

history of american imperialism

The Complex Tapestry: Exploring the History of American Imperialism

history of american imperialism is a fascinating and often contentious topic that traces the United States' expansion beyond its borders through political, military, and economic means. Unlike European imperial powers that carved up continents in the 19th century, American imperialism evolved through a unique blend of ideology, economic interests, and strategic ambition. Understanding this history offers insights into how the U.S. shaped its role as a global power and the lasting impacts on nations around the world.

Early Foundations of American Imperialism

The seeds of American imperialism were sown long before the U.S. emerged as a global superpower. In the 19th century, the idea of Manifest Destiny—the belief that the U.S. was destined to expand across the North American continent—captured the national imagination. This ideology justified territorial acquisitions such as the Louisiana Purchase (1803), the annexation of Texas (1845), and the Oregon Territory settlement (1846).

Manifest Destiny and Continental Expansion

Manifest Destiny was more than just a slogan; it was a powerful force driving American policy. It reflected a conviction that American values and institutions should spread across the continent. This belief led to conflicts with Native American tribes and Mexico, culminating in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). The war resulted in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which added vast territories like California, Arizona, and New Mexico to the U.S., dramatically expanding its size and influence.

While Manifest Destiny was largely focused on continental expansion, it laid the groundwork for more overt imperialist moves overseas by fostering a mindset that the U.S. had a right—and perhaps a duty—to extend its reach.

The Spanish-American War: A Turning Point

The history of American imperialism took a decisive turn at the close of the 19th century with the Spanish-American War in 1898. This brief but pivotal conflict signaled America's emergence as an imperial power with overseas territories.

From Isolation to Overseas Empire

Before 1898, the U.S. largely adhered to a policy of isolationism, avoiding entanglement in European affairs and overseas colonies. However, economic interests, strategic concerns, and humanitarian

rhetoric converged to push America toward intervention in Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain.

The war's swift victory gave the U.S. control over former Spanish colonies, including Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. The acquisition of the Philippines, in particular, sparked intense debate at home about the morality and practicality of imperialism. Critics argued that imperialism contradicted American democratic ideals, while proponents emphasized the strategic value of naval bases and access to Asian markets.

Economic and Strategic Motivations

American imperialism was driven not only by ideology but also by practical concerns. The late 19th century saw the U.S. economy rapidly industrialize, creating a demand for new markets and raw materials. Overseas territories provided access to both.

Strategically, control of islands like Guam and the Philippines allowed the U.S. Navy to project power into the Pacific, competing with European and Japanese interests. This shift marked the beginning of America's transformation into a global naval power, as envisioned by naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan.

Expanding Influence in the Early 20th Century

The early decades of the 20th century witnessed the United States further entrench its imperialist policies through interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean, often justified by the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.

The Roosevelt Corollary and "Big Stick" Diplomacy

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt articulated the Roosevelt Corollary, asserting that the U.S. had the right to intervene in Latin American countries to stabilize their economies and governments. This was an extension of the Monroe Doctrine, which originally aimed to keep European powers out of the Western Hemisphere.

Roosevelt's "Big Stick" diplomacy—"speak softly and carry a big stick"—meant that the U.S. was willing to use military force to protect its interests. This approach led to interventions in countries like the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Panama. The construction of the Panama Canal (completed in 1914) was a crowning achievement of this era, facilitating global trade and enhancing American military mobility.

Economic Imperialism and Dollar Diplomacy

President William Howard Taft championed "Dollar Diplomacy," a policy aimed at promoting American financial interests abroad, particularly in Latin America and East Asia. Instead of direct

military intervention, the U.S. encouraged American businesses to invest in foreign economies, hoping that economic leverage would secure political influence.

While this approach was less overtly aggressive than Roosevelt's tactics, it still reflected imperialistic ambitions by subordinating the sovereignty of smaller nations to American economic power.

American Imperialism and World Wars

World War I and World War II further shaped the trajectory of American imperialism, shifting it from territorial acquisition to global military and political dominance.

World War I: The U.S. Emerges as a Global Power

Although the U.S. initially pursued neutrality during World War I, its eventual entry in 1917 marked a significant change. American involvement helped tip the balance in favor of the Allies and positioned the U.S. as a key player in post-war diplomacy.

However, the U.S. rejected the League of Nations and retreated somewhat from global commitments, reflecting ambivalence about international entanglements. Despite this, the war set the stage for increased American influence worldwide.

World War II and the Birth of American Global Hegemony

World War II was a watershed moment in the history of American imperialism. The U.S. emerged from the conflict with unparalleled military and economic power. Unlike earlier imperial ventures, postwar American influence was exercised through alliances, economic aid (such as the Marshall Plan), and the establishment of international institutions like the United Nations and NATO.

The Cold War era that followed saw the U.S. engage in a new form of imperialism—ideological and strategic competition with the Soviet Union. This “imperialism of containment” involved military interventions, support for friendly regimes, and economic policies designed to limit communist expansion.

Contemporary Reflections on American Imperialism

Today, the history of American imperialism continues to influence debates about U.S. foreign policy. The legacy of past actions—such as the Philippine-American War, interventions in Latin America, and Cold War conflicts—remains controversial.

The Debate over American Exceptionalism

One enduring theme is the idea of American exceptionalism: the belief that the U.S. has a unique mission to promote democracy and freedom worldwide. Supporters argue that American leadership has helped secure peace and prosperity, while critics contend that imperialism often masked economic exploitation and political domination.

Understanding the history of American imperialism helps contextualize current foreign policy challenges, from military interventions to trade disputes and diplomatic relations.

Lessons from the Past

Reflecting on the history of American imperialism offers important lessons:

- **Complex Motivations:** Imperialism was rarely driven by a single factor; economic interests, strategic concerns, ideology, and domestic politics all played roles.
- **Consequences Matter:** Interventions often had unintended consequences, including anti-American sentiment, regional instability, and long-term conflicts.
- **Balance is Key:** Navigating global leadership requires balancing national interests with respect for sovereignty and international law.

By appreciating these nuances, policymakers and citizens alike can engage more thoughtfully with America's role on the world stage.

The history of American imperialism is a rich and multifaceted story that reveals how a nation once focused inward grew into a dominant force shaping global affairs. Its complexities continue to resonate, reminding us that the past always informs the present in the ever-evolving landscape of international relations.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is American imperialism?

American imperialism refers to the United States' policy and practice of extending its influence and control over other countries through territorial acquisition, economic dominance, and political influence, especially during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

When did American imperialism begin?

American imperialism is generally considered to have begun in the late 19th century, particularly after the Spanish-American War in 1898, when the U.S. acquired territories like Puerto Rico, Guam,

and the Philippines.

What were the main motivations behind American imperialism?

The main motivations included economic interests such as access to new markets and resources, strategic military considerations, national prestige, and the belief in the cultural superiority of American values often framed as the 'civilizing mission.'

How did the Spanish-American War influence American imperialism?

The Spanish-American War marked a turning point by enabling the U.S. to acquire overseas territories like the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico, signaling a shift from continental expansion to overseas imperialism.

What role did the Philippines play in American imperialism?

The Philippines became a major site of American imperialism after the U.S. defeated Spain in 1898 and subsequently fought a brutal war to suppress Filipino independence efforts, establishing a colonial government there until after World War II.

How did American imperialism impact indigenous populations and local cultures?

American imperialism often led to the displacement, marginalization, and cultural suppression of indigenous populations, as well as significant social, economic, and political changes that disrupted traditional ways of life.

What is the legacy of American imperialism in contemporary U.S. foreign policy?

The legacy includes ongoing military presence overseas, influence in global economic systems, and debates over interventionism and national sovereignty, reflecting the lasting impact of imperialistic practices on U.S. foreign relations.

Additional Resources

History of American Imperialism: An Analytical Review

history of american imperialism traces the evolution of the United States from a relatively isolated post-colonial nation to a dominant global power with extensive territorial, economic, and political influence. This complex and often contentious development has shaped international relations, domestic policies, and America's self-identity over more than two centuries. Understanding the history of American imperialism requires a nuanced exploration of its motivations, manifestations, and consequences, as well as the broader geopolitical context in which

it unfolded.

Early Foundations of American Expansionism

The roots of American imperialism can be traced back to the 19th century, particularly through the ideology of Manifest Destiny. This belief held that the United States was destined to expand across the North American continent, spreading its values and institutions. Manifest Destiny provided a cultural and political justification for territorial acquisition, including the annexation of Texas, the Oregon Territory, and the Mexican Cession following the Mexican-American War (1846-1848).

This period exemplified continental imperialism, where expansion was primarily focused on North America. The consequences included significant displacement and suffering of Indigenous peoples and reshaping of the nation's demographic and economic landscape. While not imperialism in the overseas colonial sense, this era established a precedent for the U.S. approach to power projection and territorial acquisition.

Transition to Overseas Imperialism: Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

The history of American imperialism entered a new phase in the late 19th century as the United States shifted its attention beyond continental borders. Several factors contributed to this transition, including economic interests, strategic considerations, and ideological motivations.

The Spanish-American War and Its Aftermath

A pivotal moment in American imperialism occurred with the Spanish-American War of 1898. Sparked by the explosion of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor and fueled by sensationalist journalism, the conflict marked the United States' emergence as a colonial power. The war resulted in the Treaty of Paris, which ceded Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the U.S., while Cuba became a nominally independent protectorate.

This expansion represented a departure from America's historical aversion to colonialism. Control over these territories provided the U.S. with strategic naval bases and access to new markets, signaling the dawn of American overseas imperialism. However, it also ignited debates about the nation's identity and the morality of its imperial ambitions. The Philippine-American War (1899-1902), a brutal conflict following the annexation, highlighted the costs and contradictions of American expansion.

Economic and Strategic Motivations

Economic motivations were central to the history of American imperialism during this period. The late 19th century saw rapid industrialization, creating a demand for new markets and raw materials.

Overseas territories offered opportunities for investment, trade, and resource extraction.

Strategically, the construction of the Panama Canal and the acquisition of naval bases in the Caribbean and Pacific underlined the importance of global military reach. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, articulated in 1904, asserted the United States' right to intervene in Latin American nations to stabilize regional affairs, effectively establishing a form of "police power" in the Western Hemisphere.

American Imperialism in the 20th Century: Global Power and Influence

Throughout the 20th century, the history of American imperialism evolved alongside the country's growing role in global affairs. While the overt colonial acquisitions of the late 19th century diminished, the United States exercised imperial influence through economic dominance, military interventions, and political alliances.

World Wars and the Emergence of Superpower Status

The two World Wars fundamentally altered the international order and solidified the United States' position as a global superpower. In both conflicts, American military and economic contributions were decisive, leading to increased influence in Europe, Asia, and beyond.

Following World War II, the U.S. engaged in the reconstruction of war-torn regions through initiatives such as the Marshall Plan, shaping political and economic systems to align with Western interests. This period also saw the establishment of military bases worldwide and the formation of strategic alliances like NATO, further extending American reach.

The Cold War: Ideological and Proxy Imperialism

The Cold War era redefined American imperialism in ideological terms, pitting the U.S. against the Soviet Union in a global contest for influence. Rather than traditional colonialism, the U.S. pursued a policy of containment, supporting friendly regimes and intervening in countries perceived as vulnerable to communist expansion.

Examples include military involvements in Korea, Vietnam, and Latin America, as well as covert operations by the CIA. These actions often sparked controversy, raising questions about sovereignty, democracy, and human rights.

Modern Dimensions of American Imperialism

The history of American imperialism extends into the 21st century, reflecting shifts in geopolitical dynamics and the nature of power projection.

Economic Globalization and Soft Power

In recent decades, American influence has been exercised largely through economic globalization, cultural exports, and diplomacy. The proliferation of multinational corporations, the dominance of the U.S. dollar, and leadership in international institutions like the IMF and World Bank exemplify this form of soft imperialism.

Military Interventions and the War on Terror

Post-9/11, the United States launched extensive military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, citing national security and the promotion of democracy. These interventions reignited debates about the limits and consequences of American power abroad, particularly regarding sovereignty, civilian casualties, and long-term stability.

Critical Perspectives and Legacy

The history of American imperialism is marked by a complex interplay of ideals and interests. Proponents argue that American expansionism facilitated modernization, economic development, and the spread of democratic values. Critics, however, highlight the exploitation, cultural suppression, and violence that often accompanied imperial policies.

Understanding this history involves recognizing the diversity of experiences and the ongoing impact on international relations, domestic politics, and cultural identities. The legacy of American imperialism remains a contentious and evolving subject, reflecting the challenges of balancing national interests with global responsibilities.

In tracing the history of American imperialism, one observes a trajectory from continental expansion to global influence, marked by both achievements and contradictions. This history continues to inform contemporary debates about the role of the United States in an increasingly multipolar world.

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history of american imperialism: [Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations](#)
Michael J. Hogan, Thomas G. Paterson, 2004-01-19 Originally published in 1991, Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations has become an indispensable volume not only for teachers and students in international history and political science, but also for general readers seeking an introduction to American diplomatic history. This collection of essays highlights a variety of newer,

innovative, and stimulating conceptual approaches and analytical methods used to study the history of American foreign relations, including bureaucratic, dependency, and world systems theories, corporatist and national security models, psychology, culture, and ideology. Along with substantially revised essays from the first edition, this volume presents entirely new material on postcolonial theory, borderlands history, modernization theory, gender, race, memory, cultural transfer, and critical theory. The book seeks to define the study of American international history, stimulate research in fresh directions, and encourage cross-disciplinary thinking, especially between diplomatic history and other fields of American history, in an increasingly transnational, globalizing world.

history of american imperialism: American Imperialism Adam Burns, 2017-01-17 Provides a critical re-evaluation of US territorial expansionism and imperialism from 1783 to the present. The United States has been described by many of its foreign and domestic critics as an empire. Providing a wide-ranging analysis of the United States as a territorial, imperial power from its foundation to the present day, this book explores the United States acquisition or long-term occupation of territories through a chronological perspective. It begins by exploring early continental expansion, such as the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon Bonaparte in 1803, and traces US imperialism through to the controversial ongoing presence of US forces at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. The book provides fresh insights into the history of US territorial expansion and imperialism, bringing together more well-known instances (such as the purchase of Alaska) with those less-frequently discussed (such as the acquisition of the Guano Islands after 1856). The volume considers key historical debates, controversies and turning points, providing a historiographically-grounded re-evaluation of US expansion from 1783 to the present day. Key Features: Provides case studies of different examples of US territorial expansion/imperialism, and adds much-needed context to ongoing debates over US imperialism for students of both History and Politics. Analyses many of the better known instances of US imperialism (for example, Cuba and the Philippines), while also considering often-overlooked examples such as the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Guam. Explores American imperialism from a territorial acquisition/long-term occupational viewpoint which differentiates it from many other books that instead focus on informal and economic imperialism. Discusses the presence of the US in key places such as Guantanamo Bay, the Panama Canal Zone and the Arctic.

history of american imperialism: American Empire in Global History Shigeru Akita, 2021-12-19 This book shows how the predominantly national focus that characterises studies of the United States after 1783 can be integrated with global trends, as viewed from the perspective of imperial history. The book also argues that historians of European empires have much to gain by considering the United States after 1783 as a newly-decolonised country that acquired overseas territorial possessions in 1898 and remained a member of the Western 'imperial club' until the mid-twentieth century. The wide-ranging synthesis by A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (2018), provides the starting point for contributions that appraise its main theme and take it in new directions. The first three chapters identify fresh approaches to U.S. history between the Revolution and the Civil War, suggesting ways in which the United States can be considered as a newly-decolonised country, examining shifting meanings of the term 'empire,' and reassessing the character of continental expansion. The second group deals with initiatives and responses in the Philippines and Cuba, reconsidering the character of nationalism in two of the most important overseas territories that were either ruled directly or controlled indirectly by the United States, and placing it in an international context. The third group examines the exercise of U.S. power in the twentieth century, identifying aspects of international law that have been overlooked and reviewing the extensive literature on the controversial themes of the Cold War and informal empire after 1945. The ten chapters in this edited volume bring together noted specialists on the history of international relations, the United States, and the insular empire it ruled in the twentieth century. The chapters were originally published as articles in a special issue of *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*.

history of american imperialism: American Imperialism and the State, 1893-1921 Colin D. Moore, 2017-04-17 How did the acquisition of overseas colonies affect the development of the American state? How did the constitutional system shape the expansion and governance of American empire? American Imperialism and the State offers a new perspective on these questions by recasting American imperial governance as an episode of state building. Colin D. Moore argues that the empire was decisively shaped by the efforts of colonial state officials to achieve greater autonomy in the face of congressional obstruction, public indifference and limitations on administrative capacity. Drawing on extensive archival research, the book focuses principally upon four cases of imperial governance - Hawai'i, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic and Haiti - to highlight the essential tension between American mass democracy and imperial expansion.

history of american imperialism: The Rise and Decline of the American "Empire" Geir Lundestad, 2012-03-08 The Rise and Decline of the American Empire explores the rapidly growing literature on the rise and fall of the United States. The author argues that after 1945 the US has definitely been the most dominant power the world has seen and that it has successfully met the challenges from, first, the Soviet Union and, then, Japan, and the European Union. Now, however, the United States is in decline: its vast military power is being challenged by asymmetrical wars, its economic growth is slow and its debt is rising rapidly, the political system is proving unable to meet these challenges in a satisfactory way. While the US is still likely to remain the world's leading power for the foreseeable future, it is being challenged by China, particularly economically, and also by several other regional Great Powers. The book also addresses the more theoretical question of what recent superpowers have been able to achieve and what they have not achieved. How could the United States be both the dominant power and at the same time suffer significant defeats? And how could the Soviet Union suddenly collapse? No power has ever been omnipotent. It cannot control events all around the world. The Soviet Union suffered from imperial overstretch; the traditional colonial empires suffered from a growing lack of legitimacy at the international, national, and local levels. The United States has been able to maintain its alliance system, but only in a much reformed way. If a small power simply insists on pursuing its own very different policies, there is normally little the United States and other Great Powers will do. Military intervention is an option that can be used only rarely and most often with strikingly limited results.

history of american imperialism: American Empire A. G. Hopkins, 2018-02-20 A new history of the United States that turns American exceptionalism on its head American Empire is a panoramic work of scholarship that presents a bold new global perspective on the history of the United States. Drawing on his expertise in economic history and the imperial histories of Britain and Europe, A. G. Hopkins takes readers from the colonial era to today to show how, far from diverging, the United States and Western Europe followed similar trajectories throughout this long period, and how America's dependency on Britain and Europe extended much later into the nineteenth century than previously understood. In a sweeping narrative spanning three centuries, Hopkins describes how the revolt of the mainland colonies was the product of a crisis that afflicted the imperial states of Europe generally, and how the history of the American republic between 1783 and 1865 was a response not to the termination of British influence but to its continued expansion. He traces how the creation of a U.S. industrial nation-state after the Civil War paralleled developments in Western Europe, fostered similar destabilizing influences, and found an outlet in imperialism through the acquisition of an insular empire in the Caribbean and Pacific. The period of colonial rule that followed reflected the history of the European empires in its ideological justifications, economic relations, and administrative principles. After 1945, a profound shift in the character of globalization brought the age of the great territorial empires to an end. American Empire goes beyond the myth of American exceptionalism to place the United States within the wider context of the global historical forces that shaped the Western empires and the world.

history of american imperialism: Empire for Liberty Richard H. Immerman, 2010 How could the United States, a nation founded on the principles of liberty and equality, have produced Abu Ghraib, torture memos, Plamegate, and warrantless wiretaps? Did America set out to become an

empire? And if so, how has it reconciled its imperialism--and in some cases, its crimes--with the idea of liberty so forcefully expressed in the Declaration of Independence? *Empire for Liberty* tells the story of men who used the rhetoric of liberty to further their imperial ambitions, and reveals that the quest for empire has guided the nation's architects from the very beginning--and continues to do so today.

history of american imperialism: The Routledge History of U.S. Foreign Relations Tyson Reeder, 2021-12-30 The Routledge History of U.S. Foreign Relations provides a comprehensive view of U.S. diplomacy and foreign affairs from the founding to the present. With contributions from recognized experts from around the world, this volume unveils America's long and complicated history on the world stage. It presents the United States' evolution from a weak player, even a European pawn, to a global hegemonic leader over the course of two and a half centuries. The contributors offer an expansive vision of U.S. foreign relations—from U.S.-Native American diplomacy in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the post-9/11 war on terror. They shed new light on well-known events and suggest future paths of research, and they capture lesser-known episodes that invite reconsideration of common assumptions about America's place in the world. Bringing these discussions to a single forum, the book provides a strong reference source for scholars and students who seek to understand the broad themes and changing approaches to the field. This book will be of interest to students and scholars of U.S. history, political science, international relations, conflict resolution, and public policy, amongst other areas.

history of american imperialism: Gale Researcher Guide for: Overview of American Imperialism Abroad Tamara Venit Shelton, 2018-09-28 Gale Researcher Guide for: Overview of American Imperialism Abroad is selected from Gale's academic platform Gale Researcher. These study guides provide peer-reviewed articles that allow students early success in finding scholarly materials and to gain the confidence and vocabulary needed to pursue deeper research.

history of american imperialism: Imperialism and Expansionism in American History Chris J. Magoc, David Bernstein, 2015-12-14 This four-volume encyclopedia chronicles the historical roots of the United States' current military dominance, documenting its growth from continental expansionism to hemispheric hegemony to global empire. This groundbreaking four-volume encyclopedia offers sweeping coverage of a subject central to American history and of urgent importance today as the nation wrestles with a global imperial posture and the long-term viability of the largest military establishment in human history. The work features more than 650 entries encompassing the full scope of American expansionism and imperialism from the colonial era through the 21st-century War on Terror. Readers will learn about U.S.-Native American conflicts; 19th-century land laws; early forays overseas, for example, the opening of Japan; and America's imperial conflicts in Cuba and the Philippines. U.S. interests in Latin America are explored, as are the often-forgotten ambitions that lay behind the nation's involvement in the World Wars. The work also offers extensive coverage of the Cold War and today's ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, and the Middle East as they relate to U.S. national interests. Notable individuals, including American statesmen, military commanders, influential public figures, and anti-imperialists are covered as well. The inclusion of cultural elements of American expansionism and imperialism—for example, Hollywood films and protest music—helps distinguish this set from other more limited works.

history of american imperialism: American Imperial Pastoral Rebecca Tinio McKenna, 2017-01-20 In 1904, renowned architect Daniel Burnham, the Progressive Era urban planner who famously “Made No Little Plans,” set off for the Philippines, the new US colonial acquisition. Charged with designing environments for the occupation government, Burnham set out to convey the ambitions and the dominance of the regime, drawing on neo-classical formalism for the Pacific colony. The spaces he created, most notably in the summer capital of Baguio, gave physical form to American rule and its contradictions. In *American Imperial Pastoral*, Rebecca Tinio McKenna examines the design, construction, and use of Baguio, making visible the physical shape, labor, and sustaining practices of the US's new empire—especially the disposessions that underwrote market

expansion. In the process, she demonstrates how colonialists conducted market-making through state-building and vice-versa. Where much has been made of the racial dynamics of US colonialism in the region, McKenna emphasizes capitalist practices and design ideals—giving us a fresh and nuanced understanding of the American occupation of the Philippines.

history of american imperialism: The American Imperial Gothic Johan Hoglund, 2016-03-16 The imagination of the early twenty-first century is catastrophic, with Hollywood blockbusters, novels, computer games, popular music, art and even political speeches all depicting a world consumed by vampires, zombies, meteors, aliens from outer space, disease, crazed terrorists and mad scientists. These frequently gothic descriptions of the apocalypse not only commodify fear itself; they articulate and even help produce imperialism. Building on, and often retelling, the British 'imperial gothic' of the late nineteenth century, the American imperial gothic is obsessed with race, gender, degeneration and invasion, with the destruction of society, the collapse of modernity and the disintegration of capitalism. Drawing on a rich array of texts from a long history of the gothic, this book contends that the doom faced by the world in popular culture is related to the current global instability, renegotiation of worldwide power and the American bid for hegemony that goes back to the beginning of the Republic and which have given shape to the first decade of the millennium. From the frontier gothic of Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* to the apocalyptic torture porn of Eli Roth's *Hostel*, the American imperial gothic dramatises the desires and anxieties of empire. Revealing the ways in which images of destruction and social upheaval both query the violence with which the US has asserted itself locally and globally, and feed the longing for stable imperial structures, this book will be of interest to scholars and students of popular culture, cultural and media studies, literary and visual studies and sociology.

history of american imperialism: American Slavery, American Imperialism Catherine Armstrong, 2020-07-30 Slavery casts a long shadow over American history; despite the cataclysmic changes of the Civil War and emancipation, the United States carried antebellum notions of slavery into its imperial expansion at the turn of the twentieth-century. African American, Chinese and other immigrant labourers were exploited in the name of domestic economic development, and overseas, local populations were made into colonial subjects of America. How did the U.S. deal with the paradox of presenting itself as a global power which abhorred slavery, while at the same time failing to deal with forced labour at home? Catherine Armstrong argues that this was done with rhetorical manoeuvres around the definition of slavery. Drawing primarily on representations of slavery in American print culture, this study charts how definitions and depictions of slavery both changed and stayed the same as the nation became a prominent actor on the world stage. In doing so, Armstrong challenges the idea that slavery is a merely historical problem, and shows its relevance in the contemporary world.

history of american imperialism: The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire Martin Thomas, Andrew Thompson, 2018-12-06 The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire offers the most comprehensive treatment of the causes, course, and consequences of the ends of empire in the twentieth century. The volume's contributors convey the global reach of decolonization, with chapters analysing the empires of Western Europe, Eastern Europe, China and Japan. The Handbook combines broad, regional treatments of decolonization with chapter contributions constructed around particular themes or social issues. It considers how the history of decolonization is being rethought as a result of the rise of the 'new' imperial history, and its emphasis on race, gender, and culture, as well as the more recent growth of interest in histories of globalization, transnational history, and histories of migration and diaspora, humanitarianism and development, and human rights. The Handbook, in other words, seeks to identify the processes and commonalities of experience that make decolonization a unique historical phenomenon with a lasting resonance. In light of decades of historical and social scientific scholarship on modernization, dependency, neo-colonialism, 'failed state' architectures and post-colonial conflict, the obvious question that begs itself is 'when did empires actually end?' In seeking to unravel this most basic dilemma the Handbook explores the relationship between the study of decolonization and the study of

globalization. It connects histories of the late-colonial and post-colonial worlds, and considers the legacies of empire in European and formerly colonised societies.

history of american imperialism: Literary Culture and U.S Imperialism : From the Revolution to World War II John Carlos Rowe Professor of English University of California at Irvine, 2000-06-12 John Carlos Rowe, considered one of the most eminent and progressive critics of American literature, has in recent years become instrumental in shaping the path of American studies. His latest book examines literary responses to U.S. imperialism from the late eighteenth century to the 1940s. Interpreting texts by Charles Brockden Brown, Poe, Melville, John Rollin Ridge, Twain, Henry Adams, Stephen Crane, W. E. B Du Bois, John Neihardt, Nick Black Elk, and Zora Neale Hurston, Rowe argues that U.S. literature has a long tradition of responding critically or contributing to our imperialist ventures. Following in the critical footsteps of Richard Slotkin and Edward Said, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism* is particularly innovative in taking account of the public and cultural response to imperialism. In this sense it could not be more relevant to what is happening in the scholarship, and should be vital reading for scholars and students of American literature and culture.

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