



Imperialism Past and Present

By Emanuele Saccarelli, Latha Varadarajan

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After a long hiatus, when it was seemingly banished to the wilderness of esoteric academic debate, imperialism is back as one of the buzzwords of the day. In the past decade many have invoked it as an old specter only to nervously deny its contemporary applicability. A smaller, but highly significant minority has embraced it as a positive good - the only way out of the contemporary political impasse. Meanwhile, the term has continued to be applied to the most diverse range of economic, political, cultural and linguistic phenomena, as well as historical scope. From the Persian Empire of antiquity to contemporary American military operations in the Middle East; from China's ongoing economic penetration of Africa to the old Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, passing through every real or perceived form of "hierarchy" and "privilege", imperialism is now invoked with great frequency and even greater imprecision.

Imperialism Past and Present clarifies the prevailing confusion and provides a concise historical account of imperialism, explaining when and how it emerged and its relation to the colonialism and empires of the past. Should any sort of predatory foreign policy be regarded as imperialist? Does the seemingly universal concern for "humanitarianism" and human rights rule out the applicability of imperialism to contemporary politics? The book examines important theoretical debates about the origins and nature of imperialism, as well as the most significant and dramatic episodes in its actual history - from the 1884 Berlin Conference, through two World Wars, decolonization, and the end of the Cold War. As Emanuele Saccarelli and Latha Varadarajan argue in this provocative book, imperialism is hardly a political artifact. Rather it remains the mainspring of global instability and conflict today.

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Editorial Review

Review

"How did imperialism become such a decisive factor in modern history? This insightful book uses both history and economics to address that great question. Ranging from Joseph Conrad and Adam Smith to Rwanda and the Arab Spring, it sheds new light on a force that continues to shape the world." -Stephen Kinzer, author of *The Brothers* and *All the Shaw's Men*

"*Imperialism Past and Present* is essential reading for anyone interested in current events. A lucid book that returns a central category - imperialism - to our conversation about what otherwise appears to be random disasters in remote places." -Vijay Prashad, author of *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*

"This superbly written, researched and argued book enables us to understand contemporary international relations through the lens of historical continuities. All students and scholars of these issues will benefit from reading it." -Pádraig Carmody, author of *The New Scramble for Africa*

"A wonderfully frank, lucid and irreverent primer. Sweeping with historical command from Thucydides through King Leopold to Dien Bien Phu, it is uniquely powerful when demonstrating why recent U.S. and European adventures - the bombing of Serbia, the invasion of Libya, the Rwandan genocide - should be grouped with the classical imperialisms of old. Sharp, feisty, and, in spite of everything, filled with hope." - Timothy Brennan, author of *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right*

"The concept of imperialism in international relations has fallen from academic fashion, but the practice of imperialism has continued uninterrupted. The post-2001 War on Terror has ushered in a whole new era of global interventions. *Imperialism Past and Present* does an excellent job of linking up present-day imperialism with earlier historical experiences, showing a broad continuity of imperial practices over long periods of time. This is a welcome addition to the international relations literature, bound to trigger much needed debate." -David Gibbs, author of *First Do No Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*

About the Author

Emanuele Saccarelli and **Latha Varadarajan** are both Associate Professors of Political Science at San Diego State University.

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