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## Book review

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### **Remaking the World: European Distinctiveness and the Transformation of Politics, Culture, and the Economy**

*by Jerrold Seigel*

Cambridge University Press

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Europe's development as a global power has had a profound impact on shaping modern world history. In *Remaking the World: European Distinctiveness and the Transformation of Politics, Culture, and the Economy* (2025), Jerrold Seigel provides an in-depth analysis of Europe's uniqueness in shaping the political, cultural and economic transformations that have affected the world. This book offers a comprehensive historical exploration, delving into various aspects of how Europe's political, cultural and intellectual fragmentation contributed to significant changes that have not only impacted Europe but also the world.

Seigel begins by illustrating how Europe, through its lack of central political authority, was able to produce a dynamic and innovative social and political system. In this context, Europe differs from other great powers, such as China or the Ottoman Empire, which had stronger centralised governance. Instead, Europe's fragmented system encouraged the emergence of competing centres of power, which in turn fostered innovation in politics, culture and economics. This book explores four main arenas – politics, culture, imperialism and industrial economy – and shows how each of these areas was influenced by Europe's unique political fragmentation.

One central theme discussed by Seigel is "Europe's preoccupation with liberty", a concept that has been a focal point of European political thought since the Middle Ages. This book examines in greater detail how liberty, despite often being limited by elite power or constrained by class and gender factors, has remained a critical component in shaping Europe's political and social discourse. Seigel demonstrates that although liberty has often been a contentious topic, Europe's preoccupation with freedom has driven movements and transformations that have inspired other nations.

The second theme explored in depth is autonomy, which, in this context, refers to the freedom of various sectors in Europe, such as science, culture and religion, from central authority control. Seigel describes how these fields developed into autonomous sectors, creating extraordinary progress in various domains. In his analysis, Seigel discusses the role of institutions such as the Church and universities, which facilitated scientific and cultural innovations in Europe, and laid the foundation for the industrial revolution that would later shape the world.

Additionally, this book offers a global perspective by comparing how Europe's development differs from that of other regions, particularly in Asia and Africa. Through these comparisons, Seigel argues that Europe's distinctiveness lies in its social and political



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structure, which enabled the emergence of new ideas and innovations not found in other parts of the world.

The final section of the book delves into how European transformation led to the rise of the modern industrial economy. Seigel argues that the industrial revolution that began in Britain in the 18th century was not only the result of technological innovation but was also influenced by Europe's fragmented social and political structure. By analysing the cases of Britain, France and Germany, Seigel demonstrates how industrial capitalism in Europe emerged as part of a broader political and cultural change.

Nevertheless, the book is not without its criticisms. Some readers may feel that Seigel places too much emphasis on the positive aspects of European development, while giving insufficient attention to the darker side of European imperialism. This leads to an imbalance in portraying the broader impacts of imperialism, particularly for the non-European societies that were its victims. Additionally, while the book offers rich intellectual analysis, it occasionally fails to explore in greater depth the lived experiences of non-European societies that were marginalised by the process of colonisation. To enhance readers' understanding, it is suggested that future editions provide more space for presenting perspectives from colonised communities and deepen the discussion on the social, political and cultural impacts of imperialism on these societies.

Overall, *Remaking the World* is an outstanding contribution to understanding Europe's role in shaping the modern world. By combining a deep theoretical approach to history, politics and economics, this book provides a comprehensive and diverse insight into Europe's development, both its positive aspects and its negative impacts. In this work, Seigel successfully links various academic disciplines coherently and uses rich global comparisons to clarify why Europe has had such a unique impact on the world. Thus, Seigel's book is invaluable for scholars, researchers and anyone interested in understanding how Europe shaped the world in such a distinctive way. With its deep analysis and systematic presentation, this book is highly recommended as essential reading in the fields of history, political thought and global studies.

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**Further reading**

Seigel, J. (2025), *Remaking the World: European Distinctiveness and the Transformation of Politics, Culture, and the Economy*, Cambridge University Press.