

Rocky M. Mirza, *How the West was Won and Lost: Athenian Democracy to the BRICS: 5th Century BCE to 2016* (Trafford Publishing, USA & Canada, 2016), 613.

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The Chilcot Report, released on July 6, 2016, revealed the truth behind the US invasion of Iraq. Saddam Hussain was not a threat and there was no evidence of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) that were claimed as an excuse to invade the Middle East. The report reveals how the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair along with the US President George W. Bush plotted a path to war just hours after the 9/11 attacks where an extremely clever plan and strategy would require to get rid of Saddam. Of course, the real reason was the spoils of war – control of oil industry – through a protracted war in the Middle East, the effects of which are evident to this day in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq and Syria.

For all those who wish to understand the true nature and ambitions of the Western powers in the Middle East, the Chilcot Report must be read in tandem with Rocky M. Mirza's *How the West was Won and Lost: Athenian Democracy to the BRICS: 5th Century BCE to 2016*. The book, a third in the series of books by Mirza, reveals how the western empires right up to the American Empire, have exploited the Third World, stealing resources and setting up regimes that would safeguard their interests. Mirza's book attempts a thorough investigation of the rise of the Western empires and addresses the interesting yet difficult question of just why, beginning around 1500, did a few small polities on the western end of the Eurasian landmass come to dominate the rest of the world?

The central argument of Mirza's book is that the history of the world has been one of empires, wars, and invasions, and the America Empire is simply the latest of the long list of empires that have invaded and killed with absolutely no logical justification. Of all the empires that arose and thrived on the face of this earth from the Greek city states to the American, the latter is as ruthless as any in history. Mirza contends that all American presidents from George Washington to Barack Obama have

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been a “dedicated warmonger” who have ensured continuing wars to occupy him, and his men and women. America’s policies and actions have resulted in more deaths than those under the imperial regimes of Rome, Spain, Portugal, France, England and Holland or at the hands of Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler, and that have gone almost unnoticed, disguised in the robes of eloquent rhetoric and propaganda.

The argument spread over 11 chapters deals with the rise of “Western” empires from the Greek city states, Rome, Islam, and West European to America. All chapters invariably fall back to comparisons with the American Empire, and maintain that the latter has never been a force for good in the world. All through the narrative, the readers would not fail to notice Mirza’s obvious revulsion for the West. All imperial powers — democratic, republican, or monarchy — since the birth of the Western “civilisation” attributed to both the Greek and Roman empires have followed the path of waging wars while preaching peace. The current East-West conflict between Muslims and Christians originated with the wars between the Greek city states and the Persian Empire even though neither Christianity nor Islam had yet been born. According to Mirza, the pre Christian-Islamic origin can be justified by the fact that the Persian Empire converted to Islam, while the Greek converted to Christianity.

Along with the tirade against European and American domination, the book is a lesson in history. According to Mirza, the growth indices of both the Greek and Roman empires — economic development, population, trade, culture, literature, philosophy, art, science, slavery, piracy, and wars — are the hallmarks used by the West to measure the rise of a civilisation. But while the classical era of Greek civilisation mixed the Greek and Persian cultures, traditions, religion, governance and language, the Western European and Americans have been determined to stigmatise the Middle East as “Eastern” since West is now civilised and Christian, while the East is now barbaric. Mirza is of the opinion that almost all western scholars claim that the Eastern empires were not civilised because they did not embrace democracy.

Mirza argues that the “freedoms” claimed by the West as the foundations of Western democracy are more of a propaganda than truths, and the laws are often created and enforced to maintain this very limited

and constrained democracy rather than to serve justice. From the Christian Crusades that began in 1096 to the incursions into the Middle Eastern region, the roots of what is called Western civilisation have been an obsession with warmongering, endless acquisition of colonies, commitment to slavery and piracy, limited democracy, outrageous propaganda, and religious dogma. It is no wonder then that the US has the most efficient propaganda machine in the world. The logic of invasions by America has been that it's fine to kill people as long as they are not your own people. According to the author, it's all right for the West to use the most sophisticated weapons and unmanned drones to kill defenseless people in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, but not for a leader like Gadhafi to use superior weapons against rebels armed and brainwashed by the West. This, as Rocky contends, is extremely important to remember when addressing the current Western invented "War on Terror."

Mirza is of the opinion that the single most important mistake that the Arabs made after conquering the Persian and Byzantine empires was to assume that the heartland of civilisation would remain in the Middle East, where it had existed for almost all of the documented human history. With the rise of Portugal and Spain after 1400, the Christian empire expanded westward to the New World giving rise to the colonial empires of Holland, England, France, Italy, Germany and Scandinavia, while the Muslim Empire remained centered on Constantinople and Iraq.

The East-West division of the world that began with the split of the Roman Empire widened after the rebirth of the Western Empire under Portugal and Spain and the birth of the Dutch, French, British, Italian, German and American empires. As these empires consolidated, the Muslim states found themselves ruled by autocratic governments imposed by the Western colonial empires. Since the mass protests of 2011 in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and Turkey, Muslims in the Middle East have foolishly sought American and western arms and fell a prey to the western propaganda to depose their governments. Consequently, the US and the West have had a field day stirring up civil unrest, civil wars and Sunni-Shia conflicts in the region. Today, Muslims are more divided than ever, and the growing internal strife and dissention compensates for the weakening economic and military clout of the West. Islam which was

once a uniting force, it's now divisive since the West has cleverly pitted Shia Iran against Sunni Saudi Arabia.

With the destruction of Britain and Germany during the second World War (WWII), the US was powerful enough to force the world to accept its status as the world's leading power, and has been since that time, hunting for politically acceptable excuses to feed its ambitions and addiction to warmongering, and this is most evident in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Afghanistan. The invasion of Syria and attempted regime change was the final disaster that gave birth to ISIS which America sees as a stepping stone to Western recolonisation. The West has used the expected strategy for a regime change to instigate a civil war and then condemn the expected response by the use of propaganda.

Rocky has little respect for Western democracy as a political form of government, which has been shaped by massive use of propaganda and control of media, and buying votes with promises of mass production of consumer goods. America developed the complementary revolutions of mass production in the 1920s, what some economists have called the second industrial revolution. This was copied in every western country – Britain, France, Canada, Germany and Australia. Even as Mirza is critical of the rise of the West, he is not oblivious of the fact that it is also on the defensive, challenged economically by the ascent of China and politically and militarily by a wave of Islamist hatred. States in East Asia, especially and increasingly China, have made great strides in economic modernisation and now compete successfully against the West.

Although Mirza finds nothing worthwhile in the rise of Western empires, he does recognise both good and bad sides but infers that, in comparison with other civilisations, the bad side came out on top. Many of the observations in *How the West Was Won and Lost* will appeal to the people in the Third World. Motivated and passionate on his reflective meaning of civilisation, democracy and freedom, Rocky M. Mirza's book is an authoritative examination of the rise of the Western empires through the ages. Mirza uses exhaustive historic data to buttress his thesis, weaving together a vivid narrative, historical anecdotes, and analysis. But even as Mirza is critical of the Western civilisations, he totally fails to identify solutions to the problem he is writing about. The

book is an essential read for anyone interested in why the East has not been able to find its rightful place in the world politics of today.