What Makes an Empire Rise and Fall?
A comparison between Isaac Asimov’s Empires and the Roman and British Empires

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Introduction

The aim of this essay is to explore the differences and similarities between the two large empires in Isaac Asimov’s *Foundation* series, the historical empires of Ancient Rome and the British Empire. The focus will be on the factors that brought about the rise and the fall of these empires. This essay covers events in the first four books of the *Foundation* series namely; *Prelude to Foundation*¹, *Foundation*², *Foundation and Empire*³ and *Second Foundation*⁴. Throughout this work the fictional empires will be compared to the historical ones on a number of different subjects. This essay is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter deals with the fall of the Galactic Empire, and the second chapter deals with the rise of the Foundation.

The initial part of the first chapter deals with the history of conquest that exists as a major part in all the empires discussed. It also deals with the weight conquest carries with it when it comes to political power, both in respect to official rulers and people who worked more or less behind the scenes. This section also deals with what the general public thought of their empire, and not only with what was said by their rulers.

The second part of the first chapter deals with the fall that came at the end of the Galactic Empire, the Roman Empire and the British Empire alike, and the reasons that brought about their fall. There was not really one single reason that made any of the great powers fall, but rather a combination of causes that inevitably

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led to their demise. This part of the chapter also touches on the subject of the psychology involved as being a significant part of their disintegration.

The first part of the second chapter deals with how religion can be, and has been, used as a tool in history, and of how Asimov uses this as one of the ways of describing the rise of the Foundation. Specific examples are analyzed and discussed to illustrate both the advantages and disadvantages with this practice, and most importantly, how it is yet another example of how Asimov has taken parts of our history and woven then into his story of the future.

The second part of the second chapter deals with scientific advantage as a practical tool as a part of building an empire, and again, how psychology and appearances also play a part. Even if they are not physical advantages they are nonetheless important. This part of the chapter also explores the consequences of an advanced technology, and the difficulties of rapidly spreading it to a large number of people.

The third and final part of the second chapter deals with trade and economics and the many ways in which these are important, both for a growing empire and for one that wishes to maintain a certain balance. Trade can be used as a tool for expansion, control and defense if handled properly, and unlike many other methods of control this is one that makes money rather than spending it.
1. 1 The fall of the Galactic Empire

In the very beginning of Prelude to Foundation, the first book in the Foundation series, Asimov gives a fairly detailed description of both the extent and the government system of his Galactic Empire. This basic outline might at first seem to make any comparison between Asimov’s Empire and those of ancient Rome and the more recent British Empire impossible. However, if one examines the case a little more closely, one can see that this is in fact not true.

The Galactic Empire consists of approximately twenty five million worlds, with each world being inhabited by at least one billion individuals. Statistically speaking that makes Rome’s and Great Britain’s Empires dwindle to nearly nothing, both when it comes to area and the number of individuals they both entailed. However, despite these statistical figures the differences are less than they seem to be. Though the distances and numbers in Asimov’s world are far greater, they are compensated by the more advanced technology in the science fiction world of a distant future. For instance, space travel replaces the sailing ships that were available to the United Kingdom. In the end, they have more things in common than the things that set them apart.

1.2 A history of conquest

Some of the specific details of the history of Asimov’s Galactic Empire remain unclear since it is shrouded and lost among the massive amounts of history accumulated during thousands of years. This phenomenon is explained by one of the scholars in the novel:

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5 Isaac Asimov, Prelude to Foundation. 8.
Records don’t last forever, Hari. Memory banks can be destroyed or defaced as a result of conflict or can simply deteriorate with time. Any memory bit that is not referred to for a long time, eventually drowns in accumulated noise.\(^6\)

There are however, a few things that do become evident through a number of hints and historical references. For one, the Galactic Empire was created through conquest, and the power a widely popular conquering general had in society was great, even in the final stages of its deterioration and death.\(^7\) In fact, the process of conquering others and putting them under the rule of the Empire is seen as a service to mankind as a whole. The Empire was seen as something that was worth preserving even if one did not approve of the individual leaders or temporary disturbances within, or at the borders of, its rule.\(^3\)

Whatever you think of the Empire you will admit its great services. Its armed forces have committed isolated crimes, but in the main they have been a force for peace and civilization. It was the Imperial navy that created the *Pax Imperium* that ruled over all the Galaxy for thousands of years. Contrast the millennia of peace under the Sun-and-Spaceship with the millennia of anarchy that preceded it.\(^8\)

This speech is part of an attempt to talk a scholar into helping the Empire fight the Foundation. It clearly shows the dedication the general has to the very idea of the

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\(^6\) Isaac Asimov, *Prelude to Foundation*. 172.

\(^7\) Isaac Asimov, *Foundation and Empire*. 28, 36-37.

\(^8\) Isaac Asimov, *Foundation and Empire*. 28
Galactic Empire, if not any true depiction of what this empire looked like during that period of time.

There are a few rather obvious connections between Asimov’s Galactic Empire and both ancient Rome and the British Empire when it comes to the history of conquering other nations and the benefits the ruling nation thought it provided for all parties involved. A brief look at the British Empire reveals that much of the expansion was made through conquest and colonization, and that the British Empire initially had no intention of turning back from that path.9 In fact in 1870 the ex-Prime Minister Earl Russel said:

There was a time when we might have acted alone as the United Kingdom of England, Scotland and Ireland. That time has passed. We conquered and peopled Canada, we took possession of the whole of Australia, Van Diemen’s Land and New Zealand. We have annexed India to the Crown. There is no going back.5

On top of this many felt that losing or giving up the British Empire would seriously harm Britain, and it was therefore never really considered a valid option. Although these fears were rarely specified, they entailed such things as a decrease in British wealth and power, as well as a loss of international prestige.5 Again the similarities between Asimov’s Galactic Empire and its British’s counterpart are striking.

Moving even further back in time to ancient Rome, we find something that was called Pax Romana, a peace that began with Augustus Ceasar and which

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lasted for about two hundred years. Asimov seems to have borrowed both the phenomenon and the name itself from Rome when he called the time of peace in the Galactic Empire Pax Imperia. During the times of peace in the Roman Empire, the sense of romans being the ones to spread civilization and culture grew. One example of this is that as urbanization developed a traveler could enter almost any given city, within the empire of course, and find himself a place to stay, a nice hot bath and an entertaining gladiator fight. Now, when it comes to popular conquerors gaining a great amount of power, there are few places where more examples of this can be found than in ancient Rome. One such example is a man by the name of Aetius, who for approximately twenty years, managed to control the imperial family and play various warlords against each other. When he defeated Attila in 451 his power grew even more, unfortunately this led to envy in others and he was finally murdered in 454.

1.3 The Fall

Though all three empires that have been mentioned so far came from a background of exploration and conquest, which eventually led them to a time of great prosperity and even peace, something happened to make them crumble and fall. But just as the old expression reveals, Rome was not built in a day, and neither could either of those great powers fall within such a short period of time. The question that needs to be answered here is; how did the collapse begin?

The first not so discrete hint about the Galactic Empire being caught in a state of decay comes as early as the fourth page of Prelude to Foundation. “Well

12 Eric Nelson, Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Roman Empire. 255
these are not the old days when science and mathematics were all the rage. That sort of thing seems to have died down somehow, perhaps because all the discoveries have been made, don’t you think?\textsuperscript{13} Although it is one of the reasons for the fall of the Galactic Empire, this is one place where Asimov’s world differentiates itself from Rome and Britain, since neither of the latter were situated in a time where scientific progress was slow or perhaps even nonexistent. However, it remains valid to the argument since it is connected to another important factor. The loss of will to retain an empire, and the burden the empire became on its people, was the same for both the Galactic Empire and its British counterpart:

And did anyone care? The Emperor was no more than a symbol of Empire, like the Spaceship-and-Sun but far less pervasive, far less real. It was his soldiers and his officials, crawling everywhere, that now represented an Empire that had become a dead weight on its people […]\textsuperscript{14}

The peoples’ and the leaders’ views on any empire, and their thoughts about how it should be managed is crucial to how situations develop, and again we can see a similar phenomenon occurring in the British Empire.\textsuperscript{15} Jan Morris says that by the time of the Second World War the British Empire had become “a colossal burden”.\textsuperscript{11} As early as the 1920’s a strong consensus was reached about how the management of the British Empire should be handled.\textsuperscript{16} In short it was said that the empire must be maintained, but that threats of force should be kept at a minimum so as not to

\textsuperscript{13} Isaac Asimov, \textit{Prelude to Foundation}. 4.
\textsuperscript{14} Isaac Asimov, \textit{Prelude to Foundation}. 9
\textsuperscript{15} P.J Marshall, \textit{Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire}. 81.
\textsuperscript{16} P.J Marshall, \textit{Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire}. 84
bring about more trouble than could easily be handled. It was also stated that formal structures for imperial unity were not relevant during that period of time.\textsuperscript{12} The end of growth might not have included science, but the stagnation was none the less a significant part of the fall.

Another important indicator that the end is closing in is when an imperial power is no longer able to protect itself, either by diplomatic means or by force. A fairly obvious case of this in Asimov’s Galactic Empire is when four worlds in the outermost parts of the empire break free and threaten the newly founded community of the Foundation, who at that time were supposed to be under the Emperor’s direct and personal protection.\textsuperscript{17} If the emperor cannot even protect what he has personally started, it is a definite indication that things have begun to crumble.

Another person who was not able to protect what was his was Theodosius, who ruled eastern Rome from Constantinople. He built a large protective wall around his capital city but it did not stop it from being vulnerable to attacks from the Goths and Huns.\textsuperscript{18} In truth, these attacks continued despite the fact that Theodosius paid large sums in tribute.\textsuperscript{14} This is another example of a ruler who cannot protect that which is closest to himself, and is therefore equally unable to hold a vast empire together.

Irrespective of how one looks at other things that might or might not signal the end of an empire, what must be seen as clear to everyone is when the subjects of the said empire are no longer loyal to, or obey in any way, their former rulers.

In Asimov’s Galactic Empire one such occasion has already been mentioned. When the four worlds in the outer periphery proclaimed independence,

\textsuperscript{17} Isaac Asimov, \textit{Foundation}. 59-60
\textsuperscript{18} Eric Nelson, \textit{Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Roman Empire}. 248
the empire lost control over them, and even if they were not a threat to their old rulers, they were nonetheless no longer under their control.\textsuperscript{19}

Such times were fairly recent in the British Empire. From 1947 to 1948 independence was granted to India, and the British Empire surrendered the mandate for Palestine.\textsuperscript{20} Not so long after that, around 1957 to the mid 60’s, independence was also given to colonies in Africa, Caribbean and Malaya.\textsuperscript{16} In short, it was over.

In Rome something similar came about when a series of boy emperors occupied the thrones of western and eastern Rome. This led to the gap between the two parts of the Roman Empire becoming permanent, and a series of adults who were supposed to help the young emperor schemed and moved for power, eventually becoming unable to control the various barbarian warlords, or even the commanders who served them.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Isaac Asimov, \textit{Foundation}. 59-60
\textsuperscript{20} P.J Marshall, \textit{Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire}. 84-85
\textsuperscript{21} Eric Nelson, \textit{Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Roman Empire}. 249
2.1 The Foundation

Unlike the story depicted of the Galactic Empire, the rise of the Foundation is something which is described in detail during the course of the *Foundation* series. The Foundation began as a small isolated world of scientists on the planet Terminus dedicated to a specific task. This task was preserving the scientific knowledge of the empire in the form of an Encyclopedia Galactica, a lexicon consisting of the complete knowledge of the entire galaxy, and evolves into an empire with enough strength to expand into a more and more barbaric surrounding.\(^{22}\) Finally they are able to expand into the Galactic Empire’s territory, eventually growing beyond its reach. Again this might at first seem to have few or no connections with Rome’s or Great Britain’s history but they do have a number of key elements in common.

2.2 Using Religion as a Tool

One of the first truly grave situations the newly created Foundation is faced with is the isolation from the rest of the Galactic Empire, of which it was originally a part, and the threat from the surrounding worlds who wish to annex the young world.\(^{23}\) Their solution to this problem changes the course of their world forever. They use the scientific knowledge they had preserved and developed through the work with the Encyclopedia Galactica, play their opponents against each other and create a religion based economy that moved Terminus from being a threatened subordinate planet to being the center of a religious dominion.\(^{24}\) Terminus provides nuclear power, medicine and weapons, carefully balancing how much is given to each opposing kingdom so as not to make one too powerful compared to the other three.\(^{20}\)

\(^{22}\) Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 37-38.
\(^{23}\) Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 56-64.
\(^{24}\) Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 104-109
However, they surround the technology with religion to the point where the so-called priests have no real knowledge of what they are doing. Though this does not seem as a real power in itself at first, it means that the world of Terminus became a sacred place, and could not be touched by the surrounding monarchs. This becomes evident when the regent of the world of Anacreon tries to launch an attack against Terminus but is stopped since the priests shut down all power on both the ships and the world of Anacreon itself. Another interesting effect of this religion the Foundation created and that Asimov weaves into his story, that also has a counterpart in for instance Rome’s history, is how the rulers of the kingdoms use this new faith to secure their own thrones:

“Yes, they do; but we don’t. And you may be thankful it’s so, for according to this foolishness, you are king by divine right — and are semi-divine yourself. Very handy. It eliminates all possibilities of revolts and insures absolute obedience in everything. [...] I am only regent, and quite human. You are king, and more than half a god — to them”

Religion is clearly used as a tool by both the Foundation and by the kingdom, though in this case the ultimate power did not lie with the kingdoms or their monarchs, who might have been kings by divine right. The Foundation itself, which is nothing less than the center of the entire faith is the true center of that power. This method of maintaining and managing worlds is retained for some time, until it is eventually replaced by other means of management.

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26 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 151-154
27 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 130
28 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation and Empire*. 
The thought of monarchs, emperors, and the leaders of society being some form of demi gods or even full fledged gods is hardly a new idea. During the Roman Empire this was a fairly common belief, and there was a period where elevating the rulers of Rome to deities, even during their own lifetimes, was more of a rule than an exception. During the days when the Roman emperors were seen and revered as gods this Imperial Cult became a tool to insure the loyalty of the citizens of Rome. In order to be considered a loyal citizen of Rome one had to bring offerings of incense to the godly spirit of the emperor; this was done on a regular basis and upon its completion the citizen received a certificate proving it had been done. One example of those who were persecuted and tracked down using this tool was the Christians, since they believed it was idolatry to sacrifice to the emperor and could thus easily be accused of disloyalty. Also, the Imperial Cult was a great help in introducing newly conquered provinces into Rome, as well as consolidating a young and, in many cases, under governed empire during the Augustan age. Despite all of this, it is important to remember that even though the Imperial Cult was used for many less morally acceptable political goals, it was not merely a tool to the vast majority of the population of Rome, to them it was truth.

2.3 The Scientific Advantage

When the Foundation was created on Terminus it had the specific goal of collecting and maintaining the sum of all knowledge in the entire galaxy. Therefore, fifty years later, when it faces its first trials it begins with a significant scientific advantage.

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31 Yong-Ling Ow, Role of the Roman Imperial Cult During the Augustan Age, http://janusquirinus.org/essays/Cult.html 27 November, 2004
32 Isaac Asimov, Foundation. 37-38
compared to the surrounding worlds. Another thing that further advances the Foundation’s advantage in technology subsequently is the fact that the planet Terminus is a world with very few natural resources when it comes to metals, so its inhabitants are forced to develop new technologies that do not require so much metals. This process makes the scientifical distance between the Foundation and other sources even greater. These advances cover areas as diverse as medicine, power supply, utensils and heavy machinery. But this advantage does not only suffice to give them a military advantage, it also gives a mysterious shine to their culture, as well as an edge in trading. The men and women of the Foundation are then seen as magicians, thus giving them a psychological advantage as well as one of technology. The mysteries of the unknown are often feared more than what one clearly understands. Even if the Foundation did begin spreading their technology almost as soon as they began spreading from their home planet Terminus, the task of distributing it to the other worlds is such that it cannot happen overnight, especially with new things being discovered every day.

Britain had a few scientific advantages compared to the countries and continents they colonized, which gave them a significant advantage in various areas. One such advantage which corresponds to an advantage the Foundation had was in the area of medicine. Western medicine was spread throughout a large part of the world due to the British Empire, though the people of the empire did in truth also help spread diseases as they traveled from one part of the world to another. Around

33 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 50
34 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 292
36 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation and Empire*. 10
37 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 144-145
38 P.J Marshall, *Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire*. 142-143
1899 a school in tropical medicine was started in Britain, and the missionary hospitals in the colonies became quite good at treating the diseases of Africa and Asia, mainly to the benefit of the British, but also to others living in the areas surrounding them.\(^{39}\)

However, even with the more and more advanced medical science becoming available to the British, they also faced the problem of getting it out to the masses. In many cases it was a relatively insignificant portion of the people who needed help who could receive it, as in the case with the Indian doctors who were supposed to serve the poor population in Bombay. Despite a sound education their 296 beds could do little for the community as a whole, even if it might have made a huge difference for individuals.\(^{40}\)

Another example where Britain had an advantage was the industrialization that had taken place in the country and which they brought with them out into the colonies. In India for example, patchy development of what was then modern industry occurred.\(^{41}\) It was however, not a great percentage of the population who were affected, and India remained mainly rural until well into the 20\(^{th}\) century.\(^{37}\)

Still, one must remember that in India even a small percentage includes a large number of people.\(^{37}\)

### 2.4 Trade and Economics

The power of trade, the influence it gives over the economy and thus the subject races are other things the Foundation, ancient Rome and Great Britain's empires had in common. The Foundation used trading in combination with the scientific advantage they had in more than one way. Firstly, the traders themselves chose their occupations for personal benefits, gaining wealth and so on, but as a growing empire

\(^{39}\) P.J Marshall, *Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire*. 142-143

\(^{40}\) P.J Marshall, *Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire*. 369
the Foundation also used it to forward its own expansion and survival. One of Asimov’s characters, a mayor of Terminus explains it in a rather straightforward way when he talks about why the Foundation will not have to go into warfare with another world, simply because they cut off trading:

But – notice that I am making this as simple as a problem in addition – in the past three years she has based her economy more and more on the nuclear techniques which we have introduced and which only we can continue to supply. […] When two years of the stalemate have gone, the machines in the factories will, one by one, begin to fail. Those industries […] will find themselves ruined. […] With the industrialist and financer and average man against him, how long will the Commdor hold out?43

Trade and economy might not have been military might, but worked just as well, if not better, in terms of making others dependent on the Foundation and in the long run, a part of it.

The British Empire had something akin to the expansion by trade, even if it might not be as clearly and forcefully expressed as in Asimov’s novels, but it was no less real. People moved outwards from Britain, expanding and exploring, seeking opportunities for social and economic advancement, and the empire grew with them.44 Until the time when the colonies in India, Africa and other countries were fully industrialized, Britain had the role of manufacturing the primary products that the

41 P.J Marshall, *Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire*. 70
42 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 285, 290-291
43 Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*. 290-292
44 P.J Marshall, *Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire*. 23
colonies produced, but subsequently in history that was no longer true.\textsuperscript{45} But as long as Britain had the role of manufacturer it held a situation akin to that which Asimov describes, they were the ones who supplied the products people in the colonies wanted, and there was nobody else who could. However, the colonies were not the only ones Britain traded with. They conducted business with former colonies of Spain in Latin America, they traded in the Middle East, and they traded in China.\textsuperscript{46} Wherever they went, they traded, and by doing so they expanded the strength of their influence further than their raw military power could do.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{45} P.J Marshall, \textit{Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire}. 90
\textsuperscript{46} P.J Marshall, \textit{Cambridge Illustrated History British Empire}. 25
Summary and Conclusion

The aim of this essay was to take two of the largest empires of our historical world, the Roman Empire and the British Empire and explore the similarities and differences between them and the two large empires in Isaac Asimov’s *Foundation* series: that is, the Galactic Empire and the Foundation. The primary focus of this examination lies on the reasons and methods used in building those empires, and what it was that brought about their fall.

In the first chapter the fall of the Galactic Empire is explored, by showing points in its history and mentality that have counterparts in the Roman and British Empires. Secondly this chapter also looks into some of the things they have in common that helped to bring about their fall.

The first thing Asimov’s Galactic Empire has in common with the historical empires is that of a history of conquest. A history in which conquerors, those who explore and settle new lands, carry a great deal of power and respect. This is in many ways connected with the second point, that creating a united empire was seen as something good, even necessary for the peace and welfare of mankind. An obvious example of this is what Asimov calls Pax Imperia, a time of peace that stretches over thousands of years under the rule of the Emperors and Empresses of the Galactic Empire. This has a striking resemblance to Rome’s Pax Romana, both in name and description. The only main difference is that the Pax Romana lasted approximately two hundred years, not several thousand. These two factors work together to create a mentality that was important for all three empires, partly as a means of approval among the general population, and partly for generating a wish in the individual man to move outwards, thus giving him or her a chance to achieve power and wealth at the same time as the empire would grow. That growth would in
turn increase the power of the rulers and of the empire itself. Because of this, neither the leaders of the Roman, Galactic nor the British Empire initially had any intention of giving up what they had created and achieved. Two cases that I have referred to earlier where this is seen clearly is when the Imperial general tries to convince one of the scholars in Asimov’s world to help support the Galactic Empire, and in the Ex Prime Minister Russel’s declaration that it was no longer a possibility to withdraw from the path Britain had once chosen. Both were certain that the empire, once created, must be maintained, there was neither reason nor wish to go back.

Obviously all three disintegrated in the end, despite the resolve of their leaders. The interesting aspect is that they were as similar in their fall as they had been in their origins. One very serious problem a leader of a large empire can face, is when the people below him no longer wish to carry the problems and the weight of that empire. This was something that both Britain and the Galactic Empire faced. The Emperor in Asimov’s world slowly became little more than a symbol, and the vast majority of his subjects saw only his soldiers and officials. They felt the empire as a burden instead of an asset. By itself this would probably not break a great power, but it does make it weaker and more vulnerable to other problems and threats. Something very similar happened in the British Empire and as a result it assumed a less aggressive stance to the world, stating that threats of force should be kept at a minimum and that a formal imperial structure was not necessary. This was also a sign of a decrease in the British Empire’s strength.

A very serious sign of weakness is when a state is no longer able to defend itself and its subjects from harm others would bring upon them, whether that defense would come from using military strength, diplomacy or other means. When this happens a serious blow is delivered to the empire, and the confidence of its
subjects. This is even worse if the peoples’ spirit is already low. The Galactic Empire began losing worlds at the fringes of its rule, and in eastern Rome the capital Constantinople was vulnerable to attacks from for instance the Huns. This inability to defend their territory is something they both had in common and a main reason for their continued fall.

One of the final stages in the death of the three empires that has been discussed so far is when their subjects can no longer be made to obey, either through force or through diplomacy. When this happens there is not really much that can be done, it is more or less the end. The Galactic Empire began losing worlds, the British Empire lost its colonies one after another, and the Roman Empire was divided and eventually became the prey of warlords and its own generals. It was over.

Unlike the first chapter the second chapter of this essay deals with the rise of an empire. Comparisons are made between the same two historical empires previously mentioned, but this time it is Asimov’s Foundation which is examined in detail. This chapter looks at some of the tools that were used in the creation and rise of the Foundation, and shows that these same tools have been used by both the Roman and the British Empires. Again this shows that the mechanisms used by Asimov are in essence the same that can be found in our world.

The first tool described is that of religion. The use of religion as a method to control the masses and thus the nations, or worlds as in Asimov’s books, can be a very powerful tool, even if it is not obvious to all at first. The Foundation uses this tool in a way that is in many respects very similar to the way it was used by the Roman Emperors, although there are significant differences. By spreading their advanced science under the cloak of organized religion they create a place where the rulers in the surrounding worlds are seen as demi gods, or maybe even fully divine creatures.
This has many strong connections and similarities with the Imperial Cult in the Roman Empire. There was a time in ancient Rome where elevating the status of a Roman Emperor to that of a god was more a rule than an exception. In both cases it gives the act of obeying the ruler that much more weight, since failure to do so is not merely defying a human, but a god. This can be a useful tool for a weak government, but as the rulers of Anacreon found out when they tried to use it against the Foundation it can also be equally volatile. This comes as a direct consequence of the fact that people who believe in the religion put forward do not see it as a tool, and therefore maintain their faith even if the tool is being used by someone else.

Another advantage which was described in the second chapter was the state of the empires’ advanced science compared to the people they encountered. Areas where the British Empire and the Foundation shared similar scientific advantages were medicine and industrialization. These things gave the people of these growing empires an air of mystery which added even more to the strictly material advantages they already possessed. Striking against a man is one thing, but what if he is more than a mere man? The unknown adds an element of fear. But not all scientific progress was frightening. Both the Foundation and the British Empire were relatively advanced when it came to medicine, and both made some effort to spread this to the lands they colonized and spread into. However, despite their efforts, they both encountered the same problems. It is not easy to spread science and medicine to a large number of people in a short period of time.

The final tool described in the second chapter of this essay is that of trade. It is not a direct or offensive method of spreading an empire, but it has the distinct advantage that it pays for itself both in respect to manpower and money. People go into trade of their own accord because they seek the opportunity to get
rich. The Foundation used this as a method of spreading their science in a way that
gave them economical power. Entire worlds based their economy on products and
machines that only the Foundation could provide. For a time Britain held much the
same role in our world; they manufactured the raw material that came in from all over
the world, and they supplied the products that everyone wanted but could not
produce themselves.
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