

Book Review: Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants by Nandita Sharma

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Sharma, Nandita. *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020. xi + 372 pages. Hardcover, \$87.05.

Nandita Sharma, a professor of sociology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, traces global history by moving from the period of imperialism to war to decolonization to the present span that appeared after World War II. Referred to as the Postcolonial New World Order (PNWO), this recent span is characterized by the ascendancy of nation-states, by a fixation on issues related to sovereignty and territoriality, by extreme immigration controls, by made-up unity through appeals to nationalism, by economic competition for resources, and ultimately by separation of racial, ethnic, and class-based groups based on their “nativeness,” or ostensible ties to the home country. While the book mainly explains the evolution of the current condition by tapping a multitude of sources, Sharma offers personal ideas to reverse the negative legacy which past circumstances continue to bequeath.

In addition to its nine chapters, the book includes acknowledgments at the start and notes, a bibliography, and an index at the end. The initial chapter deals with the major theme of the book and begins with the present period in world history.

The author advances the view that the United States has dominated the world since PNWO’s emergence, and because of that has not only practiced racist political and social policies, but has exported those practices along with forced compliance to competitive international capitalism.

Chapters 2 through 4 examine the mobility of groups from the mid-nineteenth century to the post-World War I era. From a global vantage point, this period included the age of imperialism and its demise. Among the cases examined is India’s rebellion against Britain. The

subsequent time was typified by indirect rule, which pitted mostly white settlers against more recent arrivals deemed as migrants. Beginning with the United States' first major immigration law in 1875, the author traces the lineage of initial immigration legislation throughout nations comprising the Americas. During World War I, the European nations who were combatants highly restricted entry of immigrants; this pattern continued with deportations and expulsions after the war.

In Chapter 5, the decolonization movement is assessed. Paramount as part of this process was the assumption of national self-determination; unfortunately, many factors inhibited significant progress or change. Politically, the 1941 Atlantic Charter signed by the United States and Britain set out the goals for the governance of the postwar world. Economically, the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement outlined the future international monetary and financial system; it was followed by the creation of the World Bank and General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT). Militarily, the American-Soviet alliance during World War II quickly devolved into Cold War antagonism and the formation of the pro-West North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the one hand and the Soviet-led eastern European Warsaw Pact on the other. The Non-Aligned Movement, founded in 1961, quickly betrayed its purpose of not being tied to any sphere of influence.

Chapters 6 through 8 analyze the contemporary, post-World War II global system coined by the author as the Postcolonial New World Order. Sharma contends that because the new system was erected in an undemocratic and hierarchical manner, attempts at national liberation foundered and underdevelopment flourished. The stagflation of the 1970s made the situation worse, resulting in the shifting of class relations both within and between nations. As the capitalist economic structure faced the aforementioned challenges, the plight of immigrants

worsened. It impacted migrants especially hard, who were increasingly denied citizenship and were blatantly discriminated against. Sharma adds to information provided earlier by tracing restrictive immigrant laws in Asia, African, and Middle East countries. These actions augmented the trend toward territoriality and “binary” divisions of populace. Ultimately, white supremacy and white nationalism bred a virulent form of nativism, whereby even non-white indigenous peoples of a country became targets of enmity.

The book’s final chapter accomplishes two purposes. First, it effectively presents current deficiencies among countries and people caused by PNWO. These include significant differences in lifespan, wage gaps, and unequal distribution of individual and national wealth. Second, the author presents her proposed solutions to the crisis, which include eliminating strict borders to combat racism, dis-identifying political categories to prevent discrimination, and mixing races to reverse poisonous nationalism. By opposing PNWO, Sharma states that we can “allow ourselves the freedom to build a new *worldly* place of our making, one that is held in common so that we can withstand the efforts of future Lords” (p. 282).

Over that last six years, a number of other books have explored similar subject as those found in the present text. Wendy Brown (2014) theorizes that the recent fixation on national boundaries is a consequence of lessened sovereignty. Reece Jones (2016) demonstrates how the molding of borders contributed to the refugee crisis. Paul Collier and Alexander Betts (2017) propose specific moves to alleviate the refugee crisis, including a humanitarian approach integrated with a new economic agenda. In their edited book, Claire Finkelstein and Michael Skerker (2018) explore the link between sovereignty and increasing executive authority in the post 9-11 environment. Adom Getachew (2019) finds that decolonization did not further self-

determination in the manner it was intended. Finally, Daniel Denvir (2020) reviews the rise of American nativism over several decades, casting equal blame between political parties for xenophobic policies attacking immigration.

As one surveys contemporary American trends, there is much to support Sharma's perspective and findings, from current racial uprisings to anti-globalization measures to punitive immigration policies. Yet, the proposed granting of asylum to persecuted persons and the blowback from the Pulitzer Prize awarded to the "1619 Project" on slavery's origins reveal an alternative orientation. Too, economic growth before the worldwide pandemic points to a positive development underappreciated by the author. Still, Sharma's bold thesis and comprehensive review of worldwide immigration legislation convincingly compensate for the book's only structural weakness, which is the longer length of Chapters 7 and 8 relative to the rest of the text.

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