

Reply to Louis Sigel

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Mr. Sigel is certainly right to criticize the presumption, met with among some Westerners, that China, or Asia, ought to follow a Western pattern of development, or of "modernization." The 1970 article of mine which he seems principally to address was in fact preliminary to the larger treatment in *The Outsiders* (1977), where I feel that this (among other points on which he takes me to task) is more adequately dealt with. In that book, however, I do see, and continue to see, important differences between Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Southeast Asian responses to the Western colonial effort and would maintain that important differences remain among all these areas in their economic growth since World War II, part of which are related to the separate experiences of each area with Western imperialism. To lump all of the colonial cities—treaty ports—together is, I think, inaccurate and misleading in such a context, as is the implication that their roles, then and now, were the same, or that none of them play or played a catalytic or even enabling role in economic development.

Even in sociological (and occupational) terms, Mr. Sigel's article tends to imply that Asian cities as a whole are merely "agglomerations of villages," lacking any of the characteristics, "constructive" or otherwise,

of modern Western cities. I find such an implication very hard to accept. What may be true of contemporary Djakarta in such terms is not necessarily—or demonstrably—true of Tokyo, Shanghai, or Bombay. And it is surely hard to demonstrate, as Mr. Sigel urges, that “this kind of change” (urban-centered economic development) “did not take place in any . . . Asian country” or that the “effects of the rising external demand were confined to the largely nonindigenous sectors of the economy.” I argue to the contrary, at least for India, in *The Outsiders*, and still feel that the evidence strongly supports such a position.

The process here labelled “indigenization” is undeniable, and important. I refer to it as “second-wave nationalism” in *The Outsiders* and point out there that one should expect it to continue to gain strength—precisely how much and how fast it seems to me unwise to presume. The Janata movement in India involves a good deal more than the personal traits of Moraji Desai, and is in any case still too new for one to be sure how far it will reverse all previous trends—to a considerable extent no doubt, but one’s judgment here is also influenced by the still more recent UNP victory in Sri Lanka. Whatever the correct answer, “indigenization” does not mean, as Mr. Sigel seems to imply, that the Western-colonial impact has simply been erased, nor, as he also stresses, that the rest of Asia is in this, as in other respects, indistinguishable from post-1949 China.

There are important and revealing differences among the major parts of Asia in all of these terms. But Asia has in common an experience, however varied, with a Western imperialism which dominated its history for about a century (more in some areas) until a generation or so ago. Imperialism did make an impact, and it willy-nilly left behind it a series of legacies. It could hardly be otherwise. But it seems to me more useful to examine the Western impact and its consequences, whatever one’s value judgments about them, than to argue that they never happened because they are seen as distasteful or destructive. I doubt that most politically conscious Asians would agree that the Western imperialist effort was of no consequence to them in the past and of no relevance to them now. Contemporary thinking and behavior in every Asian country suggests to me that this remains an important issue in their minds, one which they still feel is worth study and an effort to understand. This does not, of course mean that we all come up with the same answers. But it is not a nonsubject.

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