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REVIEW ARTICLE

MICHAEL MANN AND MODERN WORLD HISTORY

The sources of social power, III: *Global empires and revolution, 1890–1945*. By Michael Mann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-1-107-65547-8 (pbk). £22.99.

The sources of social power, IV: *Globalizations, 1945–2011*. By Michael Mann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-107-61041-5 (pbk). £22.99.

Michael Mann's last two volumes of *The sources of social power* are acknowledged to be a milestone in historical sociology.[1] They have not quite reached undergraduate history reading lists, at least in the UK. This is perhaps because his approach does not fit neatly into our common categories. He proclaims himself both an incurable empiricist and a purveyor of 'macro sociology'. He sees history as a pattern of disrupted equilibria, but this puts him much closer to the 'historian of events' than he would perhaps like to be. He is concerned with class, but is no dedicated Marxist, saying that his approach steers 'somewhere between a Marxian and Weberian position'. He focuses on the nation-state, but is devoid of nationalist commitment of any sort, differing from the position of Jeremi Suri, for instance, whose recent work *Liberty's surest guardian* broadly promotes a more positive view of America's world role.[2] Indeed, Mann sometimes appears to be rather more hostile to what he sees as the counterproductive 'imperialism' of his adopted country than, say, Messrs Chavez and Putin. He wants to inflect history with theory, but has little time for post-modernism. Neither Derrida nor Foucault, let alone Deleuze and Guattari or Zizek, figure significantly in his books, an offence almost worthy of burning at the stake in today's academy. Yet his analysis of key elements of twentieth-century historiography is consistently perceptive and his treatment of the history of the USA and the fall of communism, in particular, outclasses that of any historian I have read.

As his readers know well, Mann finds the *Sources of social power* in four conceptual categories: ideological, economic, military, and political, though,

[1] The first two volumes of *The Sources of social power* were given searching, but generally laudatory reviews in John A. Hall and Ralph Shroeder, eds., *An anatomy of power: the social theory of Michael Mann* (Cambridge, 2005), to which Mann responded with characteristic intellectual vigour. My remarks here take forward some of those themes but add new ones in view of the radical departures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

[2] Jeremy Suri, *Liberty's surest guardian: America's nation building from the founders to Obama* (New York, NY, 2011).

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interestingly, he states in volume IV that there may be others. These processes work through history in conjunction with each other, though with variable speed and effectiveness. It is difficult to judge which one of them is dominant, as this varies through time. The result was periods of concentration of power, followed by periods when it was distributed more evenly: the domination of Britain and France in the early nineteenth century, followed by the rise of Germany and Japan and, again, after 1945, American domination of many of these sources of power, though this was beginning to weaken by 2012, he believes.

The theoretical structure which underlies all four volumes gives them great coherence, especially since this aggregated understanding of power is quite appropriate for periods when empire and nation-state dominated the world. I would say, however, that a 'capillary' understanding of power, as advanced by the later Foucault and his followers, is equally if not more useful in dealing with periods such as the early eighteenth century or the post-colonial period when power was, fluid, distributed widely across the globe and moved from the peripheries inward or from the 'subaltern' upwards. This goes rather further than arguing for a 'distributive' form of power, as Mann himself does. Equally, the model advanced by the political philosopher, Raymond Geuss, which stresses a 'historically contingent amalgam of different ideologies and practices' subsisting across societies helps us to avoid an over-aggregated view of power.[3] Historians are well aware of the 'messiness' of power relations in history and we are lucky in being able to use these various models in a testing, heuristic manner rather than going to war to defend our theories.

What I want to do, then, in this brief review is not to criticize Mann, but to suggest some alternatives to be taken up in the almost impossible task of writing a history of the last century. This amounts to a mild critique, perhaps, though not criticism. I am encouraged to do this by a much earlier piece of Mann's own writing which lays out his ideas in the course of a critique of another major work, Eric Hobsbawm's *Age of Extremes*,[4] which Mann published in the *New Left Review* in 1995.[5] Much of this critique is commonly accepted. Thus, Hobsbawm failed to see that the very nature of the Bolshevik, or for that matter, Maoist, aim of building a new society on the basis of a 'new' human being would lead to terrible coercion: Stalinism and the murderous Great Leap Forward were not aberrations. Equally, Mann accuses Hobsbawm of a superficial treatment of fascism and Nazism, when they actually combined ideological, military, political, and economic power in ways very similar to communism.

Moving on to the later twentieth century, Mann downplays Hobsbawm's concept of the 'landslide', the years after 1970 when the post-war period of

[3] Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and real politics* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), pp. 59–70.

[4] Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes: the short history of the twentieth century, 1914–1991* (London, 2014).

[5] Michael Mann, 'As the twentieth century ages: the age of extremes', *New Left Review*, 1 (1995), pp. 1–14.

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optimism and nation building gave way to economic stagnation, racism, social disintegration, inequality, and unbalanced globalization. Mann notes that even during these years technological development, improvements in health, greater gender equality, and the stabilization of what both writers call 'the South' have to be set against this dismal picture which, he seems to imply, derived from an ageing man's dyspepsia.

Actually, Hobsbawm should porbably have the last laugh here. Like Spengler, his vision of the 'Decline of the West' was not wrong, but premature, and only by a generation, whereas Spengler was out by a century or so. The 2008 financial crisis, mass unemployment in developed countries, the costs of ageing populations, emerging economic problems in East Asia, the environmental crisis, and the massacres of the so-called Arab spring – all these must surely be considered a 'landslide'. It is true that Mann discusses some of these issues in his final volume. They were all around him when he wrote. But the longer-term origins of such crises in late imperialism and earlier forms of globalization have little purchase in preceding volumes, particularly in volume II, which focuses on class, revolution, and the nation-state almost exclusively in a European and American context.[6] Again, Mann might rue his statement in the Hobsbawm review of 1995 to the effect that the USA was unlikely again to project its military power across the world as it had done during the Cold War. The interlinked regional crises of terrorism, radical religion, and angry youth have produced another 'age of extremes' in which families can be distantly massacred by US drone strikes or Russian missiles, while politicians and public intellectuals argue over 'humanitarian intervention.'

Mann's concentration on class and the nation-state brings great benefits, but in some respects it curtails his view of the world. His focus in volumes III and IV inevitably falls on Europe, the United States, and Japan. A strong treatment of Japan is, of course, essential for this period, as Japan was the first non-European society to create a nation-state and a modern empire. China figures in this picture both as a victim of Japanese aggression and also as the second great scene of communist revolution in the final volume. World history cannot be all-encompassing, but I would certainly put more stress on the social roots of anti-colonial resistance, nationalism, and social change in South and South-East Asia, the Middle East and Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. It is difficult to understand the history of the second half of the century or the initial paroxysms of our twenty-first century without this background. We can learn a lot about the centre by considering what appear to be mere peripheries.

One could, nevertheless, proceed with an analysis of this sort using Mann's own categories of social power, but broadening them somewhat. In the case of ideological power, a closer focus on the role of religion as a social and political actor is of great importance. Liberal and leftist historians have a tendency to

[6] Michael Mann, *The sources of social power:* II*: The rise of classes and nation-states, 1760–1914* (Cambridge, 1993).

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downplay religion. I do not much like religion myself, but it is difficult to deny its significance, the superficial secularization of Europe notwithstanding. I argued in *The birth of the modern world*[7] that the nineteenth century saw a great revival of religion. Nationalism and empire were both tinctured with religion in the years preceding the First World War which could be called the 'idealist age.' Loose assemblages of cultic practice and philosophy became 'world religions' in Weber's sense and were energized with popular social missions. This change was firmly registered at the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 when Swami Vivekananda[8] and Anagarika Dharampala attended on behalf of 'Hinduism' and 'Buddhism' respectively. Vivekananda went on to found the Ramakrishna mission in India which promoted education and famine relief alongside religious reform, adopting and countering Christian missionary imperialism.

Neither of these religions, Hinduism and Buddhism – one a 'polymorphous monotheism', the other, a 'polymorphous anti-theism' – became coherently structured in the twentieth century even to the extent that Christianity or Islam became coherent. But Hindu and Buddhist belief and practice remained critical in anti-colonial and nation-building processes throughout the developing world. Buddhism underpinned the identity of Sinhala and South-East Asian nationalism. In the case of Vietnam, Buddhism has recently almost re-emerged as a state religion following the decline of communist atheism, particularly as a way of disciplining more dangerous private sects and American Viet Khieu-supported Christianity.

Hinduism – in a very idiosyncratic form – was central to Gandhi's appeal. Incidentally, Gandhi gets little attention, compared with Mao, in Mann's volumes. Later becoming a racial call to struggle, Hindutva ('Hindu-ness') was theorized in the early twentieth century by figures such as Golwalkar and Savarkar and emerged as a major political force in the second half of the century.[9] Since South Asia is soon to become the world's most populous region, this was a development of world-historical significance. Equally, if we consider Africa, indigenized Christianity was clearly a major force in the creation of African nation-states and also in melding with tribal differences to create identity clashes. One could think here of the Christian leanings of one element in the African National Congress and the Afrikaner Puritanism of its white opponents; or of the career of a Catholic Marxist revolutionary, such as Robert Mugabe.

In the long term, however, one must acknowledge the supreme importance of new forms of Islam that emerged during the century.[10] Ibn Saud's capture

[7] C. A. Bayly, *The birth of the modern world 1780–1914: global connections and comparisons* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 325–65.

[8] Amiya P. Sen, ed., *The indispensable Vivekananda: an anthology for our times* (Delhi, 2006).

[9] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu nationalist movement and Indian politics 1925 to the 1990s* (London, 1993).

[10] For a general view, see Malise Ruthven, *Islam in the modern world* (Oxford, 2006).

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of Mecca and Medina from the Hashemites in 1926 and the creation of a Wahhabi state at the heart of Islam coincided with the beginnings of oil exploration in Arabia. Later, the combination of puritan zeal and oil revenues was to alter the balance of world power. This would help enhance Mann's important discussion of American economic policies in the Middle East in volume IV. At the same time, less radical but equally significant forms of Islam emerged whether in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1922, or parties such as the Tablighi Jamaat which took root in what was to become Pakistan.[11] Later, after the Iranian revolution of 1979, Shi'ite radicalism also came onto the stage, setting the scene for the ideological battles of our own time. In this context, it is also essential to mention Zionism. However small the population of Israel, the foundation of the state in 1948 has again coloured world history, not to say US foreign policy ever since.[12]

One of the most admirable features of Mann's fourth volume is his robust defence of the idea of 'American Empire', whilst he notes that this only took the form of a territorial empire for short periods or in particular settings, such as central America or the Philippines. But it takes two to tango; empires always need local proxies. And as with the British empire, the Gulf States, the Taleban in 1980s Afghanistan, and the Jewish settler state have provided sometimes fitful support of this sort. Yet neither Zionism nor Wahhabism feature fully in the index to the last two volumes.

Finally, the importance of different forms of Christianity in the course of the long twentieth century is evident. It supported authoritarian regimes in Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, and Latin American regimes through to the 1990s. It provided much of the legitimating force of African nationalism, especially in East and West Africa through to the present. It had a major impact on American domestic politics and became enmeshed with neo-liberalism after the presidency of Ronald Reagan.[13] Religion, as a source of social power, almost fills a category of its own. Indeed, it has outlasted and triumphed over communism everywhere in the world as the fate of Pussy Riot firmly reminds us.

Another concept which deserves great attention beyond the nation-state and class is language and communication. This does not quite fit into any of the four sources of social power, but it interacts continuously with class, nation-state, and race. Here, post-modern theorists, drawing on Derrida and Foucault, have been quite perceptive in focusing attention on the complex, un-authored forms of speech and the way in which languages can become both forces of subtle

[11] Ira Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies* (Cambridge, 2013).

[12] Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The war for Palestine: rewriting the history of 1948* (Cambridge, 2001).

[13] Axel R. Schafer, *Countercultural conservatives: American evangelicalism from the postwar revival to the new Christian right* (Madison, WI, 2011); Daniel K. Williams, *God's own party: the making of the Christian right* (New York, NY, 2010).

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hegemony and equally of resistance. But given his alter ego as a British empiricist, Mann does not take this path.

Thinking of language in the twentieth century, the hegemonic power of the major European languages has to be acknowledged. English had become dominant in North America and Britain's dominions as native peoples were eliminated. Spanish and Portuguese were still expanding along with industry and farming throughout central and South America. French became the standard official language in French North and West Africa, while making inroads in parts of the Middle East, notably Syria and Lebanon. These linguistic empires seem likely to outlast European political and economic power by generations. After independence in 1960, for instance, the Algerian government did its best to discourage both French and Berber, bringing in Arabic teachers from Egypt and Syria. But radio and later satellite broadcasting brought back the French language with a vengeance, not least because it remained the language of commerce across the Mediterranean. Up to 40 per cent of the population now speak it regularly while the language of the street is a French-Arabic patois.[14] Similarly, in South Asia, English remains powerful as a 'link language' in the context of huge linguistic diversity and attempts to impose Hindi as a national language.

One bizarre, if slightly chilling fact, tying together empire, race, religion, and language concerns Malala Yousafzai, the young woman shot by the Taleban for advocating women's education. The Taleban leader who wrote to her to justify the attempted assassination specifically introduced the name of T. B. Macaulay, the British statesman, who in 1835 had proposed the promotion of English and the partial discontinuance of government support for the teaching of Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit in his Minute on Education. The Taleban ideologue went on to demand: why were the government and Pakistani elites so keen to promote English?[15] Well it was because 'Englishmen are the supporters and slaves of the Jews', presumably a reference to the Balfour Declaration and the creation of the state of Israel.

This reminds us, of course, that language has also been tied to forms of resistance throughout the century. Whether in the Irish Republic after 1922, in Quebec throughout the century, or in Kurdish parts of Turkey, indigenous languages have made a little headway in places. Thus, in New Zealand, the Maori language revived in the 1930s, in part because of the country's indebtedness to the Maori soldiers who fought in the First World War. North American Indians have also used the weapon of colonial guilt and the cash garnered from their control of gaming parlours to reinstate some of their native languages. Yet language widely relates to and strengthens hierarchy. In a striking anticipation of the work of theorists such as Homi Bhabha on this issue, from the 1970s Sri

[14] Michael Slachman,'In Algeria: a tug of war for young minds', *New York Times*, 23 June 2008.

[15] 'Why they shot Malala', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 July 2013.

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Lankan Sinhalese called English *'kaduwa'*, a word which means sword, implying something which is cutting the nation to pieces.[16] Of course, this had ramifications for ethnic relations since Tamils were disproportionately represented among the English-speakers. Elsewhere, elites have sometimes promoted English as an agent of nation-building, something which would have delighted Macaulay. In Singapore, there has been a determined government campaign to substitute Standard English for what is called 'Singlish' Singapore English patois.[17] Elsewhere in East Asia, however, it is the rise of Chinese as a world language which is most significant. Even in Australia, numbers of children are now learning Chinese at school.

A world history of the twentieth century certainly needs to develop the idea of communication in the context of social power. 'The medium is the message' now gives way to a new saying: 'the medium is the power.' I would certainly want to read a chapter about radio, television, films, the worldwide web, Facebook, the blog, and Twitter as defining features of the century (even though I have only the haziest understanding myself of the last two). Elections are now won with internet messages. Indian and Chinese farmers can now find markets with their mobiles. Governments use police resources and manpower to try to stop people putting political messages on the web, as the Vietnamese government did in August 2013. Social media also look set to change the very nature of human sociality and communication, for better or for worse. Friendship has changed its meaning, as has enmity-witness the so-called internet 'trolls'. A recent North American study found that if students taking a written examination received and read an email message during the session, their scores dropped by about 20 per cent, a fact which will not surprise this readership.

I want now to move on to some other themes which would fit well into Mann's categories of the economic and political sources of power, but also to 'provincialize Euro-America' in this discussion – to use and abuse Dipesh Chakrabarty's famous phrase. A great strength of volume III is its discussion of the Great Depression of the 1930s and its long-term effect on class relations. But it may be possible to see here a glimmer of one of the great changes which has characterized the last century, that is the slow growth of industrial and service capacity in the non-West, and not merely in Japan. Colonial governments in the 1930s were almost all devoted to laissez-faire internally, but protectionist in regard to the outside world. This was one reason that relations between developing Japan and the West broke down. At the same time, the very economic conditions of the Depression, notably differential labour costs between the West and the Rest, gave something of a boost to production in Mexico, much of the rest of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The Indian textile industry at Ahmadabad and Bombay had already benefited from the

[16] I am grateful to Dr Sujit Sivasundaram for this point.
[17] David Deterding, *Singapore English* (Edinburgh, 2007).

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poverty of the Indian government after 1918, when it was forced to put tariffs on British imports. The Second World War and the protectionist policies of the post-Independence governments speeded the process of industrialization.

Not all decolonizing countries followed this pattern. Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore rejected protectionism on the grounds that it destroyed citizens' self-reliance and was heard denouncing Nehru's protectionist policy in India as late as 2001.[18] But, however unbalanced, this early spurt of industrialization laid the early foundations of the shift in the location of world production which has gathered pace with the spectacular rise in China's exports in the past two decades. The process looks set to continue as wages rise in the new industrial powerhouses and their poorer competitors – Vietnam, Indonesia and the African states – gain equivalent advantages. Mann specifically acknowledges this at the end of volume IV. But this off-laying of economic functions was already beginning to occur in the mid-twentieth century. The wealth gap between the West and the non-West has distinctly diminished, if only slowly in some areas.

Related to this sea-change, and extending the whole issue of class, the rapid pace of world urbanization and the relative decline of the peasantry has surely been an epochal change. The world's urban population grew from less than 20 per cent of the total population c. 1920 to more than 60 per cent today. In many societies, the old urban working class was swamped by new immigrants from the declining countryside or from small to larger towns. The immigration of black southerners to North America's major cities in the 1920s was one part of this change in geography, urban–rural balance, and ultimately race politics. This movement has continued to the present when cities such as Lagos in West Africa are now bigger and have larger populations than London, Paris, and Chicago. Steady urbanization has often led to ethnic and racial tension, empowering right-wing, chauvinist parties across the world, which were less in evidence in the aftermath of the defeat of fascism.

At any rate, the rise and fall of the peasant is a critical dimension of the century's class politics and needs to be stressed. The older of us will remember that the peasantry was the major focus of both macro- and micro-sociology as recently as the 1960s and 1970s, with works by Gunder Frank, Scott, and Popkin leading the charge.[19] Peasants were not just objects of academic study; they were seen as the political future. Outbursts of so-called Maoism in central India and Venezuela apart, the peasant now seems to be the great loser of the century. He has disappeared from modernizing communist posters in China and Vietnam, while in Russia he is killing himself with vodka.

[18] Interview with Lee Kuan Yew, 5 May 2001, www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/leekuanyew.html, accessed Aug. 2012.

[19] Andre Gunder Frank, *On capitalist underdevelopment* (Bombay, 1875); Samuel L. Popkin, *The rational peasant: rural society in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA, 1979); James. C. Scott, *The moral economy of the peasant: subsistence and rebellion in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT, 1976).

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I should add that these huge changes had a powerful effect on mores, the structure of the family, sexuality, and aspirations across the world. Cities breed new ideas and new relationships. Combined with better nutrition and the expansion of medical knowledge, urbanization has contributed to the continuing growth of population, particularly the young population in developing countries. Elsewhere, it is the elderly population that has increased disproportionately while also being alienated from society. The joint family has all but disappeared, while the one-child policy in Asian communist countries and aversion to large families in much of Europe is leading to striking imbalances between working-age and retired people. Gender relations tend to be more equal in cities than in the countryside, though this is sometimes associated with random sexual violence such as occurred recently in India and Brazil. I mention this because what we might call the 'social sources of social power' move upwards, changing the balance of ideological, military, economic, and political power. The Muslim Brotherhood, for instance, flourished because it provided aid for the urban and rural poor. Radical political movements of both Right and Left have been empowered by the mass of young unemployed. Without buying into the doctrinal version of subaltern studies, world history does need to be seen from the bottom up, as it were, as well as from the so-called peripheries.

Mann's emphasis, particularly in volume III, understandably lies on revolution, the fascist counter-revolution and the middle ground trod when Western nations created the welfare state and America moved away from laissez-faire in the aftermath of the New Deal, at least until the 1970s. Volume IV pays equal attention to the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions and to the fall of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe, in the context of the Cold War and arms race and the strains they created. A view from what was once the periphery, which has been my theme throughout, might, however, stress the varied fortunes of popular and democratic government across the world, socialist or not.

To a considerable extent, Mann himself did this in his *The dark side of democracy*.[20] But historians will need to be aware of the roots of demands for equality in different world settings. The diffusion and mixing of ideas, once again, was certainly an important influence. New communications, print, and travel have made people aware of the existence of a degree of economic and political liberty in other societies. This was the fundamental reason for the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and its modification towards state entrepreneurship in China and Vietnam, for instance. Ironically, it was also the reason for the brief burst of democracy in Allende's Chile, which was then suppressed by the USA itself, supposedly the icon of political freedom. Yet the demand for popular government also had roots other than the outward percolation of supposed Euro-American values.

[20] Michael Mann, *The dark side of democracy: explaining ethnic cleansing* (Cambridge, 2005)

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In Africa, for instance, an appropriation of the themes of equality arguably inherent to the Christian message merged with indigenous ideas of the honour of the individual, at least the male individual. This created a powerful force for democracy against both the late colonial powers and the various military dictators who often succeeded them. Dr J. B. Danquah in 1930s West Africa, the Kenyan resistance leaders of the 1950s, and Nelson Mandela, an admirer of both Nehru and Gandhi, are all examples of this. Again, as suggested earlier, the popular Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood has been a force for democratic change, whether one admires its social programme or not. In India, the flawed, but admirable survival of democracy through Mrs Gandhi's 'Emergency', the rise of Hindutva, and neo-liberalism owes relatively little to the British introduction of representative forms, which focused on the influence of conservative interest groups. Instead, mass mobilization by Congress and (initially) the Muslim League, pushed even conservative nationalist leaders to concur in the concession of universal adult suffrage in 1938, only shortly after the British had taken this step, and before the French. In turn, the development of the idea of reservations and political representation for the lower castes, pioneered by B. R. Ambedkar, fundamentally changed the nature of India's democracy.[21] The variable history of democracy is a key theme of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While it is impossible to advance a story either of straightforward teleology or of West–East diffusion, it is clear that people constantly appropriated themes from global political debate and applied them to their own 'life-world' in Gadamer's sense.

Michael Mann ends his final volume with a consideration of the other great issue of the present: environment, climate change, population, and the limits of economic growth. Significant elements of the historical profession, including the subalternists, have moved in a similar direction. The interesting aspect of this branch of emerging historiography is that it is necessarily global in reach and intertwined with the growth of states and empires. Yet it needs to be understood as the product of a set of long-term changes, rather than something which has suddenly hit us at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In fact, a number of important studies in environmental history were published over the last generation, but they have not generally been integrated with wider history. Works by Richard Grove and Mahesh Rangarajan, among others, preceded the present trend.[22]

The massive die-off of flora, fauna, and population in the Americas from the fifteenth century onward was followed by the ravaging of woodlands across Western Europe to support ship-building and housing. In turn, European

[21] Shruti Kapila, 'Global intellectual history and the Indian political', in Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds., *Rethinking modern intellectual history* (New York, NY, 2013), pp. 437–57.

[22] Richard Grove, *Green imperialism: colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism* (Cambridge, 1995); Mahesh Rangarajan, *The Raj and the natural world* (Delhi, 1999).

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empires promoted mass deforestation and destruction of wildlife, only latterly imposing self-interested forest policies. Post-colonial governments and modern nation-states have connived at mass building projects which have disrupted river systems and driven down water tables. Globalization has spread diseases among wildlife, plants, and trees, as witness the decline of Denmark's forests. The jury is out on the role of carbon dioxide and climate change. Here democracy, economic liberalization, and even religion become entangled in what future historians have already named 'the environmental turn'. The longue durée history of empire, including the Americas, from the sixteenth century onwards must illuminate this critical new branch of our discipline.

The great strengths of the *Sources of social power* are two. First, is Mann's remarkable ability to read and synthesize a huge range of historical and sociological writing with great clarity. Secondly, his macro-sociological model – the four sources of power – means that the whole work retains an impressive explanatory framework. The great danger of writing world history is that, on the one hand, it becomes 'everything under the sun' and 'one thing after another' or, on the other hand, it becomes a rigid essay in homogenization. I suspect my *Birth of the modern world* veered in the first direction, while Mann, by classing much of the world before 1945 under the heading of 'empire', may sometimes run the risk of moving in the opposite direction. I would simply re-iterate my assertion that power moves upward as well as downward and it also moves from the outward to the inward, from periphery to centre, as well as in the other direction. It is more than a matter of distribution and concentration; power is malleable, fluid, and arises from remarkable conjunctures of events, intellectual reflection, and commitment, as Mann often recognizes.

My aim in this review has been, to adapt the words of Mark Anthony, 'to praise Michael Mann, not to bury him'. I have chosen to do so by taking an extra-European, and particularly a South Asian view of some of the themes which I personally would stress more fully in a world history of the twentieth century: religion, language communication, urbanization, and the fate of democracy, among others. But to do so is in no way to detract from the remarkable intellectual achievement of *The sources of social power*.

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