

Defining Empire: three case studies

Empire is a term frequently employed in the perjorative, associated with tyranny, slavery and military conquest: in a post-colonial world, imperial regimes are regarded as regrettable divergences from the path to democracy and internationalism. This visceral response is mainly a reaction to the 'colonial' empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; but these quite short-lived types of empire are an incomplete representation of a political form which has far greater longevity than the nation state, and has had greater complexity than economic exploitation, providing for cultural, social and religious security in a flexible and adaptable form of government. While Michael Doyle's definition of *empire* is succinct — 'Empires are relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies' — the success of empires in general and particularly European empires, and the variety of forms they have taken, defies easy categorisation.¹ Rulers have declared themselves emperors without peripheral territories, feudal states have been redefined as empires by later historians, and empires have been defined as empires without consistency or clarity. But while the great colonial empires of the modern era may exemplify many imperial features, continental empires, in Europe and elsewhere, lasted over a longer period and may be considered to be more representative of the political form appropriated from Rome.² Empire is more than a convenient label for an ambitious polity: empires are highly effective and adaptable political systems that have demonstrated both longevity and the ability to shape subsequent history, appropriating other states and binding them through a combination of coercion and advantage into a shared sovereignty that is as adaptive, complex and overlapping as it is effective. Identifying empires, and analysing the means by which they manage their satellite territories, enhances our understanding of the range and potential of historical and future states

¹ M. W. Doyle, *Empires*, Ithaca, NY, 1987, p.19

² In describing an empire as continental, I am deliberately distinguishing it from a predominantly colonial and maritime empire. Such continental empires may be said to include the Carolingian Empire and its successor Holy Roman Empire, the 'Byzantine' Empire, the Mughul Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire, Russian Empire and many empires in Asia. These may be distinguished from the Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish and British Empires. However, the discussion in this paper will suggest that all empires share common features.

Empires and imperialism are not dependent on a single nation: empires are 'large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people'.³ Unlike the nation state, it is not a single community with a 'deep, horizontal comradeship' (to use Anderson's phrase), nor with a single 'imagined' identity, nor even a single ethnicity, religion, legal system, economy or culture.⁴ In spite of the constantly shifting meaning of both *empire* and *imperialism*, the essential structure of an empire is the relationship between a ruling power (or metropole) and its satellite colonies or occupied polities (peripheries), which are acquired by conquest or involuntary interest (such as through alliance, treaty or marriage).⁵ In turning acquisition into governance, the ruling power has to accommodate the *differences* between the incorporated peoples and the centre, because enslavement or coercion through military occupation is uneconomic. Customs, economies, religions, foods, local hierarchies, races, all are linked systematically to the centre without incorporation into a syncretic uniformity.⁶

Imperialism, in Roman usage, indicated a supreme exercise of power, or in modern usage, 'simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire'.⁷ But this definition raises the question of whether imperialism is the deliberate exercise of power or is a response to conditions in the periphery and imbalances of power between states.⁸ For Tacitus, imperial power represented a necessary development in Roman government

In favour of despotic government it might be urged, that though Rome had subsisted long and gloriously under a republican form of government, yet she had often experienced such violent shocks from popular tumults or the factions of the great, as had threatened her with imminent destruction:

³ David K Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey From the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1982, p.15

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 2006, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003060963-46/imagined-communities-benedict-anderson>, accessed 20 February 2022, p.6; using a different approach, Smith discuss the importance of the *ethnie*, defined by a consciously developed identity myth, see A. D. Smith, 'The Origins of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1989, p.342.

⁵ For a discussion of the various shifts in the use of the term, see Helge Jordheim, and Iver B Neumann, 'Empire, imperialism and conceptual history', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2011, 'This changing conceptual history of empire is, among other things, the story of how hierarchy has been inscribed in different ways.' (p.181).

⁶ Jane. Burbank, and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History Power and the Politics of Difference*, Apple Books edn, Princeton, 2010, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.30977>, Accessed, 3 July 2022, p.17

⁷ '*imperium populi Romani*', Richard Koebner, *Empire*, Cambridge, 1961, p.5; 'Empires', 1987 p.45

⁸ *Ibid.* p.24, p.45

...such a form of government was utterly incompatible with the present circumstances of the Romans that by the conquest of so many foreign nations, by the lucrative governments of provinces, the spoils of the enemy in war, and the rapine too often practised in time of peace, so great had been the aggrandizement of particular families in the preceding age, that though the form of the ancient constitution should still remain inviolate, the people would no longer live under a free republic...

... the firm and vigorous administration of one person, invested with the whole executive power of the state, unlimited and uncontrolled....⁹

Far from being aggressive or coercive, Suetonius regarded Octavian's actions in appropriating imperial power as necessary and benevolent for both the conqueror and the conquered; and throughout the last two thousand years, empires have sought to cast themselves as instruments of a higher good.

Colonial empires of the late modern period have tended to focus our attention on empires as economic phenomena. Eric Hobsbawm argued that the period from 1875 to 1914 might be described as the Age of Empires not only because it saw a new kind of imperialism develop based on unfettered capitalism, but because of the number of empires in existence.¹⁰ As a Marxist, he builds on the work of Hobson, in 1902, who attacked the prevailing view that imperialism was an outgrowth of excessive population growth, suggesting instead that expansion was driven by economics and the needs of financial systems. Imperialism and capitalism were connected by Lenin, who regarded imperialism as 'the development and direct continuation of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in general'.¹¹ But this is a conclusion that more recent historians have been at pains to rebut, pointing to the role of national interest in the development and annexation of territory.¹² However, the European expansionary empires, both those based on settlement like those in the Americas and the 'occupation' territories in Africa and Asia, were a creation the late-eighteenth century.¹³ There is, therefore, strong continuity in the nature of empire across historical periods, and it is

⁹ Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, T. Forester (ed.), 2018, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/detail.action?docID=413159>, p.232

¹⁰ E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, London, 1994, p.56

¹¹ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*, Moscow, 1970, http://books.google.com.au/books?id=D9FduAAACAAJ&hl=&source=gbg_api, p.84

¹² J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, London, 1902, <https://archive.org/details/imperialismastu00goog/page/n6/mode/2up> ; David K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914*, London, 1973, p.465

¹³ *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey From the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1982, pp.373-73

instructive to look at how social and political structures of empire and imperialism have contributed to their success or otherwise as a polity.¹⁴ Doyle draws attention to the arguments of Gallagher and Robinson, who claimed a continuity between the early- and late-Victorian empire to show the importance of strategic considerations and the situation in the periphery, and suggests that politics as much as economics was the key driver in the 'Age of Empires'.¹⁵ They go so far as to suggest that there were no economic advantages in the carve-up of Africa, nor a popular or political desire to accrue territory:

'much of this imperialism was no more than an involuntary reaction to the various proto-nationalism of Islam that were already rising in Africa...'.¹⁶

Doyle suggests that capitalism is inherently anti-imperialistic, as the monopoly of the imperial system militates against free trade.¹⁷ He suggests that there are four interacting sources of imperial relationship: the metropolitan regime, its capacities and interests; the peripheral political society, its interests and weakness; the transnational system and its needs; and the international context and the incentives it creates.¹⁸

Whatever the significant differences we can observe between particular empires over past millennia, or between particular kinds of empire, one should be able to identify, using Doyle's historical sociology-based framework, *forces that drive expansion*, the *systemic relationship between the centre and the periphery*, the *structures through which difference is mediated and exploited*, and the *processes by which the empire adapts to change or transforms into a different polity or polities* ('repertoires of power' in Burbank and Cooper's phrase).¹⁹ These four factors are evident in the Roman Empire, which has served as a template for historical analysis of empire.²⁰ Rome has been sometimes

¹⁴ For a more completely developed version of this argument, see Susan Reynolds, 'Empires: a problem of comparative history', *Historical Research*, vol. 79, no. 204, 2006,

¹⁵ John Gallagher, and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade,' in *Imperialism : the Robinson and Gallagher controversy*, ed. William Roger Louis, New York, 1976, William Roger Louis, (ed.) *Imperialism : the Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, New York, 1976, <https://archive.org/details/imperialism0000unse/page/74/mode/2up>, accessed 31 July 2022, pp.57-59

¹⁶ Ronald Robinson, and John Gallagher, 'The Partition of Africa,' in *Imperialism : the Robinson and Gallagher controversy*, ed. William Roger Louis, New York, 1976, accessed p.75

¹⁷ 'Empires', 1987 p.159

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.46

¹⁹ This analysis does, therefore, owe much to Doyle: see *Ibid.* p.46 and Chapter 6, 'The sociology of empires: hypotheses'. See also 'Empires in World History Power and the Politics of Difference', 2010

²⁰ In passing, I note the significant critique of Doyle's theory of empire in Mark R Beissinger, *Rethinking Empire in the Wake of Soviet Collapse*, 2005, , where the author argues that empire is in fact a product of

regarded as an 'atavistic and aggressive' state, but the long history of expansion (mostly during the late Republic), such a range of impulses to expansion and hence a variety of imperialisms during its history.²¹ While Rome could demonstrate a considerable level of tolerance towards religious and cultural differences, it was assiduous in winning the cooperation and loyalty of local elites in the peripheries and imposing a shared set of values and civility originating in a Greek education.²² But imperial government was a complex web of identities and loyalties, often to local hierarchies, deities or ethnicities as much as to Rome; and as the Empire matured, fragmented and reconstituted, it was capable of appropriating new overarching identities, as it did when Constantine defined Christianity as an overarching source of imperial unity.²³

Imperialism is far more than the economic exploitation of the periphery, as the Holy Roman Empire, the Angevin empire, and that of the Habsburg Empire, all illustrate; even when they may lack some of the elements of empire; we can recognise expansion, systemic relationship, structured difference and adaptability. In the case of the Holy Roman Empire, as the Western Empire fragmented, the axis of the Roman Empire shifted to the Balkans and Asia Minor. The split between eastern and western empires became permanent in 395 CE, and the west became dominated by a series of tribal groups, of which the Franks became the most important in the sixth century.²⁴ The empire throughout its history was based on relationships between the Emperor, princes and cities, lacking a strong central administrative centre until the Habsburg period, and relying on a body of laws (exemplified by the electoral capitulation) to govern the relationship between ruler and the ruled.²⁵

nationalism, even in the case of Rome, and insists that the defining characteristic of empire is nonconsensual rule. That I have preferred Doyle's model should be clear from the course of this paper.

²¹ David J Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*, Princeton, 2011, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.une.edu.au/stable/j.ctt4cgd4k>, p.17

²² Susanna Morton Braund, 'Roman assimilations of the other: "Humanitas" at Rome', *Acta Classica*, vol. 40, no. 1997, p.29

²³ Louise. Revell, *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities*, Cambridge, 2009, <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0811/2008007073-b.html><http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0811/2008007073-d.html><http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0811/2008007073-t.html>, p.191

²⁴ Peter H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History*, Harmondsworth, 2017-02-23, https://read.amazon.ca/?asin=B012UTQ5LQ&ref_=kwl_kr_iv_rec_1&language=en-CA, accessed 20 July 2022, p.17

²⁵ Joachim Whaley, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2018-07-19, <https://www-veryshortintroductions->

The Ottonian kings succeeded in creating what was essentially a German or Saxon kingdom; crucially, they established the German crown's claim to the *imperium*, to the heritage of Rome. While Gregory VII described Emperor Henry IV in 1075 as *regnum Teutonicorum* (implicitly the 'German king'), Whalley argues that Germans continued to believe they were part of a larger polity.²⁶ But how was this largely geographically and ethnically German state an Empire? It encompassed large minorities (among others Bohemian, Polish, Dutch, Italian, Hungarian, Slovenian and French peoples) and contained within it independent states, not generally the result of recent conquest, but the subject of continual renegotiation of status. Peter Wilson rejects the idea of a federation to describe it, as the imperial institution was at the centre.

Imperial governance entailed fostering a consensus amongst the Empire's political elite to ensure at least minimum compliance with agreed policy, enabling the emperor to dispense with the burden of both forcing cooperation and of ruling the bulk of the population directly.²⁷

For some scholars, the Empire was a ramshackle structure that held back the development of a strong German state, although the ideal of the strong German state received a body blow after the Reformation; but revival of interest in the Empire has shown an alternative past, where the mass of people lived with a strong degree of legal and customary rights within a highly devolved structure.²⁸

The Holy Roman Empire was, therefore, an effective example of an imperial system. While we might not agree with Whalley that it formed 'the national framework for German territories', given the range of states that emerged from the dissolution in 1806, it can be recognised as an empire, the metropole and periphery not defined geographically or economically, but held together by law, custom, religion and the local identity of towns, villages and provinciality.²⁹ It continued to explore an innovative legal structure by which the rights of territorial rulers, magistrates, and inhabitants of towns

com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198748762.001.0001/actrade-9780198748762?rskey=J8JRmL&result=4, accessed 18 July 2022, p.3

²⁶ *Ibid.* p.44

²⁷ 'The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History', 2017-02-23 p.12

²⁸ Peter H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495-1806*, Basingstoke, 1999, p.7

²⁹ Joachim Whalley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, 2012, <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=UiFWYsG-t7UC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Germany+and+the+Holy+Roman+Empire&ots=lyInlnoRgv&sig=09inZ2sM8VwOnhX-IMFG14T3ezo>, accessed 23 June 2022, p.13

and cities were able to function at a juridical and social, rather than political level.³⁰ Scales and Whalley describe the Empire succinctly as existing 'in the immediate relationship between the Emperor and the imperial estates'.³¹ While religion became a source of conflict during the Reformation, rather than the unifying factor it had been for centuries, the Treaty of Augsburg allowed Protestant and Catholic princes to co-exist, and the idea of an imperial church remained, until it failed, like so many other institutions, after the Enlightenment.³² The Peace of Westphalia enshrined, in the prototype of international law, the legal and social obligations of emperor and the electors and princes:

That there shall be a Christian and Universal Peace, and a perpetual, true, and sincere Amity, between his Sacred Imperial Majesty, and his most Christian Majesty; as also, between all and each of the Allies, and Adherents of his said Imperial Majesty, the House of Austria, and its Heirs, and Successors; but chiefly between the Electors, Princes, and States of the Empire on the one side; and all and each of the Allies of his said Christian Majesty, and all their Heirs and Successors, chiefly between the most Serene Queen and Kingdom of Swedeland, the Electors respectively, the Princes and States of the Empire, on the other part.³³

The end of the Empire in August 1606 was certainly the result of the delegitimizing effects of the Enlightenment and the resultant association of power with direct rule, but it was also the result of a conscious political decision by Emperor Francis II to deny Napoleon any claim to the title after the formation of the Francocentric Confederation of the Rhine. Ultimately, the systemic relationships and the ideological structures which had maintained were swept away by the French Revolution.

If the Holy Roman Empire is an example of a state existing almost outside the concept of territoriality, the Angevin Empire might be regarded as a territorial empire that was neither intended by its founder nor recognised as such by its contemporaries. What has been called the 'Angevin Empire' was an Anglo-Norman state formed from an accumulation of matrimonial and military alliances by Henry II (1133–1189), the grandson of Henry I and great-grandson of William the Conqueror. He became king in 1154, and soon turned his attention to his father's and grandfather's claims in France;

³⁰ Joachim Whaley, 'Central European History and the Holy Roman Empire', *Central European History*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, p.44

³¹ Len Scales, and Joachim Whaley, 'Introduction', *German History*, vol., 2018, p.337

³² 'The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History', 2017-02-23 pp. 108–114

³³ Treaty of Westphalia, Yale Law School: The Avalon Project, 2008, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/westphal.asp, accessed 1 August, 2022,

through war, negotiation and marriage he came to rule over much of what is now France, but which were not incorporated into the 'kingdom' of England.

Henry was not an autocrat: his authority was constrained by the consent to customary and feudal law which underpinned his titles to many of his possessions. But in his last years, however one might describe the political entity he had created, he was one of the most powerful rulers in Europe. The state has been described as a 'composite kingdom', and to call it an empire is to use the term 'without any precise constitutional meaning'.³⁴ Ralph Turner describes it as a 'hegemonic' rather than territorial empire, relying on indirect exploitation by the conqueror's local nominees; but lacking the central geographic 'core' of power from which power could be asserted where necessary.³⁵ Neither Henry nor his successors used the term '*imperium*', although there is some evidence that contemporaries conceptualised the Angevin lands in such a way.³⁶ Gerald of Wales, for example, hailed Henry as a new Alexander.

For your victories vie with the world itself, since you, our Alexander of the "West, have stretched out your arms from the Pyrenean mountains to the farthest and most western borders of the ocean. In these parts you have spread your triumphs as far as nature has spread her lands. If the bounds of your expeditious be sought, we reach the ends of the earth before we find their limits. For though your brave spirit may find no more lands to conquer, victory never deserts it; and its triumphs will never fail but with the want of materials for triumph.³⁷

Yet it was not Henry's martial prowess that struck Gerald, but his ability to restore and keep the peace.

With a grace that has no parallel on earth, but which was divinely conferred on you from above, you, the friend and promoter of concord, restored peace

³⁴ David Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain 1066-1284* Kindle edn, London, 2004, https://read.amazon.ca/?asin=B002RUA408&ref_=kwl_kr_iv_rec_1&language=en-CA, Accessed, 20 July 2022,, Kindle Location 3671

³⁵ Ralph V. Turner, 'The problem of survival for the Angevin 'Empire': Henry II's and his sons' vision versus late twelfth-century realities', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 100, No. 1, no. Feb., 1995, p.79

³⁶ Maria Paula Rey, "The Vocabulary of Empire: Gerard of Wales and the Angevin Empire," diss., Central European University, 2019), <https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2019/reymaria-paula.pdf>. accessed Maria Paula Rey 12 July 2022, p.2

³⁷ Thomas Wright, (ed.) *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis: Containing the Topography of Ireland, and the History of the Conquest of Ireland*, London, 1892, <https://archive.org/details/historicalworkso00girauoft/page/154/mode/2up>, accessed 1 August 2022, p.154

in your own dominions by your power, in foreign kingdoms by your counsels and authority.³⁸

Perhaps 'empire' is then the most appropriate term for describing how different the Plantagenet state was from the Anglo-Norman kingdom that Henry I inherited.³⁹ Henry II was the heir to the Dukes of Anjou, who had dedicated over two centuries to building up the family claim in France's south: he was not content to consolidate, as his grandfather had done, but rather intended to expand as his mother's family had.⁴⁰

The use of 'empire' to describe the Angevin lands was first employed by Kate Norgate in a pioneering work in 1877 to demonstrate its distinctive character when compared to the Anglo-Norman kingdoms.⁴¹

Formidable as was the task of England's internal re-organization, it was but a small part of the work which lay before Henry Fitz-Empress. His accession brought the English Crown into an entirely new relation with the world at large. The realm which for ages had been counted almost as a separate sphere, whose insularity had been strong enough to survive even the Norman conquest and to turn the conqueror's own native land into a dependency of the conquered island, suddenly became an unit in a vast group of states gathered into the hands of a single ruler, and making up altogether the most extensive and important empire in Christendom.⁴²

French historians, perhaps sensitive to national history, have preferred to describe it as '*espace Plantagenet*', and John Gillingham describes it as an 'empire without a name', which seems to beg the question.⁴³ Henry's court constantly moved, and this lack of a centre or metropole seems to contradict some of Susan Reynold's useful description of empire:

...relatively large polities that consist of a ruling part (the metropolis) and other parts (colonies or peripheries) that it dominates as a result of military conquest or some kind of political or economic bullying, and that are retained and governed separately from the metropolis rather than being absorbed in it...⁴⁴

³⁸ *Ibid.* p.157

³⁹ Bernard S. Bachrach, 'The Idea of the Angevin Empire', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, vol. 10, No. 4, no. Winter, 1978, p.298

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.299

⁴¹ Kate. Norgate, *England Under the Angevin Kings*, London, 1887, <https://archive.org/details/englandunderange01norguoft/page/n5/mode/2up>, accessed 11 July 2022,

⁴² *Ibid.* p.440

⁴³ See Rey, "Vocabulary of Empire." p. 11; John. Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, London, 2001, p.2

⁴⁴ Reynolds, "Empires: a problem of comparative history." p.159

John Le Patourel suggested in *The Norman Empire* (1976) that the history of post-Conquest England and Normandy was one of successful colonisation and assimilation.⁴⁵ This view has been critiqued by David Bates, who has argued that there is strong evidence that the various lands of Henry I and Henry II were politically and conceptually separate: not a kingdom but an empire.⁴⁶ Henry's power was based on strong administrative institutions and what Carpenter calls a delicate balance between giving and taking, all of which allowed him to survive both the disgrace of Becket's murder and the Great Revolt of his sons and empress in 1173.⁴⁷

Henry was ambivalent about the future of the disparate lands he had gathered together, but his sons Richard and John saw the potential for something more permanent.⁴⁸ Henry continued the policies of his mother's family in expanding and cementing his hold over the French lands, while subduing much of Britain that had not been brought under control. His recognition of customary law and development of the common law established a systemic relationship between centre and periphery and provided a variety of structures with which various magnates, barons, bishops and abbots and townsfolk could find an identity and a source of rights and authority. Richard and John both attempted to make this 'empire' a kingdom more focused on the absolute power of the Crown, and both failed, most of the empire's territories being lost during the reign of Henry III.

Finally, the Habsburg Empire is the subject of dispute over its origins, nature and the extent to which its dissolution in 1918 was the end of the story. It was successively the Austrian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and ultimately Austria-Hungary, but often identified by reference to its ruling family. Martyn Rady emphasises its dynastic nature, focussing on the acquisition by marriage and treaty of the territories of the Eastern empire, and its powerful link with the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁹ Pieter Judson describes

⁴⁵ John Le Patourel, *The Norman Empire*, Oxford, 1976, see mainly Chapter 7. The implication is, of course, that England was part of a Norman state

⁴⁶ David Bates, 'Normandy and England after 1066', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 104, No. 413, no. Oct., 1989, p.862

⁴⁷ 'The Struggle for Mastery: Britain 1066-1284', 2004 loc. 3859

⁴⁸ Turner, "The problem of survival for the Angevin 'Empire': Henry II's and his sons' vision versus late twelfth-century realities."

⁴⁹ Martyn Rady, *The Habsburg Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2017-03-16, <https://www-veryshortintroductions->

it as 'An Empire of Contradictions', for not only is its founding the subject of debate, but even the title of 'empire' was explicitly ceded in the 1867 Compromise that created the Dual Monarch.⁵⁰ A.J.P. Taylor is dismissive of the Empire as a 'plaster cast on a broken limb', based on 'institutions which had long ago lost their moral sanction'.⁵¹

Much of the contention around the Habsburg state in the nineteenth century must be laid at the door of its apparent reversion to absolutism and the survival of a 'medieval' patchwork of petty states within it; Hegel regarded it as an anachronism when comparing it to Prussia.⁵² Notwithstanding the development of effective ecclesiastical, legal and bureaucratic institutions under Maria Theresa and Joseph II, the Habsburgs ruled by decree, a tendency that was only emphasised after 1815, when an 'Austrian' Empire emerged under the tutelage of Clemens von Metternich. Metternich's philosophy was succinct in focussing on strong government against liberals and Jacobins alike, but his ideas show a recognition of the structural and symbolic elements of empire.

The first principle to be followed by the monarchs, united as they are by the coincidence of their desires and opinions, should be that of maintaining the stability of political institutions against the disorganised excitement....

Let them not confound concessions made to parties with the good they ought to do for their people, in modifying, according to their recognised needs, such branches of the administration as require it. ...

Let them maintain religious principles in all their purity, and not allow the faith to be attacked and morality interpreted according to the social contract or the visions of foolish sectarians....

Let them suppress Secret Societies, that gangrene of society.⁵³

com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198792963.001.0001/actrade-9780198792963?rskey=j8JRmL&result=5, accessed 18 July 2022, p.15

⁵⁰ Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 2016, https://read.amazon.ca/sample/B01EHQKNAE?f=1&r=ed403348&sid=131-7382196-8632930&rid=&cid=A2HLB8BR5HRQPO&clientId=kfw&l=en_CA, Kindle edn., accessed 25 July 2022, p.103. The Hungarians rejected the idea of empire because it implied territorial unity, so a compromise was ultimately reached with the name 'Austro-Hungarian Monarchy' or simply 'Austria-Hungary', see Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*, London, 2015-12-14, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.une.edu.au/10.4324/9781315839493>, accessed 24 July 2022, p.193

⁵¹ A J P Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, Harmondsworth, 1964, <https://archive.org/details/habsburgmonarchy00tayl/mode/2up>, accessed 25 July 2022, p.272

⁵² John Deák, *Forging a Multinational State : State Making in Imperial Austria From the Enlightenment to the First World War* 2015, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/detail.action?docID=3568967>, Accessed, 2 August 2022, p.4

⁵³ Prince Klemens von Metternich Political Confession of Faith, *Fordham University: Modern History Sourcebook*, Fordham University, 1997, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1820metternich.asp>, accessed 2 August 2022,

The irony, is, of course, that Metternich's attempt to create a strong state foundered in much the same way as his attempts to create a Concert of Europe.

Did the Habsburg rule an empire, was it a dynastic and absolutist kingdom, or merely a loose federation? Judson abandoned his earlier opposition to describing the Habsburg monarchy as an empire because it lacked expansionist and colonial enterprises, and accepted the position of Burbank and Cooper, that empires are marked by their recognition of difference, a key feature of the Habsburg state.⁵⁴ The Habsburg empire rather effectively illustrates the relationship of the metropole and periphery existing in a tension of incorporation and differentiation.

Metternich's fall and the succession of Franz Joseph in 1848 saw a moderation of absolutism in the face of intellectual resistance, the new industrialists and the nobilities of each constitution state in the empire. Rather than creating a unitary state, the emperor made himself the focus of imperial unity, through the etiquette of the court, the many cultural roles the emperor played across the empire, and the example of piety. The Habsburgs:

legitimized their rule in terms of their family's historical role as the holders of the crown of the Holy Roman Empire, and as the protectors of Christendom. In fact Emperor Franz Joseph saw his empire as in many respects like the Holy Roman Empire and his position like that of the Roman-German emperor.⁵⁵

The 'failure' of the Habsburg empire is often blamed on the 'nationalities question'.⁵⁶ Nationalism was a challenge, but it had far more to do with Austria's drift towards Germany, and Hungary's self-understanding of itself as a nation state, than the ambitions of other minorities; and the empire became steadily more dependent on Prussia and the new *Reich*. Count von Beust's contemporary view of the *Ausgleich* (Compromise) of 1867, saw the capitulation to Hungary's demands of autonomy and for constitutional result as

⁵⁴ Mladen Medved, 'Habsburg Empire Strikes Back', *Central European History*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2017, p.359; 'Empires in World History Power and the Politics of Difference', 2010 p.18

⁵⁵ Solomon Wank, 'The Nationalities Question in the Habsburg Monarchy: Reflections on the Historical Record', *Center for Austrian Studies*, vol. Working Paper 93-3, 1993, p.9

⁵⁶ 'The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918', 2015-12-14 p.264

related to the external competition with Prussia for the leadership of Germany, than about nationalism:

Everyone who has studied the German problem — which assumed an acute form in 1866, when I was Minister in Saxony — must feel that, setting aside the question of rivalry with France, which sooner or later will be decided at the point of the sword, it resolves itself simply into the question of political supremacy.⁵⁷

The history of the Habsburgs has sometimes been reduced to a story of decline and dissolution under the stress of centripetal forces, an empire that was distinctly un-modern and poorly adapted to change in dynamic world of the late nineteenth century. Walter Sauer's approach in *Age of Empires* certainly condemns the empire as an economically-backward, weak democracy, attempting to recover status by colonising the Balkans; but John Deak catalogues recent work that depicts the empire as economically and industrially successful and integrated into the European system, intellectually adventurous and increasingly able to incorporate ethnic groups into a multinational state.⁵⁸ Deak goes so far as to suggest that it was the excesses of militarisation of the Habsburg state in 1914 that destroyed the order so carefully nurtured by Franz Joseph: it was a multicultural experiment that benefited its constituent peoples and showed enormous resilience during four years before war finally tore it apart.⁵⁹ Obscured and delayed by the Versailles settlement and the Cold War, this experiment may be underway again in the European Union.

Understanding the nature of empire is to engage both in comparative history and in a semantic struggle, all the more urgent because contemporary political and economic hierarchies show a resurgence of imperial forms. What we have investigated in this paper is the essential form of empire, once the complexities of maritime colonies and the disputed relationship with capitalism is stripped away. What emerges from an examination of three European empires is that, while economic relationships within the

⁵⁷ Friedrich Ferdinand Count von Beust Memoirs of Friedrich Ferdinand Count von Beust, *Memoirs of Friedrich Ferdinand Count von Beust*, Fordham University Modern History Sourcebook, 1887, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1867beust.asp>, accessed 2 August 2022,

⁵⁸ Walter Sauer, 'Austria-Hungary,' in *The age of empires*, ed. Robert Aldrich, London, 2007; John Deak, 'Habsburg Studies within Central European History: The State of the Field', *Central European History*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, p.54

⁵⁹ 'Forging a Multinational State : State Making in Imperial Austria From the Enlightenment to the First World War', 2015

empire may be important, what defines an empire is a web of relationships among peoples who are defined by their differences. No more coercive than the nation state, empires appropriated and included to achieve identity and sovereignty, rather than excluding or assimilating as nations must. The repertoire of empires was not confined to their need to expand: it found expression in the systemic relationships between metropole and periphery, often based in religion, law and culture, and in each empire's capacity to change, adapt and, ultimately, transform. The Holy Roman Empire may not have had the central forms of government, and the conquest and colonies of Rome, but the appropriation of the title and the powerful symbolic, religious and legal ties allowed it to survive and adapt, and its populations mainly to prosper, even surviving the wars of religion, until the Enlightenment removed the elements of its legitimacy. The Angevin empire may have been short-lived, but Henry found effective means to bind widely-different territories into an effective governance. The Habsburg Empire was far more successful than is often portrayed and provided more than a century of successful rule in an area that, over the next seventy years, was to know little but conflict and oppression. While the nation state remains the dominant political form in the present day, it is worth recognising that that some of the most valued characteristic of a civil society — the acceptable of difference, autonomy and shared symbolism— are sometimes more apparent in empires than in nations.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 2006,
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003060963-46/imagined-communities-benedict-anderson>, accessed 20 February 2022.
- Bachrach, Bernard S. 'The Idea of the Angevin Empire', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* vol. 10, No. 4, no. Winter, 1978, pp. 293–99. doi:10.2307/4048161, accessed 12 July 2022.
- Bates, David 'Normandy and England after 1066', *The English Historical Review* vol. 104, No. 413, Oct., 1989, pp. 851–80. doi:10.2307/572785, accessed 1 August 2022.
- Beissinger, Mark R 'Rethinking empire in the wake of Soviet collapse,' In *Ethnic Politics after Communism*, edited by Zoltan Barany, and Robert G. Moser, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2018. doi.org/10.7591/9781501720840-003, accessed 1 August 2022, pp. 14-45.
- Braund, Susanna Morton 'Roman assimilations of the other: "Humanitas" at Rome', *Acta Classica* vol. 40, no. 1997, pp. 15–32. doi:10.2307/24595043.
- Burbank, Jane., and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History Power and the Politics of Difference*, Apple Books edn, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010,
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.30977>, Accessed, 3 July 2022.
- Wright, Thomas, (ed.) *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis: Containing the Topography of Ireland, and the History of the Conquest of Ireland*, London, George Bell, 1892,
<https://archive.org/details/historicalworkso00girauoft/page/154/mode/2up>, accessed 1 August 2022.
- Carpenter, David, *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain 1066-1284*, Kindle edn, London, Penguin, 2004,
https://read.amazon.ca/?asin=B002RUA408&ref_=kwl_kr_iv_rec_1&language=en-CA, Accessed, 20 July 2022.
- Deák, John, *Forging a Multinational State : State Making in Imperial Austria From the Enlightenment to the First World War*, Stanford University Press, 2015,
<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/detail.action?docID=3568967>, Accessed, 2 August 2022.
- Deak, John 'Habsburg Studies within Central European History: The State of the Field', *Central European History* vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, pp. 53–55. doi:10.1017/s0008938918000079,
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0008938918000079>, accessed 24 July 2022.
- Doyle, M. W., *Empires*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1987.
- Fieldhouse, David K, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey From the Eighteenth Century*, London, Macmillan, 1982.
- Fieldhouse, David K., *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973.

- Beust, Friedrich Ferdinand Count von Memoirs of Friedrich Ferdinand Count von Beust, *Memoirs of Friedrich Ferdinand Count von Beust*, Fordham University Modern History Sourcebook, 1887, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1867beust.asp>, accessed 2 August 2022.
- Gallagher, John, and Ronald Robinson 'The Imperialism of Free Trade,' In *Imperialism : the Robinson and Gallagher controversy*, edited by William Roger Louis, New York, New Viewpoints, 1976.
- Gillingham, John., *The Angevin Empire*, London, Arnold, 2001.
- Hobsbawm, E. J., *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, London, Abacus, 1994.
- Hobson, J. A., *Imperialism: A Study*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1902, <https://archive.org/details/imperialismastu00goog/page/n6/mode/2up>.
- Jordheim, Helge, and Iver B Neumann 'Empire, imperialism and conceptual history', *Journal of International Relations and Development* vol. 14, no. 2, 2011, pp. 153–85. doi:10.1057/jird.2010.21, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/jird.2010.21>.
- Judson, Pieter M., *The Habsburg Empire*, Kindle edn. Harvard University Press, 2016, Kindle edn., https://read.amazon.ca/sample/B01EHQKNAE?f=1&r=ed403348&sid=131-7382196-8632930&rid=&cid=A2HLB8BR5HRQP0&clientId=kfw&l=en_CA, accessed 25 July 2022.
- Koebner, Richard, *Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961.
- Le Patourel, John., *The Norman Empire*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1976.
- Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1970, http://books.google.com.au/books?id=D9FduAAACAAJ&hl=&source=gbbs_api.
- Mattingly, David J, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2011, <https://www.jstor-org.ezproxy.une.edu.au/stable/j.ctt4cgd4k>.
- Medved, Mladen 'Habsburg Empire Strikes Back', *Central European History* vol. 50, no. 2, 2017, pp. 236–59. doi:10.1017/s0008938917000310, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0008938917000310>, accessed 1 August 2022.
- Norgate, Kate., *England Under the Angevin Kings*, London, Macmillan, 1887, <https://archive.org/details/englandunderange01norguoft/page/n5/mode/2up>, accessed 11 July 2022.
- Metternich, Prince Klemens von Political Confession of Faith, *Fordham University: Modern History Sourcebook*, Fordham University, 1997, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1820metternich.asp>, accessed 2 August 2022.
- Rady, Martyn, *The Habsburg Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, <https://www-veryshortintroductions-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198792963.001.0001/actrade-9780198792963?rskey=J8JRmL&result=5>, accessed 18 July 2022.
- Revell, Louise., *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0811/2008007073-b.html>

- Rey, Maria Paula. "The Vocabulary of Empire: Gerard of Wales and the Angevin Empire," MA Thesis, Central European University, 2019, <https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2019/reymaria-paula.pdf>, accessed 12 July 2022.
- Reynolds, Susan 'Empires: a problem of comparative history', *Historical Research* vol. 79, no. 204, 2006, pp. 151–65. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2281.2006.00373.x>, accessed 18 July 2022.
- Robinson, Ronald, and John Gallagher 'The Partition of Africa,' In *Imperialism : the Robinson and Gallagher controversy*, edited by William Roger Louis, New York, New Viewpoints, 1976.
- Scales, Len, and Joachim Whaley 'Introduction', *German History* vol., 2018, doi:10.1093/gerhis/ghy040, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghy040>.
- Sked, Alan, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*, London, Routledge, 2015, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.une.edu.au/10.4324/9781315839493>, accessed 24 July 2022.
- Smith, A. D. 'The Origins of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* vol. 12, no. 3, 1989, pp. 340–67.
- Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, T. Forester (ed.), Floating Press, 2018, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/detail.action?docID=413159>.
- Taylor, A J P, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*, Harmondsworth, Penguin UK, 1964, <https://archive.org/details/habsburgmonarchy00tayl/mode/2up>, accessed 25 July 2022.
- Treaty of Westphalia, Yale Law School: The Avalon Project, 2008, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/westphal.asp, accessed 1 August, 2022.
- Turner, Ralph V. 'The problem of survival for the Angevin 'Empire': Henry II's and his sons' vision versus late twelfth-century realities', *The American Historical Review* vol. 100, No. 1, no. Feb., 1995, pp. 78–96. doi:10.2307/2167984, accessed 12 July 2022.
- Sauer, Walter 'Austria-Hungary,' In *The age of empires*, edited by Robert Aldrich, London, Thames & Hudson, 2007.
- Wank, Solomon 'The Nationalities Question in the Habsburg Monarchy: Reflections on the Historical Record', *Center for Austrian Studies* vol. Working Paper 93-3, 1993, <https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/90517/1/WP933.pdf>, accessed 3 August 2022.
- Whaley, Joachim, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, Oxford University Press, 2012, <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=UiFWYsG-t7UC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Germany+and+the+Holy+Roman+Empire&ots=IyInlnoRgv&sig=09inZ2sM8VwOnhX-IMFG14T3ezo>, accessed 23 June 2022.
- Whaley, Joachim 'Central European History and the Holy Roman Empire', *Central European History* vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, pp. 40–45. doi:10.1017/s0008938918000067, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0008938918000067>, accessed 31 July 2022.
- Whaley, Joachim, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, <https://www-veryshortintroductions->

com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198748762.001.0001/actrade-9780198748762?rskey=J8JRmL&result=4, accessed 18 July 2022.

Wilson, Peter H., *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495-1806*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999.

Wilson, Peter H., *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History*, Harmondsworth, Penguin UK, 2017,
https://read.amazon.ca/?asin=B012UTQ5LQ&ref_=kwl_kr_iv_rec_1&language=en-CA,
accessed 20 July 2022.