

typified by China's Silk Road Economic Belt initiative. But, as the authors show, this focus on greater connectivity by itself may only further entrench the corrupt practices already occurring.

Few if any of the phenomena detailed in *Dictators Without Borders* are unique

to Central Asia. Still, the authors deserve high praise for making an often-overlooked region the sole focus of serious scholarly inquiry, dispelling an array of misperceptions and proposing a number of common-sense policy recommendations along the way.

The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation, Stuart Hall, Kobena Mercer, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), 256 pp., \$25.95 cloth.

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Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights boldly asserts that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” and Article 2 deems that all humans are entitled to human rights regardless of “distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” The increasing visibility of white supremacy and nationalism in Western countries over the past few years has been a disturbing reminder of how aspirational rather than descriptive these declarations are. *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* is the timely first publication of Stuart Hall's W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures delivered in 1994 at Harvard University. These three lectures remain as relevant as ever, as they examine the pervasive role of difference and discourse in three concepts that are crucial for the maintenance and modification of the unequal power relations that govern our world.

Hall uses a discursive method of deconstruction to show how conceptions of race, ethnicity, and nation can be broken down to signify difference, reinforcing a narrative of “us” versus “them.” The first

lecture recalls Du Bois's establishment of race as a social rather than biological concept and grapples with its prevalence in human history. Through a remarkably thorough and clear discussion on the complex role of language in constructing difference, he argues that “race is a discourse” (p. 45) that makes possible a certain “chain of equivalences” (p. 63) between physical differences and social differences. The second lecture examines how the word “ethnicity” is used differently from “race,” but notes that both behave as “sliding signifiers”—that is, the characteristics they each encompass slide to signify who the “us” and the “them” are. The final lecture on “nation” examines the crisis of identity that nations have experienced and continue to experience as a result of globalization and worldwide migration. Nations establish a collective identity that is often “constructed *across* difference and *through* difference” (p. 139), and attempt to make the political and cultural congruent.

The strength of Hall's insight is his ability to clarify terms that are often difficult to define and that permeate current political debates. This clarity, however, does not detract from the complexity that these

topics bring with them. One notable example is the seemingly contradictory effects of capitalism, which according to Hall both promotes homogeneity and relies on the proliferation of differences. In an increasingly globalized world where

identity is often a cause for conflict, Hall's explication of how society's discursive use and understanding of race, ethnicity, and nation can inadvertently perpetuate systems of inequality has never been more important.