IL MESTIERE DI STORICO

Rivista della Società Italiana
per lo Studio della Storia Contemporanea

X / 2, 2018

viella

SOCIETÀ ITALIANA PER LO STUDIO DELLA STORIA CONTEMPORANEA
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IL MESTIERE DI STORICO

ISSN 1594-3836 ISBN 978-88-3313-198-6 (carta)
ISBN 978-88-3313-200-6 (e-book pdf) ISBN 978-88-3313-199-3 (e-pub)
Rivista semestrale, anno X, n. 2, 2018
Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Roma del 4/5/2009, n. 143/2009

direttore responsabile Giovanni Sabbatucci
direttore Adriano Roccucci
redazione Arianna Arisi Rota, Maddalena Carli, Elisabetta Caroppo, Giovanni Cristina, Laura De Giorgi, Valeria De Plano, Giorgio Del Zanna, Andrea Di Michele, Valeria Galimi, Domenica La Banca (segretaria di redazione), Marco Mariano, Marco Rovinello, Rosanna Scatamacchia, Filippo Triola
corrispondenza e libri inviare a «Il mestiere di storico», c/o Viella s.r.l., Via delle Alpi, 32 - 00198 Roma
e-mail mestieredistorico@yahoo.it

copertina Franco Molon TheSign

amministrazione Viella s.r.l., Via delle Alpi, 32 - 00198 Roma
tel./fax 06 84 17 758 - 06 85 35 39 60
abbonamenti@viella.it info@viella.it www.viella.it

abbonamento annuale 2018 (2 numeri) Italia € 75 Estero € 85
Numero singolo € 40

modalità di pagamento c/c bancario IBAN IT82B0200805120000400522614
c/c postale IBAN IT14X0760103200000077298008
carta di credito Visa / Master Card

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DISCUSSIONI

Imperi senza fine
(a cura di Adriano Roccucci e Teodoro Tagliaferri)

Krishan Kumar, *Visions of Empire. How Five Imperial Regimes Shaped the World*, Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press, 2017, 600 pp., $ 39.50

ne discutono
Amanda Behm (University of York), Valerie Ann Kivelson (University of Michigan), Federica Morelli (Università di Torino), Erik-Jan Zürcher (Universiteit Leiden) e Krishan Kumar (University of Virginia)

L'accresciuta consapevolezza dell'apporto essenziale recato dagli Imperi multietnici, multireligiosi e multinazionali dell'età moderna e contemporanea alla genesi policentrica e interattiva della società globalizzata è intimamente connessa alla percezione di una ritornante attualità etico-politica delle loro peculiari morfologie istituzionali, strategie di legittimazione e tecniche di governo – ritenute a lungo esaurite e quasi predestinate a soccombere davanti all'inesorabile incedere del paradigma egemonico dello Stato-nazione dopo le due guerre mondiali e la decolonizzazione. Tale percezione ha giocato una parte considerevole nella reviviscenza e nel rinnovamento degli studi imperiali in corso da circa un trentennio (Teodoro Tagliaferri, *Christopher Bayly e «the return of universal history»*, in Id., *La persistenza della storia universale. Studi sulla professione di storico*, Roma, Bordeaux, 2017, p. 70).

Sarebbe arduo però indicare, nella pur copiosa letteratura pluridisciplinare e interdisciplinare scaturita dallo *imperial turn*, molti altri autori i quali si siano cimentati in una ricognizione degli esperimenti di «gestione della diversità e delle differenze» (p. 13) compiuti dalle *élites* imperiali con la chiarezza d'intenti programmatici, con la sistematicità, con l'esperta combinazione di sociologia storica comparata, teoria politica e storia delle idee di Krishan Kumar (l'ovvio termine di paragone è Jane Burbank, Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2010). L'ultimo libro del professore di sociologia dell'Università della Virginia trae la sua ispirazione di fondo dal convincimento del tutto esplicito che le

vicende dei regimi imperiali, in particolare europei, abbiano in serbo «lezioni» preziose per tutti coloro che sono oggi impegnati nella ricerca di soluzioni ai problemi delle «società multiculturali» (p. 13) e nella progettazione di «un nuovo ordine mondiale» (p. 24) basato su «modi di pensare e forme di regolazione transnazionali» (p. 13) meglio idonee a fronteggiare i processi e i conflitti innescati dalla globalizzazione di quanto non si stia rivelando il «presente sistema di circa duecento Stati-nazione, tutti reclamanti la sovranità e tutti tendenti all'uniformità etnica» (p. 496).

A conferire a *Visions of Empire* un indubbio carattere di originalità concorre del resto la scelta di porre al centro dei casi di studio esaminati – ottomano, asburgico, russo e sovietico, inglese, francese – la fisionomia, l'autocoscienza, l'ideologia, le pratiche di potere dei rispettivi «"state-bearing" peoples» (p. 49), artefici o fruitori delle ambiziose rappresentazioni della vocazione «"storico-mondiale"» (p. 308) dell'autorità imperiale evocate nel titolo. Ciò rende l'opera, sotto un altro riguardo, il naturale prolungamento di una serie di importanti lavori nei quali Kumar si era soffermato, con risultati scientifici di grande rilevanza anche per la comprensione di avvenimenti recenti come la *Brexit*, sulla complessa interazione tra la «Englishness» e il ruolo di «ruling people» rivestito dagli inglesi nel sistema coloniale britannico (*Nation and Empire: English and British National Identity in Comparative Perspective*, in «Theory and Society», XXIX, 2000, pp. 578-608; *The Making of English National Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003; *Empire and English Nationalism*, The Ernest Gellner Nationalism Lecture on Nations and Nationalism, delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 19 April 2005, in «Nations and Nationalism», XII, 2006, pp. 1-13; *Empire, Nation, and National Identities*, in *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* [Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series], edited by A.S. Thompson, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 298-329; *The Idea of Englishness: English Culture, National Identity, and Social Thought*, London, Ashgate, 2015).

L'opzione valoriale pluralista, multiculturalista e globalista dichiaratamente sottesa all'indagine e il privilegiamento analitico della prospettiva e dell'agentività delle *élites* si riflettono nella concettualizzazione operativa della specificità della dimensione imperiale adottata da Kumar in funzione di questa ulteriore tappa del suo itinerario di ricerca, che si basa, nella sostanza, su una corrispondente interpretazione del «modello romano» (p. 88). Avendo definito l'impero un'organizzazione statale di grandi dimensioni entro cui una sovranità stratificata si esercita su spazi politici compositi e gerarchizzati, occupati da un mosaico di gruppi umani tendenzialmente coestensivo con l'ecumene, nel nome di una qualche «"missione" universale» (p. 27) rivendicata dai «popoli imperiali» (p. 26) che ne costituiscono il nucleo centrale e originario, Kumar focalizza lo sguardo sui modi nei quali questi ultimi sogliono rispondere alle «sfide» (p. 15) inerenti al supremo imperativo pratico di riconciliare unità e diversità e ne vengono a loro volta plasmati fin nel profondo delle loro identità collettive.

Al cuore della statualità imperiale si situa dunque per Kumar un mito di legittimazione provvidenzialistico che assegna al gruppo dominante il demiurgico «compito» (p. 13) di unificare il mondo in una comunità di comunità rese partecipi di una civiltà universale nel rispetto dell'individualità di ciascuna. Ciò trova effettivo riscontro, ad esempio, nella diffusione di una cultura imperiale condivisa in parallelo con il riconoscimento della personalità corporata delle comunità particolari, nella cooptazione e nella chiamata a collaborare al governo dell'Impero delle *élites* dei gruppi subordinati, nella loro ammissione ai ranghi della cittadinanza imperiale, nella composizione cosmopolita del personale di istituzioni quali la burocrazia, la diplomazia e l'esercito, nella promozione di un patriottismo imperiale imperniato sul culto di dinastie e figure di monarchi proposti alla venerazione dei sudditi in quanto incarnazione simbolica di valori panumani e cosmici (anziché esclusivistici). Il «"nazionalismo imperiale"» (p. 49), ossia dei popoli eletti i quali fanno derivare il proprio senso di sé e l'immagine di sé che proiettano all'esterno da una qualche «causa» (p. 51) missionaria che trascende l'oggettivazione storico-politica di quanto vi è di peculiare e distintivo nella loro etnia, nazionalità, cultura o religione, dà luogo pertanto a una forma di appartenenza inclusiva, aperta, elastica, compatibile con una scala di lealtà multiple (che riecheggia – osserva Kumar – nell'insistenza sull'ibridità del nucleo dei padri fondatori riscontrabile in parecchi miti delle origini imperiali). Ma ciò implica il paradosso che i popoli-guida pagano l'affermazione della propria unicità al prezzo di una «soppressione» (p. 411) della loro individualità, sicché il trauma della perdita dell'Impero li mette di fronte al difficile problema di ridefinire una propria identità nazionale mentre è ancora vivissima in loro la memoria e il lascito delle passate supremazie.

Risulta evidente che il procedimento comparativo portato avanti nei capitoli del libro dedicati alle singole esperienze imperiali non è orientato né alla generalizzazione induttiva né all'individuazione delle particolarità dei casi esaminati, ma mira piuttosto a rintracciare, in ciascuno di essi, la presenza ricorrente e il vario configurarsi di una medesima costellazione di situazioni, problemi, atteggiamenti e politiche prefigurata, e in parte direttamente influenzata, dalla tradizione alessandrino-romano-cristiana. L'accento batte di conseguenza (non senza una certa unilateralità ammessa e di certo preventivata dallo stesso Kumar) sull'efficacia e sulla resilienza della forma-impero, sulla sua rispondenza ai bisogni suscitati dalla modernizzazione e dalla globalizzazione e sulla sua adattabilità al mutare delle circostanze, che le avrebbero garantito un grado di successo, una durevolezza e un'incidenza di lungo termine sulle dinamiche della storia generale ancora troppo sottovalutati nelle narrazioni convenzionali, per lo più legate – specie in ambito contemporaneistico – a schemi teleologici postulanti acriticamente un movimento «from "empire to nation"» (p. 15).

Dal punto di vista della storiografia professionale, la validità della proposta metodologica di Kumar va misurata dalla sua fecondità euristica, dalla sua capacità di generare nuove questioni da sottoporre al vaglio della ricerca, ma anche dalla suscettibilità del suo

impianto concettuale di accogliere modifiche, integrazioni, correzioni suggerite dall'investigazione empirica del fenomeno imperiale condotta secondo differenti angolature teoriche e istanze ideali. «Il mestiere di storico» ha invitato perciò quattro studiosi degli Imperi a confrontarsi con gli esiti dell'applicazione dell'approccio delineato in *Visions of Empire* nelle rispettive aree di specializzazione. I loro commenti hanno sollecitato Krishan Kumar a un'ampia e articolata replica, che costituisce di per sé un significativo contributo all'ulteriore chiarificazione delle tesi sostenute nel libro e che ci piace pensare gli abbia offerto un'occasione di confronto utile allo sviluppo di una riflessione che appare, come egli stesso rimarca preannunciandoci la prossima pubblicazione di una nuova monografia sulla sociologia storica e politica degli imperi, ancora in modo promettente aperta e *in fieri*.

Federica Morelli

«Empire is back» states Krishan Kumar at the beginning of his impressive volume on empires. This book indeed represents one the most recent efforts to write a transnational and comparative history of empires, as a steadily growing number of books, conferences, and mass media treatments testify. The persisting and mutating forms of less formal influence, both by the former colonial powers and by others; the ever-increasingly important presence of people of non-European origin in advanced industrial countries – of migration, diasporization, multi-ethnicity, cultural syncretism; the rise to global significance of «postcolonial» literatures and other cultural and intellectual productions; the focus on ideas of an American empire and a «colonial present»: all have combined to make the imperial legacy and its contemporary resonances crucial in the intellectual and political sphere. Most importantly, the recent literature on global powers has clearly shown us that empire is not only a pre-modern form of polity, but reminds us that – once we get rid of the teleological inevitability of the nation-state – sovereignty can be shared, layered, and transformed.

Beginning with the Roman Empire and moving through the Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian, British, and French (but notably not the American) empires, Kumar gives us an impressive picture of how the rulers managed a multiplicity of peoples. Focusing on the rulers rather than the ruled, he also stresses the importance of entanglement and imitation between empires. In this regard, Kumar finds a remarkable commonality in the way that these empires were governed – both in terms of the mentality of rulers, and in the forms of rule. The most important common feature was the sense of a broader mission. Empires were not concerned merely with the defense of a territory or a people: they wanted to change the world. Sometimes this mission was linked to faith, as in the case of the Ottoman Empire (Islam), the Hapsburg Empire (Catholicism), or the Russian Empire (Orthodoxy). Sometimes, it was linked to other ideals such as the rule of law and

representative government (the British), republicanism and secularism (the French), the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a classless society (the Soviets). This sense of a broader purpose helped to hold empires together.

Even though the author declares that his selection of empires is arbitrary, «a reflection of my own tastes and interests as well as the limits of my knowledge» (p. XV), such choice is not adequately argued and explained. Kumar's focus is firmly on the European imperial experience. Yet European empires were not the only ones that deployed significant imperial imaginaries or repertoires of power (Significantly the first chapter of Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper's book begins with a comparison between Roman and Chinese empires, since «these two empires became long-lasting reference points for later empire-builders», Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010, p. 4). Even the Ottoman and the Russian empires are envisaged as part and parcel of the European political order. According to Kumar, although the Ottoman rulers deployed the Islamic creed as a form of civilizing mission, they not only identified strongly with the Roman imperial legacy, but continued the Roman tradition in seeing themselves as the protectors and promoters of the Christian faith. Despite the importance of the Roman model, we certainly cannot neglect the multiple links that the Ottomans maintained with Asia and Africa, including the influences regarding the ideas and ideologies of imperial rule. The Ottoman Empire managed to blend Turkic, Byzantine, Arab, Mongol, and Persian traditions into durable, flexible, and transforming power. On the other hand, even though Russians had proclaimed Moscow the «Third Rome» and themselves as the legatees of the Byzantines, historiography has widely acknowledged that the Russian empire was the result of the encounter and rivalry with the Chinese and Mongol empires. Narrowing his vision to Europe and its margins, Kumar goes against those historians who, through a global history approach, have worked to connect different areas of the world, thereby «provincializing» Europe.

Considering the Habsburg empire as a unity is another controversial choice. Even though the Habsburg dynasty ruled a disparate group of territories that stretched from the Atlantic to the Carpathians and beyond, and from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, they did not rule as a single unified entity. The empire was only really unified under a single authority – the emperor – in the reign of Charles V. Yet he acted as ruler of a European empire, with Europe-wide interests and responsibilities. In that sense, as has frequently been observed, Charles continued in the medieval tradition of the Holy Roman Empire rather than inaugurating the age of overseas empires. It was this tradition too that preoccupied the Austrian Habsburgs, who regained the Holy Roman Empire after Charles's abdication and death. Their empire remained resolutely, indeed quintessentially, European. Even though Kumar underlines the overlap and continuities between the Spanish and the Austrian Habsburgs, insisting on the geographical and political connections

between Spain and Central-Eastern Europe, the Spanish or Iberian territories in America, Asia, and Africa completely disappear from his account. In the last part of the chapter on the Habsburgs, entirely dedicated to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kumar does not lay stress on any continuity between the modern Habsburg Empire and that of the early modern period. Still, the idea of a multi-ethnic federation under an emperor or a king remains critical from America to the Carpathians throughout the nineteenth century.

The Habsburg perspective in which the Spanish empire is encompassed, limits considerably its significance in the history of empires as well as its entanglements with the other early modern overseas empires. Beyond the universalistic mission of the Spanish monarchy and the Church, the Spanish empire shared several elements with the other Atlantic empires. In the Americas, settlers from Europe, subordinated indigenous people, slaves brought from Africa, and their imperial masters produced new forms of imperial politics. If empires always implied governing different people differently, the empires of the Americas brought out explicit debates about what a politics of difference should be. Still, the Atlantic dimension of the European empires is almost absent from Kumar's volume. Not only does he pay little attention to the Spanish Empire, but he also limits the analysis of the British and French empires to the modern age - thus essentially to their African or Asian extension. Although he states that there is great deal of continuity in the rise and expansion of the British Empire, these continuities are not described in the book. Still, Atlantic and global historians have made a great effort in recent decades to underline the connections and continuities between early modern and nineteenth- and twentieth-century empires in the British and French cases. The Atlantic connection is not only evident in the long-lasting presence of the British and the French in the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas, but also in some practices and ideas about colonial rule, the exploitation of labor, and the inferiorisation of the others. While the cultural contexts may be extremely different, certain processes and institutional developments might fruitfully be thought in relation to one another.

Another critical aspect of the book concerns the relationship between empire and nation. As do other historians of empires, Kumar challenges the conventional wisdom that nations and empires are rivals, sworn enemies, the first emerging from the dissolutions of the latter. Kumar shows convincingly how and why the two models of polity organization have historically been, and remain, interdependent. This is particularly evident in the dynamics of imperial breakups: the overwhelming majority are not directly caused by the so called «wars of national liberation» – assuming the existence of nations that want to free themselves; rather they are the result of political crises that are often caused by exogenous factors such as wars. Moreover, imperial crises are not always followed by the formation of nation-states: sometimes they give rise to a readjustment of political balance within the empire or to the creation of federations/confederations within larger units. Even today people in the Pacific islands (New Caledonia in relation to France) or

Caribbean ones (Puerto Rico in relation to the United States) and elsewhere weigh the advantages or disadvantages of dissociating themselves from larger units. All these cases show that there is no single path from empire to nation.

Yet, Kumar's analysis is more controversial when he tries to blend nation and empire: «empires can be nations writ large» (p. 38). Empires and nation-states overlap since, Kumar argues, many independent kingdoms such as Spain, Great Britain and France were the result of conquest and colonization. This dynamic process of conquest and colonization meant that the states and kingdoms that were established in medieval and early modern Europe had the appearance of empires. Many «nation-states», Kumar continues, «are empires in miniature», since they have been formed in the same way as empires have usually been formed (p. 27). Nevertheless, assimilating medieval and early-modern kingdoms to modern nation-states is extremely arguable. While the first were «composite monarchies» or «multiple kingdoms», where one monarch ruled over several territories – that maintained a strong political and cultural autonomy – the modern nation-state is based on the idea of a single people in a single territory constituting itself as a unique political community. Making state conform with that of nation is indeed a recent phenomenon. Spain of the early modern period was not at all similar to a nation-state: it was a mixed monarchy composed by different kingdoms both in the Peninsula and overseas. American provinces – called kingdoms, as Kumar points out quoting Pagden (p. 151) – belonged formally to Castile and not to other peninsular kingdoms such as Navarra or Aragon. Moreover, throughout the early modern period, there was not a sharp division between the law of metropolis and that of the rest of the empire. Only in the nineteenth century, with the formation of national states - based on a presumed cultural and territorial homogeneity – were special legal regimes established for the colonial territories. Imperial rulers thought that the same laws could not be applied in a homogenous nation-state as well as in territories where heterogeneity was the rule. This specialness made it possible that several opposing concepts such as freedom and slavery, equality and inequality, parliamentary government and dictatorship, cohabited in the framework of a unique political culture and constitutional system. This change reflects the transformation of the old empires – composed of different territories with different rights, including the so-called metropolis – to the «imperial nations», as Josep Fradera has clearly shown (Josep M. Fradera, *La nación imperial. Derechos, representación y ciudadanía en los imperios de Gran Bretaña, Francia, España y Estados Unidos [1750-1918]*, Barcelona, Edhasa, 2015). During the age of imperial nations, the ancient metropolis – now formally a nation-state – became indisputably the predominant part of the empire, the one that, for its moral, political, and cultural superiority, established the rules for the other parts of the empire, which were not considered parts of the nation. So, I should say, empire can be a type of state, but can hardly overlap with one nation, if we conceive the latter in the modern sense of the term.

This lack of overlapping between empire and nation-state is evident if we look at the consequences produced by the loss of empire, both in the metropolis and in the colonies. Paradoxically, the difficulties for creating a shared national space were greater in the former than in the latter. In Great Britain as well as in Spain – contrary to what Kumar states (p. 469) – the end of the empire generated strong contestations of the nation-state that had never emerged before.

Valerie Ann Kivelson

Krishan Kumar's *Visions of Empire* adds a judicious assessment to the burgeoning literature on the theme of empire. With a series of thoroughly researched case studies, he analyzes the different approaches to imperial rule adopted by some of the great Eurasian, European, and transoceanic empires. He takes his reader from ancient Rome to the ostensibly post-imperial present, where he finds lingering elements of empire still alive and well.

Kumar is to be commended on the astounding erudition of the book, which presents the most up-to-date Anglophone scholarship and sets out each field's controversies fairly and responsibly. The writing is smooth and the authorial voice is admirably clear in setting out the stakes of the debates and the central points of each chapter. Despite its length, the book would serve well as a textbook for courses on empire or as an accessible introduction for a general audience.

As a specialist on the Russian empire, I read the chapter on Russia closely, and found little cause for complaint. A sweeping comparative work like this one always risks missing the fine points that specialists love to debate, but in this case, the accuracy certainly outweighs any omissions. The «Third Rome» idea and the general commitment to evangelizing Orthodox mission may be a bit overplayed, but otherwise, the coverage is good, clear, and unobjectionable.

One of the most interesting aspects of the analysis is the emphasis on imperial «restraint». This is an important reminder that imperial rule can be enforced through episodic displays of untrammeled violence, but coercion alone cannot suffice to ensure long-term, effective, profitable rule. The elites, the «state-bearing people», must rein in their rapacity and their cultural arrogance to some degree if they want to run a functioning empire. In our book on *Russia's Empires*, Ronald G. Suny and I develop a similar concept under the label of reciprocity: in order to secure their sovereignty, Russian tsars and even Soviet leaders had to display a modicum of responsiveness to the interests of their subjects.

The balanced tone and comprehensive coverage in each section makes it difficult to engage critically with Kumar's ideas and harder to appreciate what the book aims to add analytically to the study of empire. As he lays it out in the preface, the book's «subject is

the outlook and attitudes of elites and intellectuals, rather than the mass of the subject peoples». He continues: «My justification of this is that while, particularly in the recent literature, there has been a great concern with the experience of the subjects of empires, there has been much less focus on their rulers, what they thought they were doing in their empires, and how they responded to the empire's needs» (p. XIV). This is a surprising statement. It is true that the trend in scholarship over the past few decades has inclined toward the study of subaltern populations, precisely because that perspective had been long neglected in favor of the much studied view from the top. However, I would not agree with the suggestion that interest in the colonized has resulted in neglect of the ideas of elites. No one would contest the sensible statement that «ideas of empire were not irrelevant» (p. XII), and those ideas, policies, laws, and practices have received and continue to receive ample treatment in scholarly treatments. It is the view from below that is far more difficult to discern, and for that reason, as Kumar says, scholars continue their efforts to unearth evidence that might illuminate the experience of the conquered and the subjugated. Those efforts have complemented rather than displaced examinations of the goals, policies and ideas of the conquerors and rulers.

Kumar follows the trend in recent literature that juxtaposes imperial and national political formations as competing and diametrically opposed ideal types. These models assert that empires rely on policies of hierarchy and distinction among their subject peoples, while nations base their claims to legitimacy on horizontal equality and homogeneity. Refining those distinctions, Kumar points out that empires generally advance universal claims and pretensions to limitless world governance, whereas nations of their essence are limited and exclusive in their claims, including only members of their «nation» and existing in a world where multiple nations enjoy equal rights to existence. He explains that the distinctions between empires and nations are not as clear-cut as they might sound in their ideal types. Nations may display imperial characteristics (he calls these «imperial nations»), while empires, like the Soviet Union, may strive to develop strategies of integration and to promote common identification that verge on the national. Kumar is interested in the ways in which empires, with their indifference to assimilation and their easy acceptance of difference may provide solutions more desirable than the bloodthirsty exclusions and ethnic cleansings characteristic of militant nationalism. «Empires, in their historic forms, may have had their day; but it is not at all clear that the desirable alternative is today's system of two hundred or so nation-states all claiming sovereignty and all tending toward ethnic uniformity. That seems a recipe for unending conflict, both within and between states» (p. 475). He destabilizes the teleological notion that informed both scholarship and policy through the second half of the last century, the notion that empires would inevitably crumble and give way to independent nation-states. He concludes that the arc of history is far less clear. Furthermore, he intimates that the simple binary opposition of empire and nation may not exhaust the range of political and popular formations.

His own concept of «missionary nationalism» is a fruitful one for thinking about such hybrid possibilities.

All of these points are important and valid, though many have been made before. The preface acknowledges Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper's «impressive comparative work *Empires in World History*», an important contribution to the study of empires that covers a set of themes and empires similar to those that appear in this book. The preface explains that where Burbank and Cooper paired empires in their analytical chapters, this book opts to treat «each empire individually, though of course with comparisons where relevant» (p. XV). That is a somewhat fine distinction, which perhaps accounts for the many points of correspondence between the two works.

Kumar anticipates that he may be accused of letting empires off too lightly, and in all likelihood he will, but that kind of attack does not seem altogether justified. While it is true that he skims hastily over the worst atrocities committed by the empires he studies, such as the brutal suppression of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, he has other goals in mind for this work. He concludes somewhat wistfully, «Empires, for all their faults, show us another way, a way of managing the diversity and differences that are now the inescapable fate of practically all so-called nations» (p. 475).

Erik-Jan Zürcher

As Krishan Kumar points out in his introduction, among historians there has been an upsurge in interest in empires over the past two decades. This is undoubtedly linked to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991-1992, which has been widely interpreted as the dissolution of an empire and a kind of delayed sequel to the events of 1917-1922, when the great continental empires of Europe were wiped off the map. Kumar subscribes to this idea, but also adds an original explanation, in which he links the renewed interest in empires – also outside historical circles – to the insecurity created by the quickening of globalization since the nineteen nineties, which has undermined the nation-states.

In the introduction to *Visions of Empire* Krishan Kumar also makes a number of penetrating observations on the nature of the historical phenomenon that we call «empire». He demonstrates that the dividing line between nation states and empires is not as clear as is often assumed, nor that it should be understood as a chronological sequence in which empires are somehow pre-modern or traditional as the antithesis to the «modern» nation state.

Kumar's key proposition in this book is that empires were held together by an imperial ideology that was shared by the members of their ruling *élites* and that it is crucially important that we should attempt to understand the world as seen by these imperial elites.

Apart from the thought-provoking Introduction, *Visions of Empire* is structured

around six case studies, which are each given a separate chapter, starting with that of the Roman Empire. This is no coincidence: a key thesis of Kumar's book is that the Roman Empire was the original empire, the empire *par excellence*. The Romans after all coined the term «imperium» both in its original abstract meaning of the authority exercised by, or on behalf of, the Roman people, and in its later more concrete meaning of the actual territories where the Romans held sway. He also maintains that the other empires included in the book – Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian, French and British – can be regarded as successors to the Roman empire in the sense that they inherited key concepts and practices from the Romans, and very often consciously modelled themselves on what they imagined the Roman Empire to have been.

One of the six case studies is that of the Ottoman Empire. The way Kumar summarizes the six hundred-year history of the empire on the basis of a very wide reading of the state-of-the-art literature, is exemplary. One of the aspects he emphasizes is the degree to which the Ottoman Empire, which for so long was seen as Europe's quintessential other, was in fact almost from the beginning a European state. The early Ottomans built their power as much by taking over the remains of the Byzantine Empire in the Balkans as by incorporating the other Turkish princedoms in Asia Minor. For centuries the European provinces of the empire were demographically, economically, politically and militarily the most important and right until the end (and even beyond it, because it is also true for the republic of Turkey in its first decades) the political and cultural elite hailed overwhelmingly from the Balkans.

Incorporating the Ottomans fully into European history is a welcome, and long overdue, development, but at the same time it brings with it a certain risk of Eurocentrism. I think we can see that in Kumar's emphasis on the Roman heritage of the Ottoman Empire (through the Byzantines). By emphasizing that so strongly, he risks overlooking the two other major imperial traditions that exerted at least as much influence on the Ottomans, if not more. The first of these is the old Persian tradition of kingship, which came to the Ottomans from their Turkic Seljuk predecessors, who in turn had acquired it in the Turco-Persian cultural realm in Central Asia, before their conquest of the Middle East and Asia Minor in the eleventh century. As Ottoman manuals on statecraft show, no book had more influence on the Ottoman statesmen than the famous *Siyasatname* [The Book of Government] of the Persian Seljuk Vizier Nizam al-Mulk, written in eleventh-century Baghdad. In essence this was an adaptation for Islamic society of the Persian ideas on imperial rule.

The second major non-European tradition in which the Ottomans stood was that of Central Asia, and more specifically that of Djengiz Khan's Mongol world empire. The Ottomans were part of the second major wave of Turkic mass migration to the Middle East (the Seljuks having been part of the first one over 200 years earlier) and it can be argued they acquired their independence thanks to the Mongol destruction of the Sultan-

ate of the Rum Seljuks in Asia Minor. While the Ottomans never positioned themselves as heirs to Djengiz Khan (unlike their contemporaries Timur Lenk and Babur), they were conscious of the imperial traditions of Central Asia. It is no coincidence that the official monogram of the Ottoman Sultan, which was affixed at the top of major state documents and on coins right until the end, included only the title «Khan» (as for example in «Mahmud Khan bin Abdulhamid, Muzaffer Daima» – Mahmud Khan Son of Abdulhamid, Ever Victorious) and not Sultan, Caliph, Kaisar, Shah or Khosrow – all of them titles that were used in the full titulature of the Ottoman monarchs.

Perhaps, then, it is best to see the Ottoman imperial tradition as a hybrid phenomenon that incorporates Roman/Byzantine elements as well as Persian traditions going back to the Achaemenids and Sassanids and Central Asian ones – all of these amalgamated into an Islamic worldview.

Amanda Behm

Krishan Kumar's *Visions of Empire* is a densely informed and profitably challenging exploration of the key features and life processes of five European empires – Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian, British, and French – as perceived and steered by imperial elites or rulers, broadly conceived. As the book's subtitle indicates, Kumar is concerned with the work of empires in world affairs to this day. It calls out certain academic and popular tendencies to treat empires as obsolete forms that gave way wholesale to a system of nation-states. It aggressively frames empire as an analytic rather than normative concept. To an accumulation of Roman premises – sovereignty, then command, then the «thing over which *imperium* was exercised» – it brings to bear the superseding notion of the political incorporation of «many different races and ethnicities». Empire becomes «rule over a multitude of peoples» (pp. 9-11, 19). Most notably, as it sifts and organizes vast literatures, it emphasizes the «dynamism» and durability of imperial forms, nudging the tenor of debate away from stock narratives of territorial expansion or economic control toward an appreciation of the aspirations, doubts, adaptive techniques, survival bids, and, most intriguingly, denial, that defined imperial rule as vocation, ambition, and dilemma across a vast swath of human history.

These are galvanizing positions, and the book's selective and avowedly comparative design commands reflection as it diverges from recent scholarship emphasizing global flows and entanglements while discounting the integrity of states, as well as that which treats European overseas empires as a type alongside Eurasian tributary systems. Accounts of Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian polities go back to the fifteenth centuries, while the British and French empires on display here are nineteenth- and twentieth-century undertakings. This design may or may not satisfy readers accustomed to widest-lens ap-

proaches, but it certainly compels exchange between specialists and stands to invigorate interdisciplinary debate.

For historians of Britain and empire, Kumar's chapter on those subjects is particularly illuminating and sets in relief several larger issues relating to the book's overarching design and commitments. While he gestures to scholarship on the British Empire's early modern origins and continuity across the «First» and «Second» empires, he accepts such periodization as significant and devotes his attention to the last quarter of the nineteenth century and then the era of the two world wars. The perspectives at the fore are those of scholars and statesmen emerging from the London-Cambridge-Oxford triangle, taken against a broad narrative of imperial development, dissolution, and aftermath. At one level, this framework risks reiterating longstanding preoccupations familiar to students of British imperial history— the nature and causes of «new» imperialism, for one, and the later Gallagherian notion of an interwar «revival» amidst twentieth-century decline and fall. Fresher, though, is Kumar's attention to «Greater Britain» as it draws selectively on insights from scholars working within the «British World turn» of the early 2000s, as well as those who have taken up the themes of unevenness and contestation within Britain's imperial system in the longer run.

Kumar's treatment of the British case is thus bounded and discerning. There emerge, however, instabilities between framework, evidence, and analysis meriting brief contemplation. While the book purports to examine imperial visions and identities, its overarching framework presumes the existence of two groups corresponding, in both an essential and constructivist sense, to the categories of ruler and ruled. Kumar is open about his framework; he explains at the outset that this book began as a meditation on peoples who lost their empires, and the definition of empire at which he arrives early on implies a single, supreme position of control over diverse masses and thus the coherence of one dominant group. We have a model, then, not concerned just with hierarchy but more starkly with ownership and supremacy as essential features of political organization, going back to the book's working definition of a Western type of empire. While Kumar cites Anthony Pagden admiringly at various points and expresses enthusiasm for theorizing non-linear relationships between empires and nation, he still seems to diverge from Pagden's clarification that all empires were «not only ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse but also, by definition, societies in which sovereignty was divided between a large number of political authorities» (Anthony Pagden, *Burdens of Empire: 1539 to the present*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University, 2015, p. 30). *Visions*, at least by a narrow reading, only has eyes for two elements: rule and multitudes.

For all the book's strengths, it is difficult to make out from the British chapter the implications of shared or competing claims on sovereign authority as they proliferated in the modern period, with what implications for the political trajectory and afterlives of empire. A few details illustrate this issue. Despite Kumar's specific attention to elite, U.K.

– centric views of the nature and future of empire as they took distinct shape in the 1880s – self-governing or authoritarian, settler or dependent, perpetual or self-extinguishing – the chapter gives little sustained notice to debates over political inclusion and social engineering on either side of that period, even as those struggles played out globally and came «home» to roost in metropolitan institutions. What to make of Indian nationalist campaigns celebrating radical equality through the embrace of imperial subjecthood in the 1880s and 1890s? To what extent could the colonial premiers of Australia or Natal be seen as «ruled» in any sense comparable to the Indian migrants they successfully legislated to exclude from their shores in those same decades, despite London's reservations and Calcutta's protests? But the task of dismantling a ruler/ruled distinction was not merely a question of «colonial» bids. To take just one metropolitan example, Oxford historian E. A. Freeman insisted in 1886 that George Washington had in fact been a momentous imperialist, «expanding» true English empire as he led the thirteen colonies to their separation from would become a despotic, multiracial state. Freeman, although standing in the pro-Raj camp in Kumar's reading, was in reality no champion of a British polity encompassing Asian populations; he acknowledged British India as a fact of history but as various scholars have shown, saw it as a burden to be managed rather than a jewel to admire (Edward A. Freeman, *Greater Greece and Greater Britain; and, George Washington, the Expander of England*, London, MacMillan and Co., 1886; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 50-60; Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth Century Visions of a Greater Britain*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 240-250).

Per Kumar's account, the British imperial mind collected itself circa 1900, took note of the strategic landscape, rediscovered Rome, and regrouped around the task of ruling India and its newer African charges, with more inclusive jolts to come from the world wars. But other readings emphasize the pitched grappling over recognition, participation, and rights that continued well into the twentieth century. Rather than asserting a clear divide between center and periphery, UK-based imperial theorists agonized over how to bring the post-1907 «Dominions» into the business of administering «dependencies» and how far to press the nominally equal claims of Indian subjects against those of «self-determining» settler populations in «white» Australia, Canada, and Southern Africa. The back-and-forth between proponents of empire-as-Greece and empire-as-Rome persisted. While Kumar points to significant «Roman» interventions by the likes of Lords Cromer, Curzon, and Bryce around 1900-1910, those figures framed their public salvos as warnings against public apathy, lest a globally-exposed Britain be caught unawares by so-called racial conflict in the style of endemic U.S. violence or Japan's spectacular defeat of Russia in 1905. Here was anything but a confident program of rule. As for the Greeks,

Kumar reads the celebrated interwar internationalist Alfred Zimmern as an inclusionary figure who in 1927 proposed the «Third British Empire» as heralding a wider shift from «subjecthood to citizenship, from dependency to equality» (p. 366). But illusionist and idealist were not the same thing. Zimmern was a New College Hellenist whose idealist-corporatist theories extended only incompletely to the so-called dependencies in the interwar years; other recent scholarship has emphasized the hierarchicalism of Zimmern's imperial thought as well as the reign it gave to powerful imperial segregationists such as Jan Smuts (Mrinalini Sinha, *Whatever Happened to the Third British Empire? Empire, Nation, Redux*, in Andrew Thompson, ed., *Writing Imperial Histories*, Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 2013; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: the End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2009; Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2004; Amanda Behm, *Imperial History and the Global Politics of Exclusion: Britain, 1880-1940*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2018). More could be said about patterns of imperial reform and nemesis in this time, but in short: by sometimes taking and leaving elite figures at their word, *Visions of Empire* tends to neglect the contexts in which rival claims to belonging and sovereignty defied distinctions between ruler and ruled in the British Empire and led to breaking points in imperial affairs.

Yet if there is friction between Kumar's model of empire and the messiness of Britain's global past, this dynamic only reinforces the salience of his other subtle observations. In confronting an imperial unfolding marked, despite archetypes, by uncomfortable and temporary compromise, curtailed schemes, and truncated promises, we get closer to the meaning of Kumar's otherwise inscrutable aphorism that «the English in fact can claim – if somewhat embarrassingly these days – to be among the most imperial people in the world, if not *the* most imperial» (p. 314). Quoting Paul Kennedy's 1983 musings on the role of political culture in British imperial longevity – «the dislike of extremes, the appeal to reasoned argument […] the necessity of compromise» – while suggesting that these may leave out «some important and not so attractive features» like overt authoritarianism and violent coercion, Kumar presents us with crucial oppositions (p. 385). We have the headiness of power versus fears of overexposure and weakness; aspirations to universalism contingent on the superiority of the particular; and the coherence but also the implicit and necessary impossibility of civilizing missions. We're left wondering at not just two sides of the same coin, but at how and why certain political and legal techniques, or improvisations, carried the day at key moments, and how the wellsprings and justifications thereof have informed the vocabulary and tools available to students and theorists of empire ever since.

To conclude, this is a deeply intriguing book and I hope that other forum participants will take up its important provocations regarding the relationship between empire

and nation-state and the construct of an «imperial people». Let me just end with three short notes to that effect. There is room to nuance and expand on Kumar's notion of imperial nationalisms through ample literature on Australian and Canadian (or at a further extreme, Rhodesian) «Britishness» as mobilized in defiance of multiethnic empire. In this way, we could extend the present definition of imperial nationalism to recognize «dominant ethnicity» as part of a constellation of identities and claims deployed differently but urgently across space and time within imperial contexts. Along these lines, when it comes to the question of «imperial people», it would have been helpful to see Kumar elaborate more directly from his earlier monograph study of English nationalism to better understand the mechanisms of his comparison between modern and late-modern empires and the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian type of «nationness» spooling out over five centuries. To what extent was the fact or project of being English changed or charged by imperial influences, before and during the timeframe in question? Did Englishness remain intact and identifiable on either side of the massive technological and intellectual transformations of the nineteenth century? And finally, we might return to models of empire. Kumar is in good company these days asserting that the work of empires has always been to «manage» diversity or multiplicity (pp. 6, 237). But I worry that scholars across disciplines have begun to take such definitions and imperatives for granted, and that we might be cherry-picking from the testimonies of empires' privileged voices while neglecting the contexts in which diversity and multiplicity became palpable agendas to be overcome or «managed» in the first place. What might we stand to unsettle, to lose or gain, by framing diversity as a fact of politics rather than a problem? I wonder if there is an opportunity here to render scholarship less compulsively «anti-imperial» while remaining all the more critical of inequalities and antagonisms cultivated within imperial systems. At least, as Kumar suggests, we have time to think on it; the imperial story is far from finished.

Krishan Kumar

No author could feel otherwise than honoured by such extensive and searching treatment of his work by a group of such distinguished scholars. I have learned much from their comments. If ever I were to produce a second edition of my book, I am sure I would want to incorporate many of the points they make, and to revise some of my positions. I think them warmly for the closeness and attentiveness of their readings, and for the perceptiveness of their remarks.

I can attend here only to some of the points raised by the reviews, fully conscious that I must leave much out. But I hope I have selected what might be the most important and interesting things to discuss. This also gives me the opportunity to clarify some of the claims made in the book, and to remedy omissions.

Empires, Nations, and Nationalism

The first point – raised by both Valerie Kivelson and Federica Morelli – has to do with my treatment of empires and nations or nation-states. Kivelson says that I follow «the trend in recent literature that juxtaposes imperial and national political formations as competing and diametrically opposed ideal types». She acknowledges that I qualify this in various ways. But – accepting that I might not have put it as clearly or as strongly as I should have done – I do want to stress that I was at pains not to make the distinction and separation of empires and nation-states be too sharp or pronounced. I point out that many nation-states – Spain, France, Britain – developed in very «imperial» ways, conquering or incorporating neighbouring groups and territories and forging them into entities that were later announced as long-existing and «immemorial» nation-states. I also argue that empires, especially in their later phases, can come to take on «national» characteristics, appearing as «Greater Britain», or «Greater France», or «Greater Russia». Empires and nation-states, furthermore, often both see themselves as carriers of various «missions» in the world, so that we can speak of «imperial nationalism» or «missionary nationalism» (*Visions of Empires*, pp. 23-31). So, whatever the distinctions of principle – and they are real – between empires and nation-states, they can often be analyzed as parallel and to some-extent overlapping formations (These points are argued at greater length in my article, *Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States: Two Principles, One Practice?*, in «Theory and Society», 2 [2010], 119-143).

More recently, examining especially the region of Central and Eastern Europe, I have become even more aware of the close ties between empires and nations, or at least nationalism. It is common to show how empires in effect produced their own gravediggers by giving rise to western-educated native elites who then turned western ideals – including those of self-determination – against the empires, as «prison-houses of nations» (See for a recent example Jan C. Jansen and Jurgen Österhammel, *Decolonization: A Short History*, translated by Jeremiah Riemer, Princeton, NJ., Princeton University Press, 2017. On the impact of Wilsonian self-determination on anti-colonial movements, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anti-colonial Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009). What is less often remarked is that empires are schools of nationalism in an additional sense, in calling into being nations and nationalisms that did not exist before or were very poorly developed. Thus in the Russian Empire the tsarist regime summoned up both Ukrainian and Belorusian nationalism as counters to the threatening Polish nationalism in the empire (For these and other examples in Central and Eastern Europe, see my forthcoming *The Legacy of Empire in East-Central Europe: Fractured Nations and Divided Loyalties*, in Simon Lewis, Jeffrey K. Olick, Malgorzata Pakier, and Joanna Wawrzyniak [eds.], *Regions of Memory,* London, Palgrave). Later, with policies of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization), the Soviet Union did the same with the nationalities of Central Asia. In all these cases nationalism – and in

many cases nations – scarcely existed before. The same is true of the Muslim nationalism promoted by the British as a counter to the dominant Hindu nationalism of the Indian subcontinent. Virtually non-existent before the middle decades of the twentieth century, Muslim nationalism went on to demand and create the separate nation-state of Pakistan as the British hastily departed from India.

Here too is shown the close relation, amounting almost to a symbiosis, between empires and nations. In this case, empires do not act like nation-states, or vice versa. But they are so closely tied to the rise of nations and nationalism – as *opposing* principles – that one might almost consider them the parent of nationalism. The children are ungrateful, as children often are, and usually deny the parentage. But it is important for us, in analyzing the phenomenon of nationalism, to ignore these denials, and to be much more attentive to the links to empires than we generally are. In my book I examine the first type of relationship – empires as nations, nations as empires – but I say very little about the second, empires as progenitors of nations and nationalism.

Morelli makes a further point about my treatment of nation-states and their relation to empire. She argues that I collapse the history of nation-states, not acknowledging the differences between early-modern and modern forms. «Assimilating medieval and early-modern kingdoms to modern nation-states is extremely arguable». Early modern states are frequently «composite monarchies», not the ethnically homogeneous and unified forms that are the aspiration and frequent achievement of modern nation-states. Hence, she argues, my attempt to assimilate empire to nation-states is flawed, since it does not sufficiently acknowledge that historical difference. «I would say that empire can be a type of state, but can hardly overlap with one nation, if we conceive the latter in the modern sense of the term».

This is an important and very valuable point. In my defence, I do say that the *principle* of empires, as multinational entities, is very different from that of nation-states, as based on the principle, «one nation, one state» (*Visions*, pp. 31-33). I emphasize rather that, *in practice*, nation-states can often be considered as empires, and empires as nation-states. But I fully accept that I have too quickly elided the difference between early and late forms of the nation-state. I have spoken of sixteenth-century Spain and England in the same breath as their nineteenth- and twentieth-century forms. So empires might be like the early forms but not – as Morelli argues – the late ones.

I think one can still usefully see parallels between the ideologies and practices of empires and even the modern nation-states, and I try to show that (e.g. with the idea of «missionary nationalism», which Kivelson thinks «fruitful»). But I agree that I need to do much more to *historicize* my account of the nation-state. Perhaps I can also say that I also need to do that in the case of empires. I do that briefly but quite inadequately in my book (*Visions*, pp. 312-314). My approach in that book was broadly synchronic, not diachronic. I was looking for similarities and commonalities, not so much differences. As a result I do not stress enough the differences between early-modern and modern empires

– whether we are speaking of land or overseas empires. That has now come to seem to me very important, and in some recent work I have sketched some ideas about this (See my *The Time of Empire: Temporality and Genealogy in the development of European Empires*, in «Thesis Eleven», 1(2017), pp. 113-128). I am now also at work on a new book on empires in which the historical changes and developments will play a central part. I stress there the importance of certain historical thresholds or «watersheds» in the history of empires, such as the coming of the «Axial Age» empires in the 5th-1st centuries B. C. E., and the European overseas empires of the 15th-16th centuries (The new book is tentatively entitled *Empires: A Historical and Political Sociology*. It will be published by Polity Press).

European and Non-European Empires

Both Morelli and Zürcher raise some questions about my choice of empires, and the problems this involves. Morelli writes that «Kumar's focus is firmly on the European imperial experience», and that I do not adequately justify this focus. Like Zürcher, she thinks this creates particular difficulties in my treatment of the Ottoman Empire. Zürcher commends me for recognizing the Ottoman Empire as a predominantly «European state», and says that «incorporating the Ottomans fully into European history is a welcome, and long overdue, development». But he also sees this bringing with it «a certain risk of Eurocentrism». The Ottoman Empire is not just European; it also draws upon other, non-European, traditions. Both Zürcher and Morelli feel in particular that by stressing the Roman legacy of empire, I have not been insufficiently open to other imperial experiences and other imperial traditions. I have been too concerned to trace unity and continuity.

I fully accept the force of these criticisms. Both Zürcher and Morelli are right to say that, in the Ottoman case, I largely ignore Turkic, Arab, Persian, and Mongol influences. So concerned was I to see – against so many of the usual «Orientalist» treatments – the Ottomans as part of the European world, and European politics, that I played up the Roman-Byzantine heritage and played down or ignored the non-European elements. The same, according to Morelli, is true of my account of the Russian Empire, where again I stress the doctrine of «Moscow the Third Rome», and ignore the importance of the Mongol and Chinese Empires in shaping the Russian Empire. I do briefly discuss the Mongol experience and Russia's view of itself as successor to the Mongol Golden Horde (*Visions*, pp. 216-220), but it is true that I look at the Russian expansion into Central Asia in the nineteenth century largely through Russian eyes, and ignore the importance of the challenge posed by the equally expansive Chinese Qing Empire (A first-rate antidote to this view is Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, 2005, which considers the rivalry between China and Russia for control of Central and Inner Asia, «Central Eurasia»).

In Morelli's eyes, this is all part of a wider problem with my book. «Narrowing his

vision to Europe and its margins, Kumar goes against those historians who, through [a] global history approach, have worked to connect different areas of the world, thereby "provincializing" Europe». «Provincializing Europe», in view of Europe's overwhelming predominance in earlier accounts, is always a good idea. Once more I have to say that I acknowledge the limitations of my approach in *Visions*, and have been working to broaden my range. I have recently tried to outline the *Eurasian* dimensions of all empires, East and West, showing not just the interactions between them but the way in which traditions from different regions interpenetrated and fused within particular empires: e.g. Persian influences in the Indian Mughal Empire, Mongol and Manchu influences in the Chinese Empire («Empire and Eurasia», forthcoming in the journal *Comparativ* – Leipzig). In the new book on empires which I am now writing, I am focusing as much on the Chinese, Indian (Hindu and Muslim), and Persian empires (Islamic and pre-Islamic) as on the European overseas empires.

But I want also to defend my choice of empires, and the European focus, in *Visions of Empire*. This was, as I said there, partly a matter of interest and of the limitations of my knowledge. One can only do so much. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, in their *Empires in World History* (2010), had covered many more empires. But their approach and their concerns were different from mine (despite Kivelson's comment about «the many points of correspondence» between our books). They wanted to trace empire as a general global experience, and to draw certain conclusions from this. This they did splendidly, and I have learned much from their book.

My focus was different. I wanted to show the distinctiveness of the place of the European empires in the imperial story. By any measure, the European empires have had an impact on the world greater than that of any other empires (the empire of Alexander the Great perhaps excepted). This applies partly to the land empires, such as the Russian Eurasian empire, but even more the world-spanning overseas empires of the Portuguese, the Spanish, the French, the Dutch, and the British. These transformed the world in a way that was unparalleled in previous world history. The world we live in today was substantially made by them.

I wanted to make that point in my book. I think now that I did not make it sufficiently clearly and strongly there. By treating each empire separately, noting their similarities and differences, I did not bring out clearly enough the *collective* impact of the European empires. Empire was a common European enterprise, drawing on the legacy of Rome. The concept of *translatio imperii* meant that each empire was aware of the other, each conscious that they were working in a certain tradition of empire. This was a «Westernizing» drive, carried by ideas of the Christianizing or civilizing mission of the European empires. By the early 1900s, the European empires controlled 84 per cent of the globe. For good or bad, they remade the world, which is still dealing with their legacies.

It is of course a good thing to bring a global approach to empire («empire», Sebastian

Conrad has said, «is the darling of global historians»: Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History*?, Princeton, NJ., Princeton University Press, 2016, p. 193). The more empires we study, the more we compare them, the better we will understand them as particular – though also well-nigh ubiquitous – forms. But we should also I think be aware that the imperial story is not entirely symmetrical, not a matter of equal contribution by all parts of the globe – at least if we consider scale and depth of impact. Europe in this as in certain other respects – e.g. the invention of capitalism – was unique. This uniqueness was fateful for the world.

The Habsburg and the British Empires

A few brief observations on some other points made by the reviewers, principally about the Habsburg and the British Empires. Morelli I think is right to say that in my treatment of the Habsburg Empire, although I show the continuity between the Spanish and the Austrian Habsburgs, in the latter part of my chapter on the Habsburg Empire I concentrate entirely on the land empire (Austria-Hungary) of the Austrian Habsburgs, and ignore completely the overseas possessions of Spain in America and Asia. As a result, «Kumar does not lay stress on any continuity between the modern Habsburg Empire and that of the early-modern period». It is interesting that in this case Morelli wishes to stress continuity, whereas in the case of the nation-state she wishes to stress discontinuities, between the early-modern and modern forms.

It is a question however how important the Spanish territories were to the Habsburgs in the nineteenth century. After all, the Habsburgs no longer ruled Spain. From 1700, and following the War of the Spanish Succession, the succession passed to the Bourbons. From that time the link that was feared by all other European powers was between Spain and France, not Spain and Austria. The Austrian Habsburgs occasionally toyed with the idea of an overseas empire – hence the importance of Trieste to them as a jumping-off point – but it never came to anything and they remained true to their roots (as Morelli herself says) as Holy Roman Emperors, with a wholly European mission. It is difficult therefore to see the relevance of the Spanish overseas empire to the Austrian Habsburgs at this stage in their empire.

This does however give me the opportunity to regret that I said almost nothing about another Iberian empire, the Portuguese Empire, in my book. This now seems to me a serious lack. The Portuguese were the pioneers in exploration, conquest, and colonization. Everybody learned from them, even as they sought – the Dutch and British especially – to strip Portugal of its overseas possessions (and in the case of Spain, to absorb even Portugal itself). It is striking also that the Portuguese, the first European colonists, were also the last to give up their colonies, in the 1970s. The long-lasting Portuguese Empire clearly has something to teach us about empire (A good start can be made with Anthony R. Disney, *The Portuguese Empire*, volume two of his two-volume *A History of*

Portugal and the Portuguese Empire, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009). In my new book I hope fully to do justice to it.

Finally perhaps to Amanda Behm's very interesting comments about my treatment of the British Empire, which she also uses to raise certain general points about empire. She questions what seems to her my very sharp and rigid distinction between «rulers» and «ruled», an «essentialist» view that «only has eyes for two elements: rule and multitudes». She sees a «friction between Kumar's model of empire and the messiness of Britain's global past». For her there was a continuing contestation over the meaning and management of the British Empire from the very beginning, a struggle that involved subjects equally with ruling elites. A good example – though not hers – would be the disagreement between Britain's North American colonists and the British crown in the eighteenth century: a struggle that ultimately led to American secession but in the process, in the debates between metropolitan and colonial spokesmen, gave rise to the very concept of «the British Empire», hitherto undefined and untheorized (See Richard Koebner, *Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961, pp. 105-94).

Behm's own examples include the evolving view of the place of India and other non-European dependencies in the British Empire. Where did they fit in what was for some, such as Sir John Seeley and the Imperial Federalists, essentially a «white man's club», the white Dominions seen as an extension of England itself? In all these debates and disputes, colonial subjects – black, brown, and white – were active players in what until the very end remained a very negotiable enterprise, one where it was not at all clear or predetermined what shape the Empire would take. In any case the line between «rulers» and «ruled» was always fuzzy. Thus, «by sometimes taking and leaving elite figures at their word, *Visions of Empire* tends to neglect the contexts in which rival claims to belonging and sovereignty defied distinctions between rulers and ruled in the British Empire and led to breaking points in imperial affairs». This might also mean, as she argues, that the idea that the main task of empire is the «management» of difference and multiplicity – as I and others suggest – is to treat such differences as a «problem» to be managed, rather than as «a fact of politics», one that might even have positive potential. Once again that might erode the line between «managers» and «managed» in the imagination and administration of empire.

One might accept a good deal of this; but does it mean that the concept of a «ruling people» is misguided? It is true that that the ruling elite's sense of itself might change over time: Behm echoes the view of some of the other reviewers for a greater attention to the historicity of elements in imperial rule. She asks for instance whether the «Englishness» espoused by the elites in the early-modern period was the same as that in the nineteenth century. «Did Englishness remain intact and identifiable on either side of the massive technological and intellectual transformations of the nineteenth century?».

As she is aware, I tried to answer that very question in an earlier monograph (Kri-

shan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003). But at the same time I argued that, whatever the changes over time, the clue to English national identity was the British Empire, in which the English played a preponderant and dominant role. It was precisely because they were the «ruling people» in the Empire as much as in the United Kingdom (an «English Empire») that the English were able to see themselves as an imperial people, one destined to rule other peoples, one therefore that had no need for nationalism. There was a self-consciousness about this that was never lost, though it is true that confidence in their ability to carry out this task weakened in the mid-twentieth century.

The idea of a «ruling people» does not exclude consideration of negotiation with, and active interventions of, subject peoples, «the ruled». But empire is a system of rule, of domination, if one wishes, and ever since the Roman Empire it has been clear that that imperial rule is the expression of the culture of a dominant people, whether Romans, Russians, French, or English/British. The fact that such people often did not want to stress their own ethnicity or nationality was not because they wanted to disguise or dissolve it in the empire but because it would not have been a good way of ruling. Empire did mean difference, and in recognizing this imperial rulers were conscious of the need not to stress their own identity, at least not in a nationalistic way. But that did not mean that there was not a ruling culture, the language, institutions, urban forms, often the religion, of the ruling people.

What I hope this discussion between all of us has brought out is how fertile a field of study empires are. It opens up so many questions in national and international history, questions of identities, of interactions between peoples and cultures, of ideologies and practices of rule. There is still much to be done. Empire, as John Darwin has said, has been the «default mode» of political organization for much of human history (John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000*, London, Penguin Books, 2008, p. 23). It is by definition multinational and international, seeking in most cases for a certain kind of universality. It would be strange if its history did not have much to teach us about forms or organization and methods of rule, lessons that might well speak to us today as we struggle to find suitable forms for our own increasingly interconnected world.