

BOOK REVIEW

Dmitri M. Bondarenko. *Post-Colonial Nations in Historical and Cultural Context*. London: Lexington Books, 2023. vii + 354 pp. References. Index. \$120.00. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-66694-046-6.

Bondarenko delves into the concept of post-colonialism, proposing a redefinition that widens beyond political and socioeconomic frameworks to embrace cultural dimensions. In Chapter One, “The Nation and Modernity,” he criticizes traditional classification, challenging established scholarly perspectives from figures like J.G. Herder and Benedict Anderson. The narrative navigates historical epochs, investigating nation-building from Europe’s nineteenth-century transformations to post-colonial African and Asian struggles. Bondarenko juxtaposes secularism, modernity, and globalization, discussing that non-Western societies agree on modernization without disowning indigenous cultures. His study emphasizes that modernity, outlined by historical injustices and colonial legacies, demonstrates uniquely across civilizations. This scholarly work induces readers to reevaluate the entangled advancement of nations, cultures, and ideologies.

Chapter Two, “Colonialism—Post-colonialism—Nations,” systematically investigates nation-building in post-colonial societies, dichotomizing the conversion from colonial subjugation to forming independent states. The chapter explores the unease between single modernity (Western-centric) and multiple modernities, featuring the insightful differences in the historical course between the West and the post-colonial regions of Asia and Africa. Bondarenko details the colonial legacy of arbitrarily drawn boundaries, which disdained local histories and sociocultural framework, cultivating multiethnic and multipolitical tensions. The chapter explores the colonial use of ethnicity as a political tool to systemize inequality, emphasizing its persistent impact on state formation and governance. Bondarenko assesses post-colonial headship for spotlighting territorial nationalism over genuine nation-building, upholding the disassembling of colonial hierarchies. Through perceptive analysis of education, community structures, and religious identity, the chapter reinforces the challenges of accomplishing democratic civil societies in post-colonial contexts while proffering insights into the enduring complexities of these nations.

Bondarenko’s *Post-Colonial Nations in Historical and Cultural Context* systematically examines the challenges and transformations faced by post-colonial societies in Asia and Africa. The study steers two primary courses: societies hindered by colonial legacies and those gradually embracing European models. Bondarenko critiques compelled governance structures, underscoring how democratic paradigms often discord with traditional power dynamics. He explores the

centralization of authority, juxtaposing pre-colonial systems of limited power with post-colonial despotism, where rulers clasped European-style autocracy. The role of elections, nationalism, and education documents a critical axis of the discussion. Bondarenko features the fragility of democratic foundations, commenting on how elections can accelerate violence and disseminate pseudo-democracies. Through fieldwork and historical analysis, he discloses how education systems and rewritten histories operate as tools for national unity but also propagate colonial influences. Drawing on examples like Rwanda, Nigeria, and Morocco, Bondarenko probes the correspondence between tradition and modernization, accentuating neotraditionalism and patrimonialism's enduring influence. This study is a scholarly discourse on the sociopolitical and cultural metamorphosis of post-colonial societies, highlighting their struggle for identity amidst modernity.

Chapter Three, "Post-colonial Nations in Historical and Cultural Context: Three Cases," delves into the historical and cultural underpinnings of nation-building in Tanzania, Zambia, and Uganda. Bondarenko catechizes Tanzania's unique incorporation of Swahili as a unifying force, cultivating national identity while transcending tribal and ethnic divisions. J.K. Nyerere's leadership emerged as crucial, predominantly his Ujamaa ideology, which categorized self-reliance and civil identity over ethnic or religious affiliations. The exploration encompasses Zambia and Uganda, underscoring the deep-rooted colonial legacies that silhouetted their sociopolitical landscapes. While Zambia adopted multiculturalism, Uganda's brawls with language policy and ethnic hierarchies enhanced profound integration challenges. The text also outlines the colonial framework of indirect rule, which concurrently conserved and reformed indigenous power structures. This chapter is a coercive exploration of how post-colonial nations traversed the complexities of unity, cultural heritage, and modernization, propounding an apparent perspective on their united and divergent paths.

Bondarenko probes the complex affiliation between colonialism, ethnonationalism, and religion in contouring nation-building across Uganda, Zambia, and Tanzania. The narrative draws on Buganda's crucial role in Uganda's history, where British nepotism elevated the kingdom's status, nurturing ethnonationalism and building sustaining political influence. Regardless of post-colonial transformation by leaders like Milton Obote and Yoweri Museveni, Buganda's traditional rulers retain symbolic power, elucidating the deep-rooted Ganda-centric ideology. In contrast, Zambia's chiefs employ substantial authority, influencing land use and local governance. At the same time, Tanzania emerges as a prototype of national unity, thanks to Julius Nyerere's secular policies and Swahili cultural integration. Bondarenko emphasizes the divisive role of religion in Uganda and Zambia, contrasting Tanzania's inclusive approach to religious coexistence. The analysis accounts for the constraints of national myths and pleas for a unified historical memory to foster belonging. Tanzania's success epitomizes the promise of symbolic politics in overcoming Africa's ethno-religious fragmentation.

Chapter Four, "Nation-Building in Post-colonial Countries in Historical and Cultural Context of Our Time," investigates the complex course of nation-building in post-colonial contexts, stipulating a comprehensive analysis of the

socio-political and cultural transitions that defined the post-World War II era. The chapter commences by discovering how post-colonial states, particularly in Asia and Africa, embraced developmental models rooted in European frameworks. Despite enfolding anti-colonialism and nationalism, these nations often aspired to reproduce Western ideals of statehood and self-determination. Bondarenko underscores this reliance and the need for unique models of modernity and national identity. The chapter features the complex interplay between nation, state, and cultural identity. Bondarenko discourses how Western Europe's transformation after World War II headed to the progression of multiculturalism, propelled by migration and social mobility. The idea of "the other" became a labelling feature, driving societies to reconcile cultural heterogeneity. Religious history, particularly in Europe and North America, is explored as a precursor to secularism and multiculturalism, accentuating the crucial role of forbearance and equality in silhouetting modern identities.

Bondarenko traces the historical evolution of the nation-state, exposing its roots in European industrial capitalism and cultural nationalism. He collocates this with the challenges proffered by globalization and transnationalism, which blur traditional notions of territoriality and sovereignty. The chapter offers discerning commentary on post-colonial struggles with ethnic separatism, federalization, and supra-nationalism, illuminating the diplomatic balance required to nurture unity without expunging local identities. Through case studies in Africa, Asia, and the Arab world, the author reviews the imposition of Eurocentric models and appeals from an Afro-Asian ethno-regional standpoint. The study travels with a provocative argument: multicultural nations must harmonize cultural diversity with socio-political integration, moving yonder Eurocentric frameworks to encompass pluralistic, inclusive identities. This chapter offers an enthralling assessment and an alternative vision for nation-building in the post-colonial era.

The book investigates the evolution of multiculturalism, contrasting European and post-colonial experiences. It argues that colonialism reformed cultures, unifying them into multicultural societies. The analysis spotlights the impression of globalization on intercultural interactions and questions whether nations underlining specific cultures associate with moral values. The study bonds human rights to cultural contexts, silhouetting communities across historical and political landscapes. Bondarenko concludes by establishing a thought-provoking question: If a country assigns significance to a particular culture, can it be regarded as a nation that upholds moral principles?

Lourdes R Vijayan 

XIM University

Odisha, India

lourdesvijayan@gmail.com

doi:10.1017/asr.2025.11