cases elsewhere—Iran, Egypt, China, Japan and the Philippines, among others—which also reflect the connections and contrasts between colonial projects, whether directly or indirectly. Formichi's work in bringing to light the role of Muslim women in Indonesia's public health and nation-building adds to this nascent field and provides comparative lessons for other postcolonial states where women (and indigenous peoples) have had to endure the legacies of colonial, nationalist and religious patriarchal systems (p. 5). Perhaps more pressing are the lessons for present-day Indonesia, which continues to witness the replication of these systems in different ways. As Formichi herself explains, "[I]n the 1960s, both women and religion would be excluded from the halls of power and relegated to a clearly defined 'social' sphere that by mandate had nothing to contribute to politics besides the reproduction of a patriarchal, authoritarian state" (p. 12). Ultimately, we are brought to reflect on what "progress" and being "modern" mean and who gets to define these notions and why, especially when it comes to marginalized populations and their reproduction (p. 70). Mothering, health and hygiene are always political.

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*Balikbayan: A Revenant History of the Filipino Homeland*. By Adrian De Leon. University of Washington Press, 2026. x+341 pp.

*Balikbayan: A Revenant History of the Filipino Homeland* examines the many ways the idea of the nation has been used to inspire revolution, while also subjugating communities and reinforcing social inequality. Adrian De Leon covers a wide range of examples, from Jose Rizal's writings in the nineteenth century to martial law under Ferdinand Marcos's administration.

The first part of the book features some of the country's most famous expatriates: Jose Rizal and the *ilustrados*, a group of writers

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who advocated for reform under Spanish rule. Here, the home nation is portrayed as an embodiment of its people. Any abuse inflicted upon Philippine land and its people becomes an affliction of the self as well. In contrast, De Leon shows how American colonial officials and pro-American elites co-opted Rizal's writings, reinterpreting the nation as a counterinsurgency tool.

The second part of the book shifts attention to the Filipino diaspora in the United States. De Leon recognizes that the idea of the "homeland" can become a source of solace as Filipino Americans confront discrimination and exclusion, but he also reveals how nationalism can justify violence within diaspora communities, reinforcing inequalities of gender and class. I found the chapter titled "Repatriation as Colonization" particularly enlightening. De Leon recounts how Filipino American organizations sought to deport unemployed compatriots from the United States to Mindanao, purportedly to "develop" the region. It was unnerving to read how a desire to "help" the home nation had created another form of settler colonialism.

Reading through *Balikbayan*, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the range of the book's empirical chapters. In his conclusion, however, De Leon explains that this diversity is deliberate. The book was written to form an "inchoate picture" of "a strange machine called the nation-state" (p. 274). Its narrative seeks to produce discomfort, particularly among readers who take for granted the meaning and purpose of nation and nationalism. I agree that there is a need to challenge the idea of the "homeland" within what De Leon calls the "affective landscape of the diaspora" (p. 274). If doing so entails making readers uncomfortable, I believe that the book succeeds in this endeavour.

However, I wonder whether the title, *Balikbayan*, is too limited to encompass the breadth of stories covered in the book. The term itself is relatively new and is now mainly used to refer to Filipino migrants who return to the Philippines. While De Leon devotes a chapter to the state's construction of the ideal balikbayan, this is also the less compelling part of the book's overall story.

De Leon echoes migration scholars who have long critiqued the tendency of the state to rely on overseas Filipinos as a source of revenue. However, his empirical material is mainly based on Filipino American issues and experiences. In his conclusion, De Leon discusses a social media debate on whether Filipino Americans should be allowed to wear the Philippine flag as a graduation stole. He uses this case to reiterate his argument that ideals of "nationhood" can be used to police how individuals perform their heritage and ethnic identities. I agree, but this example felt somewhat at odds with the rest of the book. Cultural gatekeepers in the Philippines can certainly be vicious, but American citizenship, American-accented English and ties to American institutions remain highly valorized among Filipinos. I also wonder whether this story is the strongest example of how nationalism reinforces symbolic violence in contemporary times.

De Leon argues that Filipino Americans remain a key subject of the Philippine state's imagination of its overseas community. While this may be true, Filipino balikbayans are now settled in dozens of destinations worldwide. It would have been good to have a broader discussion of how nationhood is interpreted beyond the US-based diaspora.

Lastly, while the book is about the idea of the nation, it also touches on issues of migration governance. I would have liked to see De Leon engage with more recent scholarship on the Philippine state's labour migration regime. As many scholars have argued, the emigration state is not a monolithic entity driven simply to extracting its citizens' labour (see Ortiga 2025; Parreñas 2021). How is the idea of the "nation" mobilized by the current regime? There is also substantial literature on diaspora politics across other migrant-sending countries such as Mexico, India and Nepal. De Leon's perspectives are much needed in this context. Engaging with this literature might have extended the book's arguments beyond the Philippines, creating even more discomfort around how the idea of the nation is contested and transformed.

Overall, *Balikbayan* is a provocative and ambitious book that compels readers to rethink the nation as a contested and deeply

political project. De Leon's careful scholarship sheds light on the many important stories that shape the Philippines as a nation and homeland.

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*Deeper Ground, Darker Shadows: The Making of a Mindanao Rebel*. By Eddie L. Quitoriano. University of Wisconsin Press, 2025. xx+351 pp.

Eddie Quitoriano's *Deeper Ground, Darker Shadows* breaks new ground in the literature on revolutionary movements of the Global Sixties by offering an insider's view of the lived experience of cadres and the operational intricacies of the communist insurgency in the Philippines at its height in the 1980s. Combining the suspense of a spy thriller, black humour and retrospection, Quitoriano offers unique insight into the growth of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in Mindanao and into insurgent efforts to secure financial support, training and arms abroad.

Structured in two parts, the memoir first explores Quitoriano's coming of age in Mindanao, an island defined by deep social contradictions that produced both the Moro Muslim separatist movement and the CPP's Mindanao Commission (Mindacom), which became the party's most powerful territorial unit during this period. Quitoriano was born in Initao, Misamis Oriental, to relatively well-