

Preface : A Frontier in the Study of Liberalism and Empire

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Preface: A Frontier in the Study of Liberalism and Empire

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The present special review section is the outcome of a book review session conducted as part of the Global Studies International Symposium, “The Deep Roots of Brexit? The Anglosphere in History,” organized by the Institute for Advanced Global Studies, the University of Tokyo, on the 23rd of March, 2019. This symposium was an attempt to examine imminent Brexit from a long historical perspective and situate it in the chronicled development of modern Britain. Under such rubric, we debated on Onur Ulas Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) with the author being invited to the aforementioned book review session. This monograph is distinct and inspiring in its in-depth analysis of the entanglement between liberalism, capitalism and imperialism (and, to a significant extent, settler colonialism). It addresses the issue by focusing mainly on the writings of three British thinkers: John Locke, Edmund Burke and E.G. Wakefield.

Since the late 1990s, the study of the history of political thought in the English-speaking world—specifically, perhaps, the worldwide intellectual history network centred around Cambridge, London, Harvard, Chicago and some other Anglo-American universities—has undergone both the ‘imperial turn’ and ‘international turn.’ One of the sustained and underlying thematics of this scholarship is the question of how modern liberalism has been closely associated with, or has even justified, European colonial development. Inherent in this question is analysts’ critical gaze at liberalism as the political tradition. The reasons behind the emergence of these turns are convoluted. The rise of the debate on ‘liberal empire’ in the wake of humanitarian interventions and global American power has been among them, yet they are not limited to this.

Ulas Ince’s book is one of the newest achievements in this strand of the study of the history of political thought. Its identifying characteristic is its incorporation of insights of political economy into the research on liberal imperialism. Through this integration, the book seeks to unravel the complex tensions and connections between liberalism and a form of violent colonial transformation into capitalism. Marxian views and the argument of C.B. Macpherson are also employed with their modernization. In addition, the book is worth reading for its investigation into the settler-colonial work of Wakefield, a nineteenth-century utilitarian figure who has long been overlooked despite his great influence on John Stuart Mill on the topic. Altogether, the book illuminates an important dimension of how the English-speaking countries—currently labelled by some as the ‘Anglosphere’—have historically been shaped.

The review articles are written by the commentators in the above-mentioned book review session, as well as myself. The author Ulas Ince has also contributed his reply to them. I sincerely thank all of them. Incidentally, the present section is the almost first attempt in the history of this Komaba academic journal to publish English articles. In this respect, I believe, it will also count much.