

Besteman, Catherine. 2020. *Militarized Global Apartheid*. Durham and London: Duke University Press 208 pp. Pb: \$23. ISBN 9781478011507.

Book review by

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Does apartheid South Africa point to an emerging paradigm in international relations? Catherine Besteman dares us to raise this provocative question in her book *Militarized Global Apartheid*. While the question may seem counterintuitive because apartheid was considered a “crime against humanity” by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, Besteman's arguments rely on a critical view of history, inspired especially by Cedric Robinson, that is far from a redemptive “narrative” of liberation from oppression.

How could apartheid South Africa be in any way similar to contemporary international relations? For Besteman, apartheid was much more than one of the most brutal forms of institutionalized racism; it was also a form of regulating labor and assigning “residence” to people based on defined racial categories. Some readers might find that Besteman's arguments strip South African apartheid of its historical singularity. This is precisely her point when she argues that a variety of “white nationalisms” developed in both the global north and south in the 19th and 20th centuries. In this sense, Besteman contends that the South African case is just one form of institutionalized racism. It seems that, for Besteman, nationalism inevitably implies a form of exclusionary racial politics.

Consistent with solid anthropological scholarship, Besteman considers race a “human creation” (p. 8) embedded in power relations. In this sense, racialization processes involve benefitting one group at the expense of others. Based on her deep engagement with recent history in Somalia and South Africa, Besteman extrapolates beyond the African context to argue that the recent official discourse assigning “Germany for Ger-

mans" or "Namibia for Namibians" uses "culture" to construct racialized forms of citizenship and curtail global migration movements.

Besteman's argument is seductive in many ways. We have seen the rise of far-right movements, the externalization of the US and European borders to countries of the global south, the emergence of elaborate border controls designed to regulate labor from the global south and allow "desirable migrants", i.e., highly skilled labor, to cross borders "freely," as well as the recent military interventions of the global north in the global south. Considering the contemporary genocide in Gaza and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Besteman's book seems to be required reading to understand where the world may be heading in the following decades. In critically analyzing this issue, Besteman highlights how gender, race and class play a role in enabling or hindering highly skilled migrants to cross borders.

Besteman frames these political, social, and economic processes as part of an emerging global order, which she calls a militarized global apartheid or a "security imperialism" that overwhelmingly benefits the global north at the expense of the global south. In this emerging international order, the global north's military superiority is but one way to keep the global south from achieving its aspirations.

In the second chapter, Besteman analyzes various ways the global north plunders the global south, including an examination of IMF structural adjustment programs that induce austerity policies and defund public services in the global south. She also considers large-scale land acquisitions that expel indigenous and peasant communities. Since the global north is overwhelmingly responsible for past and current carbon emissions, Besteman includes climate change as an expression of global power relations. She also analyzes military interventions and unfair trade relations.

Because some of her claims may seem controversial to many readers, we should pause and ask where Besteman locates the global north and south before proceeding further. Using the Pentagon's "militaristic" analyses of globalization, Besteman defines the "global north" as the US, Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Russia, East Asian countries (Japan, South Korea, Singapore, China, and Taiwan) and the Gulf Cooperation Countries (the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait). While the global south is identified as "the Caribbean rim, virtually all of Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and Southwest Asia, and much of Southeast Asia, in addition to Central America and most countries in South America" (Barnett, cited by Besteman, p. 3). In this view, the global north and south are

defined not by a specific location (the Northern or Southern hemispheres) but by a history of colonial domination and economic and military alliances.

In the remaining chapters, Besteman examines strategies used by various actors in the global north to contain the arrival of migrants from the global south. The criminalization of migrants is built upon racialized fears, mass incarceration, and the deportability of undocumented migrants, conflating bureaucracy and racism. She also analyses the legislation of migrant labor in the global north and various strategies that impede migrant workers from accessing citizenship and claiming belonging. These strategies are designed to create a flexible and disposable workforce in the global north. In the final chapter, Besteman offers her most provocative affirmation that apartheid South Africa provides more than an analogy to the current state of international relations; the aftermath of apartheid offers lessons for our common future.

Overall, in *Militarized Global Apartheid*, Catherine Besteman makes a laudable effort to diagnose our current and emerging international relations through extensive dialogue with anthropological literature on militarism, migration, and borders. However, we must ask: What is missing in Besteman's book? Besteman herself admits focusing too much on global power relations and leaving aside the agency of migrants who refuse immobility and the racist rhetoric implicit in current nationalism. Nevertheless, this book contributes to a critical view of our recent history and future possibilities. I expect that its insights will guide a renewed understanding of globalization for many years, focusing strongly on military power relations between the global north and south.