

INDIA, THE GREAT DIVERGENCE, AND THE WRECKAGE OF MODERNITY

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ABSTRACT

Research over the last two decades on the economic divergence of Europe and China before the nineteenth century has stimulated much recent scholarship investigating similar diverging paths between Europe and India. Following the lead of Kenneth Pomeranz, this work focuses on the demographic, ecological, and geographical factors in this divergence and argues for the direct comparability of the most economically advanced parts of Europe with such places as Gujarat and Mysore in Mughal India, which showed considerable proto-industrial development before their relative economic decline and deindustrialization in the nineteenth century. The book under review approaches this topic by deploying a modified Marxian-Weberian framework and draws on extensive research in Indian and British archives to argue that both Gujarat and Mysore might have embarked on paths of sustained economic growth through natural commercial expansion and deliberate mercantilist statecraft hindered by the East India Company. Despite resurging interest in Marx, much recent work in global economic history highlights the limitations of modernization theories drawn from a long tradition of Western social science indebted to the theories of Marx and Weber.

Keywords: California School, divergence, economic history, Gujarat, Industrial Revolution, Marx, modernization theory, Mysore

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx observed that “The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things . . . they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and borrowed language.”¹ Although in many historical discussions tradition weighs like a nightmare, few have been as haunted by the past as the “Divergence Debate” over the causes of the different paths of history followed by Europe and Asia since the advent of modernity. Indeed, in important ways this debate is as old as the encounter of Europeans and Asians, which is to say as old as the very idea of Europe, based as it is on an ethnographic

1. Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Norton, 1978), 595.

register shaped by more than 2,500 years of reflection on the alleged differences between Occident and Orient. This can be traced back to Hesiod and Herodotus, that is to say, to the very earliest “European” histories. These were overlain in late antiquity and the medieval period by a Christian identity defining itself in explicitly anti-Jewish (non-Oriental) terms, later sharpened by the Crusades, Moorish and Turkish Wars, and by overseas conquest, conversion, and colonization. Quite obviously, religious values and culture were central to these medieval and early modern European notions of identity, though the Iberian *Reconquista*, the violent entry of Europeans into the Indian Ocean spice trade, and the development of plantation systems using African slaves clearly worked to gradually racialize that notion of European exceptionalism by the eighteenth century.²

The advent of industry in the late eighteenth century along with suffrage reform, the abolition of slavery, and the spread of Christian missionary activity in the colonies in the early nineteenth century served to reinforce and sharpen the traditional perspectives of divergence, leading to more restrictive, hierarchical, and biologicistic definitions of European character and new heroic notions of European progress that in turn shaped not only “imperial liberalism” but the disciplines of history, economics, and sociology at their very inception.³ Although this new utilitarian and evangelical “imperial liberalism” rejected the Romantic assumptions of the Orientalism of its day, there can be no doubt about the profound lasting impact of the older Orientalism and the whiggish neo-Orientalism that came to replace it in the nineteenth century, particularly the increasingly rigid modernization telos the latter came to embrace.⁴ From Montesquieu, Smith, Malthus, Hegel, and Ranke to Nassau Senior, James and J. S. Mill, Tocqueville, Herbert Spencer, Macaulay, and Marx in the nineteenth century, and from Max Weber, Werner Sombart, Fernand Braudel, and Talcott Parsons to Walter Rostow, David Landes, Eric L. Jones, and Douglass North into the late twentieth century, there is indeed an unbroken line of influential history, sociology, and economics that has helped construct a Western modernization *Sonderweg* beholden to that heroic modernization narrative.

2. See, among many others, Américo Castro, *The Structure of Spanish History*, transl. Edmund L. King (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: The Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2013), 87–134, 183–245; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2012).

3. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); on British Indian Orientalism in particular, see Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1994); Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On “Imperial liberalism,” see Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

4. On the emergence of Anglicist neo-Orientalism, see Francis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); and *The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781–1843*, ed. Lynn Zastoupil and Martin Moir (Richmond, VA: Curzon, 1999).

Whiggish history and modernization theories derived from neo-Orientalism continue to haunt the discussion of European industrialization and the Great Divergence to the present day. To give just two contemporary examples from economic history and economics, consider Joel Mokyr's *The Enlightened Economy* and the work of the Douglass North and his colleagues in *Violence and Social Orders*.⁵ In his interpretation of the causes of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, Mokyr gives primary importance to the systems of belief and thought and changes in institutions ushered in by the European Enlightenment. The belief in an orderly universe governed by natural law and the scientific and experimental methods that emerged from that belief were applied to the study of technology, yielding the extraordinary explosion of useful technology that emerged in Great Britain in the late eighteenth century. Mokyr argues that Britain's open social structure encouraged a liberal exchange of ideas between scientists and artisans, and the abundance of skilled engineers enabled a rapid transfer of those ideas into mechanical invention and innovation. The lingering influence of Weber is unmistakable in these arguments, whether in the notions of instrumental and belief-oriented forms of rationality and their connection to Western religion, religious culture and philosophy, and the disenchanting tendency of that thought, or in highlighting the role of Protestant nonconformists in industrial entrepreneurship.⁶ Colonization, slavery, and many other less "Enlightened" features of Britain's economic history between 1700 and 1850 are notably marginal in this lengthy monograph.

Similarly, North and his colleagues John Wallis and Barry Weingast argue that in Western Europe and the United States a unique set of circumstances established rule of law for elites, permanent organizations in the public and private spheres, and a monopoly of violence constrained by law. Over time the rights of citizenship were extended to non-elites, and elites ceded access to the political system, allowing any group to form parties and participate in competitive elections defined by constitutions. Finally, the ability to form economic organizations was extended to all citizens, and economic processes came to be defined by open access, open competition, and capitalist creative destruction. This is an elaboration of the Friedman-Hayek hypothesis that societies with high levels of political freedom must also have corresponding levels of economic freedom, a notion that undergirds what has been termed the Washington Consensus.⁷ There are more than a few echoes here of Macaulay, namely of the onward march of wealth and freedom due to the peculiarly progressive habits, rational and enterprising cast of mind, and free institutions ushered in by the Glorious Revolution. It is worth mentioning here that Mokyr's and North, Wallis, and Weingast's are endogenous and culturalist narratives/frameworks, ones that do not take seriously (or much engage with) the

5. Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain 1700–1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Douglass North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

6. See Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, 361–362, 388–389.

7. For a critique of the Hayek-Friedman hypothesis and North *et al.*'s framework, see Erik Grimmer-Solem, "The Mature Limited Access Order at the Doorstep: Imperial Germany and Contemporary China in Transition," *Constitutional Political Economy* 26, no. 1 (2015), 103–120.

work of Immanuel Wallerstein or Kenneth Pomeranz and others who emphasize the role of overseas colonies, ecology, and geography—the proximity to the land and riches of the New World and the plentiful and accessible coal on the British Isles—that allegedly offered the capital, resources, and the ecological relief that enabled the development of industrial capitalism.⁸ One interesting exception from within the ranks of other economists is Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson's *Why Nations Fail*, notable for its serious engagement with the baleful long-term legacy of slavery, colonization, and crony capitalism in political and economic underdevelopment.⁹ It is noteworthy, too, for its critical engagement with the arguments of geographical and cultural determinists. That said, it is hard to overstate the influence of Douglass North's "new institutionalist" framework within the economics profession; North won the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences with Robert Fogel in 1993.¹⁰

Within the wider fields of history and sociology, it has been a slightly different story. As the work of William H. McNeill, Marshall G. S. Hodgson, Immanuel Wallerstein, Alfred Crosby, Philip D. Curtin, Patrick Manning, Patrick O'Brien, John F. Richards, and many others demonstrates, since the 1960s the divergence debate has been shaped by many innovative and often heterodox scholars from a variety of quarters, not least the new subfields of world, global, and environmental history, bolstered since the 1990s by a group of economic historians and sociologists sometimes known as the "California School."¹¹ This latter group has included Jack Goldstone, Roy Bin Wong, Andre Gunder Frank, Richard von Glahn, and Kenneth Pomeranz; their work concentrates on the early modern period, is much more explicitly comparative, and is focused on longer-term demographic, geographical, and environmental factors in Asian and European historical divergence.¹² A hallmark of much of this research is more careful study of China and choosing appropriate regions in China and Europe for "reciprocal comparisons." One insight that emerged from this work is that China and Western Europe were more similar in terms of demography, income, luxury consumption, and technological dynamism in the early modern period, and that historical divergence was much later than commonly believed and was caused by different factors than had been conveyed by the established Eurocentric canon of sociology, economics, and history.

8. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, 4 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974–2011); Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2000), 264–297.

9. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012).

10. This is not technically a "Nobel Prize," as economists would have people believe, but rather a prize established in 1969 by the Swedish National Bank "in memory of Alfred Nobel."

11. For a good recent overview of these fields, see *Global History, Globally: Research and Practice around the World*, ed. Sven Beckert and Dominic Sachsenmaier (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

12. Important works in this line of thinking include Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Andre Gunder Frank, *ReORIENT: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*.

Perhaps best known among these scholars is Kenneth Pomeranz, who argues that the most developed parts of Western Europe and China—Britain and the Yangtze delta region—were facing similar Malthusian demographic pressures on land resources for fuel, food, fiber crops, and building materials in the seventeenth century. Where these two regions diverged was that the British had to go overseas to procure such things as sugar and cotton, thus developing mercantilist institutions to project power overseas and to colonize, and through which they were lucky to find a large, land-abundant periphery close by in the Americas.¹³ Pomeranz claims that the colonies in North America and the Caribbean worked by African slaves relieved the land constraints in Britain and lowered agricultural commodity prices, and the sheer luck of abundant, easily mined, and transportable coal replaced dwindling wood fuel. Meanwhile, the North American and Caribbean colonies themselves became a buoyant market for British textiles and iron goods. These developments encouraged an Atlantic division of labor and thus stimulated proto-industrial development in Britain away from agriculture toward mechanized industry. In China, meanwhile, most sugar and cotton was domestically produced, but lacking a proximate land-rich periphery, China's extraordinarily productive agricultural sector kept up with population pressure by intensification (adding more labor inputs per acre of land). This had the effect of keeping agricultural commodity prices higher and thus extended the marginal product of labor in agriculture, closing a window for proto-industrial textiles. Also in contrast to Britain, Chinese coal was far from river or coastal transport. Pomeranz argues that all of these developments and others hindered proto-industrial specialization in the Yangtze Delta textile region, which under more fortuitous geographical circumstances might easily have mechanized.¹⁴ To be sure, some of Pomeranz's claims have had to be walked back in recent years in line with valid criticisms of some of his arguments, notably pushing a bit earlier the date when divergence between China and Britain began, but the most important features of his argument have held up well to criticism.¹⁵

The divergence debate was much invigorated by the work of the so-called “California School,” but many other economic historians working on Britain and Europe have been gradually revising the European story, drawing on new data and taking novel approaches. After a closer look at all British economic sectors during the Industrial Revolution, Nicholas Crafts and C. Knick Harley reveal that rather than a broad, heroic front of innovation across multiple sectors (as was often claimed for the Industrial Revolution), the early phase of industrialization affected only the cotton goods sector and iron smelting, with much of the rest of the British economy remaining quite traditional and contributing little to output and income growth in that period.¹⁶ Jan de Vries, meanwhile, shows that a much overlooked “Industrious Revolution” preceded the advent of mechanized

13. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, 211-263.

14. *Ibid.*, 264-297.

15. See Kenneth Pomeranz, “Ten Years After: Responses and Reconsiderations,” *Historically Speaking* 12, no. 4 (2011), 20-25.

16. N. F. R. Crafts and C. K. Harley, “Output Growth and the British Industrial Revolution: A Restatement of the Crafts-Harley View,” *Economic History Review*, New Series 45, no. 4 (1992), 703-730.

industry and was driven profoundly by a consumer revolution sparked by the new tastes and preferences that emerged from exposure to overseas colonial and Asian luxury commodities like sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco, cotton, silk, and porcelain.¹⁷ The Netherlands were the very epicenter of this revolution in tastes and sociability around these “new luxuries” that then spread all over Europe. As a result, a new middle-class consumer-goods industry in cotton textiles, ceramics, and metal goods emerged in Britain, which, as Maxine Berg has shown, was a necessary prelude to industrial mechanization.¹⁸ De Vries argues that it was also this revolution in consumer demand that intensified work to generate additional income for consumption and gradually reorganized work and the household in ways that were later conducive to both factory production and mass consumption. This is a serious blow to Marxian and neoclassical notions that “the needs of capital” had molded labor to the demands of the machine.¹⁹ More recently, Lynn Hunt has reinforced and extended these arguments, noting how important it is to analyze individual choices in response to new expectations in that process along an even broader front.²⁰ As she points out, new consumer wants stimulated by the global traffic in tobacco, coffee, tea, and sugar had implications well beyond economic history, including new expanded understandings of the self, new notions of sociability and the public sphere, and a rising demand for more democratic politics.²¹ It seems European modernity—consumer, commercial, industrial, political, and cultural—is deeply entangled with the rest of the world, and with Asia in particular.

Long-held “stylized facts” upholding the Eurocentric narrative have also been under assault from other quarters. In a wide-ranging and powerful book that made use of new global datasets compiled by the Global Price and Income History Group, Robert Allen tests the canonical explanations for the Industrial Revolution using regression models, finding them wanting.²² Among other findings, Allen calls into question the arguments proffered since Arthur Young and Karl Marx that claimed enclosure and large estates led to more farm output with less labor, which in turn supposedly spurred urbanization and industrial development. Rather, Allen shows that it was growth from the Atlantic division of labor created by Britain’s aggressive mercantilism, colonial empire, and overseas trade that stimulated urbanization, income growth, and higher wages in Britain, which in turn drove improved farm output with less labor and also to enclosure and larger agricultural estates. Enclosure as such, Allen shows, had only a modest impact on farm productivity and only a small impact on urbanization.²³ He

17. Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008). A similar argument was taken up by Christopher Bayly in *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

18. Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

19. de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, 114.

20. Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York: Norton, 2014), 130–131.

21. *Ibid.*, 131–151.

22. Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

23. *Ibid.*, 63–67, 115–116, 126–127.

likewise pours cold water on the favorite claims of many neo-classical and new institutional economists like Douglass North, namely that representative government and efficient property rights played key roles in the success of Britain's economy, showing their effects to be negligible at best—indeed, if anything it seems property rights were too strong in absolutist France and prevented productivity-enhancing infrastructural development there. The tax burden, it turns out, was also actually higher in Britain than in France, and representative government's overall impact on British economic development was found to be negligible, confirming what a number earlier studies had already found.²⁴ Nor has Allen's work been kind to those valorizing Enlightenment thought and science as prime movers of industrialization. The experimentation of the sort witnessed in eighteenth-century industrial invention was neither novel to that time nor did it require much if any formal scientific knowledge. As Allen argues, one should not construe the insignificant links that a number of industrial inventors might have had with scientific circles as important historical influences.²⁵

Taking the longer view, Allen shows that a series of historical contingencies deeper in the past created the unlikely set of conditions that made industry possible in England, notably the depopulation caused by the Black Death and the reversion to sheep pasture of vast areas of the Midlands, the rise of the “New Draperies” as a consequence of the new long-staple, coarser wool produced by that pasture, and the migration to England of highly skilled textile artisans from Flanders and France due to religious persecution on the continent. These factors helped turn a cultural and technological backwater like England into an important center of textile production in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Like Pomeranz, Allen highlights the fact that it was Britain's unsustainable use of wood fuel and the luck of having abundant and accessible coal deposits that ultimately saved its bacon and set a trajectory for an energy-intensive mode of development. But in the end it was this extraordinarily cheap fuel together with the highest wages in the world that made the mechanical innovations in cotton-textile spinning, steam pumps, and iron smelting with coke fuel peculiarly profitable in Britain. Indeed, using global price and income data, Allen shows that China, India, and all of continental Europe except the Netherlands had similarly expensive fuel and low wages, making any kind of innovation of that sort effectively unprofitable and thus highly unlikely anywhere but Britain.²⁶

An additional point raised by this wage and price data is that the Netherlands, like Britain, had unusually high wages driven by global trade, but its internal market was quite small, and it lacked the coal and other resources needed to make mechanized industry profitable and thus did not actually industrialize until the late nineteenth century.²⁷ Still, it was by far the most urbanized place in Europe, the epicenter of a major consumer revolution, and starting with the “Price Revolution” of the sixteenth century, an inventor of most of the key institutions of

24. *Ibid.*, 125-126, 129. See especially Stephan R. Epstein, *Freedom and Growth: The Rise of States and Markets in Europe, 1300-1750* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2000).

25. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution*, 238-257.

26. *Ibid.*, 135-151.

27. *Ibid.*, 98-104, 120-223, 268.

financial capitalism in Europe (negotiable bills, exchange banks, bonds and annuities, joint stock companies, commodity and futures exchanges), later copied by the English.²⁸ This invites some rethinking about the lazy and questionable conflation of capitalism (and modernity more broadly) with industry. Seen this way, industrial Britain was an odd European and global outlier, not the end point of any kind of “natural” European path. The broader impact of “California School” ideas in this perspective of divergence is worth highlighting, notably shifting the perspective away from supposedly deep-seated cultural, social, political, and economic differences between Europe and Asia toward seeing their divergence as the outcome of conjunctures between needs and opportunities, divergences shaped by geography, ecology, and population pressures, as well as by the institutions adopted to deal with those constraints. Peculiarities of religion, culture, and politics, if considered at all, are decidedly marginal in these new explanations.

The role of South Asia in the divergence debate has until relatively recently been somewhat understudied, but newer comparative histories of India and its connections to the world economy by among others Prasannan Partha Sarathi, Tirthankar Roy, and Roman Studer have now filled this gap with impressive monographs. Of the three, Partha Sarathi has written what many regard as the equivalent Indian study to Pomeranz’s work on China. Provocatively titled *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not*, this work is informed by the newer scholarship in English, European, and “global” economic history, notably the work of Crafts, Harley, and Allen, and it is very consciously sensitive, as Pomeranz’s work was, to the importance of appropriate comparisons, the centrality of context, the complexity of decision-making, and the important role of institutions and politics in the economy.²⁹ Like Pomeranz’s work, Partha Sarathi’s book also takes as its starting point the similarities in the political and economic institutions between advanced parts of Europe and India, denying substantial differences in such things as credit markets, property rights, productive agriculture, and Malthusian pressures, scientific culture, and openness to innovation. Likewise, caste was not the hindrance it has been made out to be—indeed, it could and did enhance merchant trust. A related point is that recent research has shown that two of the most prominent examples of now repudiated sociology supporting the older divergence narrative, Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and his treatment of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism in the *Sociology of Religion*, falsely dwelled on clan and caste hindrances to individual freedom and overemphasized the power of hidebound traditionalism in India and China. As it turned out, Weber consciously ignored the counterevidence of sophisticated contemporary German Indologists and Sinologists who knew better in order to prove his preconceived points about the uniqueness of the Protestant ethic and Western rationalism and capitalism, viewpoints, it seems, he held due

28. See Friso Wielenga, *A History of the Netherlands: From the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day*, transl. Lynne Richards (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 49–110; Larry Neal, *The Rise of Financial Capitalism: International Capital Markets in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–61.

29. Prasannan Partha Sarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence, 1600–1850* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

to his deference to more senior professorial authority and because those views served to justify European imperialism, to which Weber was deeply committed.³⁰ So much for his vaunted ideal of “value freedom.”

Rather than seeing a single path to a modernity defined by nineteenth-century European industry and then identifying the forces that either enabled or blocked that path, Parthasarathi is interested in multiple possible paths and focuses instead on the adaptation of British and Indian society to internal and external pressures and the paths that resulted from those social and political choices. This builds on a wider rejection of Marx’s totalizing framework within Indian historiography because of the rigidly determinist European path to modernity it contains, which has proven of little use for understanding the complexities and various possibilities of development that existed in early modern India.³¹ This has been stimulated, too, by critiques of Eurocentric modernization frameworks and the attempts to come up with more nuanced definitions of modernity suitable in Asia and elsewhere that, following Sanjay Subrahmanyam, see modernity more as a conjunctural phenomenon of uneven worldwide changes that connected formerly isolated communities, not something primarily technological that spread from Europe to the rest of the world.³²

Like Pomeranz, Parthasarathi’s focus is on the most economically developed parts of India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in his case Gujarat, Bengal, and the Coromandel Coast, which he then compares with Great Britain. In a nutshell, Parthasarathi argues that in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain, the two most important pressures were the competitive force of Indian cotton goods on the British textile sector (both domestically and in West Africa) and the growing scarcity of wood. The British adapted by imitating Indian cotton goods, protecting the domestic market from Indian calicoes, developing mechanized forms of textile production, and adopting coal as a fuel. In India, no

30. See George Steinmetz, “Scientific Autonomy and Empire, 1880–1945: Four German Sociologists,” in *German Colonialism in a Global Age*, ed. Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 50–55. On German Indology, see Dietmar Rothermund, *The German Intellectual Quest for India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1986); Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988); and Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 56–108. For an early criticism of Weber’s interpretation of Hinduism and caste as economic hindrances, see Morris David Morris, “Values as an Obstacle to Economic Growth in South Asia: An Historical Survey,” *Journal of Economic History* 27, no. 4 (1967), 588–607. More recently, see C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

31. See *Feudalism and Non-European Societies*, ed. T. J. Byres and H. Mukhia (London: Frank Cass, 1985); Prasannan Parthasarathi, “Was There Capitalism in Early-Modern Indian History?”, in *Rethinking a Millennium: Perspectives on Indian History from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Century: Essays for Harbans Mukhia*, ed. R. Datta (New Delhi: Aakar Publications, 2008), 342–360.

32. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Hearing Voices: Vignettes of Early Modernity in South Asia, 1400–1750,” *Daedalus* 127, no. 3, Early Modernities (1998), 99–100. See also Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); *Reflections on Multiple Modernities: European, Chinese and Other Interpretations*, ed. Dominic Sachsenmaier, Jens Riedel, and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (Leiden: Brill, 2002); and most recently, Dominic Sachsenmaier and Andrew Sartori, “The Challenge of the Global in Intellectual History,” in *Global History*, ed. Beckert and Sachsenmaier (as in note 11, above), 215–231.

such pressures existed: Indian cotton textiles were world-beating, and wood was still abundant. As Parthasarathi argues, in the adaptation to these pressures, the British state played an important role by restricting Indian calico imports and in creating the Atlantic division of labor through mercantilism. Likewise, the British state promoted the use of coal and thus stimulated the coal-mining industry. With the dominance of the East India Company by the mid-eighteenth century, Parthasarathi argues, India's economy was subordinated to Britain's industrial interests. The vast reservoir of Indian knowledge and skill in the cotton textile sector was lost and an opportunity to develop further in that direction was missed. Like Pomeranz, Parthasarathi's claims have been subject to criticism, though he has also been quite effective in defending them, with the severest of these coming around to the argument that the British Industrial Revolution was in part the result of a policy of import substitution. Although the matter of the comparability of British and Indian price and wage data remains unsettled, Parthasarathi was also able to point to significant flaws in the data deployed by his critics.³³

Some aspects of Parthasarathi's work are reminiscent of arguments about Indian deindustrialization often heard in Indian nationalist historiography, but Tirthankar Roy's *India in the World Economy* offers a powerful counternarrative.³⁴ In it he analyzes India's connection to the world economy from the beginnings of long-distance trade in the Mauryan Empire (320–185 BCE) to the present, highlighting the role of Indian merchants, peasants, artisans, and professionals, the remarkable networks of regional and global exchange in which they were enmeshed, and the role of empires (including the East India Company and British Empire) in that integration process, not least in creating the railway network that enabled a truly integrated Indian economy. Indeed, in a revisionist line, Roy argues that the British Empire, unlike other Indian empires, integrated the Indian economy to a degree not seen before and extended that contact beyond a trade in commodities to the transfer of people and knowledge as well as foreign investment that led to Indian industrialization and the emergence of sophisticated service industries. Viewed over the long term and in light of developments over the last twenty years, postcolonial Indian economic nationalism, by contrast, was to his mind a failed experiment that artificially disintegrated India's economy from the world.

The other important work by Roy is a study of the transition of the Indian economy between the death of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 to the final annexation of the Maratha territories by the East India Company in 1818.

33. The original criticisms were of earlier papers whose data became the basis of his book, among others, Prasannan Parthasarathi, "Rethinking Wages and Competitiveness in the Eighteenth Century: Britain and South India," *Past & Present* 158 (February 1998), 79–109. The most severe critics were Stephen Broadberry and Bishnupriya Gupta, "The Early Modern Great Divergence: Wages, Prices and Economic Development in Europe and Asia, 1500–1800," *Economic History Review* 59, no. 1 (2009), 2–31, esp. 13–18; and Broadberry and Gupta, "Lancashire, India and Shifting Comparative Advantage in Cotton Textiles, 1700–1850: The Neglected Role of Factor Prices," *Economic History Review* 62, no. 2 (2009), 279–305. See the rebuttal in Parthasarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich*, 37–46 and Prasannan Parthasarathi and Kenneth Pomeranz, "The Great Divergence Debate," in *Global Economic History*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming), ch. 1.

34. Tirthankar Roy, *India in the World Economy: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

This continued on the tack taken in his earlier book and extended the work of K. N. Chaudhuri on Indian Ocean trade beyond 1750, revealing how interconnected the Indian states were with Europe (not just Britain) and how many of the momentous changes that occurred in the Indian economy in that period were related to business decisions and market forces, too often overshadowed by Indian nationalist narratives that focus inordinately on the political transition to colonial rule.³⁵ Indeed, Roy argues that the primary forces driving Indian economic change in that period cannot be found in high politics or even the British East India Company but in enterprises in dynamic seaboard urban centers like Cambay, Surat, Bombay, Goa, Madras, and Calcutta and the integration of their hinterlands into their markets and connection to Indian Ocean and global trade centered on Indian cotton goods. That is, change and important features of modernity were already underway, not first initiated by the East India Company or the British Raj.

In contrast to both Parthasarathi and Roy, Roman Studer's *The Great Divergence Reconsidered* reaffirms a European exceptionalist narrative in the Indian divergence debate, albeit from a novel angle.³⁶ His study focuses on the previously neglected topic of the economic integration of the landlocked parts of continental Europe and their comparability to similarly landlocked parts of India. His focus is on so-called Smithian growth, that is, commercial expansion from the division of labor and trade. His chosen time period is slightly later (c. 1600–1900) and thus includes the development of railways in both Europe and India. Studer narrows his focus to the integration of commodity markets, notably those for grain (wheat, rice, and other food grains), and pays close attention to the various determinants of the degree of market integration, namely geography, climate, transport infrastructure and technology, institutions, and politics. His conclusion is that Europe had significant advantages in market integration that well predated the Industrial Revolution and railway construction, advantages only made more pronounced by those latter processes in the nineteenth century. This was confirmed by looking closely at two micro-regions, Switzerland and the Western Ghats. The integrated continental European economy was generating much higher levels of productivity and living standards as early as the eighteenth century, whereas India's internal market integration really began only with the advent of railways in the latter nineteenth century. The reasons he gives for this early European advantage are much more favorable geography, better institutions, greater political stability, advances in science and technology, and superior transportation systems. Divergence of continental Europe and India was, according to Studer's evidence, much earlier than claimed by those of the California School and Parthasarathi, and needs to be pushed back to the seventeenth century or even earlier. His work also questions some of the claims made by Roy about

35. Tirthankar Roy, *An Economic History of Early Modern India* (London: Routledge, 2013); K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

36. Roman Studer, *The Great Divergence Reconsidered: Europe, India and the Rise of Global Economic Power* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

the degree of internal market integration achieved in India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Into the increasingly crowded debate over Indian and European divergence enters Kaveh Yazdani with a highly detailed study of two of the most highly developed regions of precolonial India, Gujarat and Mysore. Yazdani's work is consciously inspired by Pomeranz's insistence on choosing comparable regions and looking closely at the local context, as well as Parthasarathi's example of engaging with the many untapped primary sources available to South Asianists, in his case those in Persian and Arabic. According to the author, less than five percent of the scientific writings in these two languages have been studied by scholars (66). His book is a revised dissertation completed at the University of Osnabrück in 2014, and unlike many of the works discussed above, has an intellectual-history inflection that makes it distinctive. It is explicitly Marxian and uses classical Marxian concepts, such as "bourgeois revolution," and focuses on the development of the "capitalist mode of production" and "capitalist social relations" (including class consciousness and struggle) to establish his metrics of modernity to assess the two regions he has chosen. More obliquely, there is also considerable reliance on measures of modernity drawn from modernization theory, which, while not unpacked or critically scrutinized, is indebted to Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas, among others. These include Yazdani's understanding of critical thought and scientific rationality and its links to a disenchanted worldview and a secularizing culture, instrumental rationality and technological inventiveness, the emergence of civil society and a public sphere informed by the products of print culture, and the rise of liberal ideology and accountable government (25-26, 69-111).

The long arc of this modernity is a central preoccupation of the author that results in the adoption of a unique (and somewhat idiosyncratic) subdivision of modernity into three distinct periods that enables it to have evolved in multiple places in Eurasia and Africa over a much longer period of time marked both by continuity and discontinuity. Thus in his chosen periodization, modernity spans the tenth to the fifteenth century in what he terms "Early Modernity." This is distinct from the "Middle Modernity" of the fifteenth to the end of the eighteenth century (the first truly global period of modernity), and the "Late Modernity" of the late eighteenth century to the present (32-61). Be that as it may, like Subrahmanyam and Parthasarathi, Yazdani seeks to delink India from a European modernization trajectory and open up multiple possible paths of an Indian modernity. That aim is nevertheless at odds with the strikingly European modernization framework the author has adopted, a tension running throughout this book and never adequately resolved. More on that later.

The purpose of Yazdani's unique periodization of modernity becomes clearer in the first chapter. Here, drawing on the work of Mark Elvin, Robert Hartwell, and John Hobson, he is at pains to demonstrate the degree to which European "Early Modernity" was indebted to borrowings from Moorish Iberia, North Africa, Central and Western Asia, and China in the fields of science, philosophy,

financial institutions, and technology.³⁷ Global entanglements and conjectures were thus an important ingredient in the rise of Europe. He also seeks to show that far from being stagnant, there was vibrant interest in developments in Europe in the period of “Middle Modernity” among Ottoman, Persian, and Indian scholars. Pride of place is given in this discussion to Persian and Indian scholars in both Ottoman Turkey and Mughal India who were agents of religious reform, secular reasoning, and translators of European scientific, mathematical, philosophical, and political tracts. These included Raghunatha Siromani (c. 1460–1540) and Mizra Shaikh I’tesam al-Din (c. 1730–c. 1800). He also surveys the field of technology, demonstrating India’s vibrant metalworking and weapons production, notably of muskets and cannons, which were the equal of or superior to those of the British at the time. Likewise, Indian textile production adopted many key innovations well before their European counterparts did and produced a superior product in demand worldwide. The conclusions he comes to are nevertheless ambivalent, conceding that in most other metrics of progress in science, technology, and culture, Europe was more dynamic (112–114).

The second chapter, by far the longest in the book (114–360), is devoted to the kingdom of Mysore in what is today roughly the territory of the southern Indian state of Karnataka. This is also where the author makes his most interesting and original contribution. Under its Muslim rulers Haidar Ali (1720–1782) and his son Tipu Sultan (1750–1799), Mysore became the most advanced Indian state in military technology and power and a major threat to the East India Company, waging no less than four major wars against the British between 1767 and 1799. As a case study of Indian “mercantilism,” it serves the author as an example of a possible Indian path to modernity via deliberate statecraft. Indeed, what was unusual under the reign of both Haidar and Tipu was the centralization of administration and the direct involvement of the state in nearly all areas of Mysore’s economy. It is impossible to convey the range of detail presented in this chapter drawn from many previously unused primary sources, which includes quite granular descriptions of many aspects of this process—this work of historical reconnaissance is in any case a very valuable service in and of itself that deserves praise. The basic contours of that statecraft are nevertheless worth highlighting. Mysore’s rulers took extensive measures to control agricultural lands and take the work of tax collection out of the hands of intermediary landlords (*zamindars*) and chiefs (petty *rajas*) into the hands of officials. This included seizure of *zamindar* lands and its distribution to peasants, who were incentivized by tax relief, gifts of plow animals, tools, and seed, and construction of granaries. In effect, this destroyed the feudal system in Mysore and helped to turn it into one of the most productive agricultural regions in post-Mughal India. Indeed, Yazdani claims that it was equal to Britain at the time in terms of agricultural productivity (130–150).³⁸ Simultaneously, there was considerable rural market expansion and

37. Somewhat related is William M. Reddy, “The Eurasian Origins of Empty Time and Space: Modernity as Temporality Reconsidered,” *History and Theory* 55, no. 3 (2016), 325–356.

38. See also Sashi Sivramkrishna, “Ascertaining Living Standards in Erstwhile Mysore, Southern India, from Francis Buchanan’s Journey of 1800–01: An Empirical Contribution to the Great Divergence Debate,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52, no. 4/5 (2009), 695–733.

monetization of Mysore that stimulated urban growth, which the author argues might have offered the potential for “industrialization and capitalist development” (160).

Economic policy under Haidar and Tipu also extended to many other areas, including such mercantilist efforts to control gold, silver, and copper in the kingdom, key export commodities like textiles, raw silk, sandalwood, ivory, pepper, and cardamom in an attempt to push aside the East India Company, Dutch, and Portuguese in that trade. Trading houses were established overseas in Muscat, Hormuz, and Jeddah to encourage trade with allies, which included the French. Attempts were even made under Tipu to create a state-owned merchant monopoly. Although much of Mysore’s manufacturing was in the hands of households, Tipu also developed his own manufactories in textiles, iron, steel, sugar, jaggery, and glass. Indeed, the range and relative sophistication of Mysorean manufacturing was remarkable. This included steel wire, watches and clocks, cutlery and iron tools, and boilers. According to the account of the Scottish doctor Francis Buchanan (1762–1829), who surveyed the kingdom, something like cottage industry seemed to have emerged by the 1790s.³⁹ Cannon and musket manufacturing was particularly well developed, which, although aided by hired and captured Europeans and European designs, was built on indigenous engineering skills and was superior to British equivalents.⁴⁰ Most striking of all was Mysore’s well-known development of rocket weapons, deploying as many as 6,000 rocketeers under Haidar and playing an important role in the defeat of the British at the Battle of Pollilur in 1780. These designs were later copied by the Woolwich Arsenal and deployed by the British in the Napoleonic Wars and War of 1812 (251–254).⁴¹

Yazdani also surveys a number of other modernizing reforms introduced by Haidar and Tipu, such as bans on widow immolation (*sati*), allowing free choice of profession, and efforts to abolish slavery and hereditary offices. Likewise, the bureaucracy was much enlarged and regularized, and significant investments were made in roadways and irrigation projects. Mysore’s armed forces were reorganized along European forms of regimentation and drill and included a sizable contingent of European mercenaries. An unusually effective cavalry was developed and very strong fortifications were constructed, and even for a brief period, a navy. Mysore became so powerful that for a time Tipu was able to conduct an effective economic war on the East India Company, denying it access to the Malabar coast pepper trade. Indeed, for a time in the early 1780s there were genuine fears that British power could slip from all of India. Mysore was aided

39. On Buchanan’s surveys, see Marika Vicziany, “Imperialism, Botany and Statistics in Early Nineteenth-Century India: The Surveys of Francis Buchanan (1762–1829),” *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no. 4 (1986), 625–60.

40. Significant innovation in cannon engineering was endogenous to the Deccan plateau and pre-dated the eighteenth century. See Richard M. Eaton and Philip B. Wagoner, “Warfare on the Deccan Plateau, 1450–1600: A Military Revolution in Early Modern India?” *Journal of World History* 25, no. 1 (2014), 5–50.

41. On British rocket technology as a hybrid of Indian and European influences, see Simon Werrett, “Technology on the Spot: The Trials of the Congreve Rocket in India in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Technology and Culture* 53, no. 3 (2012), 598–624.

in this effort by their French allies, who were an important source of military, technical, and financial assistance.

Yazdani is not blind to the shortcomings of Tipu's rule. He was petty, petulant, and reckless, and his rule was despotic, held together by the fear of draconian punishment and a network of spying. This included misguided military decisions and religious discrimination and forced conversions to Islam, which alienated Hindus in his administration and military as well as Christians and allies along the Malabar coast.⁴² With the French tapped out from their adventure supporting revolution in North America, and with the Maratha confederacy and Hyderabad siding with the British, Mysore was alone in the third Anglo-Mysore war (1790–92), after which it was forced to cede the Malabar coast and pay a huge indemnity. Tipu's bureaucracy and military were later bribed by the British, which contributed to his ultimate defeat and death in 1799 and effective Hyderabadi and British control over the kingdom.

The author describes the reign of Haidar and Tipu as a "semi-modernization" anticipating the reform efforts of Muhammed Ali in Egypt and Ahmed Bey in Tunisia, showing that an "industrial take-off" could be achieved along noncapitalist lines and without "strictly capitalist relations" (351–352). He also observes that Germany, Japan, Russia, and China later proved that a state-led effort toward modern economic growth without a bourgeois revolution was possible, albeit without exploring this much further. He then qualifies this possibility for Mysore by applying his other Weberian-Habermasian metrics of modernity, pointing out that Mysore lagged behind in theoretical science, literacy, the circulation of knowledge, and in institutions of higher learning. Likewise, it was deficient in "human rights or democratic and secular values" (353–354).

As should be clear from the previous discussion, this is a deeply problematic and ahistorical judgment, especially in light of the historical experience of defensive modernization in response to external military pressure, of which the Samurai-led Meiji Restoration in Tokugawa Japan might be the closest parallel to Mysore. Tokugawa Japan was an oppressive police state that lacked theoretical science, widespread literacy, much circulation of knowledge, or universities. Human rights, democratic values, and secularity were likewise effectively absent, yet after 1868 Japan embarked on a path of internal reform that resulted in the first Asian society that was both capitalistic and industrial by 1900.⁴³ The lack of such Asian reference points for modernity in this study points to the pitfalls that the European frame of reference and modernization theories derived from Marx and Weber impose on their subjects. Who is really to say that had Mysore been endowed with a better leader, invested a bit more in its cavalry, and had a few more local allies that it could not have pushed the East India Company out of southern India? It does not require much imagination to think of a different course of history for India if Mysore had melded Indo-Persian and French

42. See Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's Search for Legitimacy: Islam and Kingship in a Hindu Domain* (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

43. For an exploration of the problems with conventional modernization theory in analyzing Meiji-era Japan, see Erik Grimmer-Solem, "German Social Science, Meiji Conservatism, and the Peculiarities of Japanese History," *Journal of World History* 16, no. 2 (2005), 187–222.

bureaucratic statecraft, local proto-industrial know-how and Franco-Belgian technical expertise to become a kind of Indian Prussia, unifying the other Indian states against the British and expelling them from Bengal. Perhaps later in alliance with the Ottoman Empire and France, a Mysore-led India might have come to control an expanse of territory from East Africa, Arabia, Persia, and Burma all the way to Southeast Asia—Mysorean, Gujarati, and Bengali trade networks were already present in these places, after all.

Yazdani's chapter on Gujarat and its major textile hub and Indian Ocean port, Surat, is more derivative and in any case a field well plowed in recent years in some of the literature surveyed earlier, notably by Parthasarathi. Gujarat was the primary cotton-textile producing region in western India, connected to a highly sophisticated trade network that spanned the Indian Ocean to East Africa, the Red Sea, and Persian Gulf, as well as eastward to Siam and Southeast Asia. It thus serves as an example in Yazdani's book of the possibilities of Indian industrial modernity via market integration through Smithian processes. Gujarat's textile sector in such cities as Ahmedabad, Cambay, and especially Surat was known for its highly complex division of labor with a reach deep into the surrounding countryside in which merchant capital played a very significant role. Yazdani's Marxian angle thus draws his eyes to what he sees as the emergence of “capitalist social relations” and “proletarianization” in places merchants were gaining increasing leverage over weavers in the region, intensifying “class antagonisms” as evidenced in a weavers' strike in 1742 (368, 378). Like many other scholars before him, Yazdani thus points to the many similarities of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Gujarat with the most developed parallel regions of Western Europe, which also witnessed enclosure and commercialization of land and rural monetization. Indeed, he concludes—again echoing other studies—that Gujarati peasants were not much worse off than their European counterparts in the eighteenth century. With respect to the merchant class, he also notes that the wealthier of these gained imperial titles and offices and were significant patrons of local infrastructural development. They were thus not the politically powerless and isolated class of hoarders and extravagant spenders of the Orientalist imagination. Still, Yazdani concedes they were not a “genuine bourgeoisie” with an “intra-communal bourgeois class consciousness,” much less one that was secularized or had developed political and legal ideas parallel to the European Enlightenment (416).⁴⁴ Still, they were capable of sophisticated business transactions using double-entry bookkeeping, bills of exchange, and insurance. Where they were weakest was in the lack of military protection of the sort enjoyed by European merchants and in their proneness to the legal and political shenanigans that their European competitors and the East India Company were adept at lobbying for and getting from their own governments to gain the upper hand in the Indian cotton-textile trade. Surat's declining fortunes in the eighteenth century were also tied to siltation of the Tapti River and a series of natural disasters in 1775 and 1782. Unfortunately, Yazdani says almost nothing about the technological

44. An attempt has been made more recently to rehabilitate the Marxian concept of “bourgeois revolution” from a Trotskyite perspective: Neil Davidson, *How Revolutionary Were the Bourgeois Revolutions?* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013).

side of Gujarati textile production, notably the degree to which mechanization might have been taking hold in the eighteenth century, as that is a key metric of divergence from English patterns in that sector. What role did import substitution deeper inland in Gujarat play in stunting Surati cotton proto-industry? Was the size of the domestic market too small due to political fragmentation? Was it constrained by the lack of a consumer revolution hindered by caste, or by peasant and artisanal structural poverty? Was wood still too abundant to mandate a shift to coal? These questions and many more are left largely unanswered. A superficial Marxian focus on social relations is a poor substitute for that.

More attention is devoted to the Gujarati shipbuilding sector, whose products were prized the world over for their durability and workmanship and widely used by Europeans in Asian trade. But here, again, the discussion leaves a great deal to be desired. How advanced was the division of labor in Gujarati shipbuilding before the East India Company took over in 1800? What specific innovations had been introduced, and what scope was there for expansion of production with respect to the supply of wood, jute, sailcloth, and iron hardware? How large was the internal Indian market? Was there scope for expanding it? Again, these key questions are not addressed. Yazdani does discuss in passing the overall problems faced by Gujarat from monsoons and the deterioration of infrastructure with the decline of Mughal rule, but this feels like an add-on. Those seeking answers here are probably best referred to the work of Roy and Studer, discussed above. As in the case of Mysore, the author assesses Gujarat by his familiar modernization benchmarks and finds it wanting, but to his credit dispels the Weberian fog that shrouds the topic of religion and caste in India by drawing on the work of Ashin Das Gupta and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, among others.⁴⁵

The negative impact of British rule on Gujarat as a hindering factor in further modernization is given a fair bit of attention by the author, here managing a delicate balancing act between Parthasarathi and Roy: East India Company taxation, neglect of irrigation, and monopolization and restriction of some areas of commerce, as well as British mercantilist policy (the 1815 Registry Act) reduced living standards and ushered in the demise of Gujarati shipbuilding; that said, British rule allowed Gujarati Indian Ocean trade to continue on a more secure footing and opened up new opportunities in the opium trade with China. In the end, though, Yazdani sides with Parthasarathi (545–553).

In an epilogue, Yazdani recapitulates his findings in order to bring Mysore and Gujarat into broader assessment regarding their “modernity,” concluding that while India was in a transitional phase, it did not face insurmountable barriers to modernity—the potential was there for an industrial breakthrough, but due to many factors, opportunities were missed. On the whole this is an entirely defensible conclusion. So is his further claim that Eurocentric historians have ignored or belittled those potentialities just as they have played down the detrimental

45. See, among many other works by these important historians, Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta*, comp. Uma Das Gupta (New Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions: Making Polities in Early Modern South India* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

impact of European imperialism. On the downside—and quite apart from the problematic conceptual and theoretical framework of “modernization” already discussed above—critiques might be leveled of the book’s structure and length, but these would be out of place for a book with a pedigree as a PhD dissertation and by a very promising young scholar who should be encouraged and whose substantial contribution deserves acknowledgment. His remarkable industry has assembled a truly impressive range of new sources that illuminate the intellectual, social, and economic life, politics, and military statecraft in Mysore and Gujarat as never before. This adds new reference points in the divergence debate that will stimulate many new and fruitful lines of inquiry.

A more general point with which this essay will conclude is not one confined to this book and not just (or even primarily) one directed at younger scholars, but everyone: we need to abandon Marxian and Weberian modernization frameworks and their updated derivatives and offshoots. As Yazdani’s book makes plain, part of the purpose of renarrating South Asia’s economic history is recovering the dignity and agency stolen by the colonial experience and then buried under a mountain of neo-Orientalist assumptions, European modernization frameworks, and Eurocentric mythmaking. Unfortunately, Western sociologists, economists, and historians have been all too willing—if not always fully conscious—accomplices to that project. The findings of a broad new and global economic history make that painfully clear. The Marxian and Weberian junkyards have ingenious intellectual contraptions whose subtleties, refinements, and satisfying workmanship can easily pull in the unsuspecting. There is much that still glitters there, and perhaps some of it is recyclable, but on balance it is a burdensome inheritance that occludes and distorts far more than it illuminates. It is, in short, an intellectual wreckage that historians should best leave in the junkyard. The stubborn hold of these ideas hinders new ways of thinking about the world that, as we are discovering, was more connected and entangled in the past than we had ever imagined only ten or twenty years ago. We are enriched by this new awareness and the common humanity and destiny it foregrounds, and we need new paradigms and concepts to understand its historical meanings.

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