

1780–1880

A Century of Imperial Transformation

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During the revolutionary times from the 1780s to the 1830s, successive internal crises and constant conflicts among empires seemed to point to the demise of the great European monarchic empires, which were, to all appearances, in their death throes (Klooster 2009; Armitage and Subrahmanyam 2010). However, a century later, two of those empires—the British and the French—governed much of the world, a much larger part than they had ever dominated or held as spheres of influence before. At some distance, the Spanish and Portuguese crossed that period of revolution and war but kept their possessions in the Caribbean, the Philippines, and Africa. The United States of America and monarchical Brazil followed the imperial path inherited from the British and the Portuguese in the Americas. In contrast, most of their rivals and competitors in Europe—the Russians, Ottomans, and Germans—had gone through the cycle of the late eighteenth-century revolutions, or had been impacted by them during the Napoleonic Wars and later conflicts, although the weight and depth of that impact among them was undoubtedly unequal (a general approach may be found in Bayly 2004). If certain events symbolized the imperial *fin-de-siècle*, these were the Berlin Conference of 1885, the Fashoda Incident (in South Sudan), and the 1898 Samoan Crisis that touched Africa and Oceania, in which the French and British seemed to want to seal their global expansion at the expense of their more direct rivals. The meeting at Berlin was characterized by the consensus of the big boys' club regarding the distribution of the world among those powers that met certain criteria of capital-

ist modernization (a requisite that kept Spain and Portugal practically from the negotiating table). Continued confrontations between imperial powers showed the limits of a consensus built by birds of prey, where each player sought to define their spheres of influence or sovereignty on the ground.

Let us begin with the cycle of destruction and reconstruction that the monarchic empires underwent through the previously mentioned revolutionary period. The period itself, begun with the Seven Years' War, led to the construction of a new kind of state, described and analyzed by writers such as John Brewer (1990), Jan Glete (2002), Stanley and Barbara Stein (2003), Carlos Marichal (1999), and Josep M. Delgado (2007). Impelled first by the tremendous costs of this and subsequent wars, the fiscal-military state resulted from a tendency that began with the War of Succession and the War of Jenkins' Ear. The North American crisis and the French Revolution, with their huge external impact and their continuation in the Napoleonic Wars, firmly consolidated its bases. This sort of amphibious state, well equipped for war on land, but especially fitted for maritime warfare, was the indispensable instrument for the construction of contemporary empires, the differentiating factor par excellence of European societies, or those with a European matrix, versus the rest of the world (Davies 2011). In this juncture, colonial wars became a scenario upon which European and global hegemony were contested.

For Great Britain, the Thirteen Colonies' independence war and Britain's consequent withdrawal to an inhospitable northern frontier with a majority population of French-speaking Catholics inaugurated the cycle of destruction and reconstruction on a grand scale. On the other side of the globe, Britain also launched the costly operation of imperial stabilization begun in Bengal as well as the war on the Indian subcontinent first against Hyder Ali Khan, and then his son Tipu Sultan, great reformers of the Kingdom of Mysore, who allied with the French against the British East India Company until the total defeat of the French in 1799. Third, the independence of the United States signified the crisis in the Antilles that inexorably led to the 1807 British abolition of the slave trade and the growing criticism of slavery itself, and, consequently, to the need to modulate planters' assemblies' loyalty to the Crown, which then governed the British Caribbean islands. The French did not face minor problems, either. Expelled from North America and the Indian subcontinent by the British, they also had to deal with the spectacular crisis of their Antillean possessions, especially Saint-Domingue and Guadeloupe, as well as the sale of Louisiana in 1802. Despite all this, they kept a stronghold in the Caribbean—with the exception of republican Haiti—and on the

two African coasts through Senegal and Reunion/Bourbon Island. Nor did they abandon the minor enclaves that the British did not take from them in southern Asia. Furthermore, they closed this period with the conquest of Algeria in 1830, a territory that had been formally under Ottoman sovereignty. Thus seen, locating the change in the nature of the state at the center of the imperial transformation and crisis makes sense only if we understand how society and war interacted throughout the process. That is, we must understand how interstate competition became a catalyst for social change.

Empires are undoubtedly constituted through violent conquest, but their government must rely on broader means in order to rule. The crux of the matter is how the transformation of the state—its politics of war, finances, and international relations, its bureaucracy and sovereignty—connects with inherently changing societies. In this context we must reflect on what Peter Marshall calls “the making and unmaking empires” (Marshall 2005). As war indeed led to the broadening of the state’s basis in terms of military recruitment and fiscal demands, the state’s intrusion in the societies formed by the empires, which Joanna Innes defined as the fiscal-military state’s “domestic face” in reference to day-to-day governance, was produced inside as well as outside Europe (Innes 2011). This intrusion visibly disarticulated the old equilibrium upheld by the societies within the Atlantic portion of the European empires when other continents were added: enclaves and slave-trading posts in Africa, in the Indian subcontinent, and all the way to Java, Timor, and the Philippines. The foundations of all the old colonial complexes were necessarily altered. It was this that set off the revolutionary crisis across the conquered globe, as the imperial center’s demands met with the resistance of defensive local ruling classes. The first of the great crises was that of the British Empire’s Thirteen Colonies. This conflict apparently revolved around the increased fiscal pressure that the imperial government tried to impose. The second exploded in the French Antillean colonies with the French Revolution, but it was preceded by a decade of complaints and demands by the colonies’ residents against *l’exclusif*, the key imperial fiscal policy on sugar and overseas products. The repeated eruptions of violence in Spanish America, and between Lisbon and the “Paulistas” or São Paulo colonials, responded to the resistance of these empires’ American *criollos* to the imperial states’ new tributary exigencies. A hypothesis appears: it was not the weight of the new fiscal demands that caused the conflict, but the change in the nexus that tied the colonies with their metropolises, the articulation of policies that increased the imperial center’s capacity to intrude more in colonial societies.

The consequences of these conflicts would lead to the complete decolonization of a very significant portion of the monarchic empires, as well as to an important redefinition of center-periphery relations. In every case, the revolutionary crisis signals a moment of decisive imperial change, namely, the transformation of old regime monarchic empires, formed by aggregation, with their multiple jurisdictions and motley constitutional and governmental solutions, and characterized by internal variegation, into empires that are represented as “national” spaces. In effect, colonial elites wish to receive the same political treatment as their counterparts in metropolitan territories. The profound meaning of North American colonists’ “no taxation without representation” and their criticism of the so-called virtual representation; the great truth of the period, that “men are born and remain free and equal in rights” of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man; and the idea that “the Spanish nation is the re-union of all the Spaniards of both hemispheres,” as the 1812 Constitution of Cadiz proclaims—these are all reflections of the desire to fuse the monarchic empire into the single space of the new nation. Imperial constitutions were the instrument that articulated these demands for inclusion, constitutions that tried to blend the king’s domains into the body of the nation, fusing nation and empire into a single political body. Nevertheless, such projects failed. Overseas political communities developed far from their metropolises, and, proud of their origins and their juridical-political cultures, the new obligations forced upon them by the monarchies’ dynastic and international compromises dangerously eroded that distance (Greene 2010).

Those distant political communities had been formed on a substratum of colonial relations established with native populations in their original settlements, or populations that had been displaced as slaves or forced laborers, or both. Consequently, imperial protection was essential to the groups at the top of the social pyramid (Tomlins 2010; Morgan and Rushton 2013). They were, from their very origin, multiethnic societies. Only when there are doubts regarding metropolitan loyalty do socially dominant sectors contemplate separation as a reasonable possibility. The colonists’ mistrust can be appreciated in the process that led to the Proclamation line of 1763, through which the British imperial government tried to protect the native nations from the colonists’ insatiable hunger for land. It can also be observed in the Antillean colonists’ reserve regarding the imperial powers’ attitude toward the slave crisis and toward “free blacks” as well as the mutual reserve during the protracted conflict regarding the end of the slave trade. The imperial crisis moved in two interconnected planes: the struggle between colonists and the metropole for

a greater share of the available wealth, and the multiple struggles that derived from the very nature of colonial societies. In this sense, if we have learned something in the last few years, it has been that the self-liberation of Saint-Domingue's slaves in the summer of 1791 was the replica of North American colonists' great revolution of a few years earlier. They were both part of the same process. As David Geggus and John K. Thornton have shown, cultural and language barriers could not keep news of the equality of men proclaimed in Philadelphia or Paris from reaching the people at the base of that same social pyramid (Geggus and Gaspar 1997; Thornton 2012).

For this reason, the revolutionary cycle of 1780 to 1830 encompassed at the same time the *criollos'* emancipation, secured by colonists from Boston to Santiago de Chile, as well as the reconstruction of imperial frameworks, because empires always strike back. Great Britain reformed and reconstructed its empire in British North America, for instance, where it declared that it would never impose undue fiscal burdens on its colonists, and accepted political representatives for the majority population in Canada, which was of French origin, and Catholic to boot. Those represented included Tories who had fled the Thirteen Colonies (some of them, with their slaves), as well as people who migrated from the British Isles. Across the globe, the armies of the East India Company were simultaneously defeating through force of arms the great powers that succeeded the Mogul Empire in the north and center of the subcontinent, and the reformist sultans that allied with the French in the south. While these episodes of consolidation were taking place, the most complicated problem faced by the Georgian empire was that of Antillean slavery. The empire's desire for moral regeneration led to the abolition of human trafficking, as Cristopher Brown has shown, but the interests of property tied up in slavery in the islands and in Great Britain itself marked the limit of that regeneration (Brown 2006). The alliance between the religious-humanitarian campaigns and the eighteenth-century sensibility against the purchase and sale of human beings (that of children had already led to the abolition of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean) and the intentions of the military and political establishment was a crucial aspect of the British imperial reform (Allen 2009). In the end, what becomes clear is that between the Quebec Act of 1791 and the parliamentary reform of 1832, which liquidated the parliamentary lobbies of Caribbean planters and nabobs in Westminster, the empire finally released ballast and readied itself for its future expansion.

France followed a different route: after all, it had been defeated in the war for continental and global dominance. For a moment, it seemed that revolutionary

élan would carry the empire over the challenge of self-emancipation presented by Saint-Domingue and its shock wave across the rest of its Caribbean possessions, Senegal, and the Mascarene Islands. The participation of free mulattos and former slaves in metropolitan institutions guaranteed national unity until the neo-Jacobin period of 1797–98. However, as first consul, Napoleon nipped that path of revolutionary integration in the bud through two key policies. The first was placing the colonies beyond the reach of the metropolitan constitutional framework of 1799; and the second, the infamous reestablishment of slavery in 1802. Both decisions were part of a project to restore the old order in the Antilles and the Mascarene Islands. However, this meant rolling back the gains of unity and equality of the revolutionary period, notions that had completely transformed France and its overseas world. It is easy to understand then why one of Napoleon's greatest defeats was the debacle of the army that he sent against the infant Republic of Haiti, and why the stabilization of the French Empire after Waterloo was so grueling and oppressive.

There was a second cycle, from the 1830s to 1870, related to the triumph of “specialness,” that formula that Napoleon clairvoyantly announced, and which his heirs developed in France and other countries with imperial pretensions. For contemporary jurists, the French in 1799, the Spanish in 1837, and the Portuguese in 1838, the meaning behind government by “special laws” was clear. They referred to this formula as a “double constitution” system. This was a fallacious rhetorical device because there was only one constitution: special laws were an ersatz series of ordinances and decrees characterized by arbitrariness and even military despotism, which starkly revealed the absence of legislative unity between the metropole and the colonies. David Bell explained that the Napoleonic use of specialness was a strategy to “*créer un état qui peut imposer des normes administratives, judiciaires et fiscales—par exemple le Code Napoléon—sans l’obligation de fonder tous les citoyens dans une même nation*” (create a state that can impose administrative, judicial, and fiscal norms—for example the Napoleonic Code—without the necessity of merging all citizens into a single nation) (Antoine et al. 2014, 27). In time, other European powers imitated and followed the quintessentially French idea of *spécialité*, so that it acquired a superior coherence. Indeed, while in the metropolis elected parliamentary chambers debated and passed laws, embodying the essence of liberal-representative politics, colonial legislation was generated by the executive at the margin of the legislature through imperial edicts, *senatus-consulte*, *arrêtés*, ordinances, and decrees. If we look at the global postrevolutionary period, we will see a generalized coherence between the contraction of the idea of the citizen, as

the political subject par excellence, to a mere qualified elector, in the metropolis, and the literal collapse of the idea of citizenship in colonial spaces.

The deep logic of the distinction between two types of legislation, one linked to deliberation, political and electoral struggles, and the composition of parliamentary chambers, and another, discretionary, colonial, and essentially repressive, dictated as it was by political-military rule, as opposed to the rule of law, goes beyond the sphere of decisions and legislative activity. It is in colonial practice, in each and every one of an empire's corners, that the imposition of a logic that separated and distinguished between subjects and situations under a single sovereignty was felt. In the French Antilles, Senegal, and Reunion Island, where slavery was legal until the Second Republic, the universal emancipation of 1848 gave French citizenship back to the slaves (Tomich 1990; Jennings 2000). However, since those territories had been placed outside the reach of the French constitution since 1799 and the departmental changes that it later encompassed, residents of these territories were second-class citizens. The so-called old colonies remained under rules of specialness until 1947. As we will see, for the named new ones, colonial policies can be worse.

We can find similar contrasts of lights and shadows in France's rival empire, particularly, in Jamaica's Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, in which soldiers and militias repressed and killed hundreds of black rioters and the government executed hundreds more, eventually arresting and killing a mulatto political opponent and local businessman. This bloody incident galvanized and divided British public and intellectual opinion (Heuman 1994). Faced with the impossibility of clearly defining the limits and content of personal freedom in colonial conditions, the great Liberal empire decided to suspend the first empire's old system of local representation, accentuating rather than decreasing specialness. As is well known, the only exception was found in Barbados, where land scarcity and the planters' iron grip rendered this measure unnecessary.

In the Spanish case, the dilemma of keeping Cuban sugar interests on a short leash within an unstable Liberal framework led to the expulsion of the overseas representatives from the Spanish Cortes in 1837 (Fradera 1995, 334–39; for an enlarged version on Spanish colonial policy and the general context in the Spanish Antilles and the Philippines, see Fradera 2005). The legal and political vacuum thus generated was filled by a combination of military despotism and special laws, which were in place until very late in the Caribbean, and practically until the “emancipation” of 1898 under US neocolonial tutelage in the Philippines (McCoy and Scarano 2009).

If the development of specialness can be traced back step by step in colonies governed by Europeans for centuries, it is even clearer in those places where the imperial machinery came into contact with highly organized societies whose religious and legal systems, social life, and political hierarchies were as ancient and complex as those of the Europeans themselves, and were acknowledged as such by the colonizers. The examples of British India and French Algeria are enough to demonstrate this. Algeria was the counterpoint to the “old colonies,” where the Napoleonic involution reestablished slavery during the early nineteenth century. If in those old colonies, French imperial policy led to the construction of a second-class citizenship, in Algeria it led to what French jurists called a “juridical monster.” Constituted by a dual regime, the North African possession was divided into three departments for *français de souche* citizens, and a territory of Berber and Arab residents administered under a totally different regime. The long and violent military conquest and plunder that brought Algeria under French sovereignty was followed by the establishment of a set of repressive norms (that included collective punishments, deportations, and reprisals) that would have been unthinkable in the metropole’s penal system, given their absolute lack of proportion and guarantees. Finally codified in the Code d’indigénat of 1881, they were exported *prêt-à-porter* to Indochina and New Guinea. The state’s highest magistrate periodically confirmed this repressive instrument, with practically no parliamentary debate. Meanwhile, Algeria’s “dual constitution” excluded “Muslim” subjects from even the narrowly defined citizenship, even more narrow than that which the residents of the Antilles, Senegal, and the Mascarene Islands enjoyed (Blévis 2004; Thenault 2014). In Algeria, the Third Republic created French citizens in three departments at the same time as it generated phantasmagorical French subjects who could not be citizens due to religious reasons, which was in stark contradiction to the regime’s euphoric secular character. Even more shocking was that, first Jews, and then Italians and Spaniards, could ask for French citizenship, while Muslim Algerians had no legal means of attaining it.

During the Indian Rebellion of 1857 against the East India Company, the British nearly lost their immense Asian domains. A mix of peasant insurgency, officer and sepoy mutiny within the Company’s large private army, and anti-British conspiracies of provincial dignitaries came close to putting an end to a century-old British domination and administration. To prevent something like this from happening again, the empire was nationalized within the empire. Until then, the East India Company had governed its territories with an able combination of proconsular

despotism and long-established and efficient regularization of land taxation systems. But after this narrow escape, the Victorian Crown institutionalized the Indian Raj and made some concessions to the regional ruling classes (Baxi 2003). In the apotheosis of the so-called responsible governments of the large white settler colonies, the empire did not give in to the temptation of satisfying the autochthonous upper classes' demands for self-government, which was the key demand of the Indian National Congress, founded by liberal Indian and British subjects in 1885 (for more on the Indian perspective, see Bayly 2012). In *Considerations on Representative Government*, John Stuart Mill, an East India Company employee until the very last day, articulated the enlightened thought of his day when he argued that the principles of self-government were not viable without a process of education and emulation that the Indians were far from achieving (1861, 77–78). Unfortunately, there was no equivalent in India of the citizen, placed at the center of the British political system by the political reforms of 1832 and 1867. Indian and British subjects could not be judged by the same tribunals, something that angered and humiliated the autochthonous ruling classes of the subcontinent and led them to raise constant complaints.

The development of the political and juridical culture of specialness (with or without the explicit use of the term) inexorably led to a progressive distinction between sovereignty's national and imperial contexts. The nation in the metropolis tended to forge moral and cultural unity, locating the citizen and his rights at the center of the majority population's aspirations. Moreover, the condition of citizenship increasingly exceeded the subjects' strict political capacities (adult males, with fixed legal residence and a clean legal background), and encompassed certain duties of the state, such as social assistance, job security, and primary and secondary education, that set of political and social rights that Gérard Noiriel defined as the French Third Republic's "social citizenship" (Noiriel 1999; also by Saada 2007). In the colonies, however, political organization and the position of their residents was fragmented and atomized, according to the rules of specialness, between the social realities of each place and the way in which they were governed. From the opposite side, the metropolis tended to concentrate more than often extraordinary powers to display at their will (Yusuf 2014). Nobody was deceived as to where the threshold of social and political rights lay, that high point that established the hierarchy of situations in the framework of the nation and the empire.

The third cycle of imperial transformation began in the last decades of the nineteenth century and ended with the First World War. It corresponds to the

apex of the imperial nation, the moment of the great imperial expansion that we spoke of in the beginning. Very different political entities participated in this great cycle of expansion: great imperial nations, old empires, and countries with colonies. Among them, the imperial nation, that is, the sum of the national communities that emerged in the nineteenth century and its possessions, governed by rules of specialness, was at the center of global transformation. Without pretending to equate the incomparable, the two great empires of that period, France and Great Britain, as well as Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Denmark, and the recently arrived Belgium and the German Kaiserreich, more or less fit this model after 1885. We must also include in this family the United States of America, heir of the British Empire in North America, and an ardent practitioner of rules of specialness between north and south; with relation to the Indian nations; and the Hispanic-Mexican world, all of these within its continental territory, but even more accentuated after it erupted outside its continental frontiers in the late 1890s. These imperial nations were not alone: alongside them, as rivals and competitors, were the Viennese Habsburgs, Tsarist Russia, China under the Qing dynasty, Meiji Japan, the Persian Qajar dynasty, and the Ottomans, political entities that fluctuated between old, autocratic forms of government of monarchic empires and the great national transition.

Let us look again at the greatest power of that period. Between 1880 and 1918, the Victorian British Empire had left its contemporaries and competitors behind in terms of imperial expansion. In the metropole, the combination of electoral reforms and social conflict placed the community of citizens at the center of political life. At the same time, thanks to technical advances in printing and communication, with the proliferation of newspapers and popular journals, information regarding the empire and its conflicts impregnated British social life. There are many examples of the connection between empire and nation, which albeit not limited to the third cycle of imperial transformation, saw an exponential increase in their significance during this period. For instance, the combination of popular antislavery sentiment and nonconformist church antislavery campaigns in connection to the Antilles, deftly explored by Catherine Hall; the weight of the British Raj and Africa in the career of countless young middle class men; Ornamentalism's pomp and splendor, as studied by David Cannadine; the importance of the domestic replicas that were Australia, Canada, and South Africa's white settlements; and finally, the weight that interimperial rivalries acquired in metropolitan cultural and social life, from the Napoleonic Wars to the Crimean War (Hall 2002; Cannadine 2002; Darwin 2009).

As the nation was placed at the center of collective life, rules of specialness were expertly applied to the empire, so that the assimilation of new populations and territories was carried out without excessive conflicts, according to a well-practiced score of constitutional and administrative formulas. An axis formed by the metropolis and the white settlements—the Canadian and Australian federation, and later South Africa—were at the center of the imperial nation. These overseas territories governed themselves and financed themselves, and were perhaps happy to defend the empire, as the Boer Wars and later the Great War revealed. Crown colonies came next, with varied formulas of self-government and rule of law, in John McLaren’s conceptualization (McLaren 2010). They had come up with successful political formulas for spaces that were not “ethnically” homogenous, spaces of European colonization with policies for non-Europeans that went from pure and simple genocide (as in the Australian case) to paternalism that excluded (regarding the Indian nations in Canada), all legitimated by the geographical morality spoken of by Edmund Burke (Bell 2006, 283). The third concentric circle was occupied by colonial empire par excellence: the new possessions in the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Myriad imaginative gradations characterized policies in this last continent, from the Egyptian Protectorates to the colonies administered directly by British officials in the Lower Nile, the Gulf of Guinea, and Rhodesia, ending with the great discovery of “indirect government” practiced in Nigeria. Instead of attempting to find an ideal political or administrative solution, the British had the capacity and experience to devise and implement government formulas that were relevant to the local contexts. In any case, the evidence of a flexible, albeit hierarchical, system should warn us against the widespread idea that the global British imperial integration lacked a methodology or was solved through pure empiricism.

From the 1880s to the fateful year of 1914, new factors were added to the imperial transformation described so far. Undoubtedly, the first was the absolute centrality of the nation—the community of citizens at the center of the imperial power complex. The second was the influence of racial(ist) factors at the very heart of imperial politics and perceptions. These processes are intimately related. At the center of both nation-state consolidation and imperial expansion stood the nation, the most dynamic factor in the equation thanks to its weight as both a political and a cultural community. Starting in the 1870s and 1880s, the nation, which was capable of (re)defining the nature of the state that it inherited as well as the nature of its empire as a project of expansion, was the ideal and the referential framework imposed (and supposed) by the imperial nation on the great

capitalist, liberal societies. For example, the values of the Victorian “gentleman” became interwoven with serving a Great Britain that had successfully passed the double text of democratizing political life at home and consolidating its imperial expansion abroad in spite of the fierce competition of its rivals (Parry 2006, 20). The same thing happened in France, where republican ethos, social citizenship, and the *mission civilisatrice* constituted a single project that would prolong itself in various tones and shapes through the two Frances of 1940–45. This project was etched in the republican soldiers’ spirit of service, as Marshal Lyautey’s declaration in 1891 revealed, when he defended his role at the service of the great national project of his day (Lyautey 2009).

The idea of “white” “racial” superiority would increasingly gain an important place in this history, but it is not easy to discern just how important it was. It took time for the idea that biological inferiority was hereditary to become part of the cultural common sense. Nevertheless, the long validity and use of slavery constitutes a key factor. Indeed, European ethnocentrism, investigated by Douglas Lorimer and Catherine Bolt, resisted its transformation into a race-centered belief system until very late, and with great hesitancy. Nevertheless, there were inklings of white racial superiority in plantation colonies, and reverberations of it across Europe for more than a hundred years. Slavery provided a legitimate framework for exploiting transplanted Africans and their descendants without a need to define their inferiority ethnographically or racially. Things changed when that institution was progressively abolished in the various colonies, in 1833, 1848, 1865, and from 1886–88. Manifestations of an openly biological and phenotypical racism began gaining ground. Since that moment coincided with the increase in the gap between the great metropolitan centers and societies in other continents, the confluence of these perceptions seriously eroded the notion that there was a single humanity, albeit in different stages of development, which had been for a long time the shared framework of classic liberalism and Christian ecumenism (Lyautey 2009, 22). The transformation of the archetypes of racial distinction and their association with scientific thought in the spiraling process of their fabrication and legitimation was slower and more tortuous than one may think (Mandler 2000, 224–45). When Alexis de Tocqueville—author of the striking chapter on the three races in *La Démocratie en Amérique*—writes to his relative Arthur de Gobineau that the latter’s rigid vision of “human races” was worthy of a horse trader, he represents a sector of public opinion. Equally representative was Charles Darwin’s sympathy for the position adopted by John Stuart Mill (an ethnocentric, but not racist, dif-

fusionist) regarding the 1865 Jamaican conflict, and his refusal to extrapolate his ideas to the human species (that heated debate is summarized in Semmel 1962). Nevertheless, racist sensibilities increased first in the context of stark colonial relations, where significant populations of former slaves and a lack of rights generated open conflicts, before expanding throughout the respective empires. Examples easily come to mind: the emergence of the one-drop rule in the southern states after the Civil War; the anti-Asian immigrant laws passed in California; Australia and its genocidal treatment of aborigines (Lake and Reynolds 2008). If to all this we add the large-scale colonization of Africa by several countries, we can trace the way racial archetypes consolidated and expanded. However, that does not mean that we can trace with the same accuracy the ways in which they affected the formulation of colonial policy, which, as Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper warned, is a very complex issue (Burbank and Cooper 2010, 325). In any case, it is very difficult to remove these efforts at racial classification from the historically simultaneous definition of the basic cultural consensus of the modern nation, which was based on the search/construction of a homogeneity that would solidify and discipline the national body, vis-à-vis mass politics and political competition. It was in this connection that the precocious biologism of the Scandinavians and the Germans found its logical replica in the imperial lucubration of the precursor empires that we have been analyzing.

The notions advanced so far suggest a couple of conclusions. The first closes the circle that was opened with the initial question. The monarchic empires of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries became the perfect framework for the development of the great nations of America and Europe in the contemporary world to the degree that they were able to close the cycle of broken promises that characterized the revolutionary moment of the 1780s to the 1830s and open it again unequally for colonial and metropolitan subjects. The second conclusion is that the imperial nation became the model that those countries that were behind in the imperial race sought to replicate. Although other cases could be cited, the most exemplary is that of Germany after the colonial turn taken by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in the 1880s. If before, the monarchic-imperial project related to Prussia had centered on inter-European power games, the Kaiserreich now added the desire to expand globally, particularly to Africa and Oceania. A late and compulsive nationalization, and a speedy entry into the colonial race outside Europe, are two sides of the same coin. Recent texts by Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel have shown the real dimension of what the incorporation of Wilhelmine Germany

in the colonial race meant for Europe and the world (Osterhammel 2014 Conrad 2010, 2011). The importance of what happened was not limited to the simple incorporation of Germany into the select club of countries that distributed the world among themselves. I dare suggest that it had to do with the incorporation of a model of nation and empire whose constitutional and political interrelations and solutions had taken a century to form.

All empires are built upon colonial foundations. Writing about empires is a clever subterfuge for writing about the world without having to descend into the messy universe of labor in colonial conditions, the forced and voluntary displacement of human beings, and social lives and problems that were even worse than what they were in metropolitan societies. However, it is not a subterfuge when such writing addresses the political and cultural integration of diverse colonial complexes, often quite diverse. It makes even more sense if that reconstruction includes the integration, by nature unequal, between metropolitan society and the colonial worlds under its sovereignty. In these few pages I have tried to show the complex ways through which those two planes of integration were articulated from the crises at the end of the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century. If I am capable of discerning a *primum mobile* in this long century of imperial destruction and reconstruction, it is in the complexities of imperial government, by which a few “equals” governed millions of “non-equals.”

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