

*Making the British Empire, 1660-1800*, Edited by Jason Peacey, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023

This interesting volume is an important contribution to the history of the first British empire and one that richly deserves attention. Although it ranges widely across its period, there is a particular focus on the first sixty years, and that again is valuable because generally it is the latter years of this period that attracts attention. There is also a concentration on the Atlantic empire which indeed reflects this earlier period. Indeed, India did not come to the fore in attention for British imperial policymakers, however, defined, until late in the eighteenth century.

The introduction provides Jason Peacey with an opportunity to provide an historiographical scene-setting as well as to set the scene for this collection. He emphasises the significance of political economy and scholarship thereon while also drawing attention to the contribution of Stephen Pincus and, separately, the importance of religious thought and practice to the story of the British empire. This adds a particular character to the political tensions that have profitably attracted Pincus's attention. So also with the corresponding need to locate discussions of sovereignty in a political context. Of course, Whig and Tory were not coherent nor consistent identities, and that adds to the interest of the subject.

The chapter by Pincus centres his engaging and important discussion of the development of empire and imperial thought on the party politics and the Treaty of Utrecht. He offers much perception and wisdom, but his account, like much else in the book, could really do with bringing into the equation ideas and practices in other empires in this period. The British were not simply in competition and/or alliance with France, Spain and the Netherlands. There was also a flow of ideas, and it is strange to see a collection without discussion of such figures as Law and Ripperda, or the interactions of imperial mercantile and colonial practice outside Europe, or the impact of large Dutch stakes in the British economy. Possibly this is a field for further work. It certainly highlights the abiding fault and folly of the various imperial "schools," namely their Anglophone character. In this book it is instructive therefore to see a response by John Elliott to Pincus's argument. It would be very valuable, at the least, to add contributions from Dutch and French scholarship.

Linked to this comes a major issue with sources. As I showed in my *Trade, Empire and British Foreign Policy, 1689-1815. The Politics of a Commercial State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), there is a mass of material in the diplomatic archives, British and foreign, that is of very direct relevance for the framing and content of this subject. On the whole, there has been a failure to take this perspective on, let alone forward, and that weakens much of the current scholarship. While it is instructive to look at ideas, past and present, there is, aside from the selectivity bound up in the ideas discussed and their analysis, the somewhat baleful failure to focus on the ideas in practice, in for

example official instructions and diplomatic discussions. Again, the talented contributors to this volume might think about these points when producing a sequel.

Pincus draws attention to the weaknesses of the New Imperial History, not least the tendency to ignore informal empire, and argues that the contours of the British Atlantic were fundamentally shaped by British party politics, while Elliott notes Stuart inconsistency, contrasts between British and Spanish practice, and the primacy for Britain of concern about France and not imperial aggrandisement. William Bulman addresses the complexity of contemporary published work on the Islamic world and links this to a change in elite understanding of popery and puritanism, in turn relating this to developing attitudes to India. The role of Protestant expansionism in imperial thought emerges profitably from Gabriel Glickman's chapter. Leslie Theibert analyses tensions within British mercantilism to show how conflicting understandings of the prosperity and failures of the Spanish empire reflected wider divisions about imperial political economy; Whigs and Tories anew. There is an interesting discussion of Whig political economy in Jamaica. Philip Stern shows how competing claims over Bombay/Mumbai provide guidance to the complexities of sovereignty, which is instructive for later developments in Bengal. Julian Hoppit draws attention to the compensation paid for losses in order to raise an interpretation of empire as a quasi-contract between the metropolitan government and its white colonists. This is an issue of importance for deteriorating relations with the American colonies after 1763 and with Ireland in the 1790s, and is of later significance for the abolition of slavery. Eliga Gould looks at the possibilities for new imperial beginnings presented by the imperial partition of 1783 while Jennifer Pitts briefly but valuably uses the Warren Hastings impeachment trial to reconsider legal pluralism. Lots of interest in this volume.

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