

THE EMPIRE'S NEW CLOTHES

From Empire to Federation, Yesterday and Today

Anthony Pagden

In the past decade or so, there has been a remarkable revival of interest in empires and imperialism. What has for long been relegated to the wastelands of the academy now seems to be on the point of capturing the center (or perhaps recapturing it: in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, imperial history had been the dominant mode). Empires that once seemed to belong in one of history's many dustbins—an outmoded form of politics, to be studied only through traces left across the shattered landscapes of their former subject peoples—now seem contentious, interesting, highly topical, and perhaps, not all bad. Some of this revised interest is internal. The national historians of the various European imperial powers (and those of the United States) have for too long written as if their respective empires were either of no interest or simply did not exist. Now most historians would agree that modern Britain, modern Spain, modern France, modern Portugal, and the modern Netherlands have all been shaped by their imperial pasts. What was once obvious from a stroll through the centers of London, Paris, Madrid—or Washington—has now found a respectable, and increasingly popular, place on the academic curriculum. But it is of course the role of the United States and its most recent, seemingly imperial adventures in the Middle East that has dominated much of the more immediate concern. Since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, books appear, it seems almost daily, with titles such as *Incoherent Empire*, *The Sorrows of Empire*, *America's Inadvertent Empire*, *Resurrecting Empire*,

The Obligation of Empire. Robert Kaplan has likened the United States to Rome in its struggle with Carthage—and a classicist from Fresno has compared the war in Iraq with the Peloponnesian War (a perhaps unfortunate analogy in view of the outcome of that war: the virtual extinction of both sides and the debilitation of Greek democracy, which paved the way for Alexander the Great).

We now have a concept of “Empire Lite”—to go with Marlboro or Coca-Cola Lite—a dusted off version of the older “informal empire” thesis but in a new tone of moral urgency. We have the claims, made stridently by Max Boot, with more historical nuance by Niall Ferguson and more mutedly still by Michael Ignatieff, that empires can be forces for good in the world—that peace, stability, and a civilized order can only be sustained by the imposition of massive and extensive state power.¹ The “liberal imperialism” of Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill is not only beginning to be thinkable once again, it is even, with a number of important qualifications, beginning to seem attractive—and not merely to the State Department.

But what links the empires of the ancient, early modern, modern, and contemporary worlds—what links Rome to London to Vienna to Washington or Moscow, beyond a high degree of mimeticism? Not that mimeticism is not a crucial, if largely overlooked, aspect of international politics. But while some people today believe America is an empire and strenuously advocate that it should face up to what it is and act accordingly, it is worth exploring what they understand an empire to be. For a state to claim to be an empire, or to deny that it is, are highly significant political statements. So when Boot and Ferguson and Ignatieff speak of America as an empire, we must ask to what particular historical form they are, whether they know it or not, alluding. In an attempt to answer that question, I want to sketch out a brief history. It is, of course, only one among many possible histories, but I do not think that the one I have in mind can ever entirely be discarded.

Empires have always assumed the existence of a polity with some kind of center and one or more dependencies. In this limited sense, a tribute-distribution system of the kind that flourished in Central and South America, and in what is today Nigeria, in the late fifteenth century; a union of semi-independent states held together by dynastic alliances of the kind that existed in Southern and Central Europe in the sixteenth century; a metropolis and a bewildering array of overseas dependencies, colonies, dominions, and protectorates of the kind that described Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; together with the networks of economic clientage that today characterize the relation of the

1. Max Boot, “The Case for American Empire,” *Weekly Standard*, October 15, 2001, www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=318&R=76C47AD0; Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-building in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan* (London: Vintage, 2003); Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 3–7; and Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lesson for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 317.

First to the Third World—all these, and more, may be and have been described as empires. But most, if not all, of the empires we would name today as unambiguously “imperial” all have one thing in common: they were brought about, at least in large part, by conquest. It was for this reason that Benjamin Constant, writing in 1813, in what seemed to him the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic empire, relegated all such projects to an earlier phase in human history, one that he described as dominated by the “savage impulse” of war.² Like many of the liberals of his generation, Constant believed, or at least hoped, that “pleasure and utility” had, as he put it, “opposed irony to every real or feigned enthusiasm” and had thus finally made such archaic impulses obsolete. In 1918, the great Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter—writing as the (second) German empire was in the process of disintegration—made much the same kind of observation in his celebrated book *Zur Soziologie der Imperialismen*. Territorial expansion, he declared, was “the purely instinctual inclination towards war and conquest”—and like Constant, he too relegated such inclinations to an earlier, atavistic stage of human history.³ Both Constant and Schumpeter also believed that economic determinism of whatever variety was the next inevitable phase in human evolution. A concern with wealth, and the free commercial relations between nations necessary to secure it, were evidently incompatible with conquest.

On this account, rational calculation follows institutionalized violence, as aristocratic, kin-based societies give way to bourgeois meritocracies. The final stage in this progress might possibly be one in which the political orders that had underpinned both the ages of conquest and those of commerce (along with their respective imperial forms) are replaced by a global order in which the idea of sovereignty, as it has been conceived since the eighteenth century, was transferred from the individual political and cultural unit—the modern nation-state—to something rather more amorphous: a modern, or postmodern, global society not unlike Kant’s *ius cosmopolitanum*. In essence, this objective is that of the European Union, or at least it was clearly the objective of the EU’s founding father, Jean Monnet, whose project was a “United States of Europe.”

Both Constant’s and Schumpeter’s reflections are comments upon historical assumptions that might be summarized as follows: with the collapse of the Carolingian empire in the early tenth century, any serious attempt to recreate the Roman *civitas* came effectively to an end. The nearest approximation, the empire of Charles V, although it deployed the language of Roman imperialism,

2. Benjamin Constant, *The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation and Their Relation to European Civilization* (1814), in *Constant: Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 53.

3. Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, trans. Heinz Norden (1918; New York: Augustus M.

Kelley, 1951), 6–7: “Expansion for its own sake always requires, among other things, concrete objects if it is to reach the action stage and maintain itself, but this does not constitute its meaning. Such expansion is in a sense its own ‘object,’ and the truth is that it has no adequate object beyond itself.”

was, at least before the conquests of America, in effect a conglomeration of territories, secured by dynastic marriage. The discovery of America, of sea routes to Asia, and of the profits to be had from the African slave trade, however, created the possibility of a new kind of empire, which crucially was seagoing rather than land based.

Despite the obvious Roman imperial trappings that these European overseas conglomerations would finally acquire, their origins were not, in the classical sense at least, imperial. Until well into the seventeenth century, the word *empire* was used exclusively to denote either the Holy Roman empire, or else to define territorial sovereignty within individual nation-states; the word was not used to describe what Edmund Burke in 1776 would call “extended and detached empire.” Neither the Spanish nor the Portuguese, nor even the French, ever spoke of empire in this last sense, and the British began doing so consistently only after the loss of America. When the term is used earlier, it most commonly refers to the union of the various kingdoms comprising the British Isles. America, Adam Smith declared in 1776, was “a sort of splendid and showy equipage of the empire,” which in his view Britain could no longer afford. “The rulers of Great Britain,” he concluded, “have for more than a century past, amused the people with the imagination that they possessed a great empire on the west side of the Atlantic. This empire, however, has hitherto existed in imagination only. It has hitherto been not an empire but the project of an empire.”⁴

In the political and social thought of Britain—in contrast to, say, France or Spain—there seemed to have been very little serious attempt to come to terms with what the possession of overseas colonies implied, whether politically, economically, or morally. As Sir Robert Seeley remarked in 1883, the paucity of discussion in English about the nature and objective of empire might give the impression that England had “conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind.”⁵ It may be true, as many modern historians have claimed, that today the British empire tends to be looked upon as a kind of norm. It is certainly the most recurrent model for all contemporary allusions to the “American empire.” But the British version of empire did not look exemplary to most of its contemporaries. “I know of no example of it either in ancient or modern history,” Disraeli wrote in 1878: “No Caesar or Charlemagne ever presided over a dominion so peculiar.”⁶

4. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), ed. Roy H. Campbell and Andrew S. Skinner, in *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2:946–47.

5. Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 12.

6. As quoted in Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 136–37.

What Seeley and Disraeli were both looking for, however, was a constitutional definition of empire; and both were, in a sense, looking in the wrong place. But it certainly was the case that, before the late nineteenth century, any sustained or coherent attempt to understand the imperial project was hindered in part by the inescapable supposition that whatever else an empire might be, it could only be a political order brought about by conquest. And most Europeans were unhappy with the idea of conquest either as a source of legitimation or as an adequate legal description of the delicate relationship among the settlers, the indigenous populations (where there were thought to be any), and the metropolis. The French hardly ever employed the term *conquest* with respect to Canada, nor the Dutch with reference to Asia. All England's colonies in America were legally held to be "lands of conquest" (and had been so ever since Henry VII's letters-patent to John Cabot of 1496), but the English tended to agree with John Locke's condemnation: conquest is as "far from setting up any government, as demolishing an House is from building a new one in the place."⁷ Only the sea—since the oceans could not, in any obvious sense, be conquered—were exempt from this distrust. "The Sea," as Andrew Fletcher declared in 1698, "is the only Empire which can naturally belong to us. Conquest is not our Interest."⁸ Similarly, the Portuguese description of their overseas possessions as *nossas Conquitas* in *terras e mares da Guiné e Indias* (Brazil was an exception) was applied not to peoples but to the seas and to those areas over which the Portuguese claimed exclusive trading rights. Even the Spanish, whose American empire was so obviously based on conquest, banned all official use of the term in 1680.⁹

Despite this conceptual squeamishness, it remains the case that, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the English, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese had extensive territorial possessions outside Europe, most acquired in one way or another by force. These possessions and their settler populations were to be incorporated into the "mother country" in a way that would obviate or obscure the implications of their having been conquered. Hence an alternative description of them had to be found.

The move from *conquest* to *commerce*, in which both Constant and Schumpeter were to place such faith, performed this function, even if, in the long run, it did little else. Commerce had become the "craze of the century" by sometime after 1700—a moralizing balm capable of refurbishing the image of empire.¹⁰

7. John Locke, *Second Treatise* (1690), in *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), section 175.

8. Andrew Fletcher, "A Discourse on Government with Relation to Militias," in *The Political Works of Andrew Fletcher* (London: Bertessworth, 1737), 66.

9. *Nueva Recopilacion de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*, bk. 4, tit. I, ley 6, 1791, II, 4.

10. Isaac de Pinto, "Lettre sur la jalousie du commerce," in *Traité de la circulation et du credit* (Amsterdam: Chez Marc Michel Rey, 1771), 234.

The highly optimistic vision of the future offered by Diderot, in his contributions to the abbé Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* in 1780, imagined a universal trade federation in which the different peoples of the world would swap new technologies and basic scientific and cultural skills as readily as they would their foodstuffs.¹¹ By then, of course, the perception of the folly and archaism of empire had been reinforced by the loss of one major imperial possession—British North America—and the apparently impending loss of another: Spanish South America. By the end of the century, even the Spanish—most particularly, perhaps, the Spanish—were lamenting that “conquest” had been their undoing. If the message needed any further reinforcement, it was provided, in ample detail, by the Napoleonic empire. Its brief history, or so Constant hoped, had demonstrated once and for all that no future imperial project was possible in a world in which societies were large, with varied and complex economic structures. The future, as much for Constant as for Diderot, seemed to lie in a world governed through the unintended, but inescapably beneficial consequences of economic self-interest. In the same vein, Schumpeter later wrote: “It may be stated as beyond controversy that where free trade prevails no class has an interest in forcible expansion as such.”¹²

However an imperial project might be framed, the problem remained of how to reconcile extended rule over diverse peoples with a single conception of political power. During the initial phase of European empire-building, all the imperial powers to some degree preserved at least the legal fiction that the inhabitants, both indigenous and European, of the overseas dominions were equally subjects of the same ruler. Making war on the American Indians, as the great sixteenth-century theologian Francisco de Vitoria observed, was no different from making war on the population of Seville. In practice, even legal practice, this claim may frequently not have been enforced—but the legitimacy of empire rested on the assumption that it was. Sovereignty beyond Europe, unlike sovereignty within Europe, was, as Hugo Grotius insisted in 1631, very much a divisible notion and was to remain so within all subsequent conceptions of international relations in which non-European powers were involved. “Sovereignty has always been regarded as divisible in international law” is how Henry Maine, a law member of the viceroy of India’s council, put the point in 1887.¹³

Divisible sovereignty implied that empire was, in law, a relationship. It had, therefore, to involve at least two parties. If empire were not such a relationship, as so often in practice it was not, then like slavery, on which it frequently relied, it could be as corrupting for the conqueror as it could be for the conquered.

11. See Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c.1500–c.1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 178–87.

12. Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, 99.

13. As quoted in Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism, and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 63.

Britain in the late eighteenth century—until the end of its empire in the mid-twentieth—faced this problem in a particularly acute manner. In the first place, Britain had never been very clear about just what the relationship between mother country and colony was. Indeed, the British had been willfully vague and contradictory on the subject. Until the late nineteenth century, the Portuguese had ruled their overseas dependencies as military camps—so also, in effect, had the Dutch. The Spanish had maintained, since at least the late sixteenth century, that the Americas were kingdoms, in the same sense as Aragon or Naples, of an extended and composite monarchy. The French, beginning with Colbert’s “Etablissement de la Compagnie des Indes Occidentales” of 1664, had simply incorporated the colonies into the metropolis—to such an extent that the residue of that empire (the “Dom-Tom”) still constitutes a part of metropolitan France.

Britain, on the other hand, had done almost nothing to clarify what its empire was supposed to be and was still struggling with the problem in the late 1960s. Britain was also unlike its European rivals in another way. The language in which the debates over empire had been framed in Spain or France or Portugal had been frequently religious, sometimes (as in Canada) feudal, sometimes economic, sometimes (as in the Spanish case) dependent upon a project of universal sovereignty—and frequently all of these at once. Almost every British discussion of empire, by contrast, was driven by belief that their empire was and had always been dedicated, like the British constitution itself, to the pursuit of “liberty.”

This insistence that the empire was essentially dedicated to improving the condition—the “liberty,” both political and economic—of all with whom it came into contact was not a mere sentimental reflection, nor simple ideological camouflage; although it also served both those functions. The claim was an essential component of English (and later, with still greater emphasis, British) identity. For Edmund Burke, the empire was less of a political and economic order than it was a “sacred trust”—“given,” as he insisted, “by an incomprehensible dispensation of Divine providence into our hands.” To abuse that trust was morally offensive; but it also threatened the existence both of the “British constitution” and of what he called “the civilization of Europe.”¹⁴ As Arnaldo Momigliano observed with reference to Herodotus’s conception of Greek freedom versus Persian tyranny—a conception to which the British were heavily indebted—such rhetoric inevitably involved a paradox: that “freedom required power, because power is a condition of freedom, but power proved, in fact, unobtainable without ruling others.”¹⁵ Moreover, as David Hume pointed out, even the most highly commercialized

14. Edmund Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters of Edmund Burke*, ed. David Bromwich (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 15–16.

15. Arnaldo Momigliano, “Persian Empire and Greek Freedom,” in *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honor of Isaiah Berlin*, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 139–51, esp. 149.

states tend to “look upon their neighbours with a suspicious eye, to consider all trading states as their rivals, and to suppose that it is impossible for any of them to flourish, but at their expence.”¹⁶ Rivalry for power and overlordship—its inevitability—was one hidden shoal on which the enlightened transformation of empire came to grief. Nationalism was another.

Nationalism has traditionally been seen as an instrument of liberation from colonial rule. And the generalization does apply in various times and places, from late-nineteenth-century Italy and Ireland to mid-twentieth-century Egypt or Angola. But it is often forgotten that colonial insurgents, when asserting the indivisibility and sanctity of the nation against the legitimacy of empires, are appropriating a creed that their conquerors had created, though in very different circumstances. The rise of the nation-state within Europe, in the years after the Congress of Vienna, transformed the nature of empire by making the acquisition of overseas possessions a source of national pride and a potential instrument of national cohesion in times of crisis. In some sense, of course, empires had always been national. The Roman general Scipio Africanus could evade charges of corruption by appealing to the Roman people in the name of what he had achieved for *their* empire. The English and French scramble for possessions in the Atlantic in the seventeenth century was driven overwhelmingly by the desire, as one commentator phrased it, to “catch up” with Spain. But the modern nation was dependent to a far greater degree than the early-modern European monarchies had been by the need to satisfy public opinion, without the support of which, as Constant had seen, no future, post-Revolutionary society could hope to survive for long. Public opinion was the main grounds on which Tocqueville, for instance, supported the French invasion of Algeria in 1830. The French occupation of North Africa might have any number of benefits for both the settlers and the Arab population; above all, it would bring “civilization,” in which Tocqueville, like Constant, like John Stuart Mill, was as firm a believer as his Enlightenment predecessors had been. But the immediate motive was to reestablish the image of France still tarnished by the defeat of Napoleon, and the hope—unfulfilled as it turned out—that a quick victory might allow the unpopular government of Charles X victory at the polls.

The same is broadly true of the concept of the British empire which was largely a fabrication of Disraeli, intent on shoring up the image of a widely unpopular monarchy. And Disraeli’s British empire was some considerable distance from Burke’s: in the new nationalist calculus, the more of this earth you could take away, the greater you became—or, in Joseph Conrad’s famous descrip-

16. David Hume, “On the Jealousy of Trade” (1758), in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics, 1987), 328.

tion, empire was “the taking away [of the earth] from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves.” “C is for colonies” the *ABC for Baby Patriots*, published in 1899, declared:

Rightly we boast,
That of all the great
nations
Great Britain has the most.

Imperialism, as Lord Curzon had remarked the year before, had by now become “the faith of a nation.”¹⁷

At the back of the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century confrontation with empire had been the conviction that empires were wholes that had to embrace, at least to some degree, all those caught up in them. Empire was a contract that somehow had to bring well-being to all its peoples without, at the same time, seriously damaging their previous ways of life. Burke had conceived this objective as both moral and political. So too had both Constant and, in a sense, Tocqueville. Smith had very largely conceived empire as an economic necessity. Although the older Enlightenment vision of a global order of trading nations had vanished with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the idea of empire as extended protectorate had survived, and with it the project for transforming empire into a kind of federation. Burke, Smith, and Lord Kames had all proposed some variety of federal solution to the British-American crisis, as had both Turgot and the Count of Aranda for Spanish America.¹⁸ All of these, however, had remained shadowy projects that, as Smith lamented, would always run foul of the need to maintain power and dignity: any concession to the colonists would greatly diminish both power and dignity in the eyes of potential enemies and “in the eyes of our own people who would probably impute maladministration.”¹⁹ These thinkers and statesmen also stopped short of pursuing a fully federated state since, at least in the British case, the effect of distance was generally held to have rendered the various peoples of the empire, no matter what their origins, “strangers” to one another.

By the time Robert Seeley came to write *The Expansion of England* in 1883, however, modern technologies of communication had shrunk the Atlantic Ocean, which for Burke had seemed an insuperable obstacle to federation. For Seeley, the Atlantic seemed “scarcely broader than the sea between Greece and Sicily.”²⁰ It

17. As quoted in Harold Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919–1925* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1939), 13.

18. Smith, “Thoughts on the State of the Contest with America” (1778), ed. Ernest G. Mossner and Ian S. Ross, in *Glasgow Edition*, 6:382–83; Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Creech, 1774), 2:iv.

19. Smith, “Thoughts on the State,” 383.

20. Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 297.

was now possible to envisage a truly “Greater Britain,” one that would constitute a global state. Like most imperial federalists, Seeley was not very precise about what form that state would take. Like most, he assumed that it would be one in which the settler populations would have the upper hand. Like most, however, he was still haunted by Burke’s concern that, even if the various indigenous peoples of the empire were absorbed only slowly into its administrative fabric, Greater Britain must ultimately become a multicultural community, though many of the empire’s present subjects—the Maoris, the Australian Aborigines, the “Hottentots,” and the American Indians (those “dying nations” singled out for extinction by Lord Salisbury in 1898)—would, in the process, probably vanish altogether.

The enlightened vision of the future of empire—Smith’s and Burke’s vision—had involved the withering of the imperial state, the final undoing of the process of conquest that had created empire in the first place. Whereas Seeley envisaged federation as a transformation, not the undoing, of that state. Imperial federalism has much in common with the federalizing solutions that began to emerge after the Congress of Vienna as a solution to the difficulties facing post-Napoleonic Europe—from the pan-European federation that Constant’s companion Madame de Staël (and intermittently Constant himself) enthusiastically endorsed, to Proudhon’s *Du principe fédératif*, all the way to the Monnet Plan. Imperial federalism itself, like its enlightened predecessors, came to nothing—unless we consider the British Commonwealth to be something. But Seeley’s brand of federalism served to revive some lingering notion of Edmund Burke’s “sacred trust.” Casting his eye over Britain and its soon-to-be-liberated colonies in the late 1940s, the British prime minister, and architect of the welfare state, Clement Attlee, remarked prophetically: “We cannot create a heaven inside and leave a hell outside and expect to survive.” Since then, of course, the heaven has come to seem more like purgatory, and the hell has become, if anything, yet more hellish. Today the former European imperial powers are still struggling with the problems that Burke saw so clearly, but in ways that Burke could never have envisaged. For as the colonies have one by one been reduced to a few embattled settler communities (Monserrat, Gibraltar, the Malvinas/Falkland Islands) or heavily subsidized protectorates (Tahiti, Martinique) or fortress garrisons (Ceuta, Melilla), the populations of the old empires have come flooding into Europe in a reverse migration. And now it is Europe itself that is well on the way to becoming a federation. How it will adapt itself in the long run to the fact that most of its major constituent parts have been formed through the experience of empire, and that many of them—Britain, France, and Spain most obviously—are still inescapably attached to former colonies, remains to be seen.

In light of all these considerations, it would be far wiser to look upon both the United States and the European Union as, in their very different ways, attempts to revive a federalist rather than an imperial object. Such is obviously

the case with the EU. The objectives of the United States are less clear. It is not at all certain that the current administration or, indeed, any previous American administration since Truman's, has had any clear notion of what the future "new world order" could plausibly be made to look like. But I suspect that all the talk of "freedom" and of new "democratic states"—though the methods used to impose them have to date been depressingly reminiscent of those employed in the nineteenth century—is converging not on a new vision of empire but rather on something more like Robert Seeley's federation. The only difference—and clearly, it is crucial—is that this federation will not be one of "Anglo-Saxon peoples" but simply a federation of all those, whatever their ethnic identities, who have decided to embrace "Western" values. To those who can see no obvious virtue in those values, this result may look like simple imperialism under another name. But names are important, at least as a means of providing a check on the ambitions of overly powerful men (and now women)—and a "world federation" sounds to me, potentially at least, a more restraining project than a "world empire."