Select Bibliography



This brief bibliography is meant to suggest further reading – in English – on the subject of empires in general, together with some specific topics that are of importance for a general and comparative view. More detailed references are in the endnotes and list of references.

General, Comparative, and Theoretical Works

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Ancient and Non-Western Empires

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Specifically on the Muslim empires, there are Robert G. Hoyland, In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of An Islamic Empire (Oxford University Press, 2017); Stephen F. Dale, The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals (Cambridge University Press, 2010); and the gorgeously illustrated Francis Robinson, The Mughal Emperors, and the Islamic Dynasties of India, Iran and Central Asia, 1206–1925 (Thames and Hudson, 2007). For the steppe empires, Thomas J. Barfield, The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC-AD 1757 (Blackwell, 1992);

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For the Chinese Empire, Yuri Pines, The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy (Princeton University Press, 2012); Wang Hui, China from Empire to Nation-State (Harvard University Press, 2014); Dingxin Zhao, The Confucian Legalist State: A New Theory of Chinese History (Oxford University Press, 2015). An engaging inquiry, drawing on China's imperial past, is Ge Zhaoguang, What is China? Territory, Ethnicity, Culture, and History (Harvard University Press, 2008).

European Empires and European Colonialism

Excellent essays are in Robert Aldrich (ed.), The Age of Empires (Thames and Hudson, 2007), and Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie (eds.), The Routledge History of Western Empires (Routledge, 2014). Similarly wide coverage is in Krishan Kumar, Visions of Empire: How Five Imperial Regimes Shaped the World (Princeton University Press, 2017). See also Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities (Allen and Unwin, 1986); Dominic Lieven, Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals (Yale University Press, 2001); Alexei Miller and Alfred J. Rieber (eds.), Imperial Rule (Central European University Press, 2004).

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Empire after Empire

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