Nkrumah's *belief* in certain economic doctrines and policies, or the New International Economic Order's advocacy of certain institutional structures, are translated into an idiom of "economic non-domination." Rather than

[70] See e.g. Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya, *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference for International Order* (Chicago, 2008); Christopher J. Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens, OH, 2010); Quỳnh N. Pham and Robbie Shilliam, eds., *Meanings of Bandung: Postcolonial Orders and Decolonial Visions* (Lanham, 2016); Luis Eslava, Michael Fakhri, and Vasuki Nesiah, eds., *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical Pasts and Pending Futures* (Cambridge, 2017).

[71] Antony Anghie, "Bandung and the Origins of Third World Sovereignty," in Eslava, Fakhri, and Nesiah, *Bandung, Global History, and International Law*, 535–51, at 546.

[72] Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford, 2000).

[73] Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, 2019).

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being treated as contributions to a political economy to be critiqued,[74] reformulated,[75] and possibly refuted,[76] "anti-imperial non-domination" detaches these interventions from the debates and discourses in which they were engaged. And just as Burke's pursuit of Hastings should not blind modern interpreters to his odious views of black slaves and Amerindians, rosy interpretations of Nkrumah's economic policies should not blind modern interpreters to other aspects of his rule, such as his attempt to declare himself "president for life." Just as Burke could be both imperialist and a critic of empire, so too could Nkrumah (and many others) be anti-imperialist and for domination.

These new hagiographies of anti-imperialism call both for a series of critical revisions parallel to the interventions on the "global Burke" by O'Neill, Hampsher-Monk, and Agnani, and for a reckoning with what the discipline *wants* from anti-imperialism as a concept.

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[74]E.g. Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32/4 (1978), 881–912.

[75]E.g. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Falleto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Oakland, 1979); Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton, 1979).

[76]E.g. Robert Vitalis, "The End of Third Worldism in Egyptian Studies," *Arab Studies Journal* 4/1 (1996), 13–32.

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