

***International Law and Empire: Historical Explorations***. Edited by Marti Koskenniemi, Walter Rech, and Manuel Jiménez Fonesca. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xvi, 395. ISBN: 978-0-19-879557-5. UK £80.00; US\$105.00.

*International Law and Empire* is a compelling set of fifteen 15 essays, written by a wide variety of legal and historical scholars from across the globe. It is compiled as a chapter-by-chapter examination of the complicated and often symbiotic relationship between international law and empire over a 400- year period. Beginning with a nod to the introduction of international law in the Roman Empire, this book focuses on the evolution of views and the interplay of law and empire from the sixteenth through mid-twentieth century. Through these essays, this book successfully illuminates “the complexity and ambivalence of th[e] imperial involvement and of international law’s role in structuring world governance.”

The comprehensive preface outlines various deficiencies in previous attempts to fully analyze the complicated relationship between international law and empire. The editors explain the purpose of dividing the book’s essays into four distinct parts (1. Epistemologies of Empire and International Law; 2. Legal Discourses of Empire; 3. Managing Empire: Imperial Administration and Diplomacy; and 4. A Legal Critique of Empire?), give brief summaries of each part, and discuss the significance of interweaving these parts. The preface also includes a clear and concise explanation of why the editors have intentionally structured the book by thematic historical critiques rather than by cultural lines or religious perspectives.

The preface is followed by Koskenniemi’s well-developed and attention-grabbing introduction into the chaotic and ever-evolving dichotomous view of law and empire. He acknowledges that both stem from a place of power, which sets the tone for the coming essays’ elucidations of how international law has been viewed as both unifying the world (empires) and creating an ever expanding hegemony. This introduction provides an exceptionally thorough history of early international law and its significance in developing the differing perspectives that are focused on throughout this book.

Following the preface, the book shifts seamlessly from one part to the other, beginning with three essays in Part I that explore the problematic philosophical conceptualization of many Western legal and political commentators in their attempts to explore the relationship between law and empire. This segues naturally into Part II, which analyzes the role of precise international language and vocabularies in advancing imperial and colonial ends. Containing five essays, Part II paints an internationally well-rounded and captivating study of the significance of this legal discourse. Part III is therefore essential in continuing the book’s discussion, focusing on the institutional organization of the empire from international diplomatic practices to the underlying importance of securing imperial power for various empires. The final four essays comprising Part IV are perhaps the most thought provoking and round out the book with an exploration into critiquing possibilities in international law. As suggested by the question mark in its title, Part IV is less assertive and more explorative of the evolving nature of the study of law and empire.

While portions of this book are historically and theoretically dense, the overall concepts and commentaries provide for a gratifying understanding of the complexities in the intertwining relationship of law and empire. These essays provide a comprehensive understanding of the importance of considering and understanding the interplay of international law and empire for the both the novice and expert scholar.

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