

Mike Mason, *Turbulent Empires: A History of Global Capitalism since 1945*. Montreal, PQ, Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, April 2018. xiii + 329 pp., tables, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth; ISBN 978-0-7735-5321-7, Cdn \$39.95.

Mike Mason's *Turbulent Empires* surveys global economic development from the end of the Second World War (WWII) up to 2016. The author divides his narrative into chapters based on geographic samples covering the United States, Western Europe, Russia, East Asia, China, Indian and Pakistan, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Each chapter follows a parallel structure: the pre-1945 history of the region is outlined, then its relationship to world powers during WWII is considered and finally followed by an economic development narrative from 1945 to the present. Mason contends that after WWII, capitalism as a set of economic principles espoused and exemplified by the societal achievements of the United States was propagated across the world via globalisation, creating an economic world order favourable to it. Capitalism was not passively received by the rest of the globe. Globalisation required active commercial competition and use of military power to be successful. Thus, despite marketing itself as the morally superior alternative to other forms of economic organization, capitalism was an imposed ideology, fostering societal resentments, inequalities and hostilities across the globe or turbulence, in the author's parlance.

The thesis stages a narrative with wide reaching geographic, temporal and thematic parameters. Mason covers a significant portion of the globe to support his argument. While spatial reach is great, there is a fair amount of inconsistency in the coverage of the societies found within each of Mason's geographic samples, with some states existing as their own geographic units. The United States and Russia are treated in their own chapters with neighbouring polities only receiving brief mention if any. By contrast chapters on Europe, Africa and East Asia examine several societies making for uneven geographic treatment which is never explained or justified. Granted, one can understand the importance of the US as an economic power, but by the same token Britain could merit its own chapter for its early postwar influence in its remaining empire instead of being lumped in with Europe. Likewise, Russia's geographic space is treated on its own while receiving little mention in the section on Europe and Asia despite significant economic and political connections to both. A global sense is never fully captured because of this geographic compartmentalization.

Similar inconsistencies are noticeable in temporal coverage. Some societies are given extensive historical treatment from the early modern period onwards whereas others are not. US history earns a narrative epic from its foundation to the present while Africa and the Middle East are only treated historically from 1945 onwards. Historical context is often only briefly addressed, and the unevenness of the background offered sample to sample hinders the reader's understanding of the events leading up to the postwar starting point. Nonetheless, the outlines of current regional socio-economic positions as of 2016, are very thorough with an exploration of economic sector growth and political climate.

Most noticeably and detrimentally, the book suffers from uneven thematic treatment taking away from its argumentative strength. Mason's title and preface suggest that this is a survey of capitalism's global spread and its effects, but this is not where his analysis brings the reader. Capitalism is clearly at work in some chapters like the ones on the US, Europe and Africa where we have regions actively receptive to the ideas but resistant to American dominance of the global market; fully in-line with the argumentative ends of the thesis. However, others seem to depart staunchly from the American capitalist globalisation metanarrative. While taking the reader through Russia, Mason makes the case that the old Soviet style of socialistic economic and political management is never truly abandoned. A comparable point is made in the chapters on East Asia, India and Pakistan and China. Global capitalism is never fully embraced, and Mason's presentation implies that the turbulence experienced in these regions is more so the product of a failure to launch rather than inherent failings of globalisation. Capitalism is not always the instigator, undermining the claim turbulence is its result. Opportunities to show how conflict with capitalism created turbulence are present, but never taken. The compartmentalized geographic parameters only exacerbate this issue.

We cannot ignore the fact that capitalism as understood by the United States has not been implemented uniformly after the Cold War; this goes without saying. Some states have embraced alternatives to socialism. Mixed economies have emerged that approach capitalism differently than the supposedly universal neoliberal model. The connection between them is that whichever economic system is chosen, expansion and the material support of society remain the desired results; capitalism's de facto goals. Exploring this reality would have yielded far more interesting results than assessing capitalistic-ness comparatively through the lens of globalization. Looking at how societies have endeavoured to impose infrastructural and economic expansion on themselves would have helped bridge the conceptual gap between explicitly non-capitalist societies and economic development in a US dominated world. Comparing the approaches and economic mechanics societies have deployed to achieve traditional capitalist outcomes would have been a stronger history of globalization considering the author's premise and evidence.

By the end of the book, the reader is presented with not so much a history of global capitalism since 1945, but a history of the world with a capitalist hegemon on top. The analysis does not support the notion that capitalism is the cause of the world's conflicts since the author makes it evident that it does not take root everywhere, but it does show that the economic disparities of the postwar world are still coming to a head. *Turbulent Empires* offers a well-written and accessible survey of world history since 1945, showcasing the difficulties societies have experienced and how they produced serious tensions culminating in contemporary conflicts. As a history of capitalism, the book is analytically uneven, yet it still offers a relevant global history of conflict since WWII. Mason states early that refuting the *End of History* thesis was his objective, and his narrative definitely shows how conflicts and changes to the world have yet to abate.

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1: I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of History at the University of Toronto. Completing this review would not have been possible without their generous encouragement and support.