English Historical Review Vol. CXXXIX No. 597 Advance Access publication on 2 June 2024
 https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/ceae082

Review Article

Compulsory Empire: Imperial Histories of Globalisation and the Globalisation of the United States

American Empire: A Global History. By A.G. Hopkins (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018; pp. 1008. £35);

American Empire in Global History. Edited by Shigeru Akita (London: Routledge, 2022; pp. 254. £130);

Designs on Empire: America's Rise to Power in the Age of European Imperialism. By Andrew Priest (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021; pp. 304. £30).

In June 1978, James A. Field Jr. damned the subject of American imperialism as 'the worst chapter in almost any book'. After summarising the elements of an 'inverted Whig interpretation of history', including an over-emphasis on the determinative impact of crude social Darwinism, a psychic crisis of jingoism, domestic over-production, and the creation of the New Navy as the root causes of the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the annexation of the Philippine archipelago aimed at the markets of China, 'we may conclude that much of it is wrong and most of it irrelevant to "imperialism" and the events of 1898'.[1] In a dyspeptic, penetrating and entertaining essay, Field tasked his colleagues with restoring contingency, collectively re-reading the works of key strategists, and devoting more attention to non-state actors, technology and the sinews of US market expansion.

In the more than forty years that have followed, US imperial historians have been extraordinarily busy. US imperial histories are multidisciplinary, connective, comparative and heterogeneous, constantly seeking new orientations and perspectives. Rich scholarly literatures have expanded the scope of US Empire Studies dramatically, cutting across cultural, intellectual, political and economic approaches to its nature and antinomies across the United States' past. And although empire has been periodically submerged from the centre of scholarly attention, and even denied, new moments of domestic and overseas crisis have not

1. J.A. Field Jr., 'American Imperialism: The Worst Chapter in Almost Any Book', *American Historical Review*, lxxxiii (1978), p. 667.

failed to prompt fresh attention.[2] While the field continually struggles to separate itself from the public-political jeremiads against, variously, over-extended American power and imminent national decline, it has nevertheless stabilised into a major area of study—driven in part by the agenda-setting work of Paul Kramer.[3]

This has latterly coincided with the gathering momentum of the sub-field of America and/in the World—a capacious historiographical category that encompasses both 'traditional' concerns such as diplomacy and statecraft and examinations of mobility, circulations, environment, protest, race, gender and sexuality.[4] Driven by the transnational turn, which for US historians began in the early 1990s, works written under the umbrella of America and/in the World are united in adopting interpretative and spatial frameworks that are not confined by national borders, attempting to upend the established chronologies and geographies of the United States' past. The result has been an extraordinary array of interpretative paths, often following the movements of non-state actors and the circulations of goods, capital and ideas, but collectively demonstrating that the history of the United States is inseparable from the world beyond the United States. In the realm of US empire studies this has driven a significant subsection of these scholars towards transimperial terrains where the processes and agents of United States empire operated across and between European imperial formations, co-opting, adapting to, or collaborating with, imperial rivals.[5] As a global approach it is expansive and inventive, and it is still maturing. For some, 'America and the World' is a mere historiographical label signifying the big tent of US foreign relations history; but for others, it is a style of inquiry dedicated to teasing out patterns of entanglement and disconnection and a method for historicising the imperialising and globalising presence of the United States overseas.[6]

Connected to each of these, but springing more precisely from the geopolitical revolution of the world wrought by the September 11 attacks and subsequent US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the study

2. P. Kramer, 'Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World', *American Historical Review*, cxvi (2011), pp. 1348–91. Historiographical overviews abound but, for a concise overview, see F. Ninkovich, 'The United States and Imperialism', in R.D. Schulzinger, ed., *A Companion to American Foreign Relations* (Malden, MA, 2003), pp. 79–102.

3. In addition to the essay above, see especially P. Kramer, 'Embedding Capital: Political-Economic History, the United States, and the World', *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, xv (2016), pp. 331–62.

4. The transnational turn has received major institutional support from the US Academy in the form of book series with university presses at Cornell, Princeton, and Columbia, and was recently the subject of a major four-volume series, involving more than 120 contributors, by Cambridge University Press that traced its dimensions from 1500 to the present: M.P. Bradley, ed., *The Cambridge History of America and the World* (4 vols, Cambridge, 2021).

5. K. Hoganson and J. Sexton, eds, *Crossing Empires: Taking U.S. History into Transimperial Terrain* (Durham, NC, 2020).

6. K. Dierks, 'Americans Overseas in the Early Republic', *Diplomatic History*, xlii (2018), pp. 17–35.

of US empire has been further revitalised: big-picture causal questions and challenges to the imperial denial of US statesmen moved centre stage. The post-9/11 invasions in particular renewed interest in macro-comparisons of empires and especially of Anglo-American empire by historians and sociologists alike. Bernard Porter turned his attention to a parallel study of the 'uncannily close' nineteenth-century British imperial formation and twentieth-century US imperialism, concluding that in the post-9/11 world the United States had passed into a novel formation of 'superempire' of unparalleled military, economic and cultural hegemony.[7] The historical sociologist Michael Mann found the United States to be an 'incoherent empire' (what empire is not?) assembled from an archipelago of bases, backed by unmatched offensive strike-power and monetary dominance, and administered from Washington by a cadre of new militarist apparatchiks seeking to extend the benevolent hegemony of US democratic capitalism.[8] In the end, for Mann, 'the enemies of the United States are wrong to see it as the Great Satan or the Evil Empire. It is not that well organized'.[9] More cautionary, Andrew Bacevich concluded that the new militarism was the outgrowth of the aggressive pursuit of a 'strategy of openness' that began in the Cold War as an attempt to eliminate the barriers to the free flow of information and capital but had instead resulted in a search for global imperium.[10] Charles S. Maier asked through an extended comparison whether the United States had come to share the attributes of its predecessors (not all, not yet) and whether its citizens would come to *choose* empire, with all that entailed. What united these works was a rigorous search for patterns and parallels, analogies and antecedents, but they nevertheless underplayed the United States' global and inter-imperial interconnectedness; the United States was of the world of empires, but it was not in it.[11]

This is the historiographical context and inspiration for A.G. Hopkins's brilliant and expansive *American Empire: A Global History*.[12]

7. B. Porter, *Empire and Superempire: Britain, America and the World* (New Haven, CT, 2007), p. 7. See also S. Howe, 'New Empires, New Dilemmas—And Some Old Arguments', *Global Dialogue*, v (2003), pp. 62–3.

8. Among the so-called militarists identified by Mann was Robert Kagan, a neo-conservative scholar of foreign affairs and State Department employee who sought to naturalise his proposed policies as deeply rooted in US statecraft in *Dangerous Nation: America and the World, 1600–1898* (New York, 2006) and who more widely dealt in historical precedents stretching back to antiquity.

9. M. Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London, 2003), p. 15.

10. A.J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA, 2002). Bacevich continued the excavation of the imperial dimensions of US foreign policy, interventionism and internationalism in *The Imperial Tense: Prospects and Problems of American Empire* (Chicago, IL, 2003).

11. For a critique of the liberal exceptionalist approach to modern US empire and the 'critical revisionism' of its detractors, see J. Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 14–19.

12. A.G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton, NJ, 2018). Inspiration, as Hopkins reflects in the Preface on its genesis, came following his move to the University of Texas, Austin in 2001; the subsequent invasions marked the moment at which he 'put down the work I was engaged in and turned my attention to understanding Washington's reaction to the first assault on its continental territory since 1812' (p. xv).

Unlike earlier works that attempt diachronic comparisons between the United States' empire and its European rivals, Hopkins places the United States' imperial formation within the flows of global history and imperial globalisation. Written with verve, penetrating detail and a great deal of insight, its central aim is 'not to put the United States down, but rather to put it in—to the mainstream of western history' (p. 691). Appearing forty years after Field's essay, Hopkins has moved empire centre stage in the master narrative of the US past; no longer relegated to the worst chapter in any US history textbook, it has become its organising principle. This is a volume that augments Hopkins's long experience and prolific oeuvre as one of the most influential imperial and global historians of the past half-century, giving the volume a breadth of scope, scale and asynchronous comparison. As an Americanist, too, it is refreshing to read a volume that frequently frames the United States with reference to other times and places and avoids the solipsism that can plague any field. Writing some five years after its publication, it is also evident that this has been a work of immediate impact—surely recognised by the rapid publication of the essays in *American Empire in Global History,* edited by Shigeru Akita, a republication, in monograph form, of a *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* roundtable review, in which leading historians of US foreign relations, statecraft and state-building develop Hopkins's themes and suggest new avenues for research. *American Empire* is a singular achievement that yields countless insights and provocations, and, for its scholarly ambition and range, demands reading and re-reading. What follows cannot do justice to the rich, textured account offered by Hopkins, but attempts to capture its significance within the context of the array of scholarship on US empire, global history and globalisation that it crosses and to develop some of its more contestable arguments with complementary literatures.

Countless historians before Hopkins have taken aim at the national conceit of American 'exceptionalism', but he is the first to examine the trajectory of US empire as fully interwoven with the processes of globalisation.[13] Following the model of globalisation he proposed in his field-defining *Globalization in World History* (2002), *American Empire* is structured around three distinct, overlapping phases of imperial globalisation: proto- ('Decolonization and Dependence, 1756–1865'), modern ('Modernity and Imperialism, 1865–1914'), and post-colonial ('Empires and International Disorder, 1914–1959'), before a final reflection on 'Postcolonial Globalization'.[14] Driving these phased transitions was a dialectical process of crisis: 'successful expansion created countervailing or competing forces; the struggle between them

13. For a recent examination of the historical development of the exceptionalism debate, see I. Tyrrell, *American Exceptionalism: A New History of an Old Idea* (Chicago, IL, 2022).

14. A.G. Hopkins, *Globalization in World History* (London, 2002).

culminated in successive crises, which occurred in the late eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries, and the mid-twentieth century … Each ushered in a new phase that resolved one major conflict before eventually giving rise to another' (p. 32). The United States was bound up in each of these, each step of the way, and they also approximate phases of the United States' own imperial development. 'The argument that globalization has passed through different historical phases anchors the process in time and suggests how the United States can be joined to the history of Western Europe, and indeed the world,' Hopkins writes (p. 12). Indeed, the 'global history' of Hopkins's subtitle is as much a reference to comparative method as it is geographic reach, scaling United States exceptionalism down while scaling up its historiographical frame of reference: the United States 'needs to be placed in the matrix formed by other Western empires, especially that of Britain' (p. 445).

In Hopkins's treatment, globalisation is not a singular, undifferentiated process, gathering momentum and inevitability over time but rather has proceeded through a series of crises and 'sprang from multiple centers of origin' (p. 32). Nevertheless, it was strongly British-flavoured. The sprawling, unfinished and adaptive British imperial hegemon, with its dominance of global financial instruments, construction and surveillance of the global commons of telegraph and steamship infrastructure, and, of course, its ongoing dominance over patterns of transatlantic exchange, is central to understanding *American Empire*. Through his granular depiction of British imperialism, Hopkins recasts US imperial and national development within a framework of dependence. In an earlier form, Hopkins had provocatively termed this 'honorary dominion'.[15] This is a vocabulary dropped from *American Empire*, replaced with a prolonged period of 'dependent development' (p. 158) and an integrative transnational 'Atlantic complex' that 'far from withering away' after the Revolution 'underwent a transformation that greatly enhanced Britain's penetrative power' (p. 187). 'The continuation of imperialism after formal decolonisation was apparent in the elements of neo-colonialism that marked the relationship between Britain and her ex-colonies' (p. 187), Hopkins continues. This included, among other things: patterns of British financial investment in infrastructure projects such as canals and railroads; the dominance of the British marketplace for American exports (primarily of cotton and corn); and lingering patterns of cultural and social deference. The United States strained for freedom of action against these penetrative axials, but also saw an opportunity to complete the revolution and stabilise the Union under Britain's protective wing. As such, the American

15. A.G. Hopkins, 'The United States, 1783–1861: Britain's Honorary Dominion?', *Britain and the World*, iv (2011), pp. 232–46. John Darwin has gone further, labelling the United States a 'super-dominion': J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 267.

Revolution may have marked a transition of power between elites but it was a moment of marked continuity rather than radical change. It was also 'an anticipation of what became the classic postcolonial dilemma: how to make formal independence effective' (p. 187). This condition, meticulously uncovered over Chapters Two to Four, some 146 pages, is integral to Hopkins's overarching argument that the transition from proto- to post-colonial globalisation was underwritten by a major transfer of power from the British to American empires.[16] Part I sets the scene for the momentousness of that shift. It also bears clear traces of Hopkins's earlier work, with Peter J. Cain, on the 'gentlemanly capitalists' who wielded great social and financial power through their dominance of the City of London's dynamic capital markets, created a global capitalist world economy and, in this case, reasserted pre-Revolutionary patterns of transatlantic exchange.[17]

This interpretation has been gathering steady momentum. Emphasising continuity over rupture, historians of the Early Imperial Republic (to borrow one recent characterisation) have strikingly reframed the antebellum era as 'America's postcolonial period', but Hopkins has given it its fullest treatment.[18] US statesmen of all persuasions decried this dependence, utilising the powerful and flexible political vernacular of Anglophobia repeatedly and often to build anti-colonial coalitions around their objectives. As the Whig statesman Henry Clay quipped in 1820, the United States were little more than the 'independent colonies of England'.[19] Shared vernacular or not, parties aligned behind divergent political economies for achieving effective independence. As the Whig Party took refuge in a programme of neo-mercantilist tariff protections to develop markets outside of the British imperial network alongside subsidised improvements in domestic transportation and communications dubbed the 'American System', so Jackson Democrats advocated free trade to ensure low tariffs on cotton exports and

16. This transfer has been the subject of a number of works, including K. Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (Cambridge, MA, 2017), and A. Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895–1956* (London, 1996).

17. P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688–1914* (first edn, London, 1993). For assessments of the work, see R.E. Dummett, ed., *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire* (London, 1999), and S. Akita, ed., *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History* (London, 2002).

18. E. Gould, 'Independence and Interdependence: The American Revolution and the Problem of Postcolonial Nationhood, circa 1802', *William and Mary Quarterly*, lxxiv (2017), pp. 731–2; P.J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America, c.1750–1783* (Oxford, 2007); K.A. Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary American Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York, 2011); S.W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville, VA, 2010); J. Sexton, 'Epilogue', in S. Foster, ed., *British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 2013); S. Tuffnell, *Made in Britain: Nationhood and Emigration in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oakland, CA, 2020). The term 'Early Imperial Republic' is from M.A. Blaakman, E. Conroy-Krutz and N. Arista, eds, *The Early Imperial Republic: From the American Revolution to the U.S.–Mexican War* (Philadelphia, PA, 2023).

19. Calvin Colton, *The Life, Correspondence, and Speeches of Henry Clay* (6 vols, New York, 1857), v, p. 221.

reciprocally low ones on imported manufactures. The struggle between these two perspectives runs throughout Hopkins's characterisation of nineteenth-century partisan conflict in the United States, heightening as the Atlantic nations grew closer together and the dilemmas of debtor independence became more acute.[20] But opportunities also arose from transimperial 'collaborative competition' between Anglo-America in regions such as Latin America, East Asia and British North America, as Jay Sexton's review essay argues, and in lucrative areas such as transatlantic finance and cotton trading, and in the arts of moral, social and political reform.[21] The United States was also a dangerous upstart emerging from within, an 'existential threat' thanks to its 'open borders, unregulated economy, anti-imperial politics, and unrivalled integration into British transport systems that exerted a magnetic pull on discontents from around the British World'.[22] 'In truth', Sexton writes, 'America's take-over of the British Empire was … less a transfer of power than phased revolution within an imperial order'.[23] Whether a wrenching transfer of power or disjointed, protracted revolution, the architecture of Hopkins's interpretation offers a more powerful model of imperial-national development in the nineteenth century than the prevailing teleology of 'Colony to Superpower'.

And yet. The shadow cast by the *Pax Britannica* in *American Empire* is long, reflecting Hopkins's long-held concern to globalise the history of Britain's imperial world.[24] But it might, unintentionally, conceal the diversity of transimperial formations on the US continent. Hopkins's view of US development looks westward from Britain. This is clearly reflected in his treatment of the Continental imperial formation, considered in Chapter Five, 'Wars of Incorporation', which culminates with the Union's defeat of the political economy of the Cotton Kingdom in the Civil War, the key axial of the union's 'neo-colonial relationship' with Britain. But what if, as US scholars now do, we face east from the continent outward?[25] Euro-American imperial formations were not the only ones shaping the development of the continental United States. The indigenous continent looms ever larger in recent scholarship and might recast the United States' dependent development around broader transimperial and global dynamics. 'State-centrism has led historians of American foreign relations

20. Debtor independence is drawn from J. Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837–1873* (Oxford, 2005), which has meticulously demonstrated how the United States' need for capital granted outsized importance to elite transatlantic financiers in directing American foreign relations between the two great financial crises of the nineteenth century—a work that Hopkins draws on extensively.

21. J. Sexton, 'The British Empire after A.G. Hopkins's American Empire', in S. Akita, ed., *American Empire in Global History* (Abingdon, 2022), pp. 64–88, at 79.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 80.

24. A.G. Hopkins, 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History', *Past and Present*, no. 164 (1999), pp. 198–243.

25. See D. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2011).

to ignore a complex and deeply important international system' on the North American continent itself, writes Brian DeLay.[26] Inter-imperial dynamics between native polities shaped the continent, 'slowed settler colonialism, channelled it to some places and away from others, and extracted compromises … And ultimately, US expansion depended on the studied exploitation of competition within the system'.[27]

Native America was a dynamic state system. Animated by diplomacy, commerce, captive labour and war across diverse polities, sometimes loosely banded together as confederacies but sometimes decentralised and kinetic imperial formations, indigenous power transformed territory from the subarctic to the Tropic of Cancer.[28] Along the Gulf Coast, the Chickasaw, Choctaw and Seminole polities exercised sovereignty and control of their economic life through their assertive and imaginative incorporation of European trading networks and skilful exploitation of Spanish, British and American imperial pretensions in the region.[29] In the early nineteenth century, the Blackfoot Confederacy pursued the creation and maintenance of a weapons gap against its neighbours through exploiting their market power to disrupt arms flows to rivals and ensure privileged access to British and American arms.[30] Indeed, in that key moment of supposed 'Manifest Destiny', the annexation of Texas, scholars now argue that it was far less evidence of surging US power than it was a result of the deep extractive raiding of Comancheria and Apacheria that created a chronic crisis of sovereignty for the Mexican Republic along its northernmost borders.[31] Surveying the complex web of native statecraft, Pekka Hämäläinen has recently argued that 'Europeans were the supplicants—their lives, movements, and ambitions determined by native nations that drew the newcomers into their settlements and kinship networks, seeking trade and allies. … an inversion of common assumptions about White dominance and

26. B. DeLay, 'Foreign Relations between Indigenous Polities, 1820–1900', in K. Hoganson and J. Sexton, eds, *The Cambridge History of America and the World*, II: *1820–1900* (Cambridge, 2021), p. 388. See also the essays by B. DeLay, A. Harmon, and P. Rosier in the 'Native American Forum', *Diplomatic History*, xxxix (2015), pp. 926–66; and R. White, 'The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Journal of American History*, xxv (1978), pp. 319–43.

27. DeLay, 'Foreign Relations between Indigenous Polities', p. 389. For indigenous conceptions of territoriality, see J. Barr, 'Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the "Borderlands" of the Early Southwest', *William and Mary Quarterly*, lxviii (2011), pp. 5–46.

28. P. Hamalainen, 'What's in a Concept? The Kinetic Empire of the Comanche', *History and Theory*, lii (2013), pp. 81–90.

29. K. DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York, 2015).

30. D.J. Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge, MA, 2016).

31. B. DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.–Mexican War* (New Haven, CT, 2008), and P. Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT, 2008). The very idea of 'Manifest Destiny' has recently come under attack as a historiographical construction of the historian Julius Pratt: see A.C. Isenberg and T. Richards, Jr, 'Alternative Wests', *Pacific Historical Review*, lxxxvi (2017), pp. 4–17.

Indian dispossession that have survived to the present'.[32] Away from the worlds of British imperial economy, then, the British empire's grip could not match its tentacular reach. The intention here is not to attack Hopkins's characterisation of the United States as a dependent empire—his main foci after all are transatlantic 'colonial continuities' (p. 126)—but it is worth reflecting on how the imperial formations of other powers, European and indigenous, exerted powerful agency over the development of the United States—a perspective that may qualify the British imperial approach and even suggest other dependencies.

These various co-dependencies and assertions of power were all implicated components of US settler colonialism, a concept subsumed under Hopkins's British World vantage.[33] In response to mentions of 'settler colonialism' in reviews by Patrick Griffin and Max Edling, Hopkins writes that it needs 'careful handling' and characterises it in its nineteenth-century moment as 'a form of [British] sub-imperialism occurring with the framework of a territorial empire'. Instead, he prefers 'settler imperialism', since it would be 'consistent with an expansive sovereign state because imperialist impulses can arise in different types of polity'.[34] This is a point well made. There is more agreement than not between Hopkins, Edling and Griffin, however, who all argue that, understood in its eighteenth-century context, 'empire' referred to an expanding sovereign state, the national form of which aimed for homogeneity, while empires were multi-ethnic.[35] Hopkins's simultaneously tight framing of *American Empire* around the 'territorial character of formal empires' (p. 28),[36] his flexibility on the potential state-making outcomes of imperial expansion, and view of the conquered territories as states-in-waiting rather than colonies held in a position of deferred sovereignty leads to an assertion that has proven contentious: 'it is hard

32. P. Hämäläinen, *Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America* (New York, 2022), pp. xii–xiii. Most indigenous scholars recognise that Europeans played but a minor role in the long-standing rivalries and politics of the North American Continent: see, among many others, M.A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York, 2015), and D.K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

33. There is now a lively and disputatious body of scholarship on American settler colonialism: see J. Ostler and N. Shoemaker, eds, 'Forum: Settler Colonialism in Early American History: Introduction', *William and Mary Quarterly*, lxxvi (2019), pp. 361–450; J. Lahti, ed., 'Forum: Settler Colonialism and the American West', *Journal of the West*, lvi, no.4 (2017), pp. 8–96; W.L. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (New York, 2013); M.D. Jacobs, 'Seeing Like a Settler Colonial State', *Modern American History*, i (2018), pp. 257–70; F.E. Hoxie, 'Retrieving the Red Continent: Settler Colonialism and the History of American Indians in the US', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, xxxi (2008), pp. 1153–67.

34. A.G. Hopkins, 'Imperial Puzzles', in Akita, ed. *American Empire in Global History*, pp. 219–37, at 226; see also Hopkins, *American Empire*, p. 237.

35. M.M. Edling, 'United States Expansion and Incorporation in the Long Nineteenth Century', in Akita, ed., *American Empire in Global History*, pp. 36–63, and P. Griffin, 'Imperial Confusion: America's Post-Colonial and Post-Revolutionary Empire', ibid., pp. 19–35.

36. Defined by Hopkins as 'extensive, multi-ethnic polities dominated by one state or *ethnie* that ruled separate subordinate states, provinces, or peoples', p. 27.

to argue that the United States created a continental empire in the nineteenth century' (p. 237).[37]

It is not Hopkins's intention to typologise nor even to consider every modality of US imperialism, and nor is it mine to hold his feet to the coals for not doing so. Indeed, one of Hopkins's intentions is to write a new master narrative of US empire that stands up to his own call for greater conceptual precision in imperial studies (pp. 21–32). But one cannot help but feel that an opportunity to explore another dimension of the US imperial repertoire has been foreclosed by the framework of *American Empire*. Perhaps a wider definition of empire is warranted. As Paul Kramer has written, US imperial history 'is best approached pragmatically: while debates have generally centered on questions of semantics—what the imperial "is"—we should instead emphasise what it does, what kinds of analyses it enables and forecloses'.[38] Scholars of settler colonial studies have done just that, applying its insights in various North American settings, recognising that the imperial repertoires of removal and extermination were diverse and that the agents involved were not always subservient to the will of *national* government.[39] In contrast to the macro processes portrayed by Hopkins, a more pointillist picture undoubtedly results, but it is an enabling one that adds to the portrait of the US as an adaptive, heterogeneous imperial formation. Hopkins also adds that '*if* the United States is thought of as an emerging nation state rather than an empire, the term "settler colonialism" is, strictly speaking, anachronistic'.[40] Hopkins's 'if' is worth pausing over. For one thing, we ought to be wary of the gravitational pull of the nation, to which arguably 'incorporation' finds itself beholden. US historians, not only working in the Indigenous Empires mould, have invested a great deal of energy into restoring contingency to the process of territorial expansion, to the point of conceding the possibility of North America

37. This stands in contrast to Frederick Cooper and Jane Burbank's engaging comparison of the US and Russian continental empires in J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), p. 251–86.

38. P. Kramer, 'Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World', *American Historical Review*, cxvi (2011), p. 1349.

39. This literature is large, and growing: B. Saler, *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (Philadelphia, PA, 2015); P. Frymer, *Building an American Empire: The Era of Territorial and Political Expansion* (Princeton, NJ, 2017); P.J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, CT, 2004); M. Adas, 'From Settler Colony to Global Hegemon: Integrating the Exceptionalist Narrative of the American Experience into World History', *American Historical Review*, cvi (2001), pp. 1692–720. Scholars have also noted that the term 'settler colonialism' has not always been precisely defined and has deficiencies; for an exemplary discussion, see R. Herrmann, *No Useless Mouth: Waging War and Fighting Hunger in the American Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 2019), pp. 6–8. As is the case for Hopkins, global comparison has been essential to this work; see, for example, K. Fullagar and M.A. McDonnell, eds, *Facing Empire: Indigenous Experiences in a Revolutionary Age* (Baltimore, MD, 2018). For an overview of the new literature on the power of the early American state, see G. Rao, 'The New Historiography of the Early Federal Government: Institutions, Contexts, and the Imperial State', *William and Mary Quarterly*, lxxvii (2020), pp. 97–128.

40. Hopkins, 'Imperial Puzzles', p. 226, author's emphasis.

devolving into a series of 'Breakaway Americas'.[41] A territorial United States stretching from Atlantic to Pacific was only one possible outcome for the North American continent. Though perhaps irresistible, the nation we now know as the United States was not inevitable.

As Hopkins shows, achieving effective independence was a hard-won, drawn-out process. Part I ends with the defeat of the Confederacy and the destruction of 'the neocolonial relationship that bound Britain to the South' (p. 238). The northern states were now free to 'forge a nation state' (p. 238)—a confounding process coeval with the transition from proto- to modern globalisation tracked in Part II. This transition was 'uneven', Hopkins argues, but it only ever has one outcome: 'Empire-building was an exercise in compulsory globalization' (p. 241). To best understand these processes, in Chapters Six and Seven, 'Uneven Development and Imperial Expansion' and 'Achieving Effective Independence', Hopkins shifts historians' attention away from the internal dramas of Reconstruction and the Gilded Age to the United States' comparative national-imperial development alongside that of its fellow European 'late-start modernizers' (p. 283), since 'the imperialism of the United States fits readily into a common pattern arising from the problems of transforming military-fiscal states into national-industrial states' (p. 284). Economics are determinant.[42] The maturation of the United States' financial sector, booming domestic production and foreign trade, and an enlarged central state with the capacity for railroad construction and market integration all enabled the United States to break free of dependence. It is unfortunate, though, that this global comparative framework has relegated the non-state actors working beyond the water's edge of the metropole—the missionaries, merchants, transimperial careerists and border-crossing agriculturalists who created the US empire from the outside in and who entangled the United States in the wider processes of globalisation—to the periphery.[43] Independence was also won in the

41. See, among others, T.A. Richards, *Breakaway Americas: The Unmanifest Future of the Jacksonian United States* (Baltimore, MD, 2020); E. Schlereth, 'Privileges of Locomotion: The Politics of Southwestern Border Crossing', *Journal of American History*, c (2014), pp. 995–1020; and R. St John, 'Contingent Continent: Spatial and Geographic Arguments in the Shaping of the Nineteenth-Century United States', *Pacific Historical Review*, lxxxvi (2017), pp. 18–49.

42. This has also been seen in the work of Hopkins's student, Marc-William Palen, in *The 'Conspiracy' of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalization, 1846–1896* (Cambridge, 2016).

43. This comes especially from the work of historians of the United States in the world. Available to Hopkins at the time of writing were: J. Colby, *The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America* (Ithaca, NY, 2013); E. Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca, NY, 2015); J.M. Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); I. Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 2010); A. Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton, NJ, 2012). Still more works flow from this sub-field, such that non-state actors have become the central protagonists for understanding the 'staggeringly wide array of interests at stake' in the creation of the United States' global footprint: J. Sexton and K. Hoganson, 'Introduction to Volume II', in Hoganson and Sexton, eds, *Cambridge History of America and the World*, II, p. 27.

social and cultural realms too, but these are, in the end, played down.[44] Still, it was a struggle to manage the transfer of economic power from agriculture to industry—the common problem of late-start developers (as Hopkins puts it, 'the particularities differed, but the problems were essentially the same' [p. 336])—a process that fuelled domestic partisanship over the tariff especially. This comparative framing is one of Hopkins's greatest contributions, not least at a time when specialist US historians from the same period seek to globalise extant periodisation rather than stepping outside of their frame to position their analyses around alternative chronologies of globalisation.[45] For readers of this journal, it may seem surprising that American imperial historiography has yet to achieve this, but here the power of American exceptionalism has left an enduring trace on histories of the Civil War era where, at times, US historians have projected onto the Atlantic World an enlarged ideological battle between republicanism and *revanchist* aristocracy, a suit that only partly fits.[46] Instead, Hopkins posits, the empire debate in the United States and (as in the antebellum era) the fierce partisan debate over political economy it produced, was about managing this structural adjustment.

It is at this juncture that the work of Hopkins and that of Andrew Priest intersect. In *Designs on Empire: America's Rise to Power in the Age of European Imperialism* (2021), Priest reveals how Americans learned from, and distinguished themselves from, other imperial states; lessons that informed but did not determine the United States' extra-continental empire project at the turn of the twentieth century. *Designs* is part a wave of recent connected histories of empire that have begun to tease out the spaces, knowledge-making practices, surveillance regimes, and networks that operated between and across empires.[47] As Priest puts it, the United States was 'enmeshed in imperial networks', an

44. Later, Hopkins writes that 'Cultural historians have undoubtedly enlarged the subject, but they have not offered a new "master narrative"; nor could they do so without being accused of advocating a form of cultural determinism' (p. 343). With the shoe on the other foot, one wonders whether Hopkins might be accused of his own brand of economic determinism.

45. See, for example, the new interest in the global history of Reconstruction: D. Pryor, *Reconstruction in a Globalizing World* (New York, 2018). But for an alternative, see the debate on the 'Greater Reconstruction', a parallel to Hopkins's attempt that has a Continental focus: E. West, 'Reconstructing Race', *Western Historical Quarterly*, xxxiv (2003), pp. 7–25, and S. Smith, 'Beyond North and South: Putting the West in the Civil War and Reconstruction', *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vi (2016), pp. 566–91.

46. See, for example, D. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York, 2017).

47. V. Barth and R. Cvetkovski, eds, *Imperial Co-operation and Transfer, 1870–1930: Empires and Encounters* (London, 2015); A. Middleton, 'French Algeria in British Imperial Thought, 1830–70', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, xvi, no. 1 (2015), available online at https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2015.0012 (accessed 26 Apr. 2024). It is also a major update to earlier attempts to understand the impact of European (though largely British) liberalism on conceptions of empire in the United States; see E.R. May, *American Imperialism: A Speculative Essay* (New York, 1968), especially pp. 116–40; R. Kelley, *The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (New York, 1969); and, more recently, L. Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007).

integration that offered a range of imperial modalities through which to reason and analogise, or to adopt; 'it was an empire that simultaneously incorporated, imitated, and also *rejected* many of the traits of its contemporaries' (*Designs*, p. 14). While for Hopkins the United States' entanglement created dependencies on enduring British influence, for Priest the world offered models for imperial 'worldmaking' among its foreign policy elite (*Designs*, p. 3). And while Hopkins is concerned primarily with the networked entanglement of the US imperial formation in the late nineteenth century and how the United States could utilise those sinuous networks to sever its dependences on Britain, Priest instead turns to elite responses to imperial interconnectedness and the fraught intellectual challenge of slipping free from the moorings of European imperial models.

Priest centres his book around four inter-imperial entanglements between the US Civil War and the 1890s: the installation and rule of Maximillian I as the Emperor of Mexico (1864–7), Spain's ten-year war with Cuba (1868–78), the Anglo-Egyptian War of 1882, and the Berlin Conference on Africa of 1884–5. Each case is captured through a rich mixture of diplomatic despatches, Congressional debate, and a web of published essays from leading middle-class periodicals, encapsulating a diverse and dynamic dialogue among American elites who held complex and contradictory views of empire.[48] While recognising contestation and dissent, Priest deftly weaves a coherent analysis from what might, in other hands, become a cacophonous riot of voices. Throughout, Priest is clear on how racial ideology shaped the perception of threat and opportunity facing American statesmen as they extended domestic racial formations into inter-imperial settings (*Designs*, p. 8). In both the Mexican and Cuban cases Priest demonstrates forcibly the intersections of racisms, non-interventionism, pro-annexationism, anti-imperialism and anti-slavery in the intellectual worlds of liberal, internationalist Republicans who dominated policymaking for the western hemisphere.[49]

The most novel contributions of the book are those on Egypt and the Congo, both overlooked by historians of US empire. Here Priest turns to the views of US consular officials, 'enmeshed in policy and practice but not at the center of them' (*Designs*, p. 121), and non-state actors who viewed empire from the periphery. Both cases were evidence of the United States' increasingly bold assertion of its own interests outside the western hemisphere. US participation in the Berlin Conference, for example, was evidence of both the European powers' recognition

48. Another work to put such a methodology to use is F. Ninkovich, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundations of American Internationalism, 1865–1890* (Cambridge, MA, 2009).

49. This is well-trodden ground; see, especially, N. Guyatt, 'America's Conservatory: Race, Reconstruction, and the Santo Domingo Debate', *Journal of American History*, xcvii (2010), pp. 974–1000, and E.T. Love, *Race over Empire: Racism and US Imperialism, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005).

of Washington's 'heft' (*Designs*, p. 156) and evidence of its expanding interests in West Africa. Priest's interlocutors in Egypt and the Congo were imperial careerists who worked closely with European imperial partners to advance US commercial interests—men such as Richard Dorsey Mohun, a US Navy Officer turned explorer-diplomat who served as US Commercial Agent in Angola and the Congo Free States, served in the Belgian military in campaigns against Arab slavers in the latter colony, and who, in 1898, undertook a three-year expedition to lay a telegraph line from Lake Tanganyika to Stanley Falls (Boyoma Falls); Willard Parker Tisdel, who led an expedition from the Port of Banana at the mouth of the Congo River to Stanley Pool (Pool Malebo) in search of commercial opportunity; and Henry S. Sanford, a former US minister to Brussels who turned his skills at public diplomacy to agitating for the expansion of US trade into the Congo River Basin. Priest uses the voluminous correspondence between these men to illustrate the wide array of competing interests at stake—from commercial boosterism to Black colonisation—whose participation was 'part of a pattern of experimentation with, assertion, and retraction of American power that was becoming more pronounced by the mid-1880s' (*Designs*, p. 187). In the case of the Kongokonferenz, US involvement was viewed in Washington as a 'limited and relatively conservative engagement that could enhance the power and prestige of the United States' (*Designs*, p. 188).[50] It was also evidence of the United States' willingness to adapt itself to evolving forms of inter-imperial governmentality. As Hopkins would have it, it is further evidence that the United States 'participated with the European states in a common, if also competitive, venture to ensure that the Western powers remained in charge of the new world order that was emerging out of the old' (*American Empire*, p. 337).

Crisply written and cogently argued, *Designs* is a significant contribution to the intellectual and diplomatic history of US empire between the Civil and Spanish-American wars. Priest cracks wide open the supposed transition from 'old' empire to the 'new' in this period, demonstrating with force that the United States was able to reconfigure itself through the exceptionalising practices of comparison. In the end, Priest is cautious on the United States' condition as an empire among empires. The United States, he concludes, was 'not at the vanguard of empire during the final decades of the nineteenth century', but 'its intellectual development was still deeply embedded in and influenced by' the 'new imperialism' (*Designs*, p. 203). This may prove dissatisfying to those scholars seeking to understand how the adaptive US imperial repertoire was augmented through imperial transfer. And what of the impact at home? Historians of European empire have demonstrated how in the cases of Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands (to name just a few)

50. For an excellent account, see J.E. Jones, *In Search of Brightest Africa: Reimagining the Dark Continent in American Culture, 1884–1936* (Athens, GA, 2011), ch. 2.

empire served as a means of reinforcing metropolitan social hierarchy, an apparatus of ideological mobilisation, and a field through which to test and experiment with models of governance.[51] Priest's actors fit the mould in many respects, but he pays less direct attention to the comparative history of these 'liberal imperialists'. Surveying these trends, Hopkins by contrast, views a commonality of thought across these polities in which 'imperialism was a means of connecting the world in ways that, so its advocates claimed, would restore economic health and political stability, and avert racial decline when all three were at risk' (*American Empire*, p. 283). As such, the key actors for Hopkins were neither liberal intellectuals nor 'gentlemanly capitalists of the kind found in the City of London. Rather they were scions of capitalism' (p. 382).

Priest's tight focus on foreign policy elites also leaves avenues for connection with wider scholarship on US imperial imaginaries and knowledge-formation from the past decade tantalisingly open—how did practices of imperial comparison underpin imperial science, medicine and geography? What were the intersections with popular cultures of empire, whether in vaudeville or the 'consumer's imperium' of middle-class homes?[52] And, following from this, to what degree did a pervasive imperial culture, perhaps inclusive of the continental empire, create a national common ground in US politics and help us to overcome the separation of empire and nation-state in US historiography? Answering this last question is a formidable undertaking, beyond the scope of Priest's volume alone, but one wonders what he made of the broader, metropolitan imperialism in which his actors were embedded. *Designs*, then, is a precise and tightly focused study, illustrative of the state of US Empire Studies more broadly—a lively field of individual studies but one that is often fragmented in the multiple temporalisations and spatialities of its subject; a reflection of the shapeshifting empire itself and a fragmentation that Hopkins seeks to replace.

And so we arrive at the global imperial moment of 1898, *American Empire*'s argumentative pivot.[53] 'By 1898, the United States had

51. This is an admittedly very incomplete panorama, but see: L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, 1992); A.S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow, 2005); D. Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race and Empire: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America* (Princeton, NJ, 2020); J. Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ, 2005); A Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, CA, 1997); E. Berenson, 'Making a Colonial Culture? Empire and the French Public, 1880–1940', *French Politics, Culture and Society*, xxii (2004), pp. 127–49; S. Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 41–9; V. Viaene, 'King Leopold's Imperialism and the Origins of the Belgian Colonial Party, 1880–1905,' *Journal of Modern History*, lxxx (2008), pp. 741–90; A.L. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA, 2002).

52. K. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007).

53. This is a point also made very effectively by R.C. Ileto in 'The Road to 1898: On American Empire and the Philippine Revolution', in Akita, ed., *American Empire in Global History*, pp. 113–34.

become a formidable and fully independent state' writes Hopkins; 'in that year, too, the Republic's newfound strength was applied to invade Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and to annex Hawai'i' (p. 337). Effective independence achieved, the United States now felt the full flush of adulthood in martial combat with the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean and Pacific, itself struggling with the military, logistical, political and financial cost of waging wars against colonial insurrection on two fronts.[54] Hopkins's ambitious agenda leads to significant interventions in this section. Chapter Nine, 'Insular Perspectives on an Intrusive World', is one of the first historical surveys of the United States colonial empire for some time, in a field in which territories are often silo-ed from one another or even marginalised as the 'great aberration'.[55] Though 1898 marked the moment when the United States entered effective independence, the key imperial transition took place between the United States and Spain, which lost the remnants of its fading empire in the western hemisphere—with the US again the chief beneficiary (indeed, one wonders whether the protracted collapse of the Spanish Empire might have been given fuller treatment across the first two-thirds of the volume). Ultimately, Hopkins concludes, 'there is a common explanation for the rise and fall of the Western empires as a whole in the twentieth century. National characteristics, or exceptionalism, added particularities and distinctiveness, but neither diverted nor diluted the influence of supranational forces' (p. 492). The United States, then, was an unexceptional empire.

This global imperial moment is depicted as a largely Western one. As Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz forcefully points out, and as Hopkins graciously concedes, *American Empire* follows a traditional framework in overlooking the Asian and larger Malay World setting of Philippine and American history.[56] As Aboitiz puts it, 'intra-Asian connections/affinities antedated the appearance of Western interests, were sustained during the long period of Spanish rule, and infused the anti-colonial nationalist movement that culminated in the Philippine Revolution'.[57] Aboitiz's essay, and indeed her 2020 work *Asian Place, Filipino Nation*, considers the centrality of the rise of Japan in Asia and the Pacific following the end of the *sakoku* ('locked country') in which cosmopolitan Japanese ports such as Kobe and Yokohama, and also Hong Kong, acted as safety valves where 'Asian subversives could act with greater freedom as well as cities in which they imagined

54. S. Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1923* (Oxford, 1997).

55. The last was W.T. Perkins's *Denial of Empire: The United States and its Dependencies* (Leiden, 1962). 'Great aberration' is from S.F. Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (New York, 1965), p. 463. Since the publication of *American Empire*, D. Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A Short History of the Greater United States* (London, 2019), has appeared.

56. N.C. Aboitiz, 'Restoring Asia to the Global Moment of 1898', in Akita, ed., *American Empire in Global History*, pp. 135–63; Hopkins, 'Imperial Puzzles', p. 230.

57. Aboitiz, 'Restoring Asia', pp. 138–9.

richer alternative lives counter to their colonial condition'.[58] Essays by William Morgan and Reynaldo Ileto likewise deepen the internal contexts of the Cuban Wars of Independence and Philippine revolutions, demonstrating that US accomplishments, as in the wars against Mexico, exploited the successes of others.[59] Ileto especially provides a useful examination of the Philippine interior, controlled largely by friar-curates whose authority was exercised chiefly in the pueblo centre, leaving the periphery largely untouched. Here, Hopkins's framework has enabled the pursuit of complementary, alternative narratives of the road to 1898 and beyond, and a multi-sited, multivocal transimperial history of the development of the United States' global imperium.

As 1898 marks one critical imperial transition—between the United States and Spain—so Part III completes the story of a much bigger one between Britain and the United States and the eventual collapse of the modern imperial system. But what is transferred between Britain and the United States? Not much. Here Hopkins grapples with the thorny question of US global power following decolonisation. Hopkins's answer is clear: the United States was not an empire after 1945 because it was not invested in *territorial* control for the sake of integrating others. Once decolonisation had become 'swift and irreversible', Hopkins writes, 'the assumption of imperial permanence was swept aside as if it had never been contemplated' (p. 445). Designating the post-1945 United States an 'empire' is 'a misnomer', Hopkins writes, since 'the conditions that had sustained territorial empires ceased to apply' (p. 696). From the 1950s, then, the United States became an aspiring hegemon, a mere world power, if not sometimes the dominant one. Equally, he gives short shrift to other forms of imperial power, informal or hidden: for Hopkins this is merely old wine in new bottles, château Robinson and Gallagher rather than Hobson or Lenin (p. 22).[60] In Chapter Fifteen, 'Dominance and Decline in the Postcolonial Age', he does, nevertheless give attention to other forms of US 'informal influence'. Hopkins is in good company here: many scholars of post-1945 America and the World eschew the term in favour of hegemon or superpower.

But if empire is a term that, in Hopkins's words, 'frays at the edges' (p. 25), it is at those edges that US historians have been most productive. Here, the leitmotifs are the respatialisation and reconfiguration of

58. N.C. Aboitiz, *Asian Place, Filipino Nation: A Global Intellectual History of the Philippine Revolution, 1887–1912* (New York, 2020); Aboitiz, 'Restoring Asia', p. 145. See also M.-H. Jung, *Menace to Empire: Anticolonial Solidarities and the Transpacific Origins of the US Security State* (Oakland, CA, 2022).

59. W.A. Morgan, 'Cuba: Context and Consequences for the American Empire', in Akita, ed., *American Empire in Global History*, pp. 89–112; Ileto, 'Road to 1898'.

60. For an excellent overview of the impact of 'informal empire' on US historiography, see Kramer, 'Power and Connection,' pp. 1374–5.

empire, be it hidden or covert, invited or irresistible.[61] As Paul Kramer writes, 'it was never the case, even in the post-1945 period, that the nation-state was the only form taken by US imperial power'.[62] The collapsing imperial order offered opportunities for the United States to reconfigure its imperial power. While Hawai'i and Alaska were absorbed into the nation and the Philippines decolonised in 1946, still other territories, including the US Virgin Islands, Mariana Islands and American Samoa in the Pacific, and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, function as 'central outpost[s] in a forward territorial perimeter designed to protect and project the polity's imperial power'.[63] The US Empire's outposts have moved into focus, too, including suburbs and the empire of bases, now some 800 strong, more than twenty-fivefold the number held by Russia, Britain and France combined (a mere thirty).[64] Drawing from diverse histories of capitalism, architecture, law, international relations and the environment, then, US historians have set a broad agenda for historicising the United States' coercive power—one in which claims to deterritorialised postcoloniality must be qualified. This is a model of empire that is perhaps unprecedented in scope, if not entirely novel. But was it not always thus? The historiographies of other empires, including the British, recognise variety and patchwork quality as enduring features of empire;[65] why should the United States be different?

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American Empire is a rich, deep, and innovative addition to US imperial studies. A masterly synthesis, the work is also a distillation of a lifetime

61. Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire*; A. Friedman, *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* (Berkeley, CA, 2013); G. Lundstead, 'Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952', *Journal of Peace Research*, xxiii (1986), pp. 263–77; V. DeGrazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2022).

62. Kramer, 'Power and Connection', p. 1373.

63. F. Schumacher, 'Reclaiming Territory: The Spatial Contours of Empire in U.S. History', in M. Middell, ed., *Spatial Formats under the Global Condition*, I: *The Dialectics of the Global* (Berlin, 2019), p. 139.

64. On suburbs, see M. Gillem, *America Town: Building the Outposts of Empire* (Minneapolis, MN, 2007). The literature on bases is large; see B.L. Blower, 'A Nation of Outposts: Forts, Factories, Bases, and the Making of American Power', *Diplomatic History*, xli (2017), pp. 439–59; G. Heefner, 'Overseas Bases and the Expansion of US Military Presence', in D.C. Engerman, M.P. Friedman and M. McAlister, eds, *The Cambridge History of America and the World*, IV: *1945 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 55–79; P. Nolan, 'Imperial Archipelagos', *New Left Review*, lxxx (Mar./Apr. 2013), pp. 77–95; D. Vine, *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (New York, 2015). For resistance to US military presence, see C. Lutz, ed., *The Bases of Empire: The Global Military Struggle against U.S. Military Posts* (New York, 2009). For a work that connects the experience of deployed soldiers to the collision between US empire and decolonising imperatives, see S. Man, *Soldiering Through Empire: Race and the Making of the Decolonizing Pacific* (Oakland, CA, 2018).

65. Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, pp. 1–22.

of previous, equally ground-breaking interventions in the histories of economic imperialism and globalisation. On the links between globalisation and American empire, this will become the go-to account, shaping graduate classes for decades to come. And finally, then, US scholars can stop debating whether the United States needs an imperial history and begin the work of writing a post-exceptionalist history of the United States empire in the world.

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