

especially in border regions, were often multilingual and indifferent to the goals of nationalist groups. Connelly's book demonstrates that that is perhaps not correct: language and nationalist arguments clearly played various roles in forming identities and policies.

This book should be read by scholars and students of the region. Its size may deter some readers, but Connelly's prose is elegant. Connelly's breadth of knowledge is obvious, and the reader needs to pay attention to his arguments. In the current climate that has steered the conversation away from nations and nation-states and instead emphasizes non-national stories, it is good to be reminded of how nations, nationalism, nationality conflicts, and national self-determination dominated discussions, policies, and identities in Eastern Europe during the modern era.

Note:

- 1 M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*, New York 1999; T. Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York 2010.

Adom Getachew: Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, 274 S.

Reviewed by
Thomas Lindner, Rostock

tion in a (supposedly) post-imperial world means. Surely, many new books will take up the concept in the coming years. But rather than a narrow focus on (post-)Soviet history alone, authors would be wise to consider what self-determination meant in different, non-European contexts during the twentieth century. A book that could inspire commentators, political scientists, and historians would be Adom Getachew's *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* – an analysis of the concept of self-determination in an unequal world.

In this ambitious book, the political theorist and assistant professor of political science at the University of Chicago analyses the political thought of black anti-colonial nationalists during the height of decolonization in the twentieth century. Published in 2019 by Princeton University Press, the work is designed as a study of political theory with an explicit claim to engage with historical scholarship. This hybrid form characterizes the book and is one of its great strengths. As Getachew discusses concepts such as post-colonial cosmopolitanism, transnational networks of anti-colonial thought, and post-colonial development, the work can (and should) be used as a bridge between political theory and (primarily intellectual and global) history. Getachew elegantly shows how political theory can be historically aware and cautious of generalizations while still challenging assumptions about the nature of multifaceted historical developments such as decolonization, globalization, and nationalism in the twentieth century.

In *Worldmaking after Empire*, Getachew studies “the global projects of decolonization black Anglophone anticolonial critics

The current war in Ukraine has brought up discussions about what self-determina-

and nationalists spearheaded in the three decades after the end of the Second World War” (p. 2). The men (because women do hardly appear) on whose thoughts she focuses are part of the Black Atlantic thought zone and include prominent names like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, Eric Williams, Julius Nyerere, and Michael Manley, to name only a few. These intellectuals attempted to rethink socialism and nationalism in a post-imperial world and fought to achieve economic equality on an international level. Through and with her historical actors, Getachew argues that decolonization is not primarily a moment of nation-building but rather an attempt to establish self-determination beyond the nation-state on an international level. This is what the author means by “Worldmaking” – a concept that perfectly encapsulates the ambitions and hopes of the examined anti-colonial thinkers.

In the five main chapters of the book, Getachew shows how anti-colonialists in different contexts and on both sides of the Atlantic used diverse strategies to achieve national self-determination for post-colonial states and justice on an international level. The first chapter delivers a political theory of decolonization. Getachew questions the inevitability of the transition from empire to nation-state and, in doing so, manages to not only show how worldmaking was a theory of political justice but also to highlight its role within the history of anti-imperial thought. While all the worldmakers knew or had participated in transnational anti-imperialism in the 1920s and 1930s, they extended their ambitions and departed from earlier projects after the collapse of the Third International (pp. 4, 25). The independence of the three

black states Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia reminded anti-colonial nationalists that formal sovereignty did not guarantee the absence of foreign domination, economic dependence, and global racial hierarchy. Between 1935 and 1945, anti-colonialists thus tethered their project to the form of the nation-state and articulated their visions of the world as an “internationalism of the nation-state” (p. 25). However, the goal always remained an international one, although it was reimagined “in and through rather than over and against the nation” (p. 28), as Getachew formulates it. Chapter 2 focuses on the debates about the League of Nations and imperialism in the 1920s and 1930s. Getachew analyses the Wilsonian Moment as a counter-revolutionary moment in which self-determination was recast and reimagined in the service of empire (p. 40). In what is essentially a critique of the liberal interpretation of the post-war order and a corrective to Erez Manela’s work, Getachew convincingly argues that Woodrow Wilson and Jan Smuts stole the revolutionary principle of self-determination from Vladimir Lenin and reframed it to preserve a racial hierarchy within the League of Nations. The examples of Liberia and Ethiopia show that membership to the League of Nations was indeed conditional, for example tied to the abolishment of slave trade, for African states. The Italian intervention in Ethiopia in 1934 was then promptly justified by the Ethiopian failure to meet certain conditions. For the anti-colonialists of Africa, America, and the Caribbean, the invasion caused disillusionment with the League of Nations and disappointment with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: in 1934, the Soviet Union joined the League of Na-

tions and thus went back on its own anti-colonial promises.

However, rather than reviving older projects (such as pan-Africanism), anti-colonialists after the Second World War decided to use the United Nations for their own goals. They transformed the General Assembly into a platform for decolonization to turn self-determination from a principle to a right (analysed in chapter 3). Self-rule was indeed acknowledged by the United Nations, but was mainly interpreted as a right of the individual and lacked any economic dimension. The following two chapters examine how worldmakers used other projects to achieve global justice. Getachew examines the thought of Nkrumah and Williams and their short-lived federal projects – the Union of African States and the West Indian Federation – and shows how these projects used the United States as a model for a post-colonial federation (chapter 4). Another attempt to achieve global economic equality was the utopia of a welfare world and the project of the New International Economic Order (NIEO, chapter 5). This vision of equality between states was more based on an alternative modernization theory than it was grounded in dependency theory. Nkrumah, for example, was convinced that imperialism had created dependence, but that development could still be replicated when the post-colonial state acted as strong agent of

transformation (p. 149). Getachew shows how the idea of the NIEO was essential to the project of worldmaking and how it intersected with actors who were not necessarily part of the Black Atlantic (such as Gunnar Myrdal or Raúl Prebisch). Nevertheless, the author also manages to show how, beginning in the mid-1970s, this internationalist project was actively displaced and how power moved from the General Assembly to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – making the NIEO the last ambitious project of anti-colonial worldmaking.

In a clear and concise language, Getachew explains how much of today's international order was created in the late 1970s and 1980s. The right to self-determination, so influential and inspirational between 1945 and 1975, was increasingly framed by its opponents as statist, collectivist, and outdated. And yet, there was a time when other futures were thinkable. By analysing the paths imagined but not taken, Getachew urges us to rethink the concept and the history of decolonization, how it intersects with the histories of nationalism and post-colonial state-building, and how little it resembles a mere universalization of the so-called Westphalian order. The question of how an egalitarian internationalism built on self-determination could look like today remains highly relevant – not just in relation to the war in Ukraine.