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European Imperialism: A Zone of Cooperation
Rather than Competition?¹

John M. MacKenzie

Historians have an inevitable tendency to look backwards: it is in the nature of the practice of their profession. The search for origins and causes is hard-wired into the very systems of their methodologies. Thus they take great epoch-making turning points, such as World War I of the twentieth century, and seek to establish the roots of such transformatory events. The decades preceding the outbreak of that war are invariably constructed as a prelude, as a time of developing conflict which ultimately breaks out into the major conflagration. But when some form of counterfactual approach is adopted and historians look at those years through an alternative lens from that of 1914–18, perhaps they would come up with rather different perspectives. If the very words 'empire' and 'imperialism' seem to carry within them the notion of competition and conflict, perhaps the new focus creates a different spin. Yet it is hard to escape the idea that empires are by their nature expansionist and expansionism leads to violence at a number of levels, violence against the people over whom dominance is established, frontier tensions with other expanding states, and struggles for supreme power (in the case of this period) within Europe itself. Perhaps we may add, more unconventionally, the violence done to the domestic, metropolitan populations of empires, not least as a result of their implication in the culture of violence which they seem to engender.

Such a belief in the essential violence of empires is clearly something of a truism. Violence and empire are indeed conjoined in a baleful historical twinning. It also seems to be a revealed truth of the era of European imperialism from the sixteenth century to the twentieth that the rivalries of the ambitious states of Europe led to a succession of wars that almost inevitably culminated in the global conflicts of the twentieth century. Of course such a statement subsumes all sorts of historical debates, but the concept of a 400-year period of conflict, ultimately sparked by forms of global expansion, seems to hold sway in a European historical orthodoxy. From the point of view of the worldwide victims of empire it seems to offer a useful vision of European iniquity in seizing indigenous destinies and identities, often in a violently destructive or even genocidal embrace. Thus for them it may be that modern globalization was conceived in rape and born in the midst of much violence. Some historians, notably Niall Ferguson, have attempted to give this a much more positive ring, the notion that
modern (alleged) capitalist freedoms and global liberalism suggest that some aspects at least of the imperial period had beneficial outcomes. Whatever we may think of this revision, perhaps we should inject another into the mix, the possibility that the image of continuous conflict has been overdrawn, that it needs to be reconsidered in certain crucial ways. This does not, by any means, have the effect of reducing the scale of the violence of imperialism, but it may revise the potentially violent relationships of the imperial powers themselves.

I. Two eras of European imperialism?

It is perhaps useful to reflect on the background to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century period, for historical context is surely important. A central dilemma that arises from this is one of continuity and change. Should we see the period of European expansion as essentially continuous from the voyages of exploration of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the wars of the twentieth? Many major historians of imperialism seem to do so, even if they recognize key economic developments or transformations during that era. Or should we distinguish a considerable rupture in the late eighteenth century? We are accustomed to think of the so-called New Imperialism as being a characteristic of the second half or final quarter of the nineteenth century, but should we perhaps see a new imperialism actually arising in the later eighteenth, one that is as much inspired by intellectual, religious and cultural changes as by economic and technological ones? And perhaps it is the case that while the earlier period was essentially nationalist, the second tended towards the internationalist. Were there perhaps two very distinct forms and periods of imperialism, the one highly competitive and riddled with conflict, the other often marked by some aspects of cooperation? Does this distinction help to create the essential background to the material of this book? Thus I am suggesting that while most historians have concentrated on economic transformations in the later eighteenth century, notably the shift towards industrial capitalism and new forms of trade, should we instead be concentrating on the intellectual, religious and cultural characteristics of the new forms of imperialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

There are indeed major contrasts between the empires of the age of mercantilism and those of the age of industrialism, between early modern and modern empires. It has generally been accepted that European mercantile empires were inevitably about conflict. The central mercantilist notion of a finite global resource, a limited world trade underpinned by protectionism and bullionism (limited precious metal supply to underpin currencies), implied this. This apparent inevitability of conflict was heightened by two factors, first the great sense of a religious struggle between the Catholic and Protestant empires, between on the one hand the centralized Crown-led empires of Spain and Portugal, united from 1580–1640, then later France, and on the other, the assertive new Protestant empires, those of the Netherlands and England. And the second was the tendency of these latter countries to create chartered companies, notably the Dutch and English East India Companies, aggressive capitalism incarnate, empire at arm’s length, contrasting with the Catholic empires held very close to the
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This highly conflictual era of European empires was to last from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries with the field gradually simplifying itself, as Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands declined, into a straight battle between Britain (after 1707) and France. Nowhere better reflects this sense of violent competition than the Caribbean. There, some islands, like St Lucia in the Antilles, repeatedly changed hands. Others, like Antigua, were ringed by forts, garrisoned by troops, and became settings of major naval bases and engagements. While Caribbean islands were often small and at that time exceptionally rich from the imperialists’ point of view, similar examples of the expectation of continual conflict, and the measures taken to cope with it, can be found around the world.

Obviously we think of the Napoleonic Wars as the powerful and enduring struggle that brought this first phase of European imperial conflict to an end. But this era had already overlapped with a supremely influential intellectual flowering. The Enlightenment has been a source of much controversy in respect of its relationship with imperialism. Did it set the mental groundwork for modern empires? Or was it essentially opposed to imperialism? Evidence for the first can be found in stadial theory – a form of historical evolution of human societies from hunting and gathering, through the pastoral, the agricultural and finally the commercial, with industrial to be added on later. This was formulated in Edinburgh by William Robertson and others. The second notable intellectual and cultural development was the hugely influential notion of the heightened contrast between civilization, so often associated with classical empires, and barbarism, that vision of the Huns, Goths and Vandals at the gates. This central concept led in two directions, firming up a sense of imperial superiority, but also tending towards a dominant idea that empires were doomed to fail, that the prime characteristic of historic empires, as reflected in the experience of the classical world, was to overreach themselves. The British were influenced – and perhaps this influence spread to the rest of Europe through translations – by two titanic eighteenth-century figures, Edward Gibbon and Edmund Burke. Both were obsessed with the fateful and violent decline of empires and their visions, together with the later rather more optimistic one of Thomas Lord Macaulay, infused the education and world-views of British imperialists in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For them and for many others, empires implied decay, human moralities that failed to live up to heroic visions of grandeur. Burke spoke of the ‘dilapidation into which a great empire must fall’; Gibbon wrote of the ‘vicissitudes of fortune […] which buries empires and cities in a common grave’ (and incidentally, note that assumed synergy between empires and cities). The romantic poet William Wordsworth, who had warmly welcomed the French Revolution, proclaimed ‘Another year […] Another mighty empire overthrown’. This view of empires as always doomed to fail through ruinous and violent collapse seems to me to be a distinctive characteristic of the Age of the Enlightenment. This became a great lesson for imperialists, a fateful and much-feared bogey to be avoided in the modern age.

Moreover, there were other supposedly anti-imperial aspects of the Enlightenment, notably in the development of the science of economics. Adam Smith’s powerful critique of mercantilism and his elevation of the concepts of free trade as a new orthodoxy was to be phenomenally influential. On the question of colonies, his work
was however ambiguous. It is interesting that in book four of *The Wealth of Nations*, he wrote of 'the general advantage which Europe, considered as one great country, has derived from the discovery and colonization of America' which he saw as leading to an 'increase of its enjoyments' and an 'augmentation of its industry', producing a variety of commodities for pleasure and for ornament. Thus he implies a consideration of Europe acting together rather than in fierce mercantilist confrontation. But he also wrote positively of the free trade area which was constructed in the region of North America and the Caribbean within the British Empire. In the nineteenth century, the free trade school, which owed its intellectual origins to Smith, certainly believed that trade had the power to overwhelm conflict, that freedom of trade and empires, formerly so protectionist, were essentially incompatible. But this also cut two ways: the reality was that free trade, rather than rendering mercantile or any other form of imperialism redundant, came to underpin and perhaps facilitate British imperialism.

And the phobia which that imperialism developed was the notion that other empires might indulge in neo-protectionism, might cut into the free trading ideal.

We can also identify a significant cultural relativism in some Enlightenment figures, not least Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of the 'noble savage', duly reflected in many of the paintings of the time. This cultural relativism had its British Indian expressions in the scholarly interests of Sir William Jones, Warren Hastings and many other figures associated with them. But such scholarly approaches were, perhaps, to be less influential than Smith's free trade and cultural relativism had a somewhat chequered career. It came to lose its influence as those oppositional dualities set up by Gibbon and others moved centre stage. Thus, as the nineteenth century progressed, it seemed to be apparent that one of the common and uniting effects of European imperialism was precisely those sets of binaries which seemed to be born out of the Enlightenment, but which were in a sense raised and educated through social Darwinism and the development of pseudo-scientific racism. These became the essential imperial dualities of civilized/savage; superior/inferior; advanced/primitive. All of these had their origins, however inaccurately, in the Rome/German tribes conflict, now massively re-emphasized by racial ideas.

Commerce and free trade were seen as one of the markers of the civilized/superior/advanced paradigm. But the great irony was that while free trade was seen as a supposed dissolver of conflict, its application, or lack of it, became a source of tension. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that whereas mercantile conflict was based on genuinely different world-views, religious and political, modern European imperialism had common intellectual origins. To a certain extent, the progress of forms of secularism facilitated this shift towards supposedly rational approaches to the outer world, even in an era when evangelicalism became central to the religious impulse. Through these triple developments, intellectual, commercial and religious, the gulf represented by the binaries was widened and deepened. And with the almost tectonic opening up of these fissures, the conceits of empire grew accordingly.

So what are these conceits of empire? The common feature of all historic empires is that they are both inspired by and in turn develop visions that are essentially illusory and fantastical. But they are of course no less real in the minds of imperialists, no less instrumental and inspirational for that. These visions involve concepts not only of
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racial, but also of intensely national superiority, notions of unique capacities. They involve fantasies of global rule and world government or monarchy. For the citizens – not the subjects – of empires they also involve fantasies of world taxonomies, of engrossing the globe into intellectual and scientific systems that will create forms of archival and scientific order. And along with those go fantasies of universal medical, scientific and educational systems, of world-encompassing religion, freedom of travel, and globalized orders facilitating trade and communications. All of these constitute the manifestations and confirmations of those binaries or dualities that underpin all nineteenth-century empires. Clearly, in the modern era, these fantasies of empire are held in common, but also potentially lead to conflict. Just as there is a tendency for each institutionalized religious system to see itself as uniquely inspired, uniquely plugged into the ur-source of the respective spiritual authority, so too does each empire consider itself to hold the particular set of unique justifications for its fantasies of superiority and authority. Anyone who has read through the school textbooks, the juvenile literature, the heroic biographies, the foundational works of history of the British in the nineteenth century, would know how far this is true. But of course equivalent bases can readily be found for the Dutch, French, German, Italian, Russian and indeed Japanese Empires. Thus while the intellectual foundations and the fantastical visionary structures built upon them are in a sense common, the national styles are qualitatively different.

II. Conflict or cooperation?

So we appear to be back in an era of conflict. Not the least of this conflict lay in another great contrast between the shared ideas and the clashes to which they seemed to lead. If intellectual ideas were held in common, but leading to competing national visions, so too were new forms of economic and demographic transformations shared by all imperial states. Thus modern empires developed equivalent economic foundations, industrialism and its spread around Europe, the United States, and later Japan, in the concentration of populations in rapidly, even explosively, growing urban settings, and in the development of increasingly sophisticated technologies – of war, transport, communications, visual displays and publications. The ‘tools of empire’ were generally shared tools. Even the organization of time itself was an imperial innovation which was held in common across empires. Yet just as intellectual systems broke down into competing conceits, so too did these common economic bases for empires and the technologies to facilitate them become sources of tension. The principal source of such friction is easy to find. The fact of the matter was that industrial techniques were reliant on raw materials that were not always available in Europe – and were largely absent in the case of Japan. Industrial imperialism with so much in common competed for the raw materials necessary to feed it. Another source of conflict lay in geography. If commerce was the vital adjunct of power, then access to commerce was key – access to the North Sea for the Germans, access to the Mediterranean for the Russians, access to India and the Indian Ocean for the British, access to South America and the Far East for the Americans. The language of the new nineteenth-century imperialism seems to
Imperial Cooperation and Transfer, 1870–1930

confirm this: the 'hands off' policy of the Monroe Doctrine, the 'Scramble for Africa', the 'Open Door' in China (violently kept open that is), the forcing open of Japan, the efforts to prop up the 'Sick Man of Europe' against the forcing open of the Bosphorus and so on. Political, diplomatic and military historians have sometimes (though not always) emphasized such conflicts and some, at least, have seen World War I as the climactic war of empires, the war which would at the very least result in the victors' redistribution of the spoils of empire (which was indeed what happened).

On the other hand, some have emphasized the manifest yearnings for international approaches. These arose out of the conference at Vienna and the diplomatic settlements of the Napoleonic wars and had their particular expression in the later nineteenth century. As is well known, the imperial powers tried to settle potential conflicts by treaty-making. The most significant of these was perhaps the General Act of the Conference of Berlin of 1885. This enshrined the British passion for free trade, freedom of navigation of waterways, freedom of missionary societies to operate in the territories of rival empires, methods of notification of land grabs and the like, as well as pledges on the abolition of the slave trade, along with ground rules for dealing with African chiefs. How effective all this was is of course another matter, but other treaties followed with regard to Africa, multilateral ones involving firearms and slavery as well as bilateral examples dealing with negotiated settlements of boundary disputes and expansionary moves. And indeed on the eve of World War I, the British and the Germans were busily making plans for what they envisaged as the break-up of the Portuguese Empire in Africa in the wake of the collapse of the Portuguese monarchy in 1910. This more or less secret agreement cheerfully re-carved up the Portuguese African colonies between them. It was partly this diplomatic activity and potential conflict resolution which led some historians to suggest that World War I had nothing whatsoever to do with empire.

III. Co-operation: the environment, science, medicine and Christian missions

If the post-1815 period seemed to be a time of attempted diplomatic rapprochement, we need to explore the significant areas of cross-imperial cooperation in such fields as the environment, scientific and medical endeavour, and Christian missionary activity. In the case of the environment, it is of course an obvious truth that the environment is no respecter of political boundaries and it is indeed the development of environmental history which helped to promote notions of a cooperative imperialism. Richard Grove dated this back to the eighteenth century, and even earlier, linking it to the environmental and scientific interests of the Enlightenment. Theories about progressive desiccation, notably on oceanic islands, but also in continental contexts, were particularly developed in an international setting, spreading from French and German environmental savants to Britain primarily through the Scottish Enlightenment and a scientific community in the northern part of the United Kingdom which was much more highly developed than in England. Such desiccation – and sometimes even desertification – was allegedly connected with tree cover. The rapacious clearance of trees in Caribbean islands (for
example, almost all the indigenous tree cover of Barbados was cleared within a few decades of the arrival of the English there in 1627) as well as the great sugar-producing French islands of the Indian Ocean, Île de France and Île de Bourbon, later Mauritius and Réunion, was key here. Whether desiccation theory was influential or not in transforming attitudes to environmental exploitation and change, it is certainly the case that scientific research generally has long been an international endeavour. Sir Joseph Banks, botanist on Captain Cook’s first voyage and later the powerful polymath and president of the Royal Society in London, had considerable international networks. Moreover, forestry as a discipline was well developed in France and Germany ahead of the emergence of such skills in Scotland or England. Thus the British set out to learn from their continental neighbours, often sending their own personnel across the English Channel for training. It took some time for education in England, notably in the universities, to catch up in the provision of such technical expertise.

All of this led to the emergence of an international group of practitioners. It is now well known that the leading foresters in British India had very non-English sounding names such as J.G. Koenig, Wilhelm Schlich, Dietrich Brandis and Berthold Ribbentrop. The appearance of non-British names in key technical areas of imperial endeavour is now a familiar phenomenon. Anyone interested in the development of the botanical gardens and scientific enterprises will find German and French names abounding in the record. This is certainly true in the founding of museums in the British Empire. Tamson Pietsch has also unveiled the same effect in her work on the origins of the universities of the Anglophone world. James Braund has recently edited a collection of essays examining the influence of German-speaking scientists upon the development of science and natural history in New Zealand, notably the geologist Ferdinand Hochstetter. Braund has also researched the wider incidence of this phenomenon in the Pacific and elsewhere. To all of this we could add the influence of continental Europeans in the history of art across the British Empire. Many of the images we have of the imperial environment, both through constructions of landscape (and its potential bounty) and of indigenous peoples were executed by travelling artists from European countries, again partly because in some respects art education was so much better developed there.

One popular subject of art was animals and hunting. This became a key area of cooperation within European imperialism from the 1890s, as the exploitation of the animal resource of Africa in particular was reaching its climax. There had developed here an elite fellowship of the hunting fraternity. The British considered the Germans not only to be admirable and fervent hunters, but also as people from whom lessons could be learned. When the British came to consider the framing of game law for their East African and other colonial territories, as well as the gazetting of game reserves, they turned to the examples of such law already put in place in German East Africa, Tanganyika, by the commissioner, later governor, Hermann von Wissmann. (Wissmann’s life, ironically or appropriately enough, was brought to an end prematurely in a hunting accident.) The British Foreign Office (which at that time was still administering the East African colonies before handing them over to the Colonial Office) asked for copies of German game law to be sent to it so that they could be used
as a template for their own legislation. Lord Salisbury obtained these from Berlin and then sent them out to the commissioners of the East African protectorates – and indeed to other colonies in Central and Southern Africa. Extensive correspondence was subsequently gathered together into a parliamentary command paper.

In 1900 the first international conference on African wildlife was held in the Foreign Office in London. Representatives of all European countries with African possessions attended, although it was apparent that the event was dominated by the British and the Germans. The Germans were indeed represented by Baron von Lindelfels as well as the said Hermann von Wissmann, who was still considered as the great expert on the subject. The resulting convention (which not all the participating countries ratified) proposed a whole range of regulations that were to be more or less influential in the control of hunting, particularly African access to it, in the twentieth century. The convention also invoked the regulations on guns and ammunition (notably keeping them out of African hands) that had been agreed at the Brussels conference of 1889–90. Moreover, the movement towards the founding of game reserves and the later national parks was essentially an international one, starting in the western United States, that archetypal region of American imperialism, and spreading throughout the world, initially within the imperial territories of the European powers. These areas of cooperation have now been studied much more extensively by Bernhard Gissibl and others. But one of the key points that must be made is that one of the objectives of all these regulations was to exert control over Africans, over their access to firearms and also to hunting, as well as to deny them the extensive lands set aside for reserves and parks. The age of internationalist imperialism always had an eye to self-preservation, particularly in respect of indigenous peoples.

By the 1890s we can carry this study of personnel cooperating across empires into the realms of tropical medicine and the new science of microbiology. Once again Scots tended to operate in tandem, or sometimes in competition, with European scientists. In the study of the pathology of malaria, Italians were prominent, not least because malaria was a problem in Italy, even close to Rome, and rival claims were established for the discovery of transmission by mosquitoes between Robert Ross in India and Italian experts, though medical researchers also cooperated. In the study of cattle diseases such as East Coast fever in Africa, not to mention trypanosomiasis and the tsetse fly, Scots worked together with Robert Koch, although occasionally the British Colonial Office expressed some anxiety about the prominence of Germans in such studies. Other tropical diseases experienced in the imperial context also invariably involved international cooperation. The international character of imperial science in the late nineteenth century was developed in an important collection of essays edited by Benedikt Stuchtey, though with the exception of Stuchtey’s introduction and the chapter with the title ‘Fraternity in the age of jingoism’ the contributions to this volume often operated in parallel rather than in a truly comparative way. Public health was yet another area in which imperial powers cooperated, once again very often, but not exclusively, in the interests of protecting imperial administrators and white settlers from what were perceived to be the dangers of the proximity of indigenous populations. Other significant studies have unveiled scientific research in various national contexts, but nonetheless the striking characteristic of an age in which
institutions proliferated together with their publications was the way in which such research journals and bulletins were exchanged across the world. Environmental anxieties in this period were also shared among the empires, particularly concerning aspects of forestry and agricultural development. Thus these trans-European networks operated not only in the exchange of personnel, but also of scientific and technical information. Scientists, museums and other scientific institutions transferred specimens in respect of natural history, other scientific disciplines and also ethnography, right across Europe.

Ulrike Lindner has pointed out various areas of imperial cooperation between Britain and Germany in the supposed era of imperial rivalry. It is of course true that the German, as well as the French, Belgian and Portuguese, Empires were dependent upon the extraordinary network of submarine and overland telegraph cables that the British had established across the globe. This was inevitably to present a major problem to the Germans on the outbreak of World War I and it was fortunate for Germany that radio communications had been invented by then. Transport systems were also invariably shared. For example, Germany established a very effective shipping line to East Africa and, for a period, the British – including imperial officials – found it the most convenient means of reaching British imperial territories in the region, although they did often deprecate the fact. British railway companies and engineers often built the railway lines in colonies of other empires.

To shift the focus towards the Far East, it is also true that the Japanese navy and expertise in transport technology, including shipbuilding, marine engineering, lighthouse building and railway building, were all developed in league with Scottish models, as well as with the shipyards of Aberdeen or of Barrow-in-Furness in North-West England. Japanese students were prominent at Scottish universities in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In different ways, we can also see areas of cooperation with the Russian and Ottoman Empires as well as in the realm of informal imperialism in China. Returning to Britain and Germany, Lindner has also pointed to the ways in which those imperial powers were tied up, even if reluctantly, in colonial campaigns, such as those against the Herero and Nama in what is now Namibia, while the Germans were also keen to tap into the convenient sources of Indian and Chinese labour which British capitalist enterprises in railway building, plantations and mines had utilized not only in South Africa, but also in East Africa as well as in Caribbean and Indian Ocean islands.

We can, however, go further. The vast growth of capitalist enterprise in the nineteenth century often took on international tendencies. Although, as Magee and Thompson have pointed out, the ties between settler colonies in the British Empire and London or other metropolitan centres were fairly intense, still there is a good deal of evidence of international cross-investment during the period, for example in the gold mines of South Africa. Banks and stock exchanges were also seldom respecters of political frontiers, at least until war broke out. Money generally headed for the places where profits could be made regardless of national sentiment – and of course cross-border risk capital could produce higher returns. This was particularly true of areas of informal imperialism. While we now know a fair amount about the characteristics of such ‘soft power’ imperialism in South America and China, it would be helpful to have more detailed studies of investment flows and international company activity in
regions like these where direct imperial sentiment was absent. It is certainly the case that German shipping and trading companies as well as German banks and insurance operators were highly active in South American countries where there was also a considerable amount of German settlement, not least in Argentina. 48

We should also note that the flow of settlers across the world additionally failed to adhere to imperial boundaries, a fact sometimes adduced by French, German and later Italian propagandists in their efforts to establish more effective territories of settlement across the globe. The French seemed to be well supplied with settlement areas in North Africa, but the others struggled to find equivalents. The massive power of the United States of course sucked in settlers not just from Britain and Ireland, but from throughout Scandinavia (notably Norway), Western, Southern and Eastern Europe. This ensured that all the empires, well-established like the British, French and Portuguese, or nascent such as the German and Italian, were united in viewing such migrants as lost to their own national ambitions. But in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Germans in particular headed in quite large numbers for Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, obviously taking their expertise and labour with them. In South Africa, 2,000 members of the German Legion who had fought on the side of the British in the Crimean War were settled by the Governor Sir George Grey as armed farmers on the frontier of the Cape Colony in order to create a buffer zone against what were seen as the threatening African people beyond that frontier. 49

In the colonies of settlement, towns with German names can be found to illustrate this movement. In Ontario there was a Berlin until, in a supremely unsympathetic move, the Canadians renamed it Kitchener during World War I. There are still a lot of people with German names living there. Further west, Germans and people from Eastern Europe settled on the prairies and in British Columbia. In the Transvaal, now Gauteng, there is a Heidelberg while in South Australia there is the celebrated Hahndorf, where the visitor is disorientated not only by the ubiquitous presence of German-ness everywhere, in its band, its shops, its fairs, but also by all the German names on its war memorial until the realization dawns that in fact they all fought on the British side. James Belich has suggested that, putting aside the enormous migration to the USA, 400,000 Germans migrated to Canada by 1950, most before 1914. There are said to be several hundred thousand New Zealanders of German descent and 27 per cent of the supposedly Dutch population of the Cape in South Africa in 1807 (that is after the British had taken it over) was actually German and there were notable fresh injections in the 1850s and during the diamond and gold booms later in the century. Some 6.2 per cent of settlers in Queensland and 7.7 per cent in South Australia were Germans. 50 Belich refers to the Germans as ‘important allies of Anglo-Saxon-ness on the part of the British, the racial myth of German origins flourishing alongside other forms of racialism. Germans indeed may have been more highly valued in the propaganda of the times than the Catholic and supposedly Celtic Irish. While such migration does suggest a cooperative settlerdom in the ‘replenishing of the earth’ (to use Belich’s title) it also implies a source of tension, a sense of loss of fellow citizenry and a competitive desire for territories of chauvinistic settlement in Africa or the Pacific.

Germans were also prominent as explorers and missionaries. One leading British imperialist who was complimentary about the German contribution in this field
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was the artist, naturalist, explorer and administrator Sir Harry Johnston. In his autobiography, he was particularly complimentary about Württembergers whose characteristics as Protestants, scholars and African travellers he was keen to extol. The objects of his praise included Reverend Sigismund Koelle who established himself in Sierra Leone on behalf of the Church of England, conducting linguistic research in the course of his missionary work; Johan Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebmann, discoverers of Mounts Kenya and Kilimanjaro in East Africa; Carl Mauch whom Johnston credited with revealing the Zimbabwe Ruins; and Theodor Wanner, the founder of the Württemberg Geographical Society. Johnston addressed the German Colonial Society offering suggestions for German colonization and, in 1910 and 1911 delivered lectures in Stuttgart as a guest of the King of Württemberg. He argued that the Germans should settle the Alsace–Lorraine problem with France, presumably by giving those former French territories back, and that France would then look kindly on German ambitions through the Balkans, into Asia Minor and Mesopotamia.

German settlers inevitably took their churches, as well as their language and culture, with them. In the eighteenth century, German Lutherans and French Protestants had been welcomed in North America as allies in the fight against what was seen as the dangers of ‘Popery’. And this inevitably leads me to a consideration of Christian missions. The emergence of evangelicalism and the phenomenally energetic dispersal of missions across the globe surely represents a considerable area of cooperative imperialism in the late nineteenth century, though one that has been little recognized. German Moravians were among the pioneer missionaries, not only in North America and notably in southern Africa from as early as the eighteenth century, but also in other colonial empires. Various British evangelical societies fanned out across the globe from the 1790s onwards, but most notably in the second half of the nineteenth century. Catholic missions soon followed. As we have seen with regard to the 1885 Treaty of Berlin, missions of a variety of European nationalities were founded in the African territories of the imperial powers. British territories not only contained several English and Scottish denominations, but also Catholic White Fathers and others, while the Paris Evangelical Mission (which was Protestant) operated in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Basutoland (Lesotho). It is true that there was occasionally a scramble among the denominations for particular influence in specific areas, but nonetheless almost every colony contained missions from other states. It is also true that during the international campaign against Leopold’s Congo, some Belgian Catholic interests imagined this to be an essentially Protestant and anti-Catholic movement, particularly as several Protestant missions operated in the Congo and supplied E.D. Morel and others with information and photographs relating to the atrocities. Nonetheless, a general policy of religious laissez faire existed across Africa and often, to protect themselves, missionaries were respectful of the civil power. This was also true of India and other parts of the British Empire. Just as examples, there were British missions in German African territories and German missions in Australia. Such a situation continued into the postcolonial era. Missionaries vied with each other in ethnographic studies, in the collection of artefacts, in the translation of the Bible into African and other languages, as well as in the provision of educational and medical facilities, but nonetheless most seemed to recognize that they were working towards the same ends
and even regularly cooperated with each other on the ground. Moreover, the international missionary movement commenced a series of conferences, the first in Edinburgh in 1910, not so very long before the outbreak of World War I.  

All these missionary societies used similar techniques to drum up support from the populations of their home countries, both in the sense of raising funds and in recruiting both clerical and lay missionaries. They invariably mounted exhibitions, published magazines and illustrations, sent missionaries on leave on lecture tours. This was all part of the imperial culture of European states, cultural forms which were strikingly similar, albeit with some differences (for example, related to levels of literacy) across Europe. Shared technologies and cultural phenomena, in print and publishing capitalism, in photography and later moving film, in theatrical displays, in exhibitions, in museums, zoos and botanic gardens, also in pressure groups and religious associations, led to similar effects – the dissemination of imperial ideas to the home population, even if some of the effects might be different. Some of these missionaries were granted heroic status, particularly those who were seen to have been 'martyred' in the field. Sometimes, such martyrdom occurred as a result of the killing of missionaries by indigenous forces who saw them, sometimes rightly, as the forerunners of the extension of imperial rule.  

Some of these missionaries were granted heroic status, particularly those who were seen to have been 'martyred' in the field. Sometimes, such martyrdom occurred as a result of the killing of missionaries by indigenous forces who saw them, sometimes rightly, as the forerunners of the extension of imperial rule. Sometimes the martyrdom took place as a result of the rigours of the environment, which may be seen to have been the case with David Livingstone, the most celebrated missionary explorer of his day who unquestionably acquired fame across international borders – though the Portuguese may have been less sympathetic to him than some other European peoples. More commonly, imperial heroes were military figures, as has been demonstrated by Berny Sèbe in a book which considers the parallel creation of heroes and the projection of their exploits to the populace in Britain and France. Kitchener and Marchand may be seen as figures who symbolized imperial rivalries on the ground, yet their construction as heroic figures and, in a sense, as courts of appeal for domestic politicians, pressure groups and others took place in strikingly similar ways.

After World War I, cooperation continued although obviously the Germans were removed from the field. One of the most influential of colonial theorists of the twentieth century, Frederick Lugard, wrote of the ways in which the decline of jealousy and friction between the British and the French led to greater cooperation. This extended from the extradition of criminals across colonial boundaries to support in the suppression of a Muslim rising just north of the Nigerian border in 1917. Nigerian railways were also vital to the trade of the French colonies in the interior. Lord Hailey, in his monumental African Survey also stressed cooperation between the British and the French, not least in forestry and including a joint commission on desiccation which was set up in the 1930s. He surveyed French, Belgian, Italian and Portuguese methods in Africa as well as British, and pointed out that botanists, botanic gardens and agricultural officers all cooperated. Moreover, the mines of both Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa were significant users of African labour from Portuguese Mozambique.

Thus, official commentators were themselves well aware of significant patterns of cooperation right down to World War II. With notable exceptions, modern scholars have been less inclined to follow them. Thus, studies of modern imperial cooperation
still have a long way to go. The most fruitful way forward, in this and in wider fields, lies in an escape from European national perspectives into much more comparative approaches. It may well be true that too many British imperial historians – perhaps because of the sheer scale of that empire, the range of studies required, as well as the limitations of language – have remained far too introspective. As a result they have often failed to recognize the necessity of such cross-national studies for a full understanding of the British experience itself. It remains the case that comparative work is still relatively in its infancy. This book represents one important advance.

IV. Cooperation: benign or malign?

The approach opened up by Ulrike Lindner requires further work. She implicitly suggests that the problem is that past studies of cooperation, concentrating as they did on scientific, medical, animal and forest conservation, and perhaps even religious and humanitarian phenomena, divert attention into benign outcomes. This approach was perfectly encapsulated in Richard Grove’s original book with its defiant title Green Imperialism. Lindner has directed our attention into more malign aspects of cooperation, in colonial wars verging on genocide, or indeed tipping over the edge, as well as on the ‘new systems of slavery’, to quote the title of the late Hugh Tinker’s book, that constituted the indentured labour movements of the nineteenth century. But it may be that such an attempt to divide cooperation into benign and malign is itself simplistic. It is surely the case that conservation activity could, in effect, be designed to the detriment of indigenous peoples. Moreover, it may be that shared intelligence systems, as well as pseudo-scientific racial studies based on anthropometric activities in which museums and other institutions indulged would demonstrate that some of the scientific activity would decidedly fall into the malign category. In any case all of this broke down in 1914, when intelligence systems, scientific activities, the so-called ‘tools of empire’ and much else were dedicated to the most violently destructive of wars, a true weltkrieg that sucked peoples across the world into its horrendously violent maw.

It may be suggested that although the war led to the development of the diplomatic internationalism of the League of Nations (at least on the part of the victors), this ran counter to a new wave of nationalism in scientific and educational institutions. The period of apparent internationalism which unquestionably developed to something of a climax at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries gave way to rather more chauvinistic approaches. We need further research here, but it can be said that British imperial museums, as well as forestry departments, were drawing almost exclusively on personnel either from the colonial territories themselves or from the United Kingdom during that period. Pietsch has demonstrated that this was also true of universities, although here the significance of the United States grows considerably, particularly, as might be expected, in Canada. Perhaps the key point is that the connection between Britain and Germany, which had been most highly developed in these international contacts, was disrupted and the Anglophone world (as an example) became more introspective. As it happened, the war had perhaps further
stimulated scientific and technical areas in which, to a certain extent, England had lagged behind.

V. Conclusion

A preliminary summing up may therefore lead us to suggest that we do have a period of intensely nationalist imperialism in the mercantile era contrasted with a much more internationalist one in the period of modern industrial imperialism. It is of course true that there were cross-national mercenaries operating in the armies of the early modern period (the Dutch Scots brigade is a good example), that various promiscuous nationalities can be found turning up in trading contexts. But nonetheless, the rivalry between the Catholic and Protestant states was intense, while that between the Dutch and the English led to the notorious so-called massacre of Ambon or Amboina in 1623 when twenty English traders were tortured and executed by the Dutch. In the later period it was much more likely that such violence would be perpetrated against indigenous people. Perhaps this highlights another contrast between the two imperial periods. Imperialism in the modern era seems to have a very different feel to it with, as we have seen, a great deal more cooperation across national boundaries. The really rich paradox about the modern period is that the most active time of such cooperation occurred in the decades before World War I, supposedly the time of intense imperial rivalries, while the retreat to a more nationalist approach occurred during the interwar years when we have allegedly moved into a time of experimental internationalism symbolized by the League of Nations. Meanwhile, it is in the years after World War II that what remained of the European empires became increasingly porous. Migration to the territories of settlement of the former British Empire then became truly international, with many more people from Southern and Eastern Europe heading for Canada and Australasia. Within a few years, large numbers of Asian people, for example Vietnamese in Australia, Hong Kong Chinese in Canada, were also migrating, ensuring that the so-called replenishing of the earth had become a genuinely global movement. Other cooperative phenomena can be identified. Recent books, drawing on newly-opened secret archives, have demonstrated the ways in which the British and the Americans were alarmed at the possibility of communist successor states to empire in the era of the Cold War. They pooled their intelligence resources to avoid such eventualities. Two distinguished historians have even written of the imperialism of decolonization – when American policy makers rapidly forgot their anti-colonial stance in the 1950s when they supported and indeed urged on the British in attempting to ensure that successor politicians after independence would be pro-West in their outlook. Other oddities have continued to emerge. More recently, ex-Portuguese territories aspired to join the Anglophone Commonwealth, while English began to replace French and Portuguese as languages of former colonies as people reached out for forms of international communication. Empires were never watertight, but as they sank, they began to leak like sieves, losing a great deal of their original national character as they did so. But it is a fact that whatever else may be said about imperialism, it has always been replete
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with paradoxes. These perhaps become more apparent as we develop these studies of imperial cooperation.

Notes

1 This chapter was originally constructed as a keynote for the Cologne conference on which this book is based. It therefore takes a synoptic form before focusing on some key areas of cooperation among European empires.

2 Cf. D.K. Fieldhouse’s *The Colonial Empires: a Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966 – first published in Germany in 1965) was epoch-making as a comparative survey and it did date the second period of imperial expansion from 1815. But there is little or nothing on intellectual underpinnings – and the Enlightenment does not even merit an index entry.


4 Cf., for example, E.J. Hobsbawm’s celebrated work *The Age of Empire 1875–1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987). This was the third of his trilogy, starting with *The Age of Revolution 1789–1848* and *The Age of Capital 1848–1875*.


6 The classic work on mercantilism is Charles Wilson, *Mercantilism* (London: Routledge, 1958), although there has been a vast literature since then.


9 For concepts of barbarism, savagery and civilization, see the five volumes of J.G. Pocock, particularly *Barbarism and Religion Vol. 4: Barbarians, Savages and Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).


13 This quotation is taken from Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 71. It can be found in the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, p. 217, no. 13.
17 This notion was proposed in a seminal article by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, The imperialism of free trade, *Economic History Review*, Second Series, 6, 1 (1953), pp. 1–15.
24 See for example the Brussels slave trade conference of 1889–90 and the resulting treaty.
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34 Cf. MacKenzie, Empire of Nature. For the material that follows, see particularly Chapter 8. See also Bernhard Gissibl, The nature of colonialism: hunting, conservation and the politics of wildlife in the German colonial empire, PhD Universität Mannheim, 2009, particularly Chapters 8 and 9.


41 One example of a growing literature is Michael A. Osborne, Nature, the Exotic and the Science of French Colonialism (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana UP, 1994); for connections
across the British Empire and beyond, see also Saul Dubow, A *Commonwealth of
Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820–2000 (Oxford: Oxford UP,
2006).

42 Cf. James Beattie, Empire and Environmental Anxiety: Health, Science, Art and
Conservation in South Asia and Australasia, 1800–1920 (Basingstoke: Palgrave

43 Cf. Ulrike Lindner, Imperialism and globalization: entanglements and interactions
between the British and German colonial empires in Africa before the First World
Lindner, Encounters over the border: the shaping of colonial identities in British and
German colonies in Southern Africa, in: Ulrike Lindner et al. (eds), *Hybrid Cultures –
Nervous States: Germany and Britain in a (Post) colonial World* (Amsterdam: Rodopi,
2010), pp. 3–22; and Ulrike Lindner, German colonialism and the British neighbour in
Africa before 1914: self-definitions, lines of demarcation and cooperation, in: Volker
Langbehn and Mahamad Salamaa (eds), *Colonial (Dis) continuities: Race, Holocaust

44 Cf. Simon E. Katzenellenbogen, *South Africa and Southern Mozambique: Labour,
Railways and Trade in the Making of a Relationship* (Manchester: Manchester UP,
1982). This offers but one of many examples. The British also built railways in areas of
informal empire such as South America and China.

Camongate, 1993); Michael Gardiner, *At the Edge of Empire: The Life of Thomas Blake
Glover* (Edinburgh: Birlin, 2007). Barrow-in-Furness supplied the *Mikasa*, the flagship
of Admiral Togo Heihachiro at the Battle of Tsushima in 1905. This ship is still
preserved at Yokosuka naval base in Japan.

46 Cf. Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of
UP, 2010), particularly Chapter 2.

47 Cf. Robert V. Kubicek, *Economic Imperialism in Theory and Practice: The Case of South

48 For German communities and enterprises in South America, see Robert Bickers (ed.),

49 Cf. Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial

50 Cf. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: the Settler Revolution and the Rise of the

pp. 445–51.

in British India in the nineteenth century, see Eric Frykenberg, Christian missions and


54 Cf. C.W. Mackintosh, *Coillard of the Zambezi: The Lives of François and Christina
Coillard, of the Paris Missionary Society, in South and Central Africa* (New York:
American Tract Society, 1907).

55 Cf. T. Jack Thompson, *Light on Darkness? Missionary Photography of Africa in the
Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012),
pp. 190–1 and 197.
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62 *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* recently had a special issue (47, 4, (2013)) devoted entirely to German colonialism. The articles in this mainly concentrate on German colonialism itself, though one consists of a discussion of Nazi expansionism in the light of Mussolini’s imperialism. But it may be that all this may encourage British historians into more comparative approaches.

63 See footnote 26 above.


66 Cf. Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars*.

