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Emulation and Designed Divergence: Ordering the British Empire with Commercial Law  
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This article offers a new way of thinking about the multiplicity of laws and legal systems in the British Empire. It focuses on private commercial law, which had a fundamental and underappreciated role in structuring the empire, and offers a new understanding of attempts to manage imperial legal difference. We can recast and better understand attempts at legal reform and change as policies of emulation (closer alignment) and designed divergence (enhancing variance) vis-à-vis English law. Examining several statutes passed by the imperial Parliament in London reveals how statutory interventions in commercial law ameliorated the challenges of doing business across the empire. They also served as a means to manage imperial legal difference, giving order to an increasingly diverse and global empire. Strategies of imperial management relied on treating component parts of the empire as regional groups. This legal infrastructure functioned as the empire's ligaments, connecting disparate and distant colonies to each other and to the metropole, and provided a means of organizing the empire.