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Age of Emergency: Living with Violence at the End of the British Empire. Erik Linstrum. Oxford:

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In the late 1950s, a series of surveys were undertaken on 'ordinary' British voters to take the political temperature following the general election and in the midst of an 'Age of Emergency', or the post-Second World War period of counterinsurgency with Cyprus, Malaya (now Malaysia), and Kenya. Several respondents were preoccupied with 'keeping Britain great', an anxious nationalist sentiment we remain familiar with today, whereas others reported concerns of being 'trample[d] on' by ex-colonial nations and being forced to 'kowtow to too many people' in the process of decolonisation (p. 98). These comments reveal that, despite their geographic distance from colonial conflicts, the effects of counterinsurgency manifested in emotional responses across all strata of British society. Televised reports of violence ignited fears of humiliation for Britain's diplomatic ranking in the postcolonial international order, provoking support for both increased *and* decreased military operations abroad.

In his new monograph, *Age of Emergency: Living with Violence at the End of the British Empire*, Erik Linstrum uses a variety of methodological sources (for example, surveys, archival documents, personal papers/diaries, films, newspaper articles, and graffiti) to build a richer understanding of British society during this period of national reckoning. How *did* British people react to knowledge of colonial wars waged in the era of Nuremberg and Windrush? These cultural touchstones are often evoked to inspire nostalgia for a particular 'British' experience of recovery, modernity, and liberal values after the Second World War, but Linstrum's analysis situates them in the same narrative as colonial violence and state aggression, shedding new light on these well-trodden topics. By framing these events together, this book shows how liberal principles were compatible with racial violence——under the guise of law and order or 'rehabilitation'—as well as unequal systems of justice.

However, rather than just flatten voters' reactions to colonial conflicts beneath a totalising umbrella of 'imperial anxiety' and unilateral national support, Linstrum investigates the full spectrum of civilian engagement in response to reports of colonial warfare; from a bruised sense of racial

entitlement and deeply personal grief for national superiority to galvanised calls for solidarity and human rights protections for colonial subjects. By examining the 'home' population in the imperial relationship, beyond just the metropole of London, Linstrum asks how imperial violence—especially extra-judicial state violence—was diversely interpreted (justified, sanitised, or critiqued) by those in whose name it was waged. Pushing against hegemonic narratives of Britain's so-called 'peaceful retreat' from its dominions, he rejects the idea that British people—as much as the population could be homogenised—were passive and disconnected from colonial conflicts. Over six empirical chapters and informed by vernacular arguments as well as formal rhetoric, the book is an intimate political history of Britain at war, attentive to the diversity of British society and the oppression experienced by many groups within it. It explores how people chose or were forced into active, participatory ways of living with violence in the aftermath of the Second World War. Indeed, as he reminds us in his introduction, the British Army still relied upon conscription until 1963, potentially drawing up to 100,000 British men into mid-century colonial campaigns. Providing the other side of the coin to that of Brian Drohan's *Brutality in an Age of Human Rights* (2017), Linstrum's forensic focus on the British population—heterogenous and dynamic as it was in the postwar era—uncovers the myriad ways that society at 'home' was unavoidably consumed with (and by) imaginaries of colonial campaigns and the 'siege' against settler life 'over there'.

Linstrum's work fits well alongside waves of recent histories on British colonial warfare and sense-making about imperial violence, including works by scholars such as Priya Satia, Kim Wagner, Dan Hicks, Priyamvada Gopal, and Michelle Gordon. It would have only strengthened his argument to have connected explicitly his analysis of the post-Second World War era to these longer lineages of racist logics within the mainstream British national identity. The peculiarities of British society's relationship with its empire and, later, the Commonwealth, has many of its roots in the administrative structures, racial ideologies, and military experiences of the nineteenth century. For instance, the framing of imperial violence as benevolent or part of a 'civilising' mission was pervasive in *both* the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These fundamental mythologies, clearly identified and

understood by Linstrum in the postwar context, could have been threaded through all six chapters thus helping the reader to understand their continued political and emotional currency during the end of empire. Ultimately, however, for academics and students of modern British history, this book provides critical insights into the unexplored dimensions of Britain's national identity and destabilises the idea of a 'bloodless' end of empire.

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