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Introduction by Daniel Immerwahr, Northwestern University

A. G. Hopkins's *American Empire* is, all four reviewers involved in this roundtable affirm, an impressive work. It is a "stunning book," writes Lloyd Gardner, which has restored "great narrative history to the top shelf." Dane Kennedy's review, though more critical, voices a similar judgment. It is a "grand history that combines great ambition, immense learning, and illuminating insights," he writes.

The greatness and grandeur of this nearly thousand-page book stem from the unusual nature of the undertaking. A. G. Hopkins is an eminent historian, honored many times over for his influential scholarship on the British Empire, economic history, and globalization.¹ And his book, the fruit of a decade and a half of labor—described by Marc Palen, who had ringside seats—exhibits a rare ambition. Not only has Hopkins set out to reinterpret U.S. history as part of global history, his is also the first survey by a historian of the U.S. overseas colonial empire in more than half a century. The last comprehensive history, Whitney T. Perkins's *Denial of Empire*, was published in 1962 in the Netherlands.²

Some of the achievements of *American Empire* reside on the level of the sentence. Hopkins writes with earned erudition, envy-inducing verbal command, and a rare dry wit—qualities on display in his response to the reviewers. But the main contribution of this book is to place the United States within global history. This has been hitherto difficult, impeded by the persistent practice of apprehending U.S. history via different concepts than the ones used to understand other countries. Rejecting this, *American Empire* sets the United States on the same analytical plane as other empires and finds it not all that distinct. Hopkins further argues that the country before 1898 must be understood as a subordinate part of a larger London-centered world system. Much of the early part of the book is thus given over to describing that system and to chronicling the United States' slow escape from neocolonial dependence. In all, Mario Del Pero deems *American Empire* a "remarkable example of how to write global history," lauding its emphasis on international comparisons within a larger structural history of an integrated world system.

It would be surprising for a book of this scope to evade controversy. The criticism comes from two angles. First, reviewers raise questions of form. Del Pero finds the book "at times quite frustrating" and wonders if it might be five hundred pages longer than necessary. He complains particularly of textbook-style sections that detract and distract from the "sophisticated and conceptually rich parts." Hopkins responds by invoking the vastness of his topic and the need to acquaint his audience of imperial historians with the basic features of U.S. history. Del Pero also criticizes Hopkins's frequent framing of U.S. history by reference to other times and places (Palen, by contrast, positively liked this aspect, as I confess I also did). Kennedy argues that the

¹ His previous publications include *An Economic History of West Africa* (Harlow: Longman, 1973); *British Imperialism*, written with P. J. Cain (Harlow: Longman, 1993; 3rd ed. 2016); *Globalization in World History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); and *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

² Whitney T. Perkins, *Denial of Empire: The United States and Its Dependencies* (Leiden: A.W. Sythoff, 1962). There have been, of course, a great number of historical studies of individual colonies and themes within U.S. colonial history. One touchstone is an excellent semi-recent work by a sociologist, Julian Go's *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), which, like Hopkins's book, compares the U.S. and British Empires.

British Empire looms so large in *American Empire* that it “overshadows its ostensible subject, the American empire, in the first half of the book and obscures its distinctive character in the second half.”

The second main angle of attack targets the substance of Hopkins’s interpretation. Hopkins argues, in his words, that “the United States did not create a continental empire in the nineteenth century.” Kennedy, raising an eyebrow, points to expansionist wars and campaigns of indigenous dispossession. The issue in part is whether to define these as creating an empire or as violent nation-building, and whether to see places such as Oklahoma (a territory for more than a century) as colonies or states-in-waiting. Kennedy also questions Hopkins’s choice of cases of overseas colonialism—Why Cuba but not Haiti? Why Hawai‘i but not Alaska? Hopkins, in response, writes that it was never his goal to “cover all possible candidates” but that he selected the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Hawai‘i, and Cuba for examination because they collectively contained “a great majority of colonial subjects” and allowed him to test the most frequent claims made about U.S. colonial rule.

Both Del Pero and Kennedy, while appreciative of Hopkins’s mission to deflate notions of “American exceptionalism,” ask if he has not made the United States out to be too unexceptional. What about the unique abundance of the United States, the relatively minor part of territory in its imperial portfolio, or its special relationship with the hegemonic Britain Empire? Hopkins addresses these ostensible distinctions, but also allows that placing the United States “in the same category as other Western empires” does not prevent recognizing and appreciating its “distinctive variations.”

What follows in these pages is an informed, enlightening exchange about an ambitious, wide-ranging book. Happy reading.

Participants:

Tony Hopkins is Emeritus Smuts Professor of Commonwealth History at Cambridge and Emeritus Walter Prescott Webb Chair in History at the University of Texas in Austin. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of London, honorary doctorates from the Universities of Stirling and Birmingham, and is a Fellow of the British Academy. He has written extensively on African history, imperial history, and globalization. His publications include: *An Economic History of West Africa* (Longman, 1973), *British Imperialism*, written with P. J. Cain (Longman, 1993; 3rd ed. 2016); *Globalization in World History* (W.W. Norton, 2001), *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton University Press, 2018); and numerous scholarly articles.

Daniel Immerwahr is an associate professor at Northwestern University. His first book, *Thinking Small* (Harvard University Press, 2015), is a critical account of the United States’ pursuit of grassroots development at home and abroad in the middle of the twentieth century. His second, *How to Hide an Empire* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), offers a narrative history of the U.S. Empire.

Mario Del Pero is Professor of International History and U.S. Foreign Relations at the *Institut d’études politiques/SciencesPo* of Paris. His research focuses on the history of U.S. Foreign Relations, particularly during the Cold War. Among his most recent publications are *Era Obama [The Obama Era]* (Feltrinelli, 2017); *Libertà e Impero. Gli Stati Uniti e il Mondo, 1776-2011 [Empire and Liberty. The United States and the World, 1776-2011]* (Laterza, 2017, 3rd ed.); *The Eccentric Realist. Henry Kissinger and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy* (Cornell University Press, 2009). Del Pero is currently writing a book on U.S. evangelical missions in early Cold War Italy.

Lloyd C. Gardner is Professor Emeritus of History at Rutgers University. A Wisconsin Ph.D., he is the author or editor of more than fifteen books on American foreign policy, including *Safe For Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1984), *Approaching Vietnam* (W.W. Norton, 1988), and *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* (Ivan R. Dee, 1995), and *The War on Leakers* (The New Press, 2016). He has been president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Affairs, and lives in Newtown, Pennsylvania, with his wife Nancy.

Dane Kennedy is the Elmer Louis Kayser Professor of History and International Affairs at George Washington University, where he has taught since 2000, and Director of the National History Center. He received his Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Berkeley, and served on the faculty of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from 1981 to 2000. He is a historian of British imperial history who has written seven books and edited or co-edited three others. They include *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire* (Bloomsbury, 2018), *Decolonization: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2016), *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Harvard University Press, 2013), and *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

Marc-William Palen is Senior Lecturer in the History Department at the University of Exeter. He is editor of the Imperial & Global Forum and co-director of History & Policy's Global Economics and History Forum. His works include *The "Conspiracy" of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalisation, 1846-1896* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), named one of the *Financial Times*'s "Summer Books 2016," as well as articles in *Diplomatic History*, the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, the *Historical Journal*, the *Journal of the Civil War Era*, and the *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*. His current book project explores the global intersections of capitalism, anti-imperialism, and peace activism.

A .G. Hopkins has written what is in all regards an impressively learned and sophisticated, but at times quite frustrating, book. By examining the different phases of a globalization often driven by processes of imperial expansion and integration, he has offered a broad and challenging re-interpretation of United States history. His objective, largely fulfilled, is to de-exceptionalize, and, one could say, ‘de-insularize’ this history by placing “the United States in a context ... far wider than its national borders”: by “inserting the [U.S.] national epic into a global, and specifically imperial, context” (7). The context of the Western empires and, more specifically, of the British example, offer, he argues, an ideal, structural milieu for understanding the evolution of the United States from its independence and tenuous survival to its rise to imperial power and, later, global hegemon (with in between the long phase, ca. 1783 to ca. 1865, of de facto postcolonial dependence on Britain). Empires, Hopkins convincingly shows, have been agents of global integration—“transmitters of globalizing impulses” (12), as he felicitously describes them. By examining the imperial common denominator is thus possible to join the history of the United States to that of Western Europe “and indeed the world” (12), the U.S. insular empire fully deserving “to be incorporated into the history of Western colonial rule and allocated places in the larger study of modern globalization” (636). This objective is attained via a sort of chronological tri-partition—the United States a) in the British empire, b) away from it and toward its empire and c) in its own empire, to sum it up—and by relying on the typical utensils of the global historian’s toolbox: via comparisons with both Europe and successive postcolonial experiences; and through the examination of the many interdependencies developed within this imperial and inherently integrating space.

Britain, of course, is the primary actor on which Hopkins focuses in the first part of the book, so much so that in describing the many specific features of the highly successful, and fairly unique, British empire one is left with the doubt that he sometimes tends to replace U.S. exceptionalist narratives with British-centric ones. Britain, he explains, was a fairly “exceptional” (53) military-fiscal state and that reverberated on its global and cosmopolitan empire, of which American colonists were acutely aware of being part. The strains of the empire—its military costs overall—and the reassertion of Britain’s imperial power led to fiscal policies that shocked Americans and paved the way for their rebellion and ultimate secession. What followed, however, was a very partial and highly conditional independence: the United States—Hopkins argues in one of his many, and not always convincing contemporary/‘presentist’ analogies—was the “largely unacknowledged precursor of policies that ex-colonial states and the World Bank were to grapple with in the second half of the twentieth century.” (159)

Timid cultural and economic efforts at nation-building notwithstanding, “colonial continuities” dominated the early Republic, epitomized both by the enlightened cosmopolitanism of the new postcolonial élites or an Anglo-Saxon mythology, which constituted one of the main ideological agencies of the process of assimilation pursued after the independence. “Everything that could be copied was copied—and then enlarged,” (178) from architecture to education, Hopkins writes. A “transnational Atlantic complex” (173) survived the revolution, which in itself represented “an example of decolonization before nationalism” (138), capable of creating a state but not yet a nation. Anglo-Saxon/transatlantic cultural ties combined with the quasi-colonial dependence on Britain of the new United States.

Hopkins masterfully describes the many dilemmas of the “dependent development” (158) of the new state, which had to rely heavily on British goods and investments as well as on the Atlantic security guarantees provided by the Royal Navy. Territorial expansion and economic growth rendered acceptable this state of

affairs: “Prosperity made dependence bearable.” (162). But dependence—commercial and financial—it nevertheless was: “the Atlantic complex, far from withering away, as its limited presence in standard historical accounts suggests, underwent a transformation that greatly enhanced Britain’s penetrative power,” Hopkins states. “The continuation of imperialism after formal decolonization was apparent in the elements of neo-colonialism that marked the relationship between Britain and her ex-colonies” (187). Expansionism, the wars of 1812 and 1846, the enlargement of the domestic market and the sectional proto-industrial developments, all contributed to the history of the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War. None of them was, however, sufficient to grant real independence. That came only as a consequence of the Civil War, “the ultimate resolution in the United States of the crisis that overtook Western military-fiscal states at the close of the eighteenth century.” (238) Here Hopkins goes a bit too far in his de-exceptionalization of US history, when he argues that the series of conflicts culminating in the Civil War “were extensions of the contest between conservatives and progressives that also drove European politics during the first half of the nineteenth century” and that “as Lincoln drew inspiration from Mazzini and Garibaldi, so the Confederacy represented the conservative forces that mounted counterrevolutions in Europe after 1848.” (238) But he has undoubtedly a point in stressing the impact of the Civil War and the triumph of a project of nation-building ultimately bound to destroy the quasi-colonial relationship with London.

The end of the Civil War opened a new phase on which the second part of the book, titled “Modernity and Development, 1865-1914,” focuses. Here the global (and anti-exceptionalist) historian adopts an approach that is primarily comparative, based on the assumption that the U.S. Republic “shared both causes and chronology with other members of the Western imperial club” (243). “When viewed in an international perspective,” Hopkins writes, “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” (284). Britain was still economically dominant; Anglo-Saxonism continued to offer a powerful pan-national, and Anglo-American, racial glue; the City remained for the United States the primary source of lending and capital inflows (and British finance was instrumental to America’s economic development). But the United States progressively emancipated itself from its past dependence; it achieved a form of “effective independence” (286) epitomized by economic growth, the gargantuan expansion of the domestic market, industrialization, and a radical alteration of the terms of its bilateral trade with Britain. Between 1860 and 1900, agriculture as percentage of GDP plummeted from 35 to 18%; manufacturing rose from 22 to 31%. Britain continued to be the main trading partner of the United States, but its share of U.S. imports fell by half, from the 42% of the mid-1800 to the 21% of the last decade of the century, whereas its imports from the U.S. came to account for almost half of Europe’s (where approximately 4/5 of American exports were destined).

The U.S. was a successful example of “late-start countries that struggled to create national-industrial states in the second half of the nineteenth century” (336), Hopkins persuasively summarizes. When, in the second half of the nineteenth century, it had become a fully independent state, it could finally use its strength to expand overseas: to go global. “Effective independence,” Hopkins states, “prepared the United States for an international role that expressed its growing sense of power and confidence” (336). Real independence interplayed with nation-building, industrialization and, ultimately, imperialism. But Hopkins tends to stress the political drivers of the imperialist turn of the late nineteenth century, while emphasizing only indirectly its potential economic matrices, in particular the opposition to bimetallism and the free trade of pro-Republican industrial and financial interests, and the risk, absent a war with Spain, that the democrats could win the mid-term elections in 1898. In one of a few hazardous parallels in the book, Hopkins places then the United States along with Italy among the “group of late-start empire-building states” that “placed political unity before economic advantage” (380). “Representation of national interest overseas,” he continues “took a

predominantly political form, though they did so to preserve the route to economic development charted by the Republican party.” The process of national building, he argues, “was essentially an exercise in uniting white Americans . . . the American contribution to new imperialism was not driven by a rising industrial bourgeoisie searching for new markets to solve problems of falling profits and surplus capital at home,” (380-381). Hopkins deals a convincing blow to a revisionist historiography whose merits he nevertheless often recognizes.

The U.S. rise to empire leads to the third and last part of the book, which covers the period 1914-1959 and examines the turmoils of the U.S. empire in an age of war and international disorder. Here Hopkins pulls together several threads, examining the many dimensions of the U.S. imperial experience and governance while preserving the comparative (and de-exceptionalizing) approach he so fruitfully applied in part II. World War I is presented as a decisive watershed in the long struggle between military-fiscal states and their rivals, with the final implosion of the former. Industrial nation-states—the U.S. now fully among them—triumphed, but remained committed to the imperial cause. Imperial management was pursued through various policies and means, with the metropolises usually adopting “a mix of direct and indirect rule based on a combination of racial assumptions and related estimates of evolutionary potential” (504). But diplomacy was also frequently placed at the service of imperial preservation: appeasement itself, Hopkins argues, can be considered an “imperial form of crisis management” (466). Chapter 11—possibly one of the best in the book—deals instead with the way the United States’ “forgotten empire” (494) was ruled and managed. Hopkins convincingly denounces the “disappearance of the insular empire after 1898” as “an omission unparalleled in the historiography of modern empires.” (496) He then proceeds to an extremely rich and detailed examination of the U.S. empire in action, discussing the political fractures it produced and exacerbated within the United States, the key role Christian missionaries played (the “crusading element in American imperialism,” 513) and—in a few, particularly enlightening pages—“the more important domestic influence on colonial policies” and “one that historians have largely bypassed since the heyday of the New Left in the 1960s,” i.e.: “the economic links between the mainland and the overseas territories” (513).

Again, Washington faced dilemmas and difficulties that were common to other empires, while the illusory assumption that colonial rule should ultimately lead to independence through various stages of self-government was shared by both the U.S. and Britain. But un-exceptional as Hopkins insists it is, the American empire retained some very distinctive features, the most important of which was possibly its Spanish roots and the fact that it had benefited from an imperial transition more than an imperial acquisition. “Whereas the European imperial states governed through the agency of indigenous authorities and settlers from their own countries,” he argues, “the United States ruled three of its four major acquisitions through intermediaries whose origins lay in Spain,” (533).

Hopkins’s subsequent treatment of how the U.S. empire worked, which is detailed in chapter 12 (“Caribbean Carnival”), and 13 (“Paradise in the Pacific”), is superb, particularly when it highlights how racially-infused civilizing aspirations often trumped strategic necessities and economic needs, whereas economic contradictions, the tensions between protectionist pressures at home and colonial requests to open domestic markets, and political over-ambitions, the incongruity between economic dependence and the dream of an effective and rapid transition to self-government, undermined the colonial project from the outset. In his discussion of the U.S. insular empire, Hopkins relies on a fairly conventional and yet convincing partition between the Philippines and Cuba on one side and Puerto Rico and Hawai‘i on the other. The latter found themselves in a much weaker positions vis-à-vis the metropole, whereas the former could rely on their previous anti-colonial resistance and large population to check or at least contain the effects of the U.S.

presence. The four shared, however, a “common fate and fortune,” i.e.: to be “the objects of the first of the development plans the United States launched on the overseas world in the twentieth century” (635). Offering one of his many, and not always convincing, ‘presentist’ reflections, Hopkins muses on how “the significance of this early experiment in structural adjustment, social engineering, and nation-building has been lost to later generations of practitioners and the ‘lessons of history,’ assuming they can be discerned, have long disappeared into a limbo of discarded knowledge.” (635).

World War II represented the second, key watershed. It opened a major crisis that Hopkins summarizes as “the shift from modern to postcolonial globalization.” (641) In order to be understood, the U.S. empire is again fit into the broader trajectory defining the fate of Western empires, at the cost of reversing the usual equation and downplaying the driving centrality of the Cold War: “Instead of fitting decolonization into the Cold War, the Cold War needs to be fitted into decolonization, which in turns needs to be placed in the even wider context of the global transformations of power, interests, and values in the postwar era” (640). But, again, peculiar domestic traits made the U.S. case different. Like other ‘have’ imperial powers, the United States was placed on the defensive by the rise of the Third World or the “Bandung states” (664). Civil rights at home, however, added an additional factor and gave greater urgency to addressing the United States’ own colonial problems. Washington, like the other remaining empires, did not always consistently and effectively pursue this objective, but the ultimate outcome was in many ways preordained, because the long postwar era was marked by increasing economic integration, in terms of trade and industrial partnerships, among leading economies in North America, Europe and Asia. American dominance and indeed, hegemony were marked by the many compromises the U.S. had to accept. While its decline has often prematurely and unfoundedly proclaimed or predicted, Hopkins concludes, the time has come for ‘Captain America’ to abandon the illusion that it is possible to pursue its goal by means of its unique military might and adopt instead “a form of smart diplomacy informed by an understanding of the root causes of global discontents and an awareness that there are different ways of achieving the good life.” (729)

American Empire, I wrote at the beginning of this review, is both impressive and at times frustrating. It is a remarkable scholarly achievement on multiple counts: for the bold and coherent interpretation it puts forward; for its challenging conceptual thickness, which is particularly visible in the first part of the book; for its extraordinary narrative richness (it is, in reality, many books within one book, and not just because of its intimidating size); for the stunning historiographical erudition Hopkins displays. Going through the thick Sans-Serif-6 200 pages of footnotes, the reader will have to trade one dioptre or two for several, short and not so short, insightful historiographical essays. And yet, this reader is left wondering if such a massive tome was really needed; whether a book half its size would not have sufficed. There are many, way too many, narrative and historiographical digressions and the book more than once seems to lose focus. Sophisticated and conceptually rich parts alternate with others that read more like a pleonastic, and redundant, textbook. There seems to be, in other words, a sort of mismatch between the originality of the interpretation and the empirically hyper-dense narrative. Do we really need to know, to offer just a couple of purely illustrative examples, that the U.S. constitution “provided for a president, two houses of Congress, and a judiciary headed by a Supreme Court” (124)? Or that the Italian monarchy “came from the ancient House of Savoy in the far northwest of the country” and “was the only institution that could serve as a symbol of national unity apart from the Vatican, which was wary of endorsing a centralized, secular authority” (276)?

To this discussion of the structural problem of the book, I would like to add two more substantial methodological and interpretative criticisms. The first concerns Hopkins’s deliberate—and overall convincing—debunking of any exceptionalist interpretation of the U.S. empire. Through his examination of

the American insular empire he targets, often explicitly if not head-on, a certain inward-looking (and even parochial) U.S. historiography. And he does so by way of comparison, both synchronic and diachronic. While the former works effectively, the latter tends to translate into a distracting form of ‘presentism,’ which risks ‘essentializing’—and thus, paradoxically, de-historicizing—not just the U.S. empire, but imperialism *tout court*. Let me offer again a few descriptive examples. Advocates of British imperialism, Hopkins writes, hoped that its “part-religious, part-secular universal beliefs would validate the British mission and create what the World Bank would later call ‘like-mindedness’” (85); American plans “to secure political independence first and to deal with issues of economic development and national identity later” were based on the same idea the future first President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, had in the 1940s, “when he adapted a phrase from the Sermon on the Mount to produce a commandment off his own ‘seek ye first the political kingdom ... and all things will be added unto it’” (138); the context between Hamilton and Jefferson’s projects “made the United States the largely unacknowledged precursor of policies that ex-colonial states and the World Bank were to grapple with in the second half of the twentieth century” (159); “becoming American after 1783 was no less fraught than becoming India after 1947 because the borders of the Republic were rolling frontiers, and its Anglo-ethnic core was shortly to receive substantial flows of immigrants from different parts of Europe” (190); in late 1800 the “leaders of the Progressive movement can be seen as anticipating Eisenhower’s vision of a ‘corporate commonwealth,’ and Johnson’s ‘Great Society,’ whereby a combination of business and governmental paternalism would forestall social conflict at home and prevent it from developing abroad” (305); 1898 expansionists “seized the moment, the means, and the rhetoric. Like the neoconservatives in the 1990s, they, too, had a dream” (377). Many other examples could be added, but I hope the point is clear.

The second critique concerns the alleged non-exceptional character of the U.S. empire. Hopkins’s approach, as I indicated above, is convincing and offers a remarkable example of how to write global history (i.e., by way of comparison and integration). And yet, out of these 1,000 pages one is often left with the impression that this highly un-exceptional American empire was ... well quite exceptional. It grew and expanded under the protective shadow of the British empire, and benefitting from the flows of capital and goods coming from the former metropole as well from the United States’ integration in the Atlantic economic sphere. It could rely on a unique, ever-enlarging domestic market, which drove its amazing growth (and, over time, that of the rest of the world), while limiting the economic importance of the colonies; it built a small, exclusively insular empire, which had many distinctive traits, beginning with its Spanish legacy; it added to this formal empire an informal, global influence that—imperial or not, the *vexata quaestio* on which so many historians have focused—rendered U.S. power somehow unique (the absence of any reflection on this informal empire is a bit disappointing, although to his credit Hopkins is very clear in explaining why he made this choice); it provoked domestic divisions and the emergence of an anti-imperialist camp that, while initially defeated, proved capable of imposing its discursive codes in the political and public conversations. Hopkins recognizes and discusses all these elements, but perhaps he could have reflected more on the paradoxes they reveal and how they could affect his analysis and interpretation.

These objections notwithstanding, *American Empire* is a truly remarkable achievement. I am not sure Hopkins has produced a ‘game-changing book’ and that after it ‘American history will never be the same again,’ as some over-enthusiastic blurbers claim. But it is certainly an engaging and original interpretation with which historians of the United States and its foreign policy (and not just them) will have to grapple for many years to come.

Updating Gibbon

Anthony G. Hopkins has an exquisite sense of irony. Time and again he employs it to make points that others struggle with over pages and pages of exposition in bone-dry academic text that may leave a reader bored rather than enlightened. In a sense, it is also a small irony to talk about an author's skill at pinpointing in a book that at 738 pages plus another hundred pages of reference notes rivals Gibbon on the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Years and years ago professors assigned text books. Eventually that standby gave way to smaller books and edited sets of readings and documents. And so on.

This is a book for a semester's study—and longer. Wherever one dips in to ponder an argument or a reference point it is hard to stop reading. At the moment (for there are many to choose from that will come to mind as I ponder this book) my favorite bit of irony involves a statement by Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., a former Governor of Puerto Rico and Governor-General of the Philippines: “We have one besetting sin in common with many other peoples, including the British. We think we are better than other people. Anyone who does things in different fashion from us is either comic or stupid. We regard being a foreigner in the nature of a defective moral attribute” (728).

The irony of quoting the eldest son of the one man who more than any other symbolized the ‘imperial’ spirit at the turn of the twentieth century cannot be topped. Moreover, ‘Ted’ was in many ways his father's son, even down to serving as an Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the 1920s at the outset of a political career that promised higher things at one point, beginning with a race for the governorship of New York. His father's attitudes about foreigners, and their moral defects, especially Latin Americans and Chinese were common parlance in the days of ‘Remember the Maine,’ and through the—*territorial*—imperial years. I put territorial in italics for a special reason. A central theme running through *American Empire: a Global History* is that bygone historians were terribly wrong back in the Samuel F. Bemis/Julius Pratt years to shove the American insular possessions off into a neglected corner; for it is in its behavior regarding Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawai‘i, and the Philippines that the United States shows itself most like the European empires, not the opposite. You might be able to fit hundreds of such island dots into India, say, but their value is accounted on scales other than square miles, both economically and culturally. These points were not to be confused with European possessions, they were forerunners of what emerged in the twenty-first century called ‘Lilypads’ capable of basing drones and other military craft for the projection of American power. As Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan said, as bases to protect an Isthmian Canal or points in China were the real frontier, so were ‘markets.’ The means have changed, then, not the objectives.¹

There remains a persistent belief, moreover, that the colonial experiment at the turn of the twentieth century was quickly remedied by efforts at uplift. In short, the U.S. was not an empire ever, but if it were, it was an empire of liberty. Hopkins reminds us that whatever the United States was/is, might be distinct in some ways, but that the treatment of colonial subjects was pretty much the same. I would argue, in addition, that Empire and Imperialism are, therefore, states of mind as well as territorial states—and that obviously the territory

¹ Thanks to Walter LaFeber for reminding me of Mahan's thoughts. On the similar Lilypad strategy, see David Vine, “The Lily-Pad Strategy: How the Pentagon Is Quietly Transforming Its Overseas Base Empire,” *The Blog*, 6 December 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-vine/us-military-bases_b_1676006.html.

itself may not be occupied as a settler state. In a not unrelated argument, Hopkins argues that the Cold War is best seen as part of decolonization, not decolonization as part of the Cold War—for it is all part of the story about one form of globalization yielding to another. Both superpowers wished to control the process; neither succeeded.

Hopkins sees empire creation in a series of globalisms, starting with the fiscal military empires that became too attenuated to survive as originally conceived. The American Revolution was one result. Hopkins also draws attention as well to the parallels in pre-Civil War ‘Filibustering’ when considering the outburst of imperial fervor at the end of the nineteenth century. In the former instance the fatal weaknesses of the first American Republic were clearly on display as leaders in the South considered what they must do to create a viable state either separate from the union, or secure in a part of it, however oxymoronic the concept. Any dilution of states’ rights, argued Southern leaders not unreasonably, would increase the power of the federal government across all issues, not only as regards slavery—obviously the most sensitive—and would subvert Thomas Jefferson’s original vision. A frantic bid ensued to add new pieces to complement the economic and political needs of the slaveholding states: “The South had to break out before the North broke in” (223).

There were thus direct lines, for both sides in the irrepressible conflict, between the Revolution and the Civil War. While mentioning William H. Seward’s suggestion in the last years before the Civil War that the American Revolution was “the first act in the great drama of decolonization on this continent,” (146), Hopkins could have previewed another aspect of his thesis that imperialist thinking, i.e. thinking about empire as an entity, is tied into reform-ist attitudes almost like the double helix of America’s DNA. In the final weeks before the Civil War, and (appropriately enough) now Secretary of State, Seward sent a memo to President Abraham Lincoln proposing what amounted to declarations of war against Spain and France, “to rouse a vigorous continental spirit of independence on this continent against European intervention.” Presumably the goal would be to finesse the slavery issue to protect the union. Somehow, he apparently hoped, the irrepressible conflict could be kicked down the road while the United States moved to extend the empire of liberty to all of the Western Hemisphere. Eventually, also somehow, the slave question would disappear as patriotism replaced the stark choice of union or disunion. Whether the Southern firebrands would have fallen for Seward’s imperial hat trick is beside the point.²

The Civil War crisis replays the sense of constriction that had consumed putative revolutionary leaders in the final decade before 1776, and would arise again in the 1890s, along now with a new fear that an Age of Socialism was about to be realized out of the conflicts inherent in the post-Civil War era and the end of the not-so Gilded Age with the long depression of the 1890s. A more perfect union was showing cracks, but these were not unique at all to America.

The American Revolution was thus one of several crises points for the over-extended military-fiscal states of Europe, especially including the Spanish empire. Hopkins writes, “The American Revolution was made possible by increased resources, rising living standards, and boundless prospects; it was made certain by a rapid downturn in expectations brought about by British policy. The deprivation felt by the colonists was real, but it was relative rather than absolute” (108). This conclusion, he adds, is perfectly compatible with

² Seward, “Some Thoughts for the President’s Consideration,” April 1, 1861. The memo, reprinted from Frederic Bancroft’s biography of Seward can be found in William Appleman Williams, *The Shaping of American Diplomacy*, 1st ed. (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1956), 296.

recent interpretations of the Revolution as inspired by idealism, whether political or religious. Key figures believed that they had a special opportunity to create a virtuous republic, because of the boundless prospects of a continent to settle. “Political idealism, however, had institutional underpinnings” (109). Previewing Seward’s ambitions for the United States both before and after the Civil War, colonial legislatures introduced progressive elements into the tax system and endorsed reforms that ended entail and primogeniture. All this was brought to a fine point, as Hopkins describes, by the healthier standards of nutrition in the colonies as compared to those of the Mother Country that resulted in the colonial soldiers literally achieving great heights because of better diet! (And here also, one might say, were the seeds of later denigration of immigrants even as the need for labor continued to grow, yet another paradox in the American Dream.)

Yet in the post-revolutionary years, economic relations between Great Britain and the United States unfolded as a typical colonial pattern of raw materials and agricultural products for manufacture. As would become central to Hopkins’s story of the American Empire, geographically small areas, the West Indies, Haiti, etc., sustained their importance economically to the smooth functioning of the changed political overlay of what remained a post-independence dependence.

As the nineteenth century neared its end, various omens suggested to leaders in the Euro-U.S. world what must ensue in the near future. Hopkins mentions historian Frederick Jackson Turner as one among many who focused on the frontier as the wellspring of American democracy. His notion “that the frontier shaped character as a means of shaping nations was embedded in the American psyche long before his own celebrated formulations appeared in 1893” (194). Indeed, Turner’s writings, especially an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, for September 1896, entitled, “The Problem of the West,” just two years before the War of 1898, made plain his belief that the problem was that there was no more West. It began, “The West, at bottom, is a form of society, rather than an area.” The separation of the “Western man from the seaboard, and his environment, made him in a large degree free from European precedents and forces.” Such a statement is another example of an isolationist (in all senses) state of mind all too prevalent in American intellectuals as well as political leaders.

But in this article Turner predicted that as the frontier disappeared “The forces of reorganization are turbulent and the nation seems like a witches’ kettle,” while the demands for an “extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries” had their primary stronghold “west of the Alleghenies.” But a “new Americanism” would not mean disunion as had happened in the 1860s, but in a “drastic assertion of national government and imperial expansion under a popular hero.”³

One of Turner’s most important followers, Walter Prescott Webb, who had updated Turner’s 1896 article in a 1937 book, *Divided We Stand: The Crisis of a Frontierless Democracy*, later wrote to one of those men from West of the Alleghenies, his fellow Texan, Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson, that the closing of the frontier had caused us to suffer from “a great pain in the heart.” Americans were “always trying to get it back again.” But after the Russian launching of Sputnik, it appeared that the United States had settled too soon on the closing of the frontier. Now, the last areas “to be occupied by the Anglo-American civilization” were about to become the launching pad for the thrust into outer space. Introduced to Johnson by an aide, Webb became

³ Excerpts from Turner’s article are reprinted in Lloyd C. Gardner, ed., *A Different Frontier: Selected Readings in the Foundations of American Economic Expansion* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 51-55.

an after-hours drinking companion in the majority leader's senate office, and later wrote speeches for him on Southern and Southwestern economic development.⁴

Could President Johnson's imagining of a dam on the Mekong River as the answer to Vietnam's economic and political problems and his belief the idea could be sold to Hanoi leader Ho Chi Minh be unrelated to such influences? That it ended tragically will hardly surprise readers of Hopkins's book. The decision to invade Iraq in 2003, he writes, produced an animated debate on the question of whether the United States was, or was becoming an empire. He writes, "few writers, however, were aware that the debate that began in 2003 rehearsed arguments that had been advanced with equal fervor in 1898. Then, as a century later, a small group of Republican conservatives pumped up the pressure that led to war." And like 1898 they were able to capitalize on a nationalist reaction "a crisis linked to foreign agency" (724). The 1898 argument for war was more varied, as it is difficult to argue that Teddy Roosevelt was a 'conservative,' for example. The imperialists back then were not a conspiracy, and the false assumptions about the sinking of the Maine as a *casus belli* pale beside the outright lies told before 'Shock and Awe' launched the forever war against terror.

Antony Hopkins has written a stunning book. We are immensely in his debt for restoring great narrative history to the top shelf in a book that ranges in its erudition from a Mediaeval Middle Eastern historian to Captain America to make its points.

⁴ Lloyd C. Gardner, *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), 21-2.

Review by Dane Kennedy, The George Washington University

Who says you cannot judge a book by its cover? Anyone who expects this 980-page tome to emphasize the global significance of the American empire would be well advised to look carefully at the cover illustration. An 1899 cartoon celebrating the United States' acquisition of colonies from Spain, it shows Uncle Sam and John Bull as Janus-headed figures whose collective girth encompasses the globe. In Hopkins's estimation, "Britain's global dominance set the parameters for other modernizing states" (283), including the United States. So did Britain's decline: the end of its empire marked the end of empires *tout court*, according to Hopkins. America may have become a hegemon once the postwar era of decolonization had drawn to a close, but it was no longer an empire. Paradoxically, then, the purpose of Hopkins's big book is to cut the American empire down to size. The subtitle, "a global history," is not meant to imply that its empire was, or is, global in scale, but rather to insist that it "needs to be placed in the matrix formed by other Western empires, especially that of Britain" (445).

There is much to be said in favor of Hopkins's approach. First, it provides a healthy corrective to the exceptionalist perspective that still shapes too many narratives of American history. Second, it reveals some striking similarities between the policies the United States pursued in its overseas possessions and those employed by other Western empires. And, third, it shows that America's imperial project should be seen as a party to the broader processes of globalization that have given rise to the modern world economy. As an acclaimed economic historian whose previous works include important studies of the British Empire and globalization in world history, Hopkins is superbly qualified to address all of these issues.¹ In addition, his immense erudition, eloquence, and wit make this at once a formidable and engaging study.

Yet John Bull is such a looming presence in this project that he overshadows its ostensible subject, the American empire, in the first half of the book and obscures its distinctive character in the second half. Hopkins begins the book with an extended discussion of what made Britain "a military-fiscal state like no other" (53), engineered to establish a vast overseas empire in the eighteenth century. True, British policies also provoked increasing discontent among American colonists, but Hopkins does not turn his attention to the North American colonies until he's past the 100-page mark. Nor does he believe that Britain's imperial influence ended with the American Revolution and the founding of the United States. From 1783 to 1861, Hopkins argues, Americans confronted "the classic postcolonial dilemma: how to make formal independence effective" (187). This period was a "protracted exercise in decolonization" (7), especially in the economic and cultural realms. Even after the Civil War, the country struggled to forge a distinct national identity that disentangled it from Britain. The United States didn't become a "fully independent state" (337) until 1898, which also happens to be when Hopkins believes it became an empire.

By viewing America's first hundred years of existence through the lens of decolonization and what Kwame Nkrumah would later term neo-colonialism,² Hopkins offers a fresh and provocative interpretation of that

¹ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2015*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016); A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002). For an appreciation of Hopkins' contributions to the discipline, see Emily Brownell and Toyin Falola, eds., *Africa, Empire and Globalization: Essays in Honor of A. G. Hopkins* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2011).

² Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965).

history. He makes the compelling point that the United States confronted many of the same constraints and challenges that afflicted the postcolonial states of Africa and Asia in the late twentieth century. As such, its experience was not exceptional. It was, however, distinctive, as Hopkins points out elsewhere in his study. And this is where his analysis of nineteenth-century America falls short. By minimizing the importance of its political independence and stressing instead its continued economic and cultural dependence on Britain, Hopkins downplays the significance of its territorial expansion across the continent. “It is hard to argue,” he asserts, “that the United States created a continental empire in the nineteenth century” (237). Actually, it is not: many historians have done so, pointing to the country’s campaigns of extermination against Indians, its war against Mexico, and its other acts of aggression against neighboring peoples and polities as evidence of empire-building.³ It only becomes hard, it seems, if one takes the view that a country cannot create an empire until it becomes ‘fully independent’ from its former imperial master’s economic and cultural bonds—and unless it then, ironically, emulates that master by pursuing its imperial ambitions overseas.

The expansion of the United States across the continent was a case of nation-building, according to Hopkins, who compares it to the consolidation of other “late-start countries” (336) like Italy and Germany. But how apt is this comparison? Neither of these countries came into being by engaging in the extermination, expulsion, or subjugation of indigenous populations by waves of invading colonists—though both certainly used these methods to acquire overseas possessions. Other examples seem more apt. Consider Russia’s conquest of Central Asia and Siberia, a continental empire-building endeavor that looks a lot like America’s contemporaneous expansion westward. Even more apropos may be the relentless march across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and southern Africa by British settlers, whose land hunger contributing mightily to the expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. While Hopkins readily acknowledges the similarities between these cases of settler colonialism and the American experience, he leaves unanswered a crucial question: how can they be said to have contributed to the expansion of empire while the settlers of the American West did nothing of the sort?

For Hopkins, America’s entry into the imperial arena occurred quite suddenly in 1898 with its annexation of Hawai’i and acquisition of the Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. This newly founded “insular empire” (an odd phrase for overseas possessions) is the principal focus of the second half of the book. The dearth of studies of the American empire overseas, Hopkins asserts, “is an omission unparalleled in the historiography of modern empires” (492)—a valid point, and one that Niall Ferguson alluded to when he called America “the empire that dare not speak its name” and that Daniel Immerwahr slyly acknowledges in the title of his forthcoming book, *How to Hide an Empire*.⁴ Determined to rectify this neglect, Hopkins conducts a richly detailed, highly illuminating analysis of how the United States shaped the fortunes of these islands and their peoples. He is especially good at exposing the connections between economic and political interests in each of the island territories and in their relations with Washington D.C.

³ William H. Goetzmann was an influential early advocate in *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966) and other books. More recent works on the subject include Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), and Walter Nugent, *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansionism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

⁴ Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America’s Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

An especially intriguing figure in this story is the sugar magnate Henry Havemeyer, who seemed to have had a finger in every pie.

So there is much to admire in Hopkins's study of this 'insular empire.' But does the category itself hold up to scrutiny? While the United States acquired the four island territories of Cuba, Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines at the same time, it dealt with them in quite different ways. Puerto Rico and the Philippines became colonies in the conventional European imperial mold, though their subsequent trajectories diverged dramatically: the Philippines gained independence after World War II while Puerto Rico became more closely tied to the United States as a so-called 'commonwealth.' Cuba was directly governed by the United States for only a few years after the Spanish-American War, though Hopkins rightly insists that the island nation remained an informal American protectorate for decades to come. But this begs a bigger question: why doesn't he include in his 'insular empire' other territories that the U.S. occupied, often for longer periods of time (Haiti from 1915 to 1934, for example), or that also became informal U.S. protectorates (a category that includes a number of Central American and Caribbean countries)? And then there is Hawai'i, which was formally annexed by the United States in 1898 and became a state in 1959. If Hawai'i is part of this 'insular empire,' why not Alaska? That territory waited far longer than Hawai'i for statehood—a 92-year delay from the date the U.S. purchased it in 1867. Or what about New Mexico? It took 62 years to become a state, and, as was the case with Hawai'i, racial issues delayed its admission. My point, then, is two-fold: the 'insular empire' category imposes an artificial commonality among the four overseas territories it examines and it draws an arbitrary distinction between these territories and others within the continental United States. At the root of this category error, I would suggest, is Hopkins's insistence on viewing the American empire in terms of—and measuring it against—the British empire.

Lest I sound too critical in my assessment of *American Empire*, let me hasten to add that it is in many respects a remarkable achievement, a grand history that combines great ambition, immense learning, and illuminating insights. Its insistence on the centrality of economic forces to the making of the modern world is compelling and important, and its thesis that a dialectical dynamic gave rise to three successive stages of globalization, which in turn shaped the course of empires, deserves serious attention and debate. No one who studies modern empires and America's place among them can ignore this book.

I have been waiting fifteen years for this book. While an undergraduate at the University of Texas at Austin in the early 2000s, I took both of Anthony G. Hopkins's courses on the British Empire. As I worked my way through his and Peter Cain's magisterial *British Imperialism* for the first time, I can still vividly recall our long conversations during his office hours as we both looked on with dismay at the Bush Administration's invasion and occupation of Iraq.¹ And we had a lot to talk about. Imperial hubris was on full display. Neocons brazenly embraced the term 'empire' in their defense of the U.S. militarist project.² Pro-war talking heads from think tanks dominated the news cycle. Misleading historical analogies between the United States and the British Empire were trotted out in editorial pages and influential journals in support of the occupation.³ Historians of empire who were critical of the war, despite having much to say on the subject, were notable only for their absence from the public debate, an exclusion that frustrated Hopkins to no end. *American Empire*, however, was yet a gleam in his eye, as he was busy putting the finishing touches on his second installment conceptualizing and historicizing globalization, laying the groundwork for today's 'global turn.'⁴

Hopkins's first published forays into the field of U.S. imperial history included a short response piece in *Current History* in 2006, followed by articles in the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* and the *Journal of Global History* in 2007.⁵ That same year, I joined the University of Texas at Austin's History Ph.D. program upon Hopkins's urging. I immediately noticed that his office had been transformed to make room for the new book project. There were now mounds of academic articles on U.S. imperialism stacked dangerously high on his desk and floor, and long rows of similarly themed books lining his shelves as he systematically went about deconstructing and synthesizing the historiography of the American Empire.

¹ The third edition has recently been published. P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2015* (London: Routledge, 2016).

² See, for example, the March 2003 issue of the *National Interest*; and "The United States Is, and Should Be, an Empire: A New Atlantic Initiative Debate," American Enterprise Institute, 17 July 2003, <https://web.archive.org/web/20040613032929/http://www.aei.org/events/filter..eventID.428/transcript.asp>.

³ See, for instance, Niall Ferguson, "Egypt 1882: A Fine Template for Running Baghdad Today," *London Times*, 1 June 2003, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/egypt-1882-a-fine-template-for-running-baghdad-today-nshpc8kv76r>; and Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 84 (September-October 2005): 87-104.

⁴ A.G. Hopkins, ed., *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). The first volume appeared four years earlier. See A.G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002). A follow up of sorts recently appeared in the April 2017 issue of *Itinerario*, edited by Brett Bennett.

⁵ Hopkins, "The 'Victory Strategy': Grand Bargain or Grand Illusion?," *Current History* 105 (January 2006): 14-19; Hopkins, "Capitalism, Nationalism and the New American Empire," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35:1 (March 2007): 95-117; Hopkins, "Comparing British and American Empires," *Journal of Global History* 2:3 (November 2007): 395-404.

Hopkins being a consummate perfectionist, nary a page went unturned. With the Iraq War winding down, discussions during office hours began turning to critical reappraisals of the imperial role of U.S. domestic sugar interests, revisiting Charles Beard's marginalized writings of the early 1930s, and questioning the 'surplus capital' thesis that is assumed to have driven America's search for new markets. By the time I was putting the finishing touches on my dissertation in 2011 and as colleagues were doing the same on Hopkins's *festschrift*,⁶ draft chapters of what would become *American Empire* were beginning to replace the stacks of journals on his desk. The end result is the formidable tome I now hold in my hands. It was worth the wait.

"Globalization and empires," Hopkins begins, "were interlinked throughout the three centuries covered by this study" (6). The American Empire was no exception. Hopkins's sweeping exploration of what he terms 'imperial globalization' took place across three overlapping phases. This periodization allows him to emphasize both continuity and change over three centuries. The first phase, 'proto-globalization,' characterized the colonial period from the seventeenth century to 1783, and centered upon the imperial expansion and contraction wrought from the European adoption of the military-fiscal state; within the American context, this phase culminated in formal American independence from the British Empire in 1783. The second phase, 'modern globalization,' in the U.S. context stretched from 1783 to 1914. This included a "protracted exercise in decolonization"; from 1783, the young American Empire was still noticeably "subject to Britain's informal influence." The United States only achieved full "effective independence" by the turn of the nineteenth century once it had industrialized, established a strong nation-state, and acquired an overseas empire (7). The book's third phase, 'post-colonial globalization,' connects the neglected early-twentieth-century U.S. insular empire to the broader global trend towards decolonization that characterized the decades after 1945. Through the prism of these phases, Hopkins is able to anchor "the process in time and suggests how the history of the United States can be joined to the history of Western Europe, and indeed the world" (12). It is a complex framework. As a result, much like the complicated process of globalization itself, the book's trajectory is at times circuitous. But with Hopkins as navigator, one never gets lost.

The overlapping phases of proto-and modern globalization were particularly fluid in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century America. Considering that this book project began well over a decade ago, it is fair to say that Hopkins's chapters here presage the nascent 'global turn' within studies of the Early American Republic.⁷ Armed with his comparative eye for details and the work of intrepid scholarship exploring the U.S. variant of the European-style military-fiscal state and its continued reliance on British finance,⁸ Hopkins offers a fresh

⁶ Toyin Falola and Emily Brownell, eds., *Africa, Empire and Globalization: Essays in Honor of A. G. Hopkins* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2011).

⁷ See, for instance, the January 2018 *Diplomatic History* forum "Globalizing the Early American Republic," which features excellent articles by Konstantin Dierks, Nancy Shoemaker, Emily Conroy-Krutz, Rachel Tamar Van, and Courtney Fullilove.

⁸ Max Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Edling, *A Hercules in the Cradle: War, Money and the American State, 1783-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). See also the recent book by Justin du Rivage, *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

interpretation for the Revolutionary era. By applying an analytical framework more commonly used in studies of twentieth-century decolonization, he argues that while the United States gained formal independence in 1783, the country in many ways remained financially and culturally dependent upon Britain, its main creditor. “Britain’s military-fiscal state sustained Anglo-American relations while also beginning the transition from formal to informal means of influence,” particularly in the first half of the century (47). Hopkins then situates the rise of the late-nineteenth-century American Empire within the larger integrative processes of modern globalization that were taking place across Western Europe. In so doing, he demonstrates how American approaches to industrialization and nation-building were far from exceptional; they paralleled those of the late-developing European powers, and even echoed growing calls from within the British Empire demanding protectionism and imperial federation to “enable a Greater Britain” (273).⁹ This section of the book also goes a long way in helping to better situate the United States within the nineteenth-century British World of settler colonies, an ambiguous position that has challenged historians of Anglo-American imperialism for more than a decade.¹⁰

But Hopkins takes care not to push the comparisons between the late-developing U.S. Empire and the developed British too far. After all, the Republican-led turn to ‘infant industrial’ protectionism across the late nineteenth century was the reverse image of ‘Free Trade England,’ what Karl Polanyi famously described as part of a nineteenth-century ‘double movement’ of late-developing states against British laissez faire.¹¹ As a result, the imperial economic policies that the U.S. Empire implemented in its formal and informal colonies obtained from the Spanish in 1898 bore far more similarities to those of US navalist Alfred Thayer Mahan’s mercantilist hero Jean-Baptiste Colbert or to German-American protectionist theorist Friedrich List than to British free-trade imperialism.¹² These differences in fiscal and imperial practice, Hopkins advances, owed

⁹ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Marc-William Palen, *The “Conspiracy” of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalisation, 1846-1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), chaps. 6, 8; Amanda Behm, *Imperial History and the Global Politics of Exclusion: Britain, 1880-1940* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), chap. 4.

¹⁰ From the British imperial side, see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Rachel Bright and Andrew R. Dilley, “After the British World,” *Historical Journal* 60 (June 2017): 547-568; David Thackeray, *Culture, Ethnicity and Market in the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in press). From the U.S. side, see, for example, Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010); David Sim, *A Union Forever: The Irish Question and U.S. Foreign Relations in the Victorian Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Stephen Tuffnell, “Anglo-American Inter-Imperialism: U.S. Expansion and the British World, c. 1865-1914,” *Britain and the World* 7 (September 2014): 174-195; Tuffnell, “Business in the Borderlands: American Trade in the South African Marketplace, 1871-1902,” in David Thackeray, Andrew Thompson, and Richard Toye, eds., *Imagining Britain’s Economic Future, c. 1800-1975: Trade Consumerism and Global Markets* (London: Palgrave Macmillan): 43-68.

¹¹ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1944).

¹² Marc-William Palen, “Empire by Imitation? U.S. Economic Imperialism in a British World System,” in Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University

much to the era's uneven economic development and to longer-term U.S. attempts to end its effective dependence upon the British: to the point that, by 1914, U.S. politicians could lay claim to having "joined other advanced countries in attaining the highest stage of political and economic development. This stage included bearing the burden of imperial responsibilities that fell unevenly upon 'civilized' countries" (336).

Similarly, the assumed cultural hegemony of Anglo-Saxonism and Social Darwinism upon the turn-of-the-century imperial mindset has now become a ubiquitous point of association between the British and American Empires. And yet this was also a time when Anglo-American rapprochement was far from great. The pervasiveness of anti-British sentiment within both major political parties across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries went a long way in dulling the imperial edge of Anglo-Saxonist and Social Darwinian ideas. Some Anglo-Saxonists like William Graham Sumner and David Starr Jordan even used these same Social Darwinian theories to argue *against* U.S. imperial expansion. And while *American Empire* does deploy more than a few of these familiar Anglo-Saxonist tropes and cast of characters, it does so with a better awareness of these tensions. It also does it with some unexpected cultural twists; Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan—born of British noble stock but raised by apes in the jungles of Africa—even swings through as "the symbol and savior of Anglo-Saxon manhood," his marriage to an American, Jane, a personification of "Anglo-Saxon union" and giving "notice of the arrival of a new global superpower" (439).

U.S. dependence upon the British across the nineteenth century thereafter led to a great deal of imperial aping in the early twentieth century, as the tail end of the modern phase of globalization moved into its post-colonial phase. Hopkins explores this within a comparative framework that sets up his in-depth investigation of the long-overlooked 'unexceptional' American insular empire—U.S. diplomatic history's own absent-minded empire, to borrow a phrase from J. R. Seeley's *The Expansion of England*—across the first half of the twentieth century, the first such comprehensive study since the early 1960s.¹³ The long-term disappearance of the U.S. insular empire *in toto* is, Hopkins rebukes, "an omission unparalleled in the historiography of modern empires" (496). And he makes a compelling case. To set it up, he first provides a detailed reassessment of the Spanish-American War and of the global role of sugar in shaping subsequent U.S. colonial policies.¹⁴ He then spends a good chunk of the second half of the book showing that, despite numerous differences in circumstances and imperial mismanagement, the early-twentieth-century American colonial empire was in many ways a microcosmic reflection of the European empires. The growing crisis within the U.S. insular empire mirrored the global uptick in anti-colonial nationalism amid the economic depression and retrenchment of the 1930s. This was, Hopkins suggests, the "crucial decade" for setting up what followed the Second World War: the global retreat from formal empire that characterized decolonization (490). From a global historical perspective, this "final crisis of the modern imperial system was a symptom of a momentous shift that was taking place in the nature of global integration" from modern to postcolonial globalization (492). This "third and still current phase" oversaw the end of the formal American Empire by 1959 (696).

Press, 2018); Palen, "The Imperialism of Economic Nationalism, 1890-1913," *Diplomatic History* 39:1 (January 2015): 157-185; Palen, *The "Conspiracy" of Free Trade*.

¹³ J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1883); Whitney T. Perkins, *Denial of Empire: The United States and Its Dependencies* (Leiden: A.W. Sythoff, 1962).

¹⁴ On the latter, see also April Merleux, *Sugar and Civilization: American Empire and the Cultural Politics of Sweetness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

The Philippines was granted independence in 1946; Puerto Rico received Commonwealth status in 1952; and 1959 witnessed the Cuban Revolution and the granting of statehood to Hawai'i. By the time the U.S. admitted defeat in Vietnam in the early 1970s, Hopkins concludes, the one-time U.S. colonial *generalísimo* of the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific had been demoted to Captain America, no longer an empire but an “aspiring hegemon” (736).

Encompassing such a big topic invariably necessitates giving more attention to some aspects of American imperial history than to others, as Hopkins acknowledges at the outset. It now awaits others to supply the missing pieces. For example, although continental expansion is certainly present, more on the earlier settler colonial project and the role of Native peoples within it could prove fruitful, as this, too, was an important element of the imperial globalization puzzle bridging America's proto- and modern phases.¹⁵ And how might the early-nineteenth-century American colonization project in Liberia, which was modeled upon the British colony of Sierra Leone, fit within Hopkins's decolonial and comparative framework? The book's cursory engagement with 'dollar diplomacy' was particularly surprising, considering the important role that U.S. financial coercion played in the creation and maintenance of the twentieth-century insular and informal empire, and considering the book's otherwise strong emphasis upon the connection between economic integration and the U.S. imperial project. But it is also the sign of a good book, already running close to 1000 pages, when it can leave the reader wanting more. We have in *American Empire* an elegantly written, carefully argued, comparative study of the entangled histories of U.S. imperialism, decolonization, and globalization across three centuries. In other words, we have a book that only Tony Hopkins could have written.

¹⁵ Some great work on this has been published since *American Empire* went to press. See, for instance, Michael A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015); Brian DeLay, Alexandra Harmon, and Paul C. Rosier's "Native American Forum" in the November 2015 issue of *Diplomatic History*; Robert Michael Morrissey, *Empire by Collaboration: Indians, Colonists, and Governments in Colonial Illinois Country* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Rachel B. Herrmann, "'No Useless Mouth': Iroquoian Food Diplomacy in the American Revolution," *Diplomatic History* 41:1 (January 2017): 20-49.

Author's Response by A. G. Hopkins, Pembroke College, Cambridge

Like other authors before me, I am immensely grateful to my commentators, all of whom are noted specialists in the ever-expanding fields of imperial and international history, for the time they have spent on my substantial book and for their thoughtful observations on its challenging argument. When *American Empire* was published a year ago, I wondered whether I would succeed in provoking historians of the United States more than historians of European empires, or whether the balance would tilt the other way. The fears of authors, like their ambitions, are nearly always disappointed. In the event, my book has been largely bypassed on both sides of the Atlantic.¹ Accordingly, I am especially grateful to H-Diplo for beginning a discussion that I hope will reanimate some neglected themes in the history of both the United States and Western Europe.

The sense of irony that Lloyd Gardner refers to in his opening sentence has no place in my response to his generous remarks. Gardner's numerous books on the history of U.S. diplomacy in the twentieth century have earned him the rare distinction of being a sage as well as a scholar. He could easily have phrased his comments to reflect his own special interests and used his superior knowledge to underline the limits of my own schematic account of U.S. international relations. But, being a sage, he has seen the big picture I sketched, traced it from the eighteenth century to the present, and added his own felicitous touches.

I am especially grateful to Gardner for staying his hand over my treatment of the Wisconsin School, of which he is an eminent member. His restraint gives me an opportunity, not otherwise offered by the Roundtable, to comment on how a New Left stance might look today, some half a century after its first influential contributions to an understanding of U.S. imperialism appeared. I was conscious of writing at a moment when economic history was beginning to enjoy a revival after a long period of being out of favour, and consequently of the need to engage with a branch of the literature that some scholars had written off (12, 339-343). The great and enduring merit of the Wisconsin School was to see that the lunge into imperialism in 1898 could not be explained adequately by immediate events but had to be set in the context of longer-term developments and specifically of the evolution of capitalism. This position remains, in my view, persuasive. Chapters 7 and 8 show how the fraught processes of industrialization and nation-building in the United States during the second half of the century culminated in a series of economic and political crises in the 1880s and 1890s—as they did in Europe.² The Wisconsin School's approach to the issue needs amending, but it is certainly not, as one critic asserted, “an artefact of the past” (341).

Admittedly, I differ in emphasis from those members of the Wisconsin School who see a direct connection between continental expansion and the events 1898. The long history of aggressive expansion undoubtedly

¹ My gratitude goes to three scholars who have reviewed the book: Wm Roger Louis, “‘American Empire’ Review: Signing up for the Imperial Club,” *Wall Street Journal*, 23 March 2018; David Armitage, “The Anti-Imperial Empire?,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 August, 2018; and Joseph M. Fronczak, “Hurricane Empire”, *Jacobin Magazine*, 9 June 2018.

² Dane Kennedy's summary of my argument at this point, suggesting that “America's entry into the imperial arena occurs quite suddenly in 1898,” does not quite capture my intention, which was to identify novel causes that arose at the end of the century without denying that the events of 1898 followed a long history of assertive expansion.

created predispositions in favour of war with Spain. As I read it, however, the literature now available justifies the weight I placed on the novel developments traced at length in Chapters 7 and 8. A more significant difference lay in the identification of the business interests that were most involved in pressing for an imperial solution to the problems that arose at the close of the century. The view that the search for markets at a time of economic difficulty was the main consideration struck me as being implausible, given the poverty of the islands and the political instability some of them were experiencing. I was intrigued to discover that this conclusion was consistent with the rarely cited judgment of Charles Beard (378-379). It was the neglected import trade, particularly in sugar, that had far more at stake and was more closely involved. In this connection, I was glad to see that Dane Kennedy picked out the extraordinary Henry Havemeyer, the sugar king, for the special mention he deserves.³ The other difference worth noting is the importance I attach to the role played by nationalist and religious pressure groups. These were not, in my reading, to be set against economic pressures, but were part of the general crisis of the 1880s and 1890s, which issued in the Republican Party's determination to preserve the development path it had charted since the Civil War.

Elsewhere, Gardner caps my own quotation from Secretary of State William Seward (borrowed from an article by Stuart Ward) that the American Revolution was "the first act in the great drama of decolonization on this continent" (146) with another linking the 'spirit of independence' to slave reform, and to a particular definition of liberty that joined it to imperialism.⁴ It is evident that North and South were advancing different conceptions of national unity and that the South envisaged the further expansion of a slave empire, but Gardner is right in thinking that I did not investigate the prospect of Northern imperialism, as opposed to expansion, beyond noting Seward's highly individual advocacy and President Abraham Lincoln's momentary interest in resettling slaves in Africa. Later, as is well known, the inflatable concept of liberty played a prominent part in justifying the acquisitions of 1898 and in validating the civilising mission throughout the world in the twentieth century (373-382). I am grateful, too, for Gardner's quotation from historian Frederick Jackson Turner, which makes the point I was heading towards rather better than I did myself. Expansion across the continent and overseas was a projection of an isolationist state of mind – a paradox that is present today and puzzles foreign observers now, as it did then. I was also fascinated to learn that Walter Prescott Webb, one of Turner's most distinguished disciples, was President Lyndon Johnson's speechwriter and drinking companion. As a former occupant of the Walter Prescott Webb Chair in History in the University of Texas at Austin, I fear that I may not have upheld all the standards that Webb set.

I must thank Mario Del Pero most warmly for composing such a thorough and careful summary of my book, which he finds "impressively learned and sophisticated," though also "at times quite frustrating." Perfection, it seems, has eluded me yet again, though I can claim a record of consistency in this regard that has accompanied me throughout my career. I am particularly grateful to Del Pero for his broad agreement that the period from 1783 to 1861 can be seen as one of dependent development (142-146, 185-190), and that nation-building and industrialization in the United States between 1865 and 1914 complemented similar developments in Western Europe during that time (241-243, 281-286, 287-298, 232-236). I appreciate, too,

³ I am glad to be able to express my debt here to Luzviminda B. Francisco and Jonathan S. Fast, for their remarkable and unjustly neglected book, *Conspiracy of Empire: Big Business, Corruption, and the Politics of Imperialism in America, 1876-1907* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1985).

⁴ Quoted in Stuart Ward, "The European Provenance of Decolonization," *Past & Present* 230 (2016), 232. Seward was speaking in 1853.

Del Pero's generous assessment (in Chapters 11-14) of my treatment of colonial rule between 1898 and 1959, which attempted to rescue the 'forgotten empire' (494) from a long period of neglect.

I now turn to the source of Del Pero's 'frustrations,' which at some points he found "quite annoying." I can easily imagine the irritation I might inadvertently have caused and of course greatly regret. Errors and even misconceptions can be committed and admitted; frustrations suggest barriers to reaching the point of being able to deal with them. Despite these obstacles, Del Pero succeeds in making three main criticisms, which I shall deal with in turn.

The longest criticism is of a "form of presentism" that risks "essentializing – and thus, paradoxically, de-historicising" both the U.S. empire and imperialism in general. This comment is followed by list of quotations from *American Empire* referring to present or recent events. Del Pero has wheeled some heavy artillery in place but has aimed at the wrong target. I take "presentism" to mean anachronism, and anachronism to refer to the procedure of attributing, inappropriately, current intentions and events to the past. The most celebrated example in the Anglo-Saxon literature refers to interpretations that treat the past as a stepping stone to an approved present of liberty and democracy.⁵ However, I took care in *American Empire* to distance myself from this familiar pitfall. A persistent motif of the book is precisely the need to give prominence to themes other than liberty and democracy in understanding U.S. history. I also criticise what seem to me to be anachronisms, such as comparisons that join the United States to Rome. Most of Del Pero's examples are not of this order but refer specifically to the decolonised states of the late twentieth century. It should be quite clear from my full and detailed text, however, that my conception of the United States as being a newly decolonised state after 1783 is founded on the literature relating to that period, even if my approach draws on my knowledge of the process of decolonization after World War II. The quotations Del Pero refers to have not been read into the past from the present but read out of the past from sources that are independent of it. Since it is incontrovertible that the United States was the first important decolonised state in the modern Western world, it would have been remiss not to have referred to its more recent successors.

Del Pero's next concern is with the size of the book, which he thinks could be reduced by half. I certainly feel his pain, but it is worth pausing before reaching for the shredder. Del Pero is too modest to mention his own book on this subject, which I apologise for overlooking and hope to refer to in future.⁶ It weighs in at nearly 600 pages and has fewer citations and a shorter index than mine, which has 738 pages of text.⁷ Had I written three volumes, each covering one of the three centuries from about 1700 to the present, I might well have found myself criticised for allocating only 246 pages to each century. Such calculations, of course, are only one aspect of the matter. Established expectations also play a part in readers' responses to the size of books. Biographies of presidents appear regularly at around 1,000 pages without raising an eyebrow; volumes in the *Oxford History of the United States* are roughly the same length, even though each covers only about 30 years.

⁵ The classic statement is Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: Bell, 1931).

⁶ Mario Del Pero, *Libertà e imperio: Gli Stati Uni e il mondo, 1776-2011* (Rome: Laterza, 2011).

⁷ My gratitude to the staff at Princeton University Press is boundless. They gave my manuscript detailed personal attention and saw it through production with professional efficiency. It is rare in today's publishing world to find a firm that will allow almost 200 pages of citations and provide an index of 50 pages.

Yet, the almost biblical status of the series insulates its ‘weighty tomes’ from criticism, at least on grounds of size.

Nevertheless, I accept that my book is undoubtedly a daunting prospect. I think (and certainly hope) that the main reason is that it stretches the reader over centuries and regions, each of which has its own complex literature and controversies. Specifically, it engages with two distinct historiographies, one dealing with the United States and the other with European imperialism (41). I was aware that the considerable range would put readers to the test. I thought it likely that each group would find some of what I said familiar, perhaps over-familiar, while perhaps feeling overburdened by the segment of work they had not previously studied.⁸ It is for this reason that I discuss the problem explicitly both at the outset and in the conclusion (41, 692-693). I was conscious that I was attempting to scale mountains of research built up by generations of distinguished scholars. As I saw it, I had a responsibility to show specialists in both camps that I had read enough of the literature for my interpretation to be taken seriously. I did not have the authority to overturn what David Armitage has aptly called “the pieties of American history.”⁹ Nevertheless, I hoped to use my status as an outsider to view established themes from a fresh angle, and in this way to suggest some modifications to conventional approaches (8-9, 691). Additionally, I wanted to provide lecturers with sufficient material to include new themes and information in their teaching programs. In my judgement, a book half the size would not have met these requirements.

Del Pero’s third comment questions whether, as a colonial power, the United States was as unexceptional as I suggest it was. Some of his illustrations, however, were not, as he puts it, “quite exceptional.” For example, the United States was not the only Western empire to benefit from Britain’s benign protection in the nineteenth century: so, too, did the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, and Italy.¹⁰ Other features, such as the inheritance from Spain, the size and wealth of the United States, and anti-imperial movements elsewhere are already discussed in my book, as Del Pero scrupulously acknowledges. Whether or not these examples should alter my central argument is, in my view, a matter of emphasis. Perhaps a solution can be found by distinguishing between the genus ‘empire’ and the species ‘United States’. My argument is that that, down to the mid-twentieth century, the essential feature of empire, as I define it, placed the United States in the same category as other Western empires, but that this claim is consistent with recognising distinctive variations of the kind that gave each empire its specific features.

I am equally grateful to Dane Kennedy, a noted imperial historian and a generous colleague, for his thoughtful contribution. He approves, in general terms, the broad context of globalization that forms the context of the whole book, my corrections to the exceptionalist perspective, and the “striking similarities” I draw between the colonial policies of the United States and the other Western empires. As Kennedy is an

⁸ This appears to have happened. It is understandable that Del Pero, an expert on U.S. history, should think that my summary of the main features of the Constitution is unnecessary, but he forgets that I am trying to involve imperial historians, who abandon the U.S. after 1783.

⁹ Armitage, “The Anti-Imperial Empire.”

¹⁰ And, in East Asia, Japan.

authority on decolonization in the twentieth century, I was especially glad to see that he found my treatment of the United States as a newly decolonized state after 1783 “compelling.”

Unsurprisingly, Kennedy also has several reservations. These puzzled me until I realized that he may have overlooked or even misunderstood important features of my argument set out in Chapter 1. If this is the case, I must bear some responsibility for failings of clarity and emphasis. The first issue is whether I exaggerate the part played by Britain in what I refer to as the ‘American Empire,’ since I do not turn my attention to the mainland colonies until the book is “past the 100-page mark.” This statement is formally correct, but it may mislead readers by omitting to explain the connection between the previous pages and those that follow. As I make clear, the American Empire during this period was the British Empire in North America before 1783 and the subsequent story of Britain’s continuing informal influence during the first half of the nineteenth century. Chapter 1 (10-41) lays out the purpose of the book, relates it to the existing literature, defines the terms used, and summarises the organisation and content of the remaining chapters. This chapter, or something like it, was in my view a necessary part of the whole undertaking; without it, readers would have been left in a country without signposts. Chapter 2 (45-94) on the military-fiscal state sets the scene for the century from 1750 to 1850; its relevance to the next three chapters, which deal exclusively with the United States (95-238), is made explicit in the concluding section (93-94). The point here is not to haggle over numbers but to emphasise that Chapter 2 is essential to my interpretation of the development of the Western world during the period in question. Without it, much of the basis of my reappraisal of U.S. history before and after the Revolution would be missing without action. The rationale for this and the two other contextual chapters (6 and 10) is clearly stated at the outset of the book (41).

Kennedy illustrates his concern that I might have minimized the importance of formal independence in 1783 by suggesting that I downplay the significance of U.S. territorial expansion across the continent. I am not sure that this is the best way to contest my argument. My *autocritique* (offered here to assist future commentators) would begin by examining those elements of sovereignty that I may have underestimated. Continental expansion is not one of them. I draw attention to the lure of territory in causing the Revolution; I emphasise Britain’s subsequent contribution in funding both the westward movement and state-building; I note the important protective role of the Royal Navy in ensuring that ‘Johnny foreigner’ did not interrupt the process. Furthermore, Chapter 5 on ‘Wars of Incorporation’ contains considerable material on the assertive measures taken to acquire territory across the continent. Given that the predominantly international theme of the book ‘is one facet of U.S. history and not its totality’ (8, repeated on 21), I doubt that I could have done more than this without making the book even larger, which would then have obliged me to offer additional apologies to Del Pero.

At this point, Kennedy reaches too quickly for his empire gun to shoot down my claim that the United States did not create a continental empire in the nineteenth century. Imperialist expansion, which undoubtedly occurred, does not necessarily result in the creation of an empire, as I note in Chapter 5 (234-238). The problem here lies in the definition of the term ‘empire’, which I examine in Chapter 1 before stating how it will be applied in the interpretation that follows (12, 21-32). Kennedy does not discuss my definition but uses the term in the very general sense that I explicitly criticise on the grounds that, by including a wide diversity

of features, it validates as similarities claims that stray too far from the principle that like should be compared to like.¹¹

Further misunderstandings, as I see them, follow. My discussion of late-start modernizing countries in Chapter 7 centres on two key developments, nation-building and industrialization, and not on the control or elimination of indigenous people. It is this process that justifies the comparison with Germany and Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century. Russia's eastward expansion does indeed look 'a lot like' U.S. westward expansion – at first sight. On inspection, however, it is apparent that the two movements differed in important respects: eastward migration occurred much later in Russia than westward expansion did in the United States; indigenous ethnic groups in Russia's eastern regions were more diverse and far more numerous than Native Americans; Russia, unlike the United States, was an unqualified autocracy before 1905; the administration had a hierarchical structure and managed provinces that had different constitutional rights.¹² I judged that there were more appropriate comparators in the (white) settler empire (194-199, 205-207, 235-236, 380). Kennedy then asserts that I fail to reconcile the fact that settlers in the dominions contributed to the expansion of empire with the claim that settlers in the U.S. did not. The answer, which is given in the book, is that settlers in the U.S. created a unified federal polity in which the component states had equal constitutional rights. Imperialist intentions can produce different results.

Finally, Kennedy wonders why I did not include countries other than the four I singled out (The Philippines, Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, and Cuba). The answer, again, is given at the outset of the book (13-15). It was never my intention to cover all possible candidates. I selected the formal, constitutional empire partly because it had been neglected, and partly because it provided the best test of propositions about the organisation, purpose, trajectory, and results of colonial rule.¹³ The territories I chose contained the great majority of colonial subjects under U.S. rule and were representative of the main issues that historians of empire regularly examine.¹⁴ My purpose would not have been served by examining scarcely populated territories or countries where control was intermittent. This procedure did not constitute a "category error," as Kennedy supposes.¹⁵

¹¹ For the record: I do not hold the view that Kennedy attributes to me that countries have to become fully independent before they can create empires.

¹² For additional complications, see Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (London: John Murray, 2000), chapters 6-8.

¹³ Cuba was, in effect, a protectorate. The island was included because it offered a substantial test of the extent to which variations in constitutional status affected evaluations of the 'imperial experience.'

¹⁴ Kennedy regards my use of the word 'insular' to describe the island territories as an "odd choice." I carried the term forward from the existing literature, which goes back to the celebrated "Insular Cases" that occupied the Supreme Court at the beginning of the twentieth century (515-516, 520).

¹⁵ Category errors are not as straightforward as they may seem. If I label a box 'oranges,' fill it with oranges, and then add an apple on the assumption that it qualifies for inclusion, I am committing a category error. If, however, I label a box 'empire,' the question of what should be put into it immediately becomes problematic. Do Greece and Rome have places with the Mughal Empire. Spain, Venice, the Ottoman Empire, the United States, and Great Britain? Should areas that are claimed to be part of an 'informal empire' be included? The answer to these questions depends on the definition

The selection of examples and the comparisons they suggest all follow from my definition of empire, which—to repeat—is set out in Chapter 1. The definition can of course be contested. Without a declared alternative, however, I feel justified in defending the consistency of the arguments derived from it.

Marc Palen's contribution begins with a memoir of the kind that compels us see ourselves as others see us - an experience that in my case should not be repeated too often. My own memory, though increasingly hazy, suggests that he is right. Reading his account now makes me think that the most appropriate descriptor is 'manic.' I summarise in my Preface how it was that President George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq in March 2003 caused me to put down my notes and drafts on the long-promised second edition of my *Economic History of West Africa* and engage in a marathon course of reading and reflection on U.S. history. As Palen correctly observes, the forms of instant history that quickly colonised the pages of daily and weekly publications after the invasion were one irritant; the difficulty of presenting an alternative was another. I published one 'op-ed' in the *New York Times* and wrote others, including one by invitation for the *Washington Post*. None of these made it into print. Of course, many other contributors were clamouring for space and my own offerings may not have met the appropriate standard.

That said, it was also the case that, after a brief period of uncertainty, the main news outlets fell in behind the flag and the troops. It then became unpatriotic to claim that the war would be anything other than a catastrophe that would reverberate through several generations. The Epilogue to *American Empire* tries to convey a sense of the calamitous consequences of this misguided judgment. There is a marked difference in this respect between 1898 and 2003. The war with Spain and its aftermath, especially continuing military action in the Philippines, aroused heated controversy, but opponents of imperialism, who included notables such as former President Grover Cleveland and author Mark Twain, were not silenced by the criticism that they were being unpatriotic, partly because their views had considerable support and were widely publicised. The link between patriotism and militarism, though evident, had still to be permanently embedded.¹⁶

Fortunately for both of us, Mark Palen speedily freed himself from whatever influence I may have had on his preliminary studies. His Ph.D. dissertation was supervised by a colleague, and his career developed subsequently in ways that rapidly established his academic independence. Indeed, it was not long before our roles were reversed. I benefited greatly from his deep knowledge of the competing movements advocating free trade and protection in the late nineteenth century; his comments on some of my draft chapters and our e-mail exchanges saved me from numerous errors on these and related topics. Consequently, some of the criticisms he might justifiably have made on this occasion have already been incorporated into what is now the published version of the manuscript.¹⁷

of empire adopted, which should be appropriate to the specific enquiry in hand. I believe that the illustrations of empire I selected were consistent with the definition I gave in Chapter 1.

¹⁶ A process expertly described by Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁷ As is especially evident in the citations in Chapter 7.

Palen nevertheless identifies important areas where either more thought or more research is needed. I have long been puzzled by the fact that historians have yet to generate a substantial discussion of categories of globalisation and their evolution. I made a tentative start on the problem in 2002 and returned to the subject in Chapter 1 of *American Empire*, but my treatment remains schematic and in need of improvement.¹⁸ Palen notes how the categories I outline assisted my interpretation of the eighteenth century; I would complement his remarks by adding that it was the impressive research of two young scholars in particular that gave me the confidence to develop the interpretation of the Revolution advanced in Chapter 3.¹⁹ Palen's references to the subsequent development of the United States allow me to acknowledge that the problem of characterising the state after 1783 was one of the most intractable in the book, notwithstanding the generous help I received from Max Edling. The existing literature did not offer the ready-made solution I needed, and the evidence suggested that, though the new Republic carried forward elements of the military-fiscal state inherited from Britain, it did so without qualifying for membership of the club.

I am particularly grateful to Palen for keeping the comparison with Europe in view because the other contributions focus, understandably, on the U.S. side of the story. As Chapter 2 argues, the political struggles in the United States between 1783 and 1861 were variations on a theme that also wove its way through the history of Western Europe. There, too, predominantly agricultural, commercial states engaged in a contest to determine the shape of the polity in the aftermath of revolution; there, too, the choice was between perpetuating or restoring versions of the military-fiscal state and opting for more progressive, constitutional forms of government. Moreover, just as the United States can be depicted as being a decolonising state during this period, so too can the European states that emerged from the fall of Napoleon's empire (71-78, 344-46). Chapter 6 then traces the staggered shift towards modernity characterised by nation-building and industrialization during the second half of the century. Here, again, the United States and Europe evolved in parallel, as did their thrust towards imperialism, even though their motives varied in emphasis according to the state of development they had reached (261-91).²⁰ Imperialism, I suggest, was a form of compulsory globalization undertaken to cure, or at least to ease, the strains of transition to the modern world.

Palen's overview also raises the question of how to characterize U.S. power after 1945. As I explain in Chapter 15, the United States was not an empire after World War II in my sense of the term because it was not invested in territorial control for the purpose of integrating other countries. Rather, I suggest, the U.S. was a hegemon, or an aspiring hegemon. This does not mean that the United States was anything other than a major world power, and, at times, the major world power. Nor should the terminology be seen as a way of excusing the U.S. from criticisms that the use of the word 'empire' would automatically suggest to many,

¹⁸ A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 3-10.

¹⁹ Both scholars were also generous enough to allow me to read their work before it was published: Justin du Rivage, *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), James M. Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III: The East India Company and the Crisis and Transformation of Britain's Imperial State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

²⁰ Del Pero wonders why I provided details about the House of Savoy and the policy of the Vatican in assessing the character of Italian imperialism. The answer is that Italy served as an example of a country whose motives for imperialism were primarily political, as opposed to Britain, whose motives were primarily economic. The two cases illustrated the range of motives that stemmed from a common cause: the general crisis of the late nineteenth century.

perhaps most, readers. It is simply, but importantly, a recognition that the means of exercising power in international relations after 1945 had altered radically in response to changes in the character of globalization.

For reasons of space, I shall select just one additional topic, that of informal empire, for further comment. Both Palen and Kennedy think that I should have allocated more space to this subject. I have already referred to some of the reasons, further explained in the book, why I restricted my comments on ‘dollar diplomacy,’ but I can now add two more. In the first place, the definition of informal empire is fraught with difficulties. I have engaged with the problem sufficiently in previous work to know that any assessment requires considerable time and space (21-25). A glance at the literature on Mexico alone confirms that it is sufficiently intimidating to suggest discretion rather than valour. Next, there is already a considerable body of research on U.S. interests in the Caribbean and Central America. I did not see much point in adding to it because the evidence suggested to me that before World War II the United States’ informal ‘empire’ was confined to these areas (446-450), which made it a regional rather than a global power. As persistent readers will have seen, however, Chapter 15 includes a substantial discussion of the nature and extent of U.S. informal influence after World War II.

As always, there is much more that could be said. I would especially welcome further consideration of the social and cultural dimensions of nation-building and imperialism that occupy important sections of the book (172-185, 249-255, 316-332, 334-336, 373-382, 504-509, 727-729). However, given that discussion of a theme as capacious as the American Empire is endless, I should now take a grip on my response to ensure that it does not become as daunting as the book itself. My concluding thoughts are of gratitude to my commentators for composing such balanced appraisals of a subject that is so easily directed by ideology, of admiration for their artistry in saying so much so concisely, and of appreciation of the astute questions they raised about the interpretation I advanced. I am equally grateful to Daniel Immerwahr, whose own book on the island empire will add significantly to our knowledge of this neglected subject, for taking the time to write an Introduction to this roundtable.²¹ The death of scholarship is not criticism: it is neglect. Thanks to my commentators and to H-Diplo, the profession may now give the subject the attention it deserves.

²¹ Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide and Empire: Geography, Territory, and Power in the Greater United States* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2019).