

BERNATH LECTURE

The Greater United States: Territory and Empire in
U.S. History*

March 1954 is a month diplomatic historians know well. It was when the Viet Minh attacked the French air base at Dien Bien Phu, which ultimately pulled the United States into the Vietnam War. But we speak less of another anticolonial revolt that broke out in another part of the world. Two weeks before Dien Bien Phu, four nationalists entered the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., made their way to the upstairs Ladies' Gallery, unfurled a Puerto Rican flag, pulled out pistols, and fired 29 rounds into the body politic below them. They shot five Congressmen, nearly killing one.¹

To this day, the drawer in the mahogany table used by the Republican leadership to address the House has a jagged hole in it.

This was not a freak event. It was but one in a long chain of violent acts undertaken by Puerto Rican nationalists under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos, arguably the most important domestic opponent of the U.S. empire in the twentieth century.²

Albizu's long career defies easy summary. In World War I, inspired by Wilsonian rhetoric of self-determination, Albizu served as a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. But he grew disillusioned and turned against the U.S. government, becoming, in the words of J. Edgar Hoover (who held him under surveillance for three decades), the "guiding light" of Puerto Rican nationalism.³ Albizu founded Puerto Rico's Army of Liberation in the 1930s. In that decade, his followers bombed numerous federal buildings (including the governor's mansion) and assassinated Puerto Rico's chief of police. After Albizu went to prison, his supporters held a march in Ponce, Puerto Rico, and were gunned down by the police. If you

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1. A detailed account, based on interviews with two of the shooters, is Manuel Roig-Franzia, "A Terrorist in the House," *Washington Post*, February 22, 2004.

2. The premier biography of Albizu is Marisa Rosado, *Pedro Albizu Campos: Las Llamas de la Aurora*, 2nd ed. (Santo Domingo, 1998).

3. J. Edgar Hoover to Harry Hopkins, July 17, 1943, FBIPR Files, Pedro Albizu Campos, FBI File No. 105-11898, section 2, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY.

count Puerto Rico as part of the United States (more about which below), it was the largest police massacre in U.S. history.

In 1950, Albizu orchestrated a coordinated uprising throughout Puerto Rico, a rebellion so serious that the Puerto Rican National Guard used planes to suppress it, strafing the towns of Jajuya and Utuado from the sky. The revolt touched eight cities. It culminated in nationalists firing shots at the governor's mansion in San Juan and in a very-nearly-successful assassination attempt on President Harry Truman in Washington, D.C. Reporter and political insider Drew Pearson cited the attempt on Truman's life as one of the reasons that Truman didn't run for re-election.⁴

If this comes as news to you, you're in good company. Despite his extraordinary career, Albizu doesn't have much of a place in U.S. historiography. You won't find him anywhere in the *Oxford History of the United States*, the *New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, or any of the major textbooks—including those, like Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States* and James W. Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, explicitly designed to give voice to suppressed histories. The *Journal of American History* has never printed his name.

The problem is not, I hasten to add, a lack of available information. Puerto Rican scholars have written a great deal about Albizu, who is a towering figure in Puerto Rican culture.⁵ In my home city of Chicago, there is a public high school named after him (with an adjoining family learning center for teen parents named after Lolita Lebrón, the chief shooter in the 1954 House shootings). There is a K-8 school named after him in Harlem: P.S. 161. Then there is the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School in the mass-produced suburb of Levittown.

Levittown, Puerto Rico, that is. The same builders who built the famous New York and Pennsylvania suburbs constructed a planned community in Puerto Rico.

In 2000, the Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York was dedicated to Albizu (and to the struggle of Vieques against the U.S. Navy). Both Hillary Clinton and Rudy Giuliani marched in that parade.

The New York Puerto Rican Day Parade last summer was *also* dedicated to Pedro Albizu Campos.

Albizu presents something of a puzzle. Why has this figure, who seems so immediately fascinating, not part of mainstream U.S. historiography? One might think it's because U.S. historians are "exceptionalists" and don't pay attention to empire.

4. Stephen Hunter and John Bainbridge, Jr., *American Gunfight: The Plot to Kill Harry Truman—and the Shoot-Out That Stopped It* (New York, 2005), 266.

5. Major accounts include Federico Ribes Tovar, *Albizu Campos: Puerto Rican Revolutionary*, trans. Anthony Rawlings (New York, 1971); Benjamín Torres, Marisa Rosado and José Manuel Torres Santiago, eds., *Imagen de Pedro Albizu Campos* (San Juan, 1973); Rosado, *Pedro Albizu Campos*; Laura Meneses de Albizu Campos, *Albizu Campos y la Independencia de Puerto Rico* (San Juan, 2007); and Nelson A. Denis, *War against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony* (New York, 2015).

But that's not it. U.S. historians have displayed a tremendous interest in the subject of empire for a long time.

For a very long time, in fact. The present historiographical preoccupation with U.S. empire is usually dated to 1959, the year that William Appleman Williams's *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* was published.⁶ Although this is strange to contemplate, we are now as chronologically distant from that book as that book was from the Philippine-American War.

Still, "empire" continues to guide our inquiries. It has proved to be such an enduring category of analysis because of its capaciousness. A key enabling move made by Williams and the Wisconsin School that continued his ideas was to refuse to limit discussion of empire to a discussion of colonies. To speak only of formal acquisitions, explained Thomas McCormick, was just an "intellectual game" that the previous generation of historians had played "to avoid confronting the centrality of American expansion to U.S. history."⁷ Once one looked beyond colonies to the "informal empire," the expansive force of the United States became apparent. Even as presidents disavowed territorial conquest, they dropped bombs, seized markets, meddled in foreign politics, and "Coca-colonized" the world.⁸

I jokingly describe this to my students as the "Menacing Eagle School of History," after the many books in this vein whose covers depict eagles attacking the globe. It's not hard to see why book jacket designers are so fond of that trope, as it actually captures a great deal of the argument. The profession of liberty (the eagle), the reality of domination (the grasping talons)—both parts are important to the notion of informal empire.

But what *isn't* important to the argument is the formal empire. Williams and the many historians working in his long shadow have always happily acknowledged the colonies that the United States took. It's common in our field to emphasize the year 1898 and the war with Spain. Yet Williams's school regarded 1898 as symptomatic rather than substantive: the small and visible tip of a much larger imperial iceberg. It was a moment when the United States briefly flirted with outright territorial conquest before turning toward other, harder-to-see forms of global power.⁹

6. William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland, OH, 1959).

7. McCormick, interview with James G. Morgan, quoted in Morgan's *Into New Territory: American Historians and the Concept of US Imperialism* (Madison, WI, 2014), 76.

8. The literature on U.S. empire is truly voluminous. A helpful account of the Wisconsin School is Morgan's *Into New Territory*. Frank Ninkovich offers an overview of the historiography in "The United States and Imperialism," in Robert D. Schulzinger, ed., *A Companion to American Foreign Relations* (Malden, MA, 2003), 79–102. For a widely read recent articulation of the Williams thesis that the United States has pursued "imperialism by other means," see Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton, NJ, 2010). Paul Kramer, in his portrait of the United States as a "nation-based empire," presents a significantly modified version of the Williams thesis that is skeptical of the clean formal/informal distinction: "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (2011): 1348–91.

9. Consider Williams's *Empire as a Way of Life*, a 226-page survey of U.S. imperial ambitions that engages in no substantive discussion of any overseas territory. William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life* (New York, 1980). For a sustained engagement by a Wisconsin-School

It is tempting to think that the overseas territories can be safely dismissed in this way because they were small and remote. “Geographical crumbs” is what Neil Smith called them in his book *American Empire*.¹⁰ It is true that many of the current insular possessions of the United States are extraordinarily small (Wake Island: population 150; Swains Island: population 17). But, overall, the overseas territories today contain over four million people.

They had even more people in the past. On the eve of the Second World War, the United States had the world’s fifth-largest empire on the planet by population.¹¹ Nearly thirteen percent of its populace lived in its overseas colonies. That was undoubtedly less than lived in the world-straddling British Empire, where there were roughly ten colonial subjects for every inhabitant of the British Isles. But it is still a significant figure. Consider that, in 1940, African Americans made up less than nine percent of the population.¹²

The comparison is enlightening. African Americans, frequently understood to be victims of “internal colonization,” are a small and subjugated part of the population. But historians have come to understand African-American history as central to U.S. history. Our narratives register not only the black experience but, moreover, the ways in which the changing position of African Americans drove key episodes in national history.

Can we say the same about the overseas territories? Not yet. Despite a great deal of research that has been done—within American Studies departments, within history departments—colonized people and overseas territories still rarely feature in broad narratives about the United States.

The reason has not just to do with our conception of empire. It has to do also with something deeper: our conception of the United States. Most U.S. historians, especially when working on the zoomed-out, textbook level, implicitly take as their

historian with formal imperialism, see Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1989).

10. Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), 16.

11. Bouda Etemad, *Possessing the World: Taking the Measurements of Colonisation from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, trans. Andrene Everson (New York, 2007), 131.

12. According to U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Reports on Population, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940*, vol. 1, *Number of Inhabitants* (Washington, DC: 1942), 12.6% of the population of the Greater United States lived in the overseas territories. The figure I have given for the black population attempts to account for black people throughout the Greater United States, not just on the mainland. Yet, the U.S. census often administered different questionnaires to the colonies than to the mainland, questionnaires with incommensurable racial categories. Counting “Negroes” on the mainland, American Samoa, Hawai’i, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Alaska; “nonwhites” in Puerto Rico; “Negro and Negro-mixed” in the Panama Canal Zone; and no one in the Philippines and Guam (for which racial breakdowns were not incorporated into the U.S. census) places U.S. blacks at 8.85% of the population. It is somewhat absurd to compare that figure to the “actual” number of black people, given the arbitrary and variable nature of race as a social construction (particularly so within the empire). Nevertheless, 8.85% is probably slightly high because, although it does not count black Filipinos and Guamanians (presumably very low numbers in 1940), it classes all non-white Puerto Ricans as black, whereas many were non-black.

Table 1: U.S. overseas territories listed by the 1940 census. Territories with no indigenous populations, such as Wake Island, are listed as unpopulated, although the United States often stationed military outposts on them. The many islands claimed by the United States but not listed in the census (all uninhabited) are not included.

Territory	Years held	1940 pop.
Philippines	1899–1946	16,356,000
Puerto Rico	1899–present	1,869,255
Hawai'i	1898–1959 (state after)	423,330
Alaska	1867–1959 (state after)	72,524
Panama Canal Zone	1903–1977	51,827
U.S. Virgin Islands	1917–present	24,889
Guam	1899–present	22,290
American Samoa	1899–present	12,908
Midway and Brooks	1859–present	-
Howland and Baker	1857–present	-
Wake Island	1899–present	-
Corn Islands	1914–1971	-
Johnston Atoll	1858–present	-
Jarvis Island	1858–present	-
Total		18,883,023

unit of analysis only a part of the United States, the contiguous part. Benedict Anderson called it the “logo map.”¹³

I’d like to propose a different unit of analysis, one that counts *all* of the land over which the United States claims sovereignty as part of the country, and as part of its history. When we factor the territories in, we’re left not with the logo map—the familiar compact and static land mass. Rather, we encounter the United States as something new: a dynamic and heterogeneous polity, with borders shifting throughout North America, the Caribbean, the Arctic, and the Pacific.

The “Greater United States.”

The “Greater United States” is not my term. It comes from 1898–99, when the United States gutted Spain’s empire, claiming the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam for itself, occupying Cuba, and taking the occasion to annex the non-Spanish lands of Hawai'i and American Samoa. This was an intellectually transformative event. “We have been so long used to regard the United States as an extent of country reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, and bounded on the north by the British possessions and on the south by the Mexican Republic,” remarked the Attorney General, “that it requires almost a wrench to take us out of our old habits of thought and accustom us to the fact that our domain on the north

13. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York, 2006), 179.



Figure 1: The logo map.

reaches to within the Arctic Circle; that we have the Sandwich Islands [Hawai'i]; that we have the vast Philippine Archipelago."¹⁴

Cartographers, eager to showcase the new dimensions of the country, rushed to publish new maps. The extraordinary maps they made showed the United States as it had become, not a contiguous mass but rather an empire with global reach. The maps came in two kinds: box maps, which showed the North American landmass plus the colonies arranged in boxes (as Alaska and Hawai'i are usually displayed today), and world maps, with all U.S. territory highlighted in color, in the manner of British imperial maps.¹⁵

These were, it is important to state, not novelty maps. They appeared frequently at the front of atlases or as the main maps of the United States in textbooks. They hung on classroom walls.

Writers, too, registered the change, as they cast about for new ways to refer to the country. Books appeared with intriguing titles: *The Greater Republic* (1899), *The Greater United States* (1904), and seven books whose titles contained the phrase "Greater America" published in the decade following the 1898 war.¹⁶ "The term

14. John W. Griggs in *The Insular Cases, Comprising the Records, Briefs, and Arguments of Counsel in the Insular Cases of the October Term, 1900, in the Supreme Court of the United States* (Washington, DC, 1901), 363.

15. Imperial maps are discussed in Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America, 1880–1950* (Chicago, IL, 2001), 38–44, 176–80.

16. The writers who used these terms were, by and large, champions of empire. One might rightly ask whether, in accepting the category of the "Greater United States," historians would be implicitly endorsing or naturalizing the United States' empire. Certainly, many inhabitants of the territories have regarded U.S. rule as illegitimate and seen themselves as inhabitants of, for

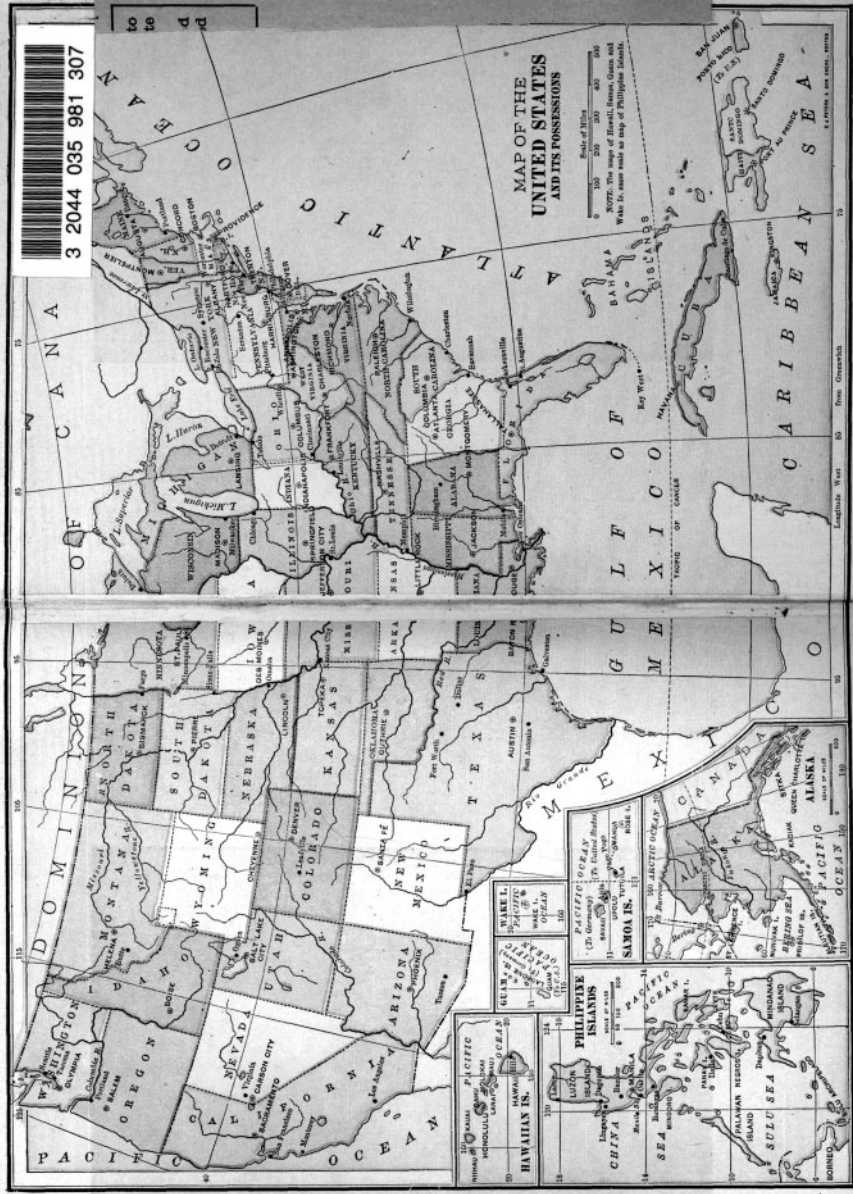


Figure 2: This box map, from the inside cover of the 1910 edition of Allen C. Thomas's textbook, *An Elementary History of the United States* (first published 1900), shows the Philippines, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Wake Island, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico.



Figure 3: August R. Ohman’s 1904 pocket map, highlighting the expansion of the United States, features a world map, top inset. It also shows the Philippines, Alaska, Hawai’i, Guam, Wake Island, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the Panama Canal Zone in boxes. David Rumsey Map Collection.

‘United States of America’ has ceased to be an accurate description of the countries over which the Stars and Stripes float,” the author of one argued. “Like ‘United

example, the Hawaiian nation rather than of the United States. But I do not think that is reason for U.S. historians to exclude the territories from their analyses and stick to the mainland. After all, many groups have contested U.S. rule, from Southern confederates to black nationalists. Historians have rightly come to understand such sovereignty challenges as important components of U.S. history rather than as “foreign” episodes that lie outside the purview of the United States. For a comparable historiographical concept, see Gary Wilder’s notion of “Greater France” in *The Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonialism Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, IL, 2005). The turn-of-the-century literature: Gilson Willets and Margaret Hamm, *Greater America: Heroes, Battles, Camps* (New York, 1898); *Greater America in Picture and Story: The Army, the Navy, and Our New Possessions* (Chicago, IL, 1898); David Jayne Hill, *Greater America* (Washington, DC: 1898); Great Northern Railway Company, *Greater America: A Brief Description of the New Pacific Colonies and How to Reach Them* (St. Paul, MN, 1899); Charles Morris, *The Greater Republic: A New History of the United States* (New York, 1899); *Greater America: The Latest Acquired Insular Possessions* (Boston: 1900); George Campbell, *The Greater United States of America, or, the United States in Destiny* (Topeka, KS, 1904); Archibald Ross Colquhoun, *Greater America* (New York, 1904); Ralph D. Paine, *The Greater America* (New York, 1907).

Kingdom,' it applies merely to the central and dominating body, the seat of empire; and Greater America comprises almost as wide a range of governments as Greater Britain itself."¹⁷

I prefer the term "Greater United States," just so as to avoid confusion with Herbert E. Bolton's influential notion of the "Greater America," intended to encompass all of the Americas within a single analytical frame.¹⁸ It's worth noting, though, that Bolton himself was shaped by the 1898 moment. Fifteen years before his famous address to the American Historical Association, the "Epic of Greater America," Bolton published a series of classroom maps and an atlas with Albert Bushnell Hart. The final map in the series showed the United States' full territorial extent. It was entitled "Greater United States."¹⁹

The Hart-Bolton map, published in 1917, was one of the last such maps to appear. Under whatever name, the conception of a "Greater United States" had largely vanished by the U.S. entry into the First World War. This can be most clearly seen in the realm of the law. In a series of cases from 1901 to 1922, known as the *Insular Cases*, the Supreme Court considered whether the territories were part of the "United States" as referred to in the Constitution, i.e., it asked whether the Constitution applied to them. Reasoning with a racist logic—the initial cases were decided by the same court that decided *Plessy v. Ferguson*—it concluded that the bulk of the territories were "unincorporated" into the political body of the United States.

As one of the justices summarized the logic, the Constitution was "the supreme law of the land," but the territories were "not part of the 'land.'"²⁰

The result of all this—the erasure of the colonies from the map, the references to the "Greater United States" growing scarce, the Court's expulsion of the territories from "the 'land'"—was the reassertion of an understanding of the United States as a nation-state. Nationalism waxed, imperialism waned. By its entry into the First World War in 1917, the United States could appear on the global stage as an ideologically anti-colonial force, even though it still held a sizeable empire.²¹

17. Colquhoun, *Greater America*, 253.

18. Herbert E. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America," *American Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (1933): 448–74.

19. Albert Bushnell Hart and Herbert E. Bolton, *Hart-Bolton History Maps* (Chicago, IL, 1917), map A24.

20. *Dorr v. United States*, 195 U.S. 138, 155 (1904) (Harlan, J. M., dissenting). On the *Insular Cases* and the legal questions of empire see especially Christina Duffy Burnett and Marshall Burke, eds., *Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution* (Durham, NC, 2001); Christina Duffy Burnett, "Untied States: American Expansion and Territorial Deannexation," *University of Chicago Law Review* 72 (2005): 797–879; Bartholomew H. Sparrow, *The Insular Cases and the Emergence of American Empire* (Lawrence, KS, 2006); Kal Raustiala, *Does the Constitution Follow the Flag?: The Evolution of Territoriality in American Law* (Oxford, 2009); and Gerald L. Neuman and Tomiko Brown-Nagin, eds., *Reconsidering the Insular Cases: The Past and Future of American Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2015).

21. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford, 2007).

For too long, historians, like cartographers, have accepted the logic of the *Insular Cases*. Not in the sense of endorsing the Court's opinion, but in adhering to the Court's understanding about what parts of the United States are "in" the country and what parts aren't. Histories of the United States are, by and large, histories of the logo map.

To get a better sense of this, consider the historiographic fate of the Philippines, the largest U.S. colony by an order of magnitude, in our most prominent historical journals. In the past fifty years, the *Journal of American History* has published one non-review article about the Philippines. That is the same number that the *American Historical Review* has published. *Diplomatic History* used to be like that. In its first twenty-five years it published only a single article on the Philippines, during which time it published three on Guatemala (one-eighth the size) and seven on France.²²

But things are changing quickly. There has been an accelerating avalanche of high-profile books on U.S. overseas territory, especially the Philippines.²³ In the past decade, *Diplomatic History* has dramatically increased its publishing on the Philippines, with an article every two or three years. Surely it's meaningful that the present editors of this journal, Nick Cullather and Anne Foster, are both historians of the Philippines.

22. I counted all non-review articles containing the words *Philippine*, *Philippines*, *Filipino*, or *Filipinos* in their titles.

23. Many of the most important books have been edited collections: Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham, NC, 1993); Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel, eds., *Puerto Rico Jam: Retinking Colonialism and Nationalism* (Minneapolis, MN, 1997); Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, eds., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Durham, NC, 2003); Catherine Lutz, ed., *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts* (New York, 2009); Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison, WI, 2009); and Alyosha Goldstein, ed., *Formations of United States Colonialism* (Durham, NC, 2014). The recent monographic literature is large; but see especially Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and the Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT, 1998); Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998); Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915–1940* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley, CA, 2002); Katherine T. McCaffrey, *Military Power and Popular Protest: The U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2002); Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC, 2004); Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham, NC, 2006); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006); Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures and the Philippines and Puerto Rico during U.S. Colonialism* (Durham, NC, 2008); Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York, 2009); Jana K. Lipman, *Guantánamo: A Working-Class History between Empire and Revolution* (Berkeley, CA, 2009); Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison, WI, 2009); Anne L. Foster, *Projections of Power: The United States and Europe in Colonial Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC, 2010); Lanny Thompson, *Imperial Archipelago: Representation and Rule in the Insular Territories under U.S. Dominion after 1898* (Honolulu, HI, 2010); and Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2011).

It's not only the Philippines. We are seeing within the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) a surge of interest in the many spaces that the United States has controlled outside of its mainland. SHAFR members are now turning with great zeal toward military bases, extraterritoriality agreements, occupation zones, Indian polities, and colonies. From what I see coming down the dissertation pipeline, we're going to see a lot more.

I have emphasized the United States' overseas colonies, places like Puerto Rico and the Philippines. That is because they dramatically expose the gap between the logo map conception of the United States and the larger conception for which I am arguing. The 1898–1899 annexations showed U.S. thinkers their country from a new perspective. In that sense, the overseas colonies are the key to the Greater United States.

But they are not the whole of it. As the 1898 generation saw, a full history of the Greater United States is not just the story of overseas territories, but also of western ones. Indeed, a remarkable feature of the intellectual moment of 1898 was its revision of the history of continental expansion, by which western territories came to be seen as quasi-colonies.²⁴ Today, we can add another major form of territorial extension to the story: overseas military bases. The three—western territories, overseas territories, and foreign bases—fit together in overlapping but chronologically distinct arcs.

The story of western expansion is, of course, well known. But even that familiar story, when viewed through the lens of territoriality, can seem new.

The question of territory was there from the start. The “United States of America,” as a name, was accurate for less than seven weeks. On March 1, 1784, just 47 days after the Treaty of Paris granting the United States independence was ratified, Virginia ceded its claims over the area north of the Ohio River to the federal government. With that, the United States was no longer a union of states alone but an amalgam of states *and territories*, which it has been ever since.

24. See, for example, James C. Fernald, *The Imperial Republic* (New York, 1899); Alpheus H. Snow, *The Administration of Dependencies: A Study of the Evolution of the Federal Empire, with Special Reference to American Colonial Problems* (New York, 1902); and Willis Fletcher Johnson, *A Century of Expansion* (New York, 1903). More recent work that explores the subordinated status of western territories includes Earl S. Pomeroy, *The Territories and the United States, 1861–1890: Studies in Colonial Administration* (Philadelphia, PA, 1947); Whitney T. Perkins, *Denial of Empire: The United States and Its Dependencies* (Leyden, 1962); Jack Ericson Eblen, *The First and Second United States Empires: Governors and Territorial Government, 1784–1912* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1968); Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780–1825* (Kent, OH, 1986); Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington, IN, 1987); Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, CT, 2004); Gary Lawson and Guy Seidman, *The Constitution of Empire: Territorial Expansion and American Legal History* (New Haven, CT, 2004); Sanford Levinson and Bartholomew H. Sparrow, eds., *The Louisiana Purchase and American Expansion, 1803–1898* (Lanham, MD, 2005); and Go, *Patterns of Empire*.

The more states followed Virginia's lead, the larger the non-state territory grew. By 1791, when all of the Atlantic states except Georgia had given up their pretensions that their borders stretched to the western edge of the country, the states covered only slightly more than half (55%) of the United States.²⁵ And the pattern continued: as older territories became states, new annexations brought new territories into the polity.

It is an extraordinary fact about the United States that its western territories became states, parts of the union on an equal footing with older states. But that fact can overshadow the territorial purgatory that future states occupied for long periods. Despite the obvious relevance of territorial issues to the most important events of the nineteenth century—it was the question of slavery in the territories that sparked the Civil War—we nevertheless find it easy to conceive of territories as embryonic states, and thus to touch only lightly on their subjugated status.

Passage to statehood *did* come quickly in some cases, such as gold-rush California. California filled with whites and transitioned from military rule to statehood in two years. But California was the extreme. On average, places that began as territories on the continent took *forty-five years* to achieve statehood.²⁶

If California was one end of the spectrum, Oklahoma was the other. It languished as a territory for 104 years between annexation and statehood. That is, for perspective, substantially longer than the French possessed Indochina or than King Leopold and Belgium held the Congo.

The reason for Oklahoma's long period of territorial subjugation is that, for the majority of the nineteenth century, it wasn't Oklahoma but "Indian Territory," a legally defined but unorganized all-Indian territory within the United States. At its establishment in 1834, Indian Territory extended from the top of present-day Texas to the Canadian border and from the Mississippi to the Rockies. The Jackson administration proposed carving out a large portion of Indian Territory for eventual admission to the union as an all-Indian state. Congress rejected the proposal, though, partly to avoid the prospect of Indian representatives in the Capitol. With time, Indian Territory was whittled down to Oklahoma. After

25. Calculated from figures in Franklin K. Van Zandt, *Boundaries of the United States and the Several States* (Washington, DC, 1966), 262–64 and Thomas Donaldson, *The Public Domain: Its History, with Statistics* (Washington, DC, 1884), 87–88.

26. I am counting the time between when a territory was annexed to the United States to the time it was admitted to the Union as a state. In cases where the territory of a future state was not all annexed at once, I count from the time year by which the majority of its land was annexed. Thus, in these cases of partial annexation, I use 1803 as the start date for LA, MN, ND, SD, MT, OK, and WY; 1845 as the start date for CO and NM; and 1848 as the start date for AZ. Because my calculation does not include states that were never territories, it excludes (1) the original thirteen states, (2) states that were carved out of existing states (KY, ME, WV), and (3) independent republics that were admitted as states (TX, VT). Adding Texas and Vermont to the pool yields an average time-to-statehood of 42 years.

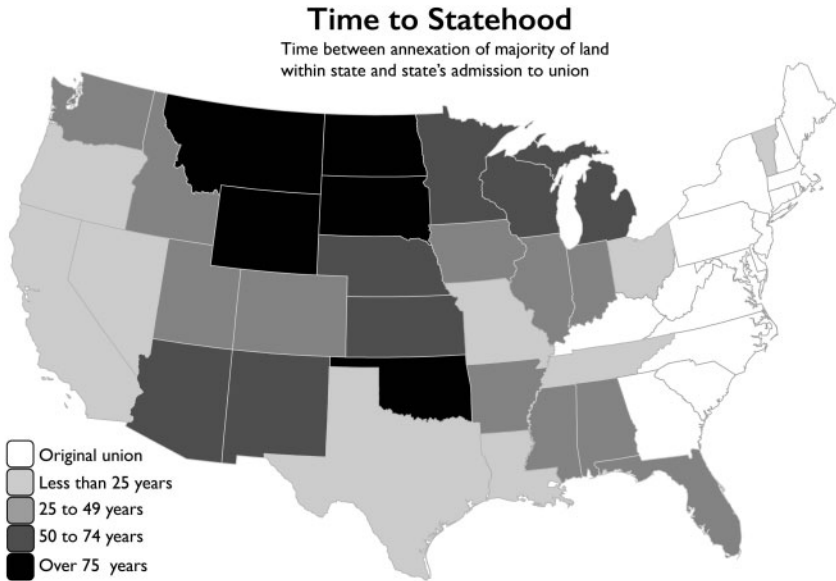


Figure 4: Time to statehood.

thousands of whites poured into the territory, many in breach of federal law, it was eventually admitted as a white-majority state in 1907.²⁷

Well before all of the continental territories became states, the United States embarked on a second phase of territorial history: overseas territories. The logo-map silhouette was completed in 1853, with the Gadsden Purchase. But those familiar borders only held for four years. In 1857, the United States began annexing guano islands—uninhabited islands possessing valuable fertilizer. The country claimed 94 such islands, nearly all in the Caribbean and Pacific, by 1903.²⁸

27. On Indian Territory, alternatively known as “Indian Country”: Roy Gittinger, *The Formation of the State of Oklahoma, 1803–1906* (Norman, OK, 1939); Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States and the American Indians*, 2 vols. (Lincoln, NE, 1984), esp. ch. 11 and 29; and William E. Unrau, *The Rise and Fall of Indian Country, 1825–1855* (Lawrence, KS, 2007). To the story of the United States’ attempt to encompass Indians within its territorial framework should be added the story of the United States’ grappling with self-constituted Indian polities, on which see Brian DeLay, “Indian Polities, Empire, and the History of American Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 39, no. 5 (2015): 927–42, and the more familiar story of Indian reservations.

28. Jimmy M. Skaggs, *The Great Guano Rush: Entrepreneurs and American Overseas Expansion* (New York, 1994), 199. See also Christina Duffy Burnett, “The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: American Guano Islands,” *American Quarterly* 57 (2005): 779–803 and Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (Cambridge, 2013).

And the annexations continued: Alaska (1867), the 1898–99 acquisitions (Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, American Samoa), the Panama Canal Zone (1903), the Virgin Islands (1917), and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (1947).

The first arc in the history of the Greater United States, concerning western territories, is obviously central to any telling of U.S. history, and has been since at least Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis. But the second arc, concerning overseas territories, is regarded as less so. Overseas empire usually appears in textbooks as an episode—a single chapter, set in 1898—rather than as an enduring feature. The tacit assumption is that the empire didn't *matter* for what came next.

But that assumption is becoming increasingly hard to hold.²⁹ It's remarkable, in fact, how many key figures in U.S. history sojourned in the overseas territories. One thinks of Teddy Roosevelt achieving national fame by charging up San Juan Heights in Cuba, William Howard Taft's terms as governor-general in the Philippines and then Secretary of War (with supervision over the colonies), Daniel Burnham's ambitious urban plans for Manila and Baguio, Margaret Mead's fieldwork in American Samoa, and New Dealer Rexford Tugwell's governorship of Puerto Rico. The highest office in the U.S. Army is chief of staff, established in 1903. The first *sixteen* chiefs of staff, until 1948, all served in the colonies. That list includes some of the most written-about figures in U.S. history: John Pershing, George C. Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, and Dwight Eisenhower.

Or jump ahead to the 2008 presidential election, which pitted Barack Obama, a Hawaiian (born shortly after Hawai'i became a state), against John McCain, a Zonian (i.e., born in the Panama Canal Zone), and Sarah Palin, the governor of Alaska. Palin's husband, an Alaska Native, was for years a registered member of the Alaska Independence Party. Palin herself twice attended Alaska Independence Party conventions.³⁰

Those examples are merely suggestive. For a fuller picture of how colonial encounters might change larger narratives of U.S. history, consider the Second World War. In popular memory, it remains the "good war," a war focused mainly on the goal of stopping Hitler's crusade through Europe. It featured a clean division between home front and battlefield and left the United States largely unscathed, with the sole and notable exception of the attack on Hawai'i at Pearl Harbor.

That narrative, I would argue, only makes sense if you don't count the colonies as parts of the United States.

29. A helpful overview of the significance of the colonies for the mainland is Alfred W. McCoy, Francisco A. Scarano, and Courtney Johnson, "On the Tropic of Cancer: Transitions and Transformations in the U.S. Imperial State," in McCoy and Scarano, *Colonial Crucible*, 3–33.

30. Kate Zernike, "A Palin Joined Alaskan Third Party, Just Not Sarah Palin," *New York Times*, September 3, 2008.

If you *do* factor them in, you start to notice some important features of the war, features often neglected in the telling of it. You notice that “Pearl Harbor” was not just an isolated attack on one patch of U.S. soil but a blitzkrieg directed at U.S. and British colonial holdings in the Pacific. On the same day that the Japanese struck Hawai’i, they also attacked the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island, Midway Island, and Howland Island, plus the British territories of Malaya and Hong Kong and the independent kingdom of Thailand.³¹ Over the course of the war, Japan attacked every inhabited Pacific colony that the United States held, and it occupied the Philippines, Guam, Wake, and part of Alaska.

This was not just a war to defend the sovereignty of countries in Europe and Asia. It was, in the Pacific, a war over colonies. And for the U.S. nationals who inhabited those colonies, it was a traumatic affair. It included an extended period of martial law in Hawai’i.³² And it included the internment of Alaska Natives from the Aleutian Islands by the U.S. government.³³

Furthermore, the Japanese-occupied parts of the United States became a Pacific bloodlands. Not only was the occupation itself onerous, but the reconquest of those colonies by the United States was extraordinarily violent. In the Philippines, the United States abandoned its initial strategy of engaging Japanese forces on the ground for one of bombing and shelling suspected Japanese targets from afar. The aim was to protect the lives of U.S. soldiers, but the cost was borne by Filipinos, large numbers of whom were killed in the cross-fire.³⁴ Manila, the sixth-largest city in the United States (substantially larger than Boston or Washington, D.C.), was decimated. “We levelled entire cities with our bombs and shell fire,” explained the Philippine High Commissioner. “We destroyed roads, public buildings, and bridges. We razed sugar mills and factories.” In the end, he concluded, “there was nothing left.”³⁵

31. The matter of the date, December 7, 1941, emblazoned into national memory by Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s “Day of Infamy” speech, is somewhat misleading on this score. Only in Hawai’i, Midway, and Howland did the vagaries of the international date line place the attack on December 7th. In the rest of the theater, it occurred on December 8th.

32. The most thorough account of Hawaiian martial law is Harry N. Scheiber and Jane L. Scheiber, “Bayonets in Paradise: A Half-Century Retrospect on Martial Law in Hawai’i, 1941–1946,” *University of Hawai’i Law Review* 19 (1997): 477–648.

33. Dean Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River: Aleut Evacuation in World War II* (Seattle, WA, 1995) and Jennifer Sepez, Christina Package, Patricia E. Malcolm, and Amanda Poole, “Unalaska, Alaska: Memory and Denial in the Globalization of the Aleutian Landscape,” *Polar Geography* 30 (2007): 193–209.

34. On U.S. military calculations in the reconquest of the Philippines, see Richard Connaughton, John Pimlott, and Duncan Anderson, *The Battle for Manila* (London, 1995). For a larger overview of the Philippines during the war, the places to start are Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years: Japan’s Adventure in the Philippines* (Quezon City, 1965), 2 vols., and Richard Trota Jose, ed., *World War II and the Japanese Occupation* (Quezon City, 2006).

35. Paul V. McNutt, address at Beta Theta Pi Fraternity, November 27, 1946; “McNutt, P.V., Correspondence and Speeches, 1945–46” folder, box 7, Office of the High Commissioner of the Philippine Islands, Records of the Washington, DC, Office, 1942–46, Records of the Office of Territories, Record Group 126, National Archives and Records Administration.

Although the count of U.S. mainland lives lost in the Second World War is precise to the last digit, counts of the lives of colonized subjects lost are at best informed guesses. Surely, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos died in the war. The Library of Congress has accepted an estimate of one million Filipino fatalities, which also circulates in the Philippines.³⁶

If that is anywhere close to correct, that makes World War II in the Philippines the most violent event ever to take place on U.S. soil, bloodier by far than the Civil War.

There is another aspect of the Second World War that deserves mention. We typically say that the end of the war left the United States in a global position of economic and political supremacy. What we rarely acknowledge is how much *territory* the U.S. also held by the war's end. By then, it had reclaimed its Pacific colonies from Japan. It had also laid claim to nearly all of Micronesia.

At the same time, the Greater United States expanded through occupations—the Japanese, South Korean, German, and Austrian occupations all extended into the postwar period. To occupy a country temporarily is obviously different from annexing it. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that a full census of all the people who lived under U.S. jurisdiction at the war's end—residents of the states, colonies, and occupied zones—reveals the astonishing fact that the majority (51%) lived outside of the continental United States. In other words, if you looked up in late 1945 and saw the stars and stripes waving overhead, it was more likely that you lived in a colony or occupied country than that you lived on the mainland.³⁷

36. Donald M. Seekins, "Historical Setting," in Ronald E. Dolan, *Philippines: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1991), 41. Theodore Friend writes that "at least" 500,000 Filipinos, 300,000 Japanese, and 40,000 mainlanders were killed in *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929–1946* (New Haven, CT, 1965), 267.

37. Caveat: 1945, occurring between decennial census enumerations in the U.S. mainland and at the end of a destabilizing war everywhere else, was not the best year for accurate population counts. Nevertheless, the broad point that the continental and extra-continental populations were roughly equal holds under any reasonable accounting. I calculated 135,341,000 persons in the colonies and occupation zones and 132,481,000 in the continental United States. Sources and figures (in thousands): South Korea (17,917), the Philippines (18,228), and Japan (76,224): Maddison Project Database, January 2013 update, Groningen Growth and Development Centre, www.ggd.net/maddison; Hawai'i (815), Alaska (138), Puerto Rico (2,071), and the U.S. Virgin Islands (27): *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, No. 52, July 27, 1951, 3; Panama Canal Zone (46): *Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, No. 29, September 1, 1949, 3; American Samoa (16): *American Samoa Statistical Digest* (Pago Pago: 1994), 17; Guam and Micronesia (35 together): Hal Friedman, *Creating an American Lake: United States Imperialism and Strategic Security in the Pacific Basin, 1945–47* (Westport, CT, 2001), 122; U.S. Zone in Austria (2,650): John D. Hilldring, *American Policy in Occupied Areas* (Washington, DC: 1947), 24; U.S. Zone in Germany (17,174): figures from October 1946 census reported in "The Demography of War: Germany," *Population Index* 14 (1948): 299; Continental United States (132,481): *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: 1975), part I, 8.

To that accounting should be added the overseas military bases that the United States took during the war—the third arc in the history of the Greater United States. The country had claimed scattered military bases before, but in 1945, the United States possessed some 30,000 military installations on 2,000 base sites.³⁸

Yet from its territorial apex, the United States did something unprecedented. As it gained power, it shed territory. It set the Philippines free. It wound up its occupations, sometimes much faster than it might have (in 1943, Roosevelt suggested that the occupation of Korea should last forty years; it lasted three).³⁹ It abandoned base sites, in some cases as a response to anti-basing protests.⁴⁰ By the time Alaska and Hawai'i became states in 1959, the proportion of people living under U.S. jurisdiction but outside of the states had fallen from 51% to around 2%, and it has hovered between 1% and 3% ever since.⁴¹

Perhaps not coincidentally, this was precisely the time when the Wisconsin School developed its understanding of U.S. empire as an “informal” undertaking.

It would be hard to disagree with the Wisconsin-School assertion that U.S. global power rests on foundations other than territorial control. But to think of the United States as having an informal empire *only* would be to miss something important. The United States continued to hold colonies after World War II, hence the Puerto Rican Uprising of 1950 and House shooting of 1954. It also added to its colonial holdings in 1947 with the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands: technically a “trusteeship” administered by the United States on behalf of the United Nations, but held under a unique arrangement that allowed the UN almost no effective oversight.⁴²

More to the point, even as the United States was partially divesting from colonies, it was consolidating its investments in a new form of territory: military bases. Though the overseas basing system shrank considerably in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the United States held onto hundreds of

38. James R. Blaker, *United States Overseas Basing: An Anatomy of the Dilemma* (New York, 1990), 33.

39. Soo Sung Cho, *Korea in World Politics, 1940–1950: An Evaluation of American Responsibility* (Berkeley, CA, 1967), 23, 34.

40. The most thorough discussion of anti-basing protests and their effects on the World War II basing network is Rebecca Herman Weber, “In Defense of Sovereignty: Labor, Crime, Sex and Nation at U.S. Military Bases in Latin America, 1940–1947” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014).

41. I am here counting Washington, D.C., among the states, even though it is a district, not a state, and lacks the full rights that states have. But moving it into the non-state column changes little. In 1960, the non-state population including D.C. was 2.6% and it stayed between 1% and 3% thereafter. The promotion of Hawai'i and Alaska to statehood can be seen as part of the global decolonization movement. The territorial governor of Alaska, Ernest Gruening, saw it that way, and drafted a book in 1954 entitled *Alaska is a Colony* (never published, but held in the Ernest Gruening Papers, box 754, folder 316, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Archives and Manuscripts, University of Alaska—Fairbanks). On Hawaiian statehood in this regard, see Sarah Miller-Davenport, “State of the New: Hawai'i Statehood and Global Decolonization in American Culture, 1945–1978” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2014).

42. Earl S. Pomeroy, *Pacific Outpost: American Strategy in Guam and Micronesia* (Stanford, CA, 1951).

bases.⁴³ These “little Americas” were—and are—pockets of extraterritorial control scattered throughout the world. They are maintained, not through informal influence, but through legal agreements, formal incursions onto the sovereignty of host nations.⁴⁴

The United States has shifted away from the large land annexations of the nineteenth century to an empire consisting largely of islands and overseas bases: a pointillist empire. It would be easy to round those points down to zero, just as it has been easy to round the western territories up to states. Certainly, in terms of size, current overseas holdings don’t add up to much—all U.S. overseas territory today, including military bases, comprises an area smaller than Connecticut.⁴⁵ But what we are learning is how important those small specks nevertheless are, as they act as staging grounds for precisely the kind of economic, military, and cultural interventions that the Wisconsin School emphasized.⁴⁶

The War on Terror has drawn our attention to how crucial small overseas sites can be to the projection of power. This was a war, not over latitudes but points, in which particular spots on the map—the Green Zone in Iraq, black-site prisons sprinkled throughout foreign countries, Guam, Guantánamo Bay, the all-important military base of Diego Garcia—took on outsize significance. Not only have we

43. The contraction of the basing network is chronicled in Blaker, *United States Overseas Basing*, chap. 1. A different but compatible accounting is offered in David Vine, *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (New York, 2015). See also Stacie L. Pettyjohn, *U. S. Global Defense Posture, 1783–2001* (Santa Monica, CA, 2012).

44. The historical literature on bases is growing quickly, with an especially tight focus on the tense relationships between bases and their surrounding areas. Besides the above, see especially Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, CA, 1990); Katharine H. S. Moon, *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.–Korea Relations* (New York, 1997); McCaffrey, *Military Power and Popular Protest*; Maria Höhn, *GIs and Frauleins: The German–American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002); Ji-Yeon Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America* (New York, 2002); Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945–1959* (New Haven, CT, 2003); Mark L. Gillem, *America Town: Building the Outposts of Empire* (Minneapolis, MN, 2007); Masumichi S. Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military: Identity Making in the Age of Globalization* (New York, 2007); Harvey Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007); Steven High, *Base Colonies in the Western Hemisphere, 1940–1967* (New York, 2009); Lipman, *Guantánamo*; Lutz, ed., *The Bases of Empire*; David Vine, *Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia* (Princeton, NJ, 2009); Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon, eds., *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present* (Durham, NC, 2010); Amy Austin Holmes, *Social Unrest and American Military Bases in Turkey and Germany since 1945* (Cambridge, 2014); Sasha Davis, *The Empires’ Edge: Militarization, Resistance, and Transcending Hegemony in the Pacific* (Athens, GA, 2015); and Vine, *Base Nation*.

45. The total area of U.S. overseas bases is reported in Department of Defense, “Base Structure Report—Fiscal Year 2015 Baseline: A Summary of the Real Property Inventory,” Washington, DC, 2015, 84. That figure excludes secret bases and some bases smaller than ten acres.

46. A very good overview of bases and other points within the network of U.S. postwar power projection is Ruth Oldenzil, “Islands: The United States as a Networked Empire,” in Gabrielle Hecht, ed., *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 13–42. On “points” in the post–World War II landscape, I have been greatly influenced by William Rankin, *After the Map: Cartography, Navigation, and the Transformation of Territory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL, 2016).

learned to tell the history of these places, but we've gone back and realized the importance of other small spaces: including Vieques, Baguio, Kwajalein, and the Bikini atoll.⁴⁷

In 1898, the rush of imperial expansion encouraged a new understanding of the United States as the Greater United States. Today, we are in a similar position. We can see, better than we could before, how the territorial extensions of the United States matter today, and how they have mattered in the past.

Once again, the Greater United States is coming into view.

47. Besides the histories of military bases listed above, exemplary studies of small spaces include Ron Robin's examination of embassies and cemeteries in *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900–1965* (Princeton, NJ, 1992); John Lindsay-Poland's portrait of San Jose Island in *Emperors in the Jungle: The Hidden History of the U.S. in Panama* (Durham, NC, 2003), ch. 2; Rebecca Lemov on Micronesia as a social scientific laboratory in *World as Laboratory: Experiments with Mice, Mazes, and Men* (New York, 2005), ch. 9; Lauren B. Hirshberg's dissertation about Kwajalein island and neighboring Ebeye, "Targeting Kwajalein: U.S. Empire, Militarization, and Suburbanization and the Marshall Islands, 1944–1986" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2011); Peter Bacon Hales on atomic testing on the Bikini atoll in *Outside the Gates of Eden: The Dream of America from Hiroshima to Now* (Chicago, IL, 2014), ch. 1; and Rebecca Tinio McKenna's study of a colonial hill station in *American Imperial Pastoral: The Architecture of U.S. Colonialism in the Philippines* (Chicago, IL, forthcoming).