The native question

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THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF EMPIRES
Britain and America, 1750-1780
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British empires that overlapped in time but differed widely in character and composition.

Marshall takes the global view in order to set the long-standing thesis that Britain undertook a great "tasking of the East" to compensate for the loss of its Empire in the west. More than the

tern Atlantic colonies stayed British after 1776, among them the richest of all. Jamaica, Britain but
also retained the major trading partner of the United States after the American War ended. Moreover, the jewel in the crown would be only a garish in the imperial eye as India's huge military and political costs outweighed its public revenues as Adam Ferguson lamented in 1780, "yields in that part of the world" (p. 9). Such an immense Imperial balance-sheet gave little reason, at least in the short run, to believe Indian expansion would make up for American independence.

Marshall's account focuses on politics rather than economics. He examines the relationships between elites - British and Indian as well as British and American - as they sought to understand why the foundations of the Atlantic Empire crumbled at the moment when the basis for British dominance was being laid in India. The answer, he argues, lay in differing strategies of negotiation and coercion after the Seven Years War. In North America, the British sought to impose its authority ever more aggressively on colonists who had assumed themselves to be partners in a pan-British empire of equals, and raced accordingly. In South Asia, the East India Company established bridgeshead with greater success when it could retain itself in an existing base (as in Bengal) than when it had to build anew (as in the Camerica). In one

sense, Britain's governors subordinated the Company to its imperial needs more efficaciously than they had managed to control the American colonists. The excision of the thir

teen colonies, coinciding with the consolidation of empire in India, dramatically shifted the balance between British and non-British people within the empire."

This produced an empire more hierarchical, authoritarian, paternalistic and heterogenous, both religiously and ethnically, than anything Britain on either side of the Atlantic had envisaged before 1763. The Making and Unmaking of Imperial prospects in paired chapters relating the American and the Indian stories in richly revealing detail. War emerges as the major force of change, and the State as both the creator of Empire in India and its destroyer in America. Despite such overarching themes, the two narratives proceed mostly in parallel and nearly interwoven, save when East India Company fun is dropped into Boston harbor, or the vanquished general of Yorktown, Lord Cornwallis, captures the Governor General of India in 1780, for example. Marshall thus leaves many opportunities for others to trace the economic linkages, mili
tary exchanges and political preconditions that enabled the two wings of Empire comparable, though not utterly incompatible.

The structure of The Making and Unmaking of Empire mirrors the political challenges of the late eighteenth-century British Empire itself. In 1777 Edmund Burke had cautioned, "I never was wild enough to conceive, that one method would serve for the whole. I could never conceive that the natives of Hindustan and those of Virginia could be entered in the same manner." He warned that "primitive politicians" should not attempt to "formulat out a spectacle of unity" from such a "rigidly and strangely diversified mass." That task would be left to historians, but only for those with the courage to consider the whole globe.

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