

**Jeremy Black.** *To Lose an Empire: British Strategy and Foreign Policy, 1758-90.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. 156 pp. \$30.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-350-21606-8.

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**Published on** H-War (July, 2022)

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Jeremy Black's *To Lose an Empire: British Strategy and Foreign Policy, 1758-90* provides an overview of British geopolitical strategy, both at home and abroad, from the Seven Years' War to the years immediately following the Revolutionary War. Recent scholarship, most notably, P. J. Marshall's *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (2007) and Maya Jasanoff's *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (2011), has argued that there are direct links between the British empires of the pre- and postrevolutionary period, and *To Lose an Empire* builds on that work.

The first two chapters of *To Lose an Empire* lay groundwork for readers by introducing the major players and challenges facing the British Empire between 1758 and 1790. Source materials used by Black include a wide range of correspondence from combatants and noncombatants, parliamentary records, the occasional novel reference, and state papers from such places as Russia and Sweden as well as France, Spain, and the Netherlands. The remainder of the book is organized chronologically, with each chapter covering a handful of years. This approach provides a finely detailed examination of turning points in British

political and military strategy within the Seven Years' War and the Revolutionary War, which allows Black to assess the many successes and failures experienced by the British Empire during both conflicts. If the early 1770s provided multiple challenges in the form of unrest in the British North American colonies, they also offered a period of relative stability home in Europe. In turn, British naval successes often balanced out British military failures in both wars.

While *To Lose an Empire* is organized chronologically, it also follows a series of themes. Most of these themes are topical in nature, such as the use of "blue water" policies in Europe, the impact of trade interests on British foreign policy, efforts to apply political solutions to military challenges in Britain, or the evolving relationship between British monarchs and the Hanoverian state. These themes provide common threads throughout the book that support Black's efforts to examine the interconnected nature of British foreign and domestic policies in the late eighteenth century. The frequent use of themes as through points does, however, have the effect of weakening the book's core argument. Black contends that scholars need to reconsider both the reasons for, and the impact of, Britain's loss of the thirteen North American

colonies during the Revolutionary War. This point is not provided with any historiographical context until halfway through the book, and so reads as one theme among many, each interesting but none more significant than the other. This suggests that a topical, rather than chronological, approach may

have allowed for greater development of the argument in the opening chapters. Nevertheless, this is a subject and period in need of additional study, and any new entries will be welcomed by scholars and teachers of the British Empire and the global impacts of the Revolutionary War alike.

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**Citation:** Abigail Chandler. Review of Black, Jeremy. *To Lose an Empire: British Strategy and Foreign Policy, 1758-90*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. July, 2022.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=57071>



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