The Burdens of Empire

Throughout human history, empires have been far more constant and widespread, and the source of far more anguished political speculation, than nation states have ever been. But despite the long history of debate and the recent resurgence of interest in empires and imperialism, no one seems very clear as to what exactly an empire is. The Burdens of Empire strives to offer not only a definition but also a working description. This book examines how empires were conceived by those who ruled them and lived under them; it looks at the relations, real or imagined, between the imperial metropolis (when one existed) and its outlying provinces or colonies; and it asks how the laws that governed the various parts and ethnic groups, of which all empires were made, were conceived and interpreted. Anthony Pagden argues that the evolution of the modern concept of the relationship between states, and in particular the modern conception of international law, cannot be understood apart from the long history of European empire building.

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The Burdens of Empire

1539 to the Present

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quae cum pulcherrima tota est For Giulia
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Preface

The essays in this book represent all that I wish to preserve of what I have written on the political and legal theory of empire over the past fourteen years. All have been extensively revised and rewritten to take account of recent scholarship and to give them an overall coherence as a single volume. Some now bear so little resemblance to their originals as to constitute new essays, and I have changed their titles accordingly. Chapter 6 appears here for the first time.

Some of the arguments presented in Chapter 1 were first used in “Conquest and the Just War: The ‘School of Salamanca’ and the ‘Affair of the Indies’” in Sankar Muthu ed., Empire and Modern Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).


Chapter 7 is a modified and revised version of “The Law of Continuity: Conquest and Settlement within the Limits of Kant’s International Right” in Katrin Flikschuh and Lea Ypi eds., *Kant and Colonialism: Historical and Critical Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).


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