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DISCUSSIONI

Un impero nascosto? La territorialità della «grande America»
(a cura di Marco Mariano)

Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire, A Short History of the Greater United States*, New York, Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2019, 516 pp., $ 30,00

ne discutono
Kathleen Burk (University College London), Mario Del Pero (SciencesPo, Paris), Justin Hart (Texas Tech University), Melani McAlister (George Washington University), Andrew Preston (University of Cambridge) e Daniel Immerwahr (Northwestern University)

Nell'aprile del 2003, poche settimane dopo l'ingresso delle truppe americane a Baghdad, un giornalista di «Al Jazeera» in una conferenza stampa chiese al segretario alla Difesa degli Stati Uniti Donald Rumsfeld se la presenza di truppe e basi in Iraq fosse parte di una strategia di «empire building». La risposta fu: «We don't seek empires. We're not imperialistic. We never have been. I can't imagine why you'd even ask the question» (*Aftereffects: Military Presence; Rumsfeld Says U.S. Will Cut Forces in Gulf*, «New York Times», 29 aprile 2003).

Il volume di Daniel Immerwahr si è imposto all'attenzione degli storici e del pubblico non specialistico anche perché parte da questo occultamento, così diffuso nel dibattito pubblico, per poi mettere al centro della sua indagine la dimensione territoriale, e non di rado strettamente coloniale, dell'impero americano. Il giovane studioso della Northwestern University nel suo primo libro (*Thinking Small. The United States and the Lure of Community Development*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2015, premiato dall'Organization of American Historians con il Merle Curti Award in Intellectual History) aveva mostrato come i progetti statunitensi di lotta alla povertà nel mondo basati su approcci micro e dal basso, ora molto in voga, abbiano una storia lunga e assai poco lusinghiera. In *How to Hide an Empire. A Short History*

of the Greater United States si pone un obiettivo più ambizioso. Dall'avanzata della «frontiera» verso ovest alle conquiste delle guerre ottocentesche contro il Messico nell'attuale sud-ovest e la Spagna nei Caraibi e nel Pacifico, dai territori occupati subito dopo la seconda guerra mondiale alle circa ottocento basi militari disseminate in ogni parte del mondo, l'impero americano – sostiene l'a. – è sempre stato costruito *anche* sull'espansione territoriale. E non solo sulla forza dei dollari, sull'attrattività della cultura di massa e sulla potenza delle armi.

Ciò che potrebbe sembrare quasi ovvio a un pubblico non statunitense non lo è affatto se si tiene conto del modo in cui generazioni di storici cercano da decenni di portare alla luce la centralità della vicenda imperiale nella storia americana e, più recentemente, del posto degli Stati Uniti nella storia degli imperi. Fino agli anni '60 il paradigma nazionalista prevalente negli studi di storia della politica estera degli Stati Uniti ha costruito l'eccezionalità americana anche sulla rimozione di territori d'oltremare e popoli colonizzati dalla vicenda nazionale. Queste tristi prerogative degli imperi formali europei sarebbero state per gli Stati Uniti una parentesi circoscrivibile alla «grande aberrazione» della guerra del 1898, un incidente in un percorso altrimenti esente dalla macchia dell'imperialismo (Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Latin-American Policy of the United States: A Historical Interpretation*, New York, Harcourt Brace and Co.,1943).

I primi a denunciare questa rimozione furono William Appleman Williams, a partire dal classico *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959), e la cosiddetta Wisconsin School affermatasi nel clima politico-culturale degli anni '60. Secondo Williams «One of central themes of American historiography is that there is no American empire» (William Appleman Williams, *The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy*, in «Pacific Historical Review», Vol. 24, n. 4. [novembre 1955], pp. 379-395), eppure quello era un dato costitutivo e permanente della storia nazionale. E per svelarne la pervasività, si iniziò a dire allora, bisognava studiare le leve informali del capitalismo assai più di quelle formali del colonialismo. La dimensione territoriale rimaneva così ai margini, né veniva recuperata dalla svolta culturalista degli anni '90, il cui impatto è stato tanto profondo da contribuire in modo decisivo a trasformare il campo della tradizionale *US diplomatic history* in una assai più ricca, sfaccettata e complessa *history of America and the world*. Quando Amy Kaplan nell'influente *Cultures of US Imperialism* (Amy Kaplan, Donald Pease [eds], *Cultures of United States imperialism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993) lamentò da un lato l'assenza della vicenda imperiale nello studio della cultura americana, e dall'altra la sottovalutazione delle variabili culturali nello studio dell'impero americano, indicò nuove prospettive della ricerca che sarebbero state battute con grandi risultati negli anni successivi, ma che raramente portarono nella direzione imboccata da *How to Hide an Empire*.

Ciò che propone Immerwahr non è tanto un contributo metodologico alla storia degli imperi, quanto un cambio di prospettiva sugli Stati Uniti. Che andrebbero visti come una «grande America» – come suggerisce il sottotitolo – in cui al nucleo nordamericano vanno aggiunti territori caraibici, artici e pacifici. Perché gli Stati Uniti sono stati in realtà un'unione di stati *e di territori* fin dal periodo rivoluzionario, quando si attivò un modello espansionista che prevedeva sì l'inclusione dei territori dell'Ovest, ma spesso dopo decenni di limbo semi-coloniale (in media 45 anni di attesa per l'ingresso nell'Unione e più di un secolo nel caso dell'Oklahoma, nato come «Indian Territory»). Lo sono stati a maggior ragione all'inizio della seconda guerra mondiale, quando la popolazione delle colonie sotto il controllo di Washington era il 13% del totale (mentre gli afroamericani erano il 9%) e arrivò al 51% nel 1945. E continuarono a esserlo anche nel secondo dopoguerra, quando scelsero di abbandonare l'opzione territoriale di tipo tradizionale per abbracciarne altre di tipo nuovo. Quando cioè le innovazioni tecnologiche – in primo luogo chimiche, ingegneristiche e logistiche – hanno reso obsoleta l'annessione di vaste aree e reso possibile il «pointillist empire» delle basi militari che hanno replicato centinaia di piccole Americhe su scala globale e assicurato l'egemonia statunitense fino alla cosiddetta guerra al terrore di inizio millennio (William Rankin, *After the Map: Cartography, Navigation, and the Transformation of Territory in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Questo cambio di prospettiva è animato da due sfide principali, tra loro correlate. La prima è la (ennesima) critica al paradigma eccezionalista. Essa viene condotta, quasi paradossalmente, ignorando le connessioni inter-imperiali portate alla luce dagli approcci transnazionali e globali esemplificati dal recente, ponderoso volume di A.G. Hopkins (A.G. Hopkins, *American Empire. A Global History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2018). Non riducibili alla massa terrestre nordamericana dalla forma vagamente rettangolare raffigurata nella iconica «logo map» di cui parlava Benedict Anderson e abitata da cittadini aventi uguali diritti, gli Stati Uniti sono piuttosto una *polity* eterogenea fatta di stati, territori, basi militari, zone occupate e in affitto (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed., London-New York, Verso, 2006, p. 179). Un'entità che esercita gradi di sovranità diversi su aree territorialmente non contigue e in cui gli individui hanno accesso a gradi diversi di cittadinanza. Se «The concept of empire presumes that different peoples within the polity will be governed differently», come affermano Frederick Cooper e Jane Burbank (Jane Burbank, Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010, p. 8), allora gli Stati Uniti sono un impero tra gli imperi, benché non siano un impero come gli altri.

Immerwahr non è certo il primo ad arrivare a questa conclusione. Il volume

intende piuttosto sintetizzare, con non pochi elementi di originalità interpretativa, una ricca stagione di studi che negli ultimi vent'anni ha profondamente rinnovato la nostra conoscenza dei rapporti tra gli Stati Uniti e il mondo, senza però uscire, secondo l'a., dai confini dello specialismo. La seconda sfida del volume è appunto volta ad affermare la «grande America» come unità di analisi nell'ambito della storiografia *mainstream*, quella dei manuali, dei testi di carattere generale e delle grandi riviste come il «Journal of American History» e la «American Historical Review». Un ambito nel quale la territorialità dell'impero americano non sarebbe ancora adeguatamente riconosciuta, con conseguenze evidenti su un clima pubblico in cui rimozioni come quella di Rumsfeld continuano a operare con successo reiterando e rafforzando vecchie autorappresentazioni nazionaliste. Immerwahr gioca questa sfida adottando uno stile narrativo piacevole e accattivante, volutamente lontano dal gergo specialistico, impreziosito dal gusto per il racconto di storie individuali rivelatrici e attraversato da una dichiarata empatia per gli «uncounted» – coloro che dell'impero americano hanno pagato il prezzo – a cui il volume è dedicato.

Su questa duplice sfida, e su altri aspetti rilevanti del volume, «Il mestiere di storico» ha chiamato a intervenire cinque studiosi nordamericani ed europei che, da prospettive diverse e con angoli di visuale differenti, hanno prodotto lavori importanti sull'impero americano. Ai loro commenti segue la replica dell'a. Ne risulta una ricca discussione che in alcuni dei suoi temi centrali – la difficoltà a fare i conti con il proprio passato (e presente) imperiale, il ruolo della storia e degli storici accademici nel dibattito pubblico – travalica l'ambito americanistico e parla a tutti.

Mario Del Pero

Daniel Immerwahr's engrossing and original history of the U.S. empire is dedicated to the «uncounted»: to the many (and the much) that in almost all histories of the United States, academic and popular, are invariably «relegated to the shadows» (p. 19). It is «a dangerous place to live», this shadowy and (mostly) hidden empire – Immerwahr ponders – where at various times its inhabitants «have been shot, shelled, starved, interned, dispossessed, tortured, and experimented on» (p. 19).

In order to give form and life to this shadow – and to offer a complete, uncut history of the «Greater United States» – it is necessary to recognize the artificiality of what Immerwahr (via Benedict Anderson) calls the «logo map» of the United States, i.e. a cartographic representation of the U.S. limited to its North American continental and territorially continuous dimension, with the possible final addendum of Alaska and Hawaii. Going beyond the logo map – engaging with the real legal borders of the United States – forces historians to deal with a political space that,

Immerwahr convincingly shows, is far from uniform, and with «a whole new set of struggles over what it means to inhabit the United States» (p. 12).

Immerwahr's tells this story through a tripartite chronology. His three-act narrative begins with the process of westward expansion. It continues with the imperial drive and the many annexations of the second half of the 19th century that culminated in the war of 1898. And it ends with the gradual distancing from that empire in an age when technological changes trumped formal imperial necessities, but a global «pointillist empire» – mainly serving U.S. strategic purposes and military projection – never ceased to exist.

Part One does not really break new ground but offers a fairly orthodox opening to what then becomes a much more unconventional book. Immerwahr highlights how, by the 1820s-30s, the original goals of the founders to centrally control and pilot territorial expansion through the absolute power of the federal government clashed with the uncontainable growth of the white population. This growth – «a flash of dynamite» that exploded «the founders' vision of the country» (p. 34) – empowered local authorities vis-à-vis Washington and produced a major cultural shift, transmogrifying white settlers from unruly troublemakers to «pioneers»: epitomes of America's virtues of resourcefulness, courage and dynamism. The main victims were of course the native populations, whose lands were depopulated and who saw themselves confined into an increasingly reduced Indian country in the West.

Part Two opens with a remarkable chapter («Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Guano but Were Afraid to Ask») on the numerous pre-1898 annexations in the Pacific and the Caribbean. The driver behind them, Immerwahr explains, was the search for the uniquely nitrogen-rich land fertilizer – guano – i.e. bird or bat feces that covered uninhabited islands on which the United States soon set its eyes. Guano promised to increase the output of U.S. agriculture, helping it escape what appeared to be – lacking major breakthroughs in productivity or a drastic alteration in population growth – an inevitable Malthusian trap. The 1856 Guano Island Act stated that whenever a U.S. citizen discovered guano on an unclaimed and unpopulated island, that island would «at the discretion of the President, be considered as appertaining to the United States» (p. 51). In a matter of a few years almost sixty islands were seized (they would become almost one hundred by 1902); on them guano was extracted by laborers coming primarily from Hawaii who worked in stunningly miserable and unhealthy conditions. Workers' rebellions often ensued, the most important on the island of Navassa («Devil's Island») near Haiti, where in 1889 black workers from Baltimore killed five white officers of the Navassa Phosphate Company, opening a legal debate on whether or not they should convicted for an event that had taken place where the U.S. still lacked proper jurisdiction.

The guano craze left several legacies, legal and strategic (chemistry would render

guano irrelevant, but many of the annexed islands retained their importance by being recycled as military hubs). It showed how central material interests were in feeding new imperial appetites and the fundamental role race would play in shaping the nature and everyday life of the U.S. empire.

At the end of the 19th century, strategic considerations fueled by new navalist theories added a further drive to imperial expansion. The United States joined the global race of imperial conquest, searching for bases that would be indispensable for the control of prized sea routes. The 1898 war with Spain was the obvious turning point that opened a new phase in the history of the United States. It was, we know this well, a «Spanish-American» war in name only, one in which Filipinos, Cubans and Puerto Ricans, who had led a long struggle against the Spanish empire, played a key political and military role. The United States emerged as conqueror more than liberator, and a conqueror facing the unprecedented predicament of managing the annexation of largely non-white populations. In Washington, this posed an insoluble «trilemma»: how to combine republicanism, white supremacy and overseas expansion. Anti-imperialists led and often dominated the discussion with a straightforward answer: a republic could not be an empire; white supremacy was incompatible with the inclusion of inferior races in the republican polity. Imperialists somehow concurred on this second point and concocted a solution accordingly: they «were willing to sacrifice republicanism, at least as applied to so-called backward races» (p. 81). The Supreme Court – the same Supreme Court that five years earlier had decided Plessy v. Ferguson, with its «separate but equal» clause and the ensuing legal justification for racial segregation – constitutionally sanctioned this sacrifice through its famous 1901 rulings, commonly referred to as the «insular cases». Race shaped and informed those rulings as well. According to them, the constitution did not automatically follow the flag; a key distinction was made between «incorporated» and «unincorporated» territories, the latter hanging – as the dissenting chief justice Melvin Weston Fuller wrote – «in an intermediate state of ambiguous existence for an indefinite period» (p. 87). Whereas incorporated territories could become states, overseas unincorporated territories (where today 4 million people still reside) were instead destined to remain in a limbo.

Two United States seemed to emerge: the mainland and the greater U.S. In many parts of the latter, struggles for independence combined with those for the full recognition of rights. In the Philippines, Washington soon found itself embroiled in a nasty colonial war: the longest war the United States ever fought before the recent, never-ending conflict in Afghanistan. The length and brutality of the war in the Philippines, along with the many scandals shaping U.S. rule in the new unincorporated territories, tempered the enthusiasm of the imperialists. By the 1910s «empire could seem, from the mainland, to be a regrettable drunken binge, never to

be spoken of» (p. 110), Immerwhar writes. The logo map returned as the fitting visual representation of what the United States was not, but how it ought to be imagined and narrated. Annexations stopped – the last one, in 1917, was that of the small cluster of islands in the Caribbean known as Danish West Indies – and the empire was swiftly brushed under the rug.

It was still there, though. And conveniently so, not so much for raw materials and commodities that the U.S. – differently from other empires – possessed in abundance in the metropole, but as a sort of laboratory for testing brutally enlightened projects, whether top-down urban planning in the Philippines or medical experiments in Puerto Rico. To them Immerwahr dedicates two wonderful chapters, on the design and construction of the Philippines' summer capital of Baguio (chapter 8: «The White City») and the tests administered to unwitting Puerto Ricans in the 1930s (chapter 9: «Doctors without Borders»). Unconstrained by law, public or double-standard ethics, and operating behind the closed curtain of this veiled empire, architects and doctors often considered the new territories as «spaces for bold experimentation where ideas could be tried with practically no resistance, oversight, or consequences» (p. 124) and «without worrying about the counterforces that encumbered action at home» (p. 135).

With the great depression and what followed, these imperial privileges became less visible or enjoyable. Often a burden more than an asset, the territories completely disappeared from public view, increasingly neglected by the government, preoccupied as it was with the unsustainable costs of any serious plan to provide for their defense, particularly in the case of the Philippines, which were now threatened by Japan's imperial designs. The 1934 Philippines Independence Act, while not granting immediate independence to the archipelago, aimed to open a process that in a decade should have led to that outcome and relieved the United States from this imperial encumbrance.

World War II represented a watershed, accelerating the third and last act of Immerwhar's story. The mobilization, militarization, domestic repression and spending spree that marked the experience of the United States during the war happened on steroids – «with the volume turned up» (p. 173) – in the territories, «the parts of the Greater United States», Immmerwahr underlines, that really «faced foreign lands» (p. 173). In Hawaii, martial law was introduced and drastically implemented. In Alaska – where Japan invaded and for a year held the Aleutian islands of Agattu, Attu and Kiska – several hundred Aleuts were deported and interned. Worse still was the fate of the Japanese living in Manila, whose properties were confiscated, homes ransacked and, on the day of Tokyo's attack in December 1941, who were often summarily executed. The war in Asia was a particularly nasty affair. Graphically vivid pages are spent on the last stages of the war in Philippines, particularly the final battle for (and

the leveling of) Manila. A war that, according to Filipino estimates, claimed more than 1 million lives, to which one should add 518,000 Japanese deaths. «The Second World War in the Philippines rarely appears in history textbooks», Immerwahr rightly stresses, «but it should. It was by far the most destructive event ever to take place on U.S. soil» (p. 212).

A vast majority of U.S. citizens living within the perimeter of the logo map – including, paradoxically, some of the same soldiers called to wage war in the Pacific – had no clue that it was U.S. soil, though. This obliviousness only augmented in the post-1945 age of the «pointillist empire». This empire was drastically reduced in size, whereas the numerous potential territorial addendums that World War II victories seemed to offer were never in fact added to the original core. The United States did something «highly unusual», Immerwahr argues: it «won a war and gave up territory» (p. 229). The paradox did not stop there. While ascending to global primacy (and often dominance), the United States relinquished its ambitions to preserve – or enlarge – a formal empire. The easiest explanation, of course, is that imperialism was discredited for good, the interwar mandate system having been the last attempt to update its legitimacy and modus operandi. Global anti-imperial resistance was a force no one, not even the mighty United States, could oppose or contain. In tune with his idiosyncratic interpretation of the U.S. hidden empire, Immerwahr relies (sometimes excessively so) on another, complementary explanation: «empire-killing» (p. 279) technological and scientific changes – particularly stunning advances in the synthetic production of several commodities – along with the U.S.'s unique command of logistics. «Together with innovations in chemistry and industrial engineering», he writes, «the U.S. mastery of logistics would diminish the value of colonies and inaugurate a new pattern of global power, based less on claiming large swaths of land and more on controlling small points» (p. 216).

Thanks to (and in the name of) World War II and Cold War imperatives, the United States built an unmatchable worldwide grid of military installations. The more it covered the globe with such bases, the less territorial expansion appeared as a viable, and indeed beneficial, option. And yet, this «baselandia» (p. 355) – made up of both small remote spots and bases in heavily populated areas – was just another incarnation of an imperial form – the «pointillist empire» – mutable, chameleonic and, in the end, very intrinsic to the historical trajectory of the U.S. «The History of the United States», Immerwhar concludes, «is the history of empire» (p. 401).

Immerwhar's is a very exceptional (and exceptionalist) telling of this trajectory. Beautifully written, engaging and relying on many individual stories, which Immerwhar vividly renders with patent (and, at times, even ostentatious) narrative flare, *How to Hide an Empire* resurrects an exceptionalist interpretation of the history of the United States many historians have long challenged and contested. In the

age of the (often-inflated) «transnational» and «global», such an approach might sometimes appear anachronistic. There are some comparisons with other imperial experiences, most notably Britain's, but the context – the incubator of the many imperial experiences of the modern age – is lacking or simply overlooked. This book is a page-turner and a joy to read, but it seems a joy written by a U.S. historian for an American public in conversation with a purely U.S. (and U.S.-centric/centered) historiography. This is also visible in how the «uncounted» – the subjects (and, often, the objects) of Immerwahr's hidden empire – are treated. The pedantic historian and occasional reviewer has the propensity to scan footnotes to get a sense of the literature (and, eventually, finger-point glaring omissions). Immerwhar seems to have more than a taste for a sort of bibliographic unconventionality that leads him to (effectively) rely on minor journals and newspapers (e.g., the *Weekly Georgia Telegraph* or the *Atchison Champion*) or on peculiar archival collections (the Othmer Library of Chemical History at the Chemical Heritage Foundation of Philadelphia), as long, however, as they are in English. There is a serious (and sympathetic) attempt to give voice to the «uncounted», as in the case of Puerto Rican nationalist firebrand Pedro Albizu Campos, but via the media (i.e. the archival record, the scholarship, the press) that the imperial eye provides. Immerwahr's laudable, and at times very effective, effort notwithstanding, too many of those uncounted still expect to be extracted from the shadows where monoglottism and exceptionalism unintentionally continue to confine them.

Kathleen Burk

Daniel Immerwahr's book is forthrightly directed towards a general rather than an academic audience. It is also directed towards an American audience, not foreign ones, although he would doubtless be delighted if it becomes widely known in, for example, the Philippines. He has certainly achieved the beginnings of American renown, as it was widely reviewed in major newspapers and magazines upon publication. As to whether his argument becomes part of American history textbooks, which is what he wants, is a question for the future. It is not a pretty tale, nor is it meant to be: it was written to shock his audience into the realisation that the US is indeed an empire, but not, perhaps, as many of them might conceive of one. After all, where is the territory? Where are the big colonies? No big colonies, no empire. The US certainly began with territory – everything now owned west of the Mississippi, Alaska and Hawai'i, all of the Spanish Empire except for Morocco and Cuba, and dozens of Pacific islands – but by 1945, the U.S., the government and those who paid attention to such issues thought that, apart from the islands,

such territory was no longer needed. His book tells the story of its growth, and the apparent American devesting of the Philippines in particular, in the hope that this will become part of general American history, not a story reserved for historians.

Immerwahr argues that this was the case because the Second World War had taught Washington the art of projecting power without claiming colonies. Furthermore, after 1945, the U.S. no longer needed to hold foreign territory as sources of raw materials. The Second World War had urgently required the synthesizing or substitution of unreachable foreign supplies; examples were rubber, which was created out of petrol, and aluminium from bauxite, both readily available from what he terms the mainland U.S.. As he puts it in one of his catchy phrases, the United States «replaced colonies with chemistry» (p. 271). As for the projection of power, he focuses on, for example, the invention and development of cryptography, aviation – you could fly anywhere, anytime, anything, as he writes, defeating Japan without invading – radio, the standardisation of screws, the ubiquity of the red octagonal stop sign, all of which he calls empire-killing technologies, and, in general, what he calls those inventions which facilitated globalization, which could also be called modernisation or even Americanisation. It was termed by a writer in the 1940s «domination without annexation».

With his focus on territories – he writes that instead of following the money, as do investigative journalists, he followed the territories – it is necessary to remember the dots of islands across the Pacific, many annexed during the 19th century as sources of guano, the bird droppings which were vital then for making fertilizer; during World War II, they came into their own as military bases. Indeed, these bases are a key for Immerwahr, which form what he calls, taking the concept from the historian and cartographer Bill Rankin, America's «pointillist empire», and which historian Brooke L. Blower has called «the modern military base empire», currently made up of about 800 military facilities, an increase from the roughly 750 listed by Niall Ferguson in 2004. However, there was a felt need for access to other strategic points, and it is worth recalling that in 1945, there was not much of the world left for colonisation. The answer was to turn to Great Britain. As the State Department wrote in a policy paper in June 1948, «British friendship and cooperation … is necessary for American defense. The United Kingdom, the Dominions, Colonies, and Dependencies, form a world-wide network of strategically located territories of great military value, which have served as defensive outposts and as bridgeheads for operations. Subject to our general policy of favouring eventual self-determination of peoples, it is our objective that our integrity of this area be maintained». Or, as put in 1957 by Frank Wisner, the first head of covert operation for the CIA, «whenever there is somewhere we want to destabilize, the British have an island nearby». Besides, large colonies invited scrutiny and financial burdens which many in the U.S. government preferred not to

have to deal with. Furthermore, colonial revolts were taking place around the globe, and the U.S. government was not about to step into that morass, in particular since they had spent most the war railing against the British and other empires.

Some academic reviewers have criticised the book because the author does not carefully situate it within or outside of current American historiological debates. One of these is the uses of and importance of ideology about empire. Another is the «cultures of imperialism» discussions as to what they were and are and their importance. Relatively little attention is paid by the author to domestic public debates beyond those arising from the acknowledged imperialism period centred on the 1898 Spanish-American War: yes, keep the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam, but no to Cuba. After all, it is not imperialism to bring the blessings of liberty to the benighted whether they wish it or not. The Philippines needed to be Christianised, it was claimed, irregardless of the fact that the Catholic Church had been established there ever since the Spanish conquest. Immerwahr's answer is that he welcomes work dealing with these issues, that to a certain extent he has drawn on it, and he is glad that it exists, but dealing with issues of the mind was not what he set out to do. Instead, he wanted to deal with territorial issues: he wanted to convince people that there is a Greater United States that includes all of the bits of American-owned property around the globe (although not including privately-owned properties), and that it is all part of the general American national story. He wants the American public to look at maps differently, and to encourage the printing of different maps that, perhaps looking down from a polar perspective, will show as many as possible of these islands dotted around oceans and seas. He would like them to look at the maps and recognise reality. In short, denying the existence of the empire does not make it go away.

This is a book which is meant to challenge, and this it does. It does not challenge intellectually as such, because it is not that sort of book. Rather, it is meant to challenge perceptions, to challenge what he believes are sins both of commission – what happened – and omission – relatively few Americans know about it. To a great extent, it depends on stories and pictures, strange and revealing anecdotes, the marriage and death of one of his ancestors in Germany, a certain wandering around the topic, and, in short, a general undisciplined bagginess. One way of telling that it was written for an American general audience is because, much too often, he ends an argument or makes an important point in a separate line following the end of the paragraph. If not used carefully and if used too often, it is a technique which can imply that the reader is too dumb to realise the point of what the writer is saying. (Used in fiction, it is probably a way of speeding up the pace.)

Of course there is a disciplined theme, and this theme underlays the stories. But it can seem less weighty than it actually is, because readers may confuse enjoyment with a lack of analytical power. In fact, there is a great deal of substance in this book,

and in many of its topics it is revelatory. It zips right along, and, for a non-fiction book, even for a history book, it is a real page-turner (a comment which is meant as a compliment). It does what its author sets out to do. It is often the case, of course, that the book is not the book which the reviewer would have preferred to have been written, an approach from which many authors have suffered. But this book is what it is – a very good book written to provide enlightenment by providing enjoyment. There should be more of them.

Justin Hart

I recently had the pleasure of teaching Daniel Immerwahr's *How to Hide an Empire* to my graduate seminar on U.S. foreign relations. The theme of the course was the domestic sources of U.S. foreign relations and one of the goals of the course was to problematize the distinction between «domestic» and «foreign», so Immerwahr's argument about expanding the parameters of U.S. history beyond the contiguous forty-eight states fit right in. Students expressed particular admiration for the compelling stories that he has unearthed, as well as his gripping prose in bringing them to us. Ultimately, the most interesting topic that came up in that evening's discussion was the matter of audience: Who is this book intended for? Or, to put a finer point on it, who *needs* to read it?

How to Hide an Empire is unabashedly didactic, from its dedication to the «uncounted» of U.S. history to the final paragraph that implores us to «get over our surprise» that «the history of the United States is the history of empire» (p. 401). The obvious follow-up questions, then, are to ask *who* has failed to account for the people residing in U.S. territories, and *who* would be surprised to learn that the history of the United States is the history of empire? Here, the answers get a little slippery and it depends a lot on whether you're trying to answer the former question or the latter. With the latter question, for example, Immerwahr is surely right that the American public at large does not consider the United States an empire. (Foreign publics not so much, I suspect.) However, if the «who» under consideration is professional historians, or even the graduate students in my class for that matter, this gets a little trickier. I have no question that a healthy majority of the members of the Society of Historians for American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) – Immerwahr's professional colleagues – would share his view that the United States is and has been an empire for a very long time. The incredible proliferation over the past decade of academic books on U.S. foreign relations with the word empire in the title is testimony to that. And, in fact, he acknowledges that «many would agree that the United States is or has been an empire» (p. 14). Thus, it seems to me that when it comes to those in denial

that the United States is an empire, this statement applies more to a general audience than a scholarly one.

However, there is still the matter of America's imperial subjects. Here, it is true that even historians of U.S. foreign relations, despite freely throwing around the word empire, sometimes forget to address events in the actual territories the U.S. government claimed outside the perimeter of what Immerwahr (borrowing from Benedict Anderson) calls the «logo map» of the continental United States. I don't know for sure, but I suspect that many of the riveting stories told in this book will not be familiar even to many professional historians of U.S. foreign relations. But not all of the stories and not all of those historians. And that is because some of those scholars have written the books that Immerwahr has mined to construct his narrative. *How to Hide an Empire* draws on a brilliant blend of some archival research, combined with contemporary periodicals and obscure published works, which is all supplemented with compelling insights from the best-known scholarship on each of the issues he writes about. So, the authors of that scholarship on the various U.S. territories – whether Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, Alaska, Hawaii, or the many overseas U.S. military bases of the Cold War and post-Cold War eras – will rightly wonder why he refers to the subjects of their books as «uncounted». At least that is the essential point I took away from his much-discussed debate with Paul Kramer in the pages of «Diplomatic History». Yet, Immerwahr is not unaware of this scholarship (as Kramer suggested), noting that «it's not as if the information isn't out there. Scholars, many working from the sites of empire themselves, have assiduously researched this topic for decades» (pp. 14-15). The problem, though, «is that those books have been sidelined… [they] seem like books about foreign countries» (p. 15). I tend to agree, although I can see why these scholars in particular might not find Immerwahr's thesis as radical as he suggests that it is.

That brings us to the most important question: How much would incorporating the material from Immerwahr's book change the way we teach U.S. history? Again, I think it depends on which teacher one is talking about and whether one is thinking of a college course in the history of U.S. foreign relations or a middle school survey of U.S. history. Rather than speculate on the way that the «average» U.S. historian teaches their courses, I'll use myself as an example, and I'll consider the chapters on the War of 1898 and its aftermath, which are the focus of the first half of the book. As it turns out, these chapters provide an excellent example of my larger point. Some of what gets covered in these chapters is typically contained in textbooks and already forms the basis of the standard undergraduate lecture on this topic. When Immerwahr informs his reader that what is «usually called the Spanish-American War» should really be called the «Spanish-Cuban-Puerto Rican-Philippine-American War» (p. 70), my immediate thought was that this is the title of my lecture on this

topic and I'm not even remotely a specialist in the field. Likewise, the material on racial animosity and the sheer brutality of the U.S. occupation of the Philippines is well known to anyone who has read Paul Kramer's book or many others on the subject. Is it still «usual» to refer to the conflict as the «Spanish-American War» rather than giving a nod to the places the war was actually fought (or perhaps just calling it the War of 1898, as Louis Perez does in a fairly well-known book that makes a similar point)? I'm not sure.

But then he gets to Puerto Rico, which does often get short shrift compared to Cuba or the Philippines, and that brings us to the story of Pedro Albizu Campos, who I was not familiar with, but clearly should be. Albizu was a bit like Ho Chi Minh in that he was initially inspired by the United States, only to be disillusioned when he realized that the U.S. government had no interest in honoring his desire for Puerto Rican independence. He then waged a decades-long campaign of revolution against U.S. and Puerto Rican authorities, including an alleged role in planning a failed assassination attempt on Harry Truman and an attack on the U.S. House of Representatives in which four men fired over two dozen shots inside the House chamber and wounded five Congressmen. Immerwahr notes that although Albizu is well known in Puerto Rico, and clearly represents a figure of major significance in U.S. history, he has never been mentioned in the «Journal of American History», nor in popular «subversive» histories of the United States, such as *Lies My Teacher Told Me* or Howard Zinn's best-selling books (p. 259). This is a problem. Albizu should be in our courses; he should be in my courses. The fact that he's not – and that Puerto Rico generally is not after a brief mention during the war of 1898 – perhaps does do a lot to explain the abominable neglect of the island in the wake of Hurricane Maria in 2017, among many other things.

Moreover, it is undeniably true that many vitally important things that have happened in U.S. territories outside the logo map have been erased from U.S. history. It may not be accurate to say that the U.S. empire has been «hidden» from historians of U.S. foreign relations generally speaking, however it is certainly accurate to say that much of the material Immerwahr recounts is not nearly as well-known as it should be, and that those events shed an additional light on the nature of the U.S. empire. Then, too, in a larger historiographical sense, Immerwahr is right that the influential Wisconsin-school thesis of American «anti-colonial imperialism» has obscured much of what happened within the colonies themselves when they were still colonies.

So, what about when those colonies were renounced, or incorporated into the union through statehood? There, the conceptual focus on territory gets a bit more complicated. Immerwahr, of course, acknowledges this and argues that post-1947 the U.S. empire took on a new character: it combined a mastery of logistics, industrial engineering, and cultural production with controlling small points of land around

the globe – that is, the 800 or so military bases that the United States continues to maintain today (p. 216). The second part of the book, «The Pointillist Empire», begins with more brilliant chapters on topics such as synthetics, the transportation revolution, international standards (screw threads!), and the proliferation of English as an international language. Many of the actual stories he presents are not well known, and do not appear in your average textbook, but nor are they paradigm-altering to anyone who has read their Henry Luce. The final chapters, on the overseas bases, likewise provide many wonderfully-telling nuggets of information about U.S. bases from the Cold War through the war on terror. The notion that these specific pieces of territory are not as carefully studied as they could be is probably true, although there is much excellent work done on U.S. overseas bases. It's also true, however, that U.S. imperialism in the post-1945 period is not exactly an untold story and I'm not convinced that a study of military bases – a focus on territory – is actually a more important indicator of an imperialist mindset than, say, the occupation and virtual annihilation of South Vietnam. As I thought about teaching the second half of my U.S. foreign relations survey course, I decided that I could indeed talk more about U.S. military bases, but I'm not sure that doing so will be more effective than the material I currently use to convince my students that the history of the United States is the history of empire. That is already the thesis of my course.

In the end, I'm ambivalent about whether the U.S. empire has really been «hidden» – at least from scholars; likewise, I'm skeptical that a focus on people and events in U.S. overseas territories is the best way to *find* that empire. Nevertheless, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and I learned a lot. Frankly, everyone should read it – especially those who doubt the reality of America's imperial past and present.

Melani McAlister

Daniel Immerwahr's innovative and beautifully written book begins with a familiar story – the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The story is told with gusto, and it is moving, even in its familiarity. But then Immerwahr pulls what we will soon recognize as a kind of signature move: this is the story you know. But did you also remember that the Philippines were also bombed that day? And both Hawai'i and the Philippines were U.S. territories, not states. But only one of these stories is remembered and celebrated, and this memory and forgetting has everything to do with how to hide an empire.

This often brilliant, sometimes frustrating, and always incredibly engaging account of the «greater United States» has been much discussed and hotly debated. Immerwahr has written a history of the U.S. as a global power that focuses on

questions of territorial control – when the U.S. state has grasped for it, how it has held onto it, and when it has ceded that control but still managed to retain extraordinary economic, political, and cultural power on the global stage.

The book is organized into two parts, dividing at World War II. The first part is more often discussed, because it is here that Immerwahr makes his argument about what he calls the «logo map» of the United States. That map is inaccurate because it shows only the contiguous states plus (sometimes) Hawai'i and Alaska. But it ignores the many other territories that have been controlled by the U.S. government: the Philippines from 1898 to 1945, Puerto Rico, Guam, Samoa, and a larger number of islands and military bases, not to mention the territories the U.S. occupied after World War II in Germany and Japan. This is Immerwahr's simple-but-crucial point: the U.S. state has claimed sovereignty over many more spaces than have been included in the «United States» that most people acknowledge. The broader history of control is not accounted for in the national narratives that shape our public life (Immerwahr also discusses the imperial westward expansion and the treatment of Native American Indians at some length). This is also the approach that has been criticized, in that Immerwahr sometimes seems so enthusiastic about showing us the realities of territorial control that he ignores the horrors that happen when non-state actors go abroad (often with state support or backing): adventurers in the Amazon, missionaries in Africa, capitalists everywhere.

But this is where the second half of the book excels, because it is there that Immerwahr tells a different story. If the first part is about «hidden» forms of territorial reach, the second part asks why the U.S. contracted its territorial ambitions after World War II, precisely at the moment when it became the most powerful country in the world. By the expansionist logic that had prevailed in Europe and the U.S. before World War II, «the United States should have consolidated its victory in the Second World War by locking down resource-rich territories. [But the US] neither claimed new colonies nor organized the joint colonization of the tropics» (pp. 274-275). There were two reasons for this, in Immerwahr's telling. The first was the rising power of Third World resistance to colonization. But this was not enough. What really did the trick was technology – the emergence of forms of material (synthetic rubber, plastics), modes of communication (radio), and travel (air power, in particular) that made large-scale colonization no longer necessary. The empire of the post-World War II era was what Immerwahr, drawing on historian Bill Rankin, describes as a «pointilist» one, built around control of those fewer, smaller territories that are necessary for modern forms of global reach, and – entirely crucially – a world-spanning network of military bases.

Material cultures. One of the many strengths of the book is its focus on the materiality of power: the bodies, the labor, the stuff of empire. Immerwahr has

been quoted as saying he doesn't think ideology has much casual power, and that is apparent in his treatment of culture overall. He does make use of wonderful illustrative examples of the ways that Americans have imagined their role in the world, drawing on everything from Bond movies to comics (and I was delighted to see a chapter title – «Language is a Virus» – that I'm pretty sure is simultaneously a nod to the science fiction novel *Snow Crash* and a song by Laurie Anderson). But in this story, culture does not work, it does not act; it exhibits ideas and values that were formed elsewhere, or it justifies decisions made on other grounds (even those grounds are not always clear – some combination of material benefit and continuing investments in racism). But if this is a weakness (and, given my own interests, I think it is), it is matched by Immerwahr's profound strength in laying out the material culture of empire, particularly in his attention to both the politics of labor and the power of science.

Indeed, in one gleeful yet serious chapter on the importance of the guano islands in the nineteenth century, Immerwahr explores the exhaustion of the soil that plagued nineteenth century agriculture. This technical problem explains exactly why and how American policymakers made the decision to annex a range of small islands in the Caribbean and Pacific: «They had the one thing that everyone in the nineteenth century badly wanted. They had "white gold", known in less polite circles as bird shit» (p. 47). Of course, the idea of a race for claiming what were literally islands of calcified bird shit is hilarious and horrifying at once, and I for one had no idea about this history. Immerwahr does more than tell a great story; he explains what the working conditions were like for the people who were mining guano (horrific), how workers fought back in the U.S. courts, and, of course, how the islands' products shaped agriculture. But he also shows that the reach was longer and more long-lasting, because the claim to these islands set legal precedent for the 'right' of the U.S. to occupy and annex territory simply because it could; and it laid the strategic groundwork for the pointillist strategies of the U.S. after World War II.

Empire-killers. This material focus leads to Immerwahr's major claim about the way U.S. power worked in the mid- to late-twentieth century. The «empire-killing technologies» (p. 279) that he focuses on are familiar, but Immerwahr asks us to think about them differently. We are reminded of the importance of rubber to the European empires, and the devastation caused by the rubber plantations in Congo or Brazil, only to consider what happens when synthetic rubber is developed in the 1940s. Colonies are not needed if the powerful countries don't need to extract what they have. This is where Immerwahr's argument about his own contribution makes a great deal of sense. «In the end, this book's main contribution is not archival, bringing to light some never-before-seen document. It's perspectival, seeing a familiar history differently» (p. 16). Now, plastics and synthetic rubber and synthetic fibers

are not just part of the story of American wealth, the expansion of consumer culture, capitalist reach, and/or the ecological destruction of the planet – they are not just part of empire and its associated sins. They are, in Immerwahr's telling, part of the reason that the U.S. after World War II had a fundamentally different kind of imperial strategy.

I wished here for a great deal more about the other reason that Immerwahr acknowledges as why formal colonialism came (almost) to an end. He several times mentions the importance of Third World anticolonialism as part of the story – and some of the best of this comes with his discussion of the disaffection and betrayal that young colonial intellectuals felt at the end of World War I. But, even granted that one cannot do everything, I longed for a real grappling with anticolonial resistance: some mention of Bandung, some discussion of the politics of nationalism as having a real, material impact on what was thinkable or possible. And I wanted an accounting of how people in the global South developed the very concept of neocolonialism and economic imperialism in order to lay bare all of the ways that territorial empire's long legacy was still alive. It is not that Immerwahr does not get this; the whole point of the last section of the book is that the empire has new clothes. But, if seriousness is indicated by pages devoted to the topic, then he does not take very seriously the impact of anticolonial resistance in that transformation.

Boots on the Ground. There are many benefits to Immerwahr's approach to highlighting colonialism's technological fix, including the ways Puerto Rico and the Philippines become so essential to the overall story of U.S. history. It also puts the global network of U.S. military bases front and center. But the profound limit of the approach is that it simply does not do justice to the ways that Americans have continued to exert brute force on the ground as a method of imposing their will on the world. Again, Immerwahr knows this, but in his determination to make us see how materially different the map of U.S. empire looks from, say, the British empire – a world of dotted sovereignty versus a world swathed in red – he profoundly underplays the bare fact of boots on the ground, over and over again. And he actually understates the importance of allies and their militaries in sustaining American power, with the U.S. standing behind with military support and training. In this telling, none of the following sites of conflict receive much treatment: Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador, India/Pakistan, Somalia, Southern Africa, Israel, or Iran. There has been an extraordinary outpouring of excellent recent work on the many manifestations of U.S. military and political domination during and after the Cold War, and I can imagine that Immerwahr felt his contribution lay elsewhere. But the costs of these omissions are real.

I noted this particularly in relationship to the book's treatment of the Middle East, including in the final chapter on the War on Terror. What Immerwahr does in

that brief chapter is impressive, in that he shows again the centrality of U.S. basing as a strategy of power. It was, after all, the U.S. basing operation on Saudi Arabia in the 1990-91 Gulf War that first inspired Osama bin Laden. And he reminds us of how drone warfare, fought as it is from a distance and with a high-tech infrastructure, is exemplary of the low-footprint version of U.S. power. Tracing the networks of black sites used to interrogate terror suspects, the use of Guantanamo (another island base), and the various surveillance operations, he shows how profoundly these alternative forms of control have shaped the global terrain. As Immerwahr summarizes, in the last line of the final chapter: «Foreign prisons, walled compounds, hidden bases, island colonies, GPS antenna stations, pinpoint strikes, networks, planes, and drones – these are the locales and instruments of the ongoing war on terror. This is the shape of power today. This is the world the United States made» (p. 390).

This is a powerful, compelling statement. But it also misses something very profound about the world the U.S. has made, particularly in the Middle East and South Asia. The U.S. occupied Iraq for almost nine years; in many ways it occupies Afghanistan still today, in what is the longest, costliest, most deadly war since World War II. Perhaps the architects of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars never planned for the occupations they launched because they did not want to become occupiers – this is part of Immerwahr's brief argument about Iraq – but there were people in the State Department and other U.S. agencies who did anticipate an occupation, and who understood that the U.S. was likely to be on the ground for some time. And everyone understood the strategic goal behind the idea of replacing Saddam Hussein with some other figure, someone «friendly» to both U.S. hegemony in the region and the needs of transnational capitalism. I imagine that no one anticipated the 6 trillion dollar costs of the wars, or the extraordinary number of civilian and military deaths. And perhaps they did not quite realize the destruction – of civil society, the infrastructure, and the environments – that would result. But there was muck and mud, violence and blood, military infrastructure, nighttime raids on family homes, people shot in the streets or in their cars, Blackwater and Falluja, suicide attacks on targets hard and soft. This was, and is, as far from a non-territorial, abstracted, pointillist empire as one can get. Immerwahr's lack of attention to those wars on the ground – his failure to get into the shit of twenty-first century power at its most material – is an example, I think, of being overly enamored of one's own argument. I would have remained convinced that this book had something profound to say about the changing nature of power and the role of technology in those changes, even if – particularly if – Immerwahr had paused to seriously consider the obvious exceptions to the developments he so beautifully traces.

We ask more of the work we are most enthusiastic about. When I teach this book in my courses, as I will, I will need to teach both with it and against it, but

perhaps that is always the case with innovative, argument-driven work. Immerwahr has written an important book, and in many ways an extraordinary one. It has already been reshaping the conversations among historians and in the general public, and it will continue to do so for many years.

Andrew Preston

Empires are, by definition, big. They sprawl in a collection of odd and non-contiguous shapes, bringing together disparate peoples, regions, and religions whether they want to be brought together or not. They can also be a variant of what Winston Churchill once called «empires of the mind»: Churchill thought of peaceful order, but his phrase also conjures up extra-territorial forms of cultural and economic control as well as, Robert Gildea has recently observed, the enduring, complicated legacies of Europe's overseas conquests. Either way, empires affect everyday life for millions and are therefore hard to miss. So how *does* one exactly «hide» an empire?

Daniel Immerwahr's illuminating answer provides the foundation for his brilliant, highly stimulating book. The United States has consistently been an empire of one kind or another, yet Americans themselves have just as consistently denied, or simply been ignorant of, the existence of their empire. Whether by intention or inattention, the empire of the United States has usually been hiding in plain sight. Immerwahr reveals it for all to see, and nobody who has read *How to Hide an Empire* will be able to repeat the old cliché, still prominent throughout all levels of U.S. political culture, that Americans have never been an imperial people. Scholars may already know this, but it's astonishing how few people beyond the academy know it too.

Immerwahr's overarching thesis is best understood by breaking it down into its component parts. First and foremost, we must recognize that the United States had, and still has, a territorial empire. This «Greater United States» was, and is, as much a part of U.S. history as Connecticut, Colorado, or California. Second, while the territorial empire was important to the United States, the people of the continental United States – Immerwahr aptly calls them «mainlanders» – didn't know or care much about it. Third, this territorial empire mostly dissolved in the era of World War II not due to the altruism of mainlanders but to the fact that «empire-killing technologies» (p. 279) allowed for the «replacement of colonialism with globalization» (p. 315). Territory lost its importance, and the U.S. relinquished control over most of its holdings.

How to Hide an Empire is a compulsively readable and ridiculously enjoyable book. Immerwahr's writing style is engaging, and the stories (the use of the plural

here is deliberate: the book is essentially a serial of discrete but related episodes) he tells are engrossing, so it's no surprise that his book has found broad appeal. Not many serious histories are page-turners, but this one is. But the book's popularity as a work of literary non-fiction shouldn't obscure its academic bona fides. *How to Hide an Empire* is a synthesis, based on a wide yet eclectic reading of large bodies of secondary literature and careful excavation of various archives. At once synthetic and original, it is an enormous historiographical achievement and will shape the scholarly discussion of American empire for years to come.

Immerwahr's argument that globalization replaced colonialism is arrestingly original, and the book's most invigorating chapters, in the second half of the book, chart the spread of American standards by way of plastics, synthetic rubber, screw threads, James Bond, the Beatles, the stop sign, and the English language. Knowledge is power, but control of how knowledge is dispensed and dispersed – i.e., international standards in an age when goods and systems had to be internationally interchangeable – is more powerful still.

This shift is Immerwahr's most important contribution to our understanding of empire, and he explains this with persuasive clarity. Yet it is only one part of the story – an underappreciated part, perhaps, but just one all the same. The other part was America's enforcement of this globally standardized system of liberal capitalism, which is, to my mind, the true locus of American empire. Immerwahr doesn't exactly ignore this other side of the story – soft-power globalization still needed hard-power enforcement, and so a «pointillist empire» of military bases dotting the world map emerged in place of large, colonial land-holdings like the Philippines – but it's never fully developed.

The Philippines, which garners the lion's share of Immerwahr's attention, isn't as important in this sense as Cuba, which, interestingly, remains relatively hidden in the book. In the Philippines the United States repurposed a (very) old-school Spanish colony only to reinvent an imperial model the British and French had devised elsewhere in Asia. In Cuba, though, as Immerwahr observes in an aside that could be developed further, Americans discovered a new form of indirect imperial control in the wake of the war of 1898. This «extraordinary» arrangement «gave the United States many of the benefits of colonization without the responsibility» (p. 113). This, not the Philippines, was the real model for the United States, by which Americans would implant norms and standards and protect them by coercive intervention if necessary (but without annexing territory). Only this way could U.S. presidents and their subordinates repeatedly claim, in all sincerity, that their wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Balkans, and the Middle East, or their imposition of structural adjustment reforms on economically ailing and prostrate countries, weren't imperial because they didn't have territorial conquest as their objective.

Of the post-1945 «pointillist» empire, Immerwahr concludes, «It's a far cry from the world Teddy Roosevelt envisioned, in which the strong violently subdue the weak and take their land» (p. 315). Not really: as Immerwahr obliquely acknowledges elsewhere in the book (p. 218), the pointillist empire is really just a newer version of Alfred Thayer Mahan's imperialism of island-based nodal points, with communications towers and drone runways replacing coaling stations. The Cold War, and especially the «new world order» that followed, saw the apogee of the Roosevelt Corollary, and Rooseveltian concepts — say, the United States as the world's humanitarian policeman launching foreign interventions and occupations but not outright annexations – became the very basis of U.S. foreign policy. In fact, one could easily see TR at the helm of the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq, defending U.S. security and spreading norms at the barrel of a gun. He and Mahan strike me as the historical figures who would feel most at home in the White House Situation Room today.

Too often Immerwahr treats the spread of U.S. standards in the post-1945 world as incidental byproducts of Americans venturing abroad. He observes that in «South Korea, which has never been colonized by an Anglophone power», English is widely spoken (p. 334), but this relies on the narrowest possible view of colonialism at the expense of a broader, more realistic conception of empire in which the U.S. military in South Korea was a heavy-handed – indeed, one might say imperial – presence. Immerwahr persuasively explains the near-simultaneous rise of the Beatles in England and Sony in Japan as the result of their proximity to U.S. military bases, and especially their personnel. But the bases were there for a reason, not simply to acculturate Liverpudlians to American popular music or to spur Japanese on to greater and greater heights of technological innovation. The U.S. military enforced an international order with the heavy hand of state-sanctioned violence, most devastatingly in Korea, and that's surely as much a part of the story of American empire as screw threads and stop signs.

Actually, even more than stop signs. Immerwahr labels these seemingly mundane traffic-control measures the «empire of the red octagon», but that's probably pushing things a little too far. Stop signs were invented in Michigan in the 1910s and fanned out from there, first across the North American continent and then beyond. Immerwahr estimates, «by my count, at least 91 percent of the world's population stops at red octagons» (p. 314). I'm not sure how to verify this figure – Immerwahr's citation is to a person who helped him arrive at it but he doesn't say how – but I am sure it cannot be true. Stop signs are rare outside North America and a handful of other countries, and I've almost never encountered them while traveling in Europe, Africa, or Asia – including in Britain, where I've been driving for two decades and have seen a stop sign only once or twice. They're a rarity, like spotting a hedgehog

in the city: it happens, but it's so exceedingly rare that the memory of the encounter lingers.

Rather than an epitome of how American standards have conquered the globe, the stop sign is emblematic of just how much of an exceptionalist oddball the United States is, internationally speaking. Its screw threads might set the worldwide alight, but its sports do not: cricket is played by more people than baseball, rugby in more countries than American football, F1 racing is global whereas NASCAR is parochial, and football (i.e., soccer) is the world's game (only basketball can claim a spot for America in the pantheon of global sports, and it was invented by a Canadian). The same is true for measuring temperature, distance, volume, and weight – in all cases, Americans are outliers, sometimes uniquely so. Moreover, the measurements Americans themselves use are not American: Fahrenheit was a German living in what is now Poland, while U.S. measurements (inches, yards, miles, ounces, pounds, etc.) are descended directly from British imperial weights and measures. Still, not even the Germans or British use these obsolete systems anymore – only in America. The paper-size on which I'm typing this review is the international-standard German A4, not the American 8.5x11.

The very shift from British imperial weights and measures to a barely perceptible American system of measurement is telling. Distilled to its very essence, American empire in all its forms is a newer variant of the British Empire. As historians – a disparate lot that includes, among many others, Paul Kennedy, Kathleen Burk, Julian Go, Bernard Porter, John Darwin, Niall Ferguson, and most recently A.G. Hopkins in his own monumental history of American empire – have shown, the United States drew its power by siphoning directly from the British source. Both nations embedded their expansionism in the spread of liberal norms. Whether it be the property-rights based economic development of settler colonialism or the empire of free trade, the British and the Americans have spread their power on the back of an unreflective conceit of self-righteousness and the firm belief that liberal values are indivisible and not open to compromise. The two world wars provided the catalyst for transitioning from a British-ordered world to an American-ordered one, but traces of the original version persisted in the updates. So it's telling that when Immerwahr names four bands that invaded Japanese popular culture in 1970, three are British – Deep Purple, Cream, and Led Zeppelin – while the fourth, Jimi Hendrix, was an American who initially failed to catch on in his home country but made his name in London while backed by the quintessentially English musicians Mitch Mitchell and Noel Redding. The British deceived themselves that they could tutor the Americans on the realities of power – Harold Macmillan had once speculated that the British could be ancient Greeks to the Americans' Romans – but this fantasy has been ineffectual despite the exertions of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair. Yet what has endured is the basis of

a normative liberal empire that has fueled the spread of Anglo-America across the world and helped create our modern world order. As Immerwahr might put it, we don't often see this empire precisely because it is everywhere.

Daniel Immerwahr

A roundtable is always an honor, but it is all the more one when the reviewers ask the hard questions, as they've done here. They have been charitable in their compliments and apt in their summaries – Mario Del Pero offers an especially detailed account. Having been spared the duty of restating my own theses and seeing no point in responding to praise, I'll cut straight to the substantive issues.

The first, raised by Kathleen Burk, concerns the book's form. As she rightly notes, *How to Hide an Empire* seeks to engage an audience beyond scholars. Thus, it makes its points through «stories and pictures» and «strange and revealing anecdotes». Burk generally appears to approve of this, deeming the book «a real page-turner», but she notes «a certain wandering around» in the plot and «a general undisciplined bagginess» to the storytelling (though not, she clarifies, to the analysis). She also finds irritating my habit of ending sections and chapters with single-line paragraphs.

Burk has a point. Addressing a wider audience meant jettisoning many writing habits inculcated in graduate school. I came to appreciate brisk paragraphing, and I spent far more time fretting about plot than I had as a monographer. I learned to incorporate callbacks to earlier chapters, to interweave stories, and to hold back information so that its eventual revelation would carry more force. All of this violated my «tell us exactly what you plan to say and signpost aggressively» academic training. It also had the unexpected effect of making my book difficult for graduate students to hastily skim, as the arguments are not always trumpeted at the start and end of chapters. I can only say that I did this on purpose and hope that it worked.

Burk's observations about writing connect to Justin Hart's important question about audience. My book, he observes, is dedicated «to the uncounted» and makes much hay of the «hidden» nature of the U.S. empire. And yet, Hart notes, the «healthy majority» of students of U.S. foreign relations have long understood the United States to be an empire. Using his own classroom as an example, Hart reports that he already teaches the 1898 war with Spain in much the terms I narrate it. He already argues that the United States is an empire – that is, in fact, the «thesis» of his course. This leads Hart to ask: from whom has the U.S. empire been hidden?

As I argue, the U.S. territorial empire has been hidden from mainlanders. Inhabitants of that empire have gone «uncounted» in the literal sense that they haven't factored into the U.S. census statistics but also in the broader sense that they

haven't had standing in the court of mainland public opinion or a place in U.S. policy decisions. Throughout the book, I offer examples of mainlanders displaying confusion about overseas territory, and I contend that such confusion carried profound and sometimes lethal consequences. My core argument here is that the United States has been distinctive for its failure to reckon with its own territory.

But, Hart asks, does that failure to reckon extend to historians? Yes and no. One could fill many shelves with excellent scholarship on the U.S. territorial empire, so in that important sense there is nothing revelatory about, say, the story of Puerto Rican nationalist Pedro Albizu Campos. Yet with the exception of the 1898 war and the subsequent war in the Philippines, my strong sense is that most historians who don't research the territorial empire engage very little with it. Certainly, it does not feature much in broad narratives about U.S. history or even U.S. foreign relations. Hart is right that most SHAFR members would argue that the United States is an empire, yet that argument usually proceeds along different lines and does not include much about territory past the Philippine War. My goal was to help historians and history readers see how central overseas territory has been to the United States.

Making that case meant leaning heavily on the copious scholarship that has already been done, as my notes show. Yet even my account of the colonial empire, which is the more synthetic half of my book, includes findings I believe to be new. One is that there was a pronounced nomenclatural shift from «the United States» toward «America» triggered by the 1898 war with Spain. Another is that the familiar 1940s episode known as Japanese internment included the violent incarceration of some 30,000 people of Japanese ancestry in the Philippines. Even the story of Pedro Albizu Campos I was able to augment by using records from Albizu's student days to show how he could be included in the «Wilsonian moment» cohort and by documenting the role of Albizu's antagonist, Cornelius Rhoads, in human subjects testing of chemical weapons.

But, as Melani McAlister and Andrew Preston observe, it is the second half of the book that is more novel – and thus more controversial. There, I argue that the territorial expression of U.S. power largely shifted from the familiar colonial type to a «pointillist» one, rooted in military bases and other small enclaves. I attribute this switch to the global revolt against empire and to U.S. mastery of new technologies.

Del Pero finds this an uncomfortably «exceptionalist interpretation». Typically, exceptionalist accounts stress the uncommonly pure motives of the United States. But *How to Hide an Empire* does not do that. Rather, it argues that the United States faced a different historical conjuncture than other empires. U.S. hegemonic ascent occurred during a worldwide anti-imperialist movement and at a time when technologies made it easier to project power into uncolonized foreign spaces. This gave the post-1945 United States a distinctive relationship to territory. No current

country comes close to matching the United States' number of foreign military bases, and no past country's territorial holdings have resembled the extent and character of the U.S. pointillist empire. If that is what Del Pero means by «exceptionalism», I'll accept the designation.

Preston, approaching from the opposite side, argues that the United States has been more of an «exceptionalist oddball» than I have allowed in my chapter on U.S.-centered global standardization. He notes the many ways in which the United States stands apart – a bizarre country where «football» means NFL teams on a 100-yard field rather than FIFA teams on a 100-meter pitch. He'll hear no dissent from me. In my book I discuss the United States' «unique exemption from international standards» (p. 313). It's the reverse of the coin: the United States has been both uncommonly successful imposing its ways on foreign countries and uncommonly successful refusing the imposition of foreign ways on itself. So, it exports basketball and the 60-degree screw thread but resists importing soccer and the metric system.

Lurking behind questions of exceptionalism is a normative question. Exceptionalism is usually a doctrine of flattery, and Hart, McAlister, and Preston wonder if the second half of my account somehow lets the United States off the hook. Hart is content to hear about military bases but doubts that they are a «more important indicator of an imperialist mindset than, say, the occupation and virtual annihilation of South Vietnam». Preston notes that those enclaves were there for a reason: to uphold a militarily imposed international order with «the heavy hand of state-sanctioned violence, most devastatingly in Korea». «That's surely as much a part of the story of American empire as screw threads and stop signs», he adds. McAlister warns that the story of territorial empire «simply does not do justice to the ways that Americans have continued to exert brute force on the ground as a method of imposing their will of the world». She calls for narratives that emphasize the «muck and mud, violence and blood».

I wholly agree. *How to Hide an Empire* is about territory under U.S. jurisdiction, which is but one face of empire. The napalm-fueled Asian wars are another face, which I've explored in my other writing. My book offers important reasons to see the United States as an empire, but it doesn't seek or pretend to offer all the reasons, and to rest that case entirely on territory would leave quite a lot out. I see my book as supplementing, not supplanting, the ample scholarship on U.S. military and economic power. And so, like Hart, when I teach the U.S. foreign relations survey, I also talk more about the Vietnam War than I do about overseas bases.

For McAlister (and seemingly also for Preston), the problem goes beyond my choice to focus on territory rather than all aspects of empire. Pointillism is an ideal type, and expressions of pointillist logic can be seen in the world map of U.S. bases, in new military technologies, and in the thought-patterns U.S. leaders. But as much

as strategists in Washington have sought to limit the United States' footprint, they have not succeeded. There have been boots on the ground – many boots – and an «extraordinary number of civilian and military deaths», McAlister writes. Moreover, there is a connection between the pointillist ideals and the messier realities that characterize today's wars. It is the predictable failures of pointillism that have led the United States to its longest-ever war, in Afghanistan, just as the predictable failures of colonialism led to its second-longest war, in the Philippines, a century before. The important thing, McAlister insists, is to capture both the vision and the reality of the pointillist empire, and she fears I have fallen short on the second score, at least when it comes to warfare.

She's right. My book highlights the resentments created by bases and the complex political, cultural, and economic interactions around them. But I do not delve into the ongoing relationship between pointillism's strategic logic and the state of seemingly endless war that the United States now finds itself in. As Preston notes, my coverage of bases deals with them more as peacetime institutions or behind-the-lines logistical hubs than as battlefield outposts. My account takes the reader to Dhahran in Saudi Arabia, Burtonwood in England, and Koza in Okinawa, not Fallujah in Iraq. The emphasis on large bases like the one at Dhahran captures the fact that the majority of U.S. bases are far from the fighting, but it fails to explore the crucial interaction between U.S. enclaves and combat. Thus, even in its analysis of territorial pointillism, McAlister argues, my book leaves out something important.

I regard this as a powerful critique. In response, I can do little more than quote Burk's concluding judgment of *How to Hide an Empire*: «This book is what it is».

Too true.