AMERICAN IMPERIALISM and the State 1893–1921

COLIN D. MOORE

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For Cynthia Moore and
to the memory of John Moore

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Preface and Acknowledgments

In the late 1970s, the historian James A. Field, Jr. took to the pages of the *American Historical Review* to describe his frustrations with the study of American expansion at the end of the nineteenth century. His provocatively titled essay, "American Imperialism: The Worst Chapter in Almost Any Book," excoriated the profession for developing a "curious narrative" that relied on "an inverted Whig interpretation of history, differing from its predecessor primarily in that now the children of darkness triumph over the children of light."[1] Although scholars have made considerable progress since Field's witty essay appeared, much work remains to be done on the *politics* and *administration* of American expansion.

American Imperialism and the State offers a new interpretation of US expansion at the turn of the twentieth century that focuses on the institutions and structures of the nascent American empire. It argues that we must see the acquisition and governance of overseas colonies as a formative moment in American state development – one that loomed large in the minds of several presidents and the early architects of American foreign policy in the twentieth century. The concern, for many of them, was whether the American constitutional system was compatible with long-lasting formal empire.

To explore this question, this book focuses principally upon four cases of American imperial governance – Hawai'i, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti – to show how the American empire *developed* and *adapted* to the constraints of the American system of separated powers. Although the formal American empire of colonies, dependencies, and protectorates would largely give way to less obvious forms of imperial control, the organizational structures developed to govern the new colonies offer us a unique window into the development of the American foreign policy state, and present some more general challenges to standard stories of American state building and the development of American foreign relations. In short, a central claim of this book is that the evolution of the

[1] James A. Field, Jr., "American Imperialism: The Worst Chapter in Almost Any Book," *American Historical Review* 83 (June 1978): 644–5.

American empire cannot be understood without fully understanding the interplay of political institutions that governed this empire.

If the US empire was exceptional, it was not because American liberal traditions made it more benevolent than its competitors. In making this argument, I join scholars such as Julian Go who has observed that "America's national character had little to do with the forms of rule the United States enacted in its colonies."[2] Where this book departs from Go's incisive analysis is its focus on the structure of the American state and the autonomous actions of state officials. In the pages to come, I show how Congress and the American constitutional system constrained the imperial dreams of two presidents and officials in the executive branch – and would eventually lead to the empire's partial collapse by the 1920s. Yet the strategies and institutional capacities developed to overcome these congressional and constitutional restraints would also, I argue, lay the foundations for the modern executive-dominated security state.

My hope is that this book will contribute to an emerging conversation in political science about the role of territorial expansion and empire in shaping the American state. It is my view that American political development requires a clear understanding of American imperialism, but political science – a discipline where the exceptionalism of the United States is frequently taken as a starting point for analysis – has remained surprisingly silent about this period. When it is mentioned, it is too often dismissed as an aberrant or ultimately irrelevant moment in American history. Yet by focusing on the domestic state to develop their theories, scholars have missed an opportunity to apply insights from historical institutional studies of American state building to explain state action in an international context.

This book is meant to fill this gap in the literature by focusing on the development of an overseas American empire. In doing so, I intend for it to provide a historical complement to work on inter-institutional theories of American foreign policy. Second, the book is meant to offer a new analytic perspective to existing narratives of US imperialism. By adopting a state-centered view, this book diverges from accounts that view the development of US empire through the lens of power politics, American racism, indigenous resistance, and local conditions in the colonized nations. Nevertheless, I see this work as a complement, rather than a challenge, to these perspectives. I hope that the historians and sociologists who pioneered these critical studies of American imperialism will agree.

There was a time, not so long ago, when the lengthy acknowledgments that begin so many academic books puzzled me. How, I wondered, given the solitary nature of scholarship, could an author possibly have so many people to thank? I now understand. In the process of writing this book, I have managed to incur more than my fair share of debts to friends, colleagues, and institutions. And now, much to my great delight, I have the privilege to thank them.

The first thanks go to my teachers. As an undergraduate at Swarthmore College, Rick Valelly first introduced me to political science. Were it not for his inspirational teaching and enthusiasm for the study of American political development, it is unlikely that I ever would have gone to graduate school. This book began as a

[2] Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 25.

dissertation in the Department of Government at Harvard University. During my years as a graduate student, Eric Schickler's unrivaled knowledge of the Progressive-era Congress greatly improved my understanding of the political dynamics of American imperialism. Theda Skocpol's brilliance and deep understanding of state development and comparative historical research was matched only by her support and generosity in discussing this project from its earliest stages. My greatest debt is to my advisor, Daniel Carpenter. Throughout the process of researching and writing this book – indeed, throughout all of my time as a graduate student and a junior professor – Dan has been a patient and encouraging force. He was among the first people to see the value in this project, and he helped me shape the argument over countless cups of coffee – and even a few fly-fishing trips to western Massachusetts.

This book would not have been completed without the generous support of several institutions. I am indebted to the National Science Foundation and the Center for American Political Studies at Harvard University for financial support during my years as a graduate student. The Center for the Study of American Politics at Yale University gave me the time to finish my dissertation and to begin the process of transforming it into this book. I am particularly grateful to Stephen Skowronek for his advice and support during my time at Yale. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Scholars in Health Policy Research program gave me two years away from teaching. This time allowed me to add several new sections to the manuscript under the guidance of Margaret Weir and John Ellwood at the University of California, Berkeley. Finally, my thanks go to Cambridge University Press for graciously allowing me to adapt, for Chapters 1, 4, and 5, portions of my article "State Building Through Partnership: Delegation, Public-Private Partnerships, and the Political Development of American Imperialism, 1898–1916," *Studies in American Political Development* (2011), 25: 27–55.

Over the last four years, the University of Hawai'i has proven to be an ideal place to complete this project. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Hokulani Aikau, Debora Halbert, Brien Hallett, Manfred Henningsen, Jon Goldberg-Hiller, Ehito Kimura, Neal Milner, Lawrence Nitz, Noenoe Silva, Manfred Steger, and Myungji Yang for their advice and *aloha*. They all discussed my ideas at length in the office and over long dinners in Kaimuki, barbeques on Kaimana Beach, and ridge hikes in the Ko'olau Range.

As I worked on this book over the years, I relied on a network of extraordinary friends who made the process bearable with their sound advice and good humor. Special thanks go to Scott Burns, Jonah Eaton, Dan Hopkins, Annaliesse Hyser, Doug Kriner, Ryan Moore, Dann Nassemullah, Andrew Reeves, Lizzie Rothwell, Danny Schlozman, and Spencer Strub who listened patiently as I prattled on about obscure Progressive-era figures in Cambridge, Philadelphia, and Berkeley. Bob Eaton and Wendy Batson provided me with an evening meal and a bed in Takoma Park, which made the months of archival research in Washington so much easier.

My biggest debt, of course, is to my family. My aunt, Glory Styles, knew just when I needed to take a break from work to explore the East Bay's culinary scene. Despite being occupied with their own careers, my brother and sister kept my spirits high even when they must have wondered if I was really making any progress at all. I dedicate this book to my mother, Cynthia, and to the memory of my father, John. Their love and support made it possible.

List of Abbreviations

Allen Papers	Henry T. Allen Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
American Historical Collection	American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University. Quezon City, The Philippines
Barrows Papers	David P. Barrows Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California. Berkeley, CA
BIA	Bureau of Insular Affairs
Bryan Papers	William Jennings Bryan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
Butler Papers	Personal Papers of Major General Smedley D. Butler, Marine Corps Research Center. Quantico, VA
Caperton Papers	William Caperton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
Cooper Papers	Henry A. Cooper Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society. Madison, WI
Dole Papers	Sanford B. Dole Papers, Hawai'i State Archives. Honolulu, HI
Edwards Papers	Clarence Edwards Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. Boston, MA
Forbes Papers	W. Cameron Forbes Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA
FRUS	*Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office)
Harrison Papers	Francis Burton Harrison Papers in the Burton Norvell Harrison Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC

Hay Papers	John Hay Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
Hollander Papers	Jacob Hollander Papers, National Archives and Records Administration II. College Park, MD
Jessup Papers	Philip Jessup Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
Knox Papers	Philander Knox Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
LeRoy Papers	James A. LeRoy Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI
Lodge Papers	Henry Cabot Lodge Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. Boston, MA
Republic of Hawai'i Records	Republic of Hawai'i Records, Hawai'i State Archives. Honolulu, HI
RG 46	Records of the Committee on the Philippines, Senate Records, RG 46, National Archives and Records Administration I. Washington, DC
RG 59	Records of the Department of State, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration II. College Park, MD
RG 139	Records of the Dominican Customs Receivership, RG 139, National Archives and Records Administration II. College Park, MD
RG 233	Records of the Committee on Insular Affairs, House Records, RG 233, National Archives and Records Administration I. Washington, DC
RG 284	Records of the Government of American Samoa, RG 284, National Archives and Records Administration at San Francisco. San Bruno, CA
RG 350	Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, RG 350, National Archives and Records Administration II. College Park, MD
Root Papers	Elihu Root Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
Smith Papers	James F. Smith Papers, Washington State Historical Society. Tacoma, WA
Story Papers	Moorfield Story Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
Taft Papers	William Howard Taft Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Washington, DC
Worcester Papers	Dean C. Worcester Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI

Contents

1

Introduction

> Some of the things the Senate does really work to increase the power of the Executive . . . In this nation, as in any nation which amounts to anything, those in the end must govern who are willing actually to do the work of governing; and in so far as the Senate becomes a merely obstructionist body it will run the risk of seeing its power pass into other hands.
>
> —Theodore Roosevelt (1906)[1]

On the morning of October 12, 1898, President William McKinley rose to address a crowd of nearly 100,000 at Omaha's Trans-Mississippi Exposition, a sprawling fairground of monumental buildings devoted to American advances in agriculture, manufacturing, and administration.[2] Just months before, the United States had emerged victorious from the Spanish–American War, and McKinley was on a ten-day tour to judge the public's reaction to America's new global role. After acknowledging the cheers that greeted his arrival on the dais, the president informed his audience that their nation's victory over Spain came with new "international responsibilities," which, he explained, would need to be met with the same sense of courage and duty that prevailed during the war. "Shall we," he asked the crowd, "deny to ourselves what the rest of the world so freely and so justly accords to us?" "No!" came the resounding answer. "The war was no more invited by us than were the questions which are laid at our door by its results." That these new questions would be difficult ones, the president had no doubt. Whatever the challenges to come, however, he remained convinced that the nation's "high and unselfish" aims would pave the way to success. "Right action follows right purpose," he assured his audience.[3] Months later, in return for a nominal payment of $20 million to Spain, the United States would formally take possession of its new overseas

[1] Theodore Roosevelt to John St. Loe Strachey, February 12, 1906, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Elting E. Morison (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), v. 5, 151.

[2] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 106.

[3] William McKinley, *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley* (New York: Doubleday & McClue Co., 1900), 101–6.

colonies, bringing the small island territories of Guam and Puerto Rico, along with the entire Philippine archipelago, under American control.

The president was not the only official who thought that "right action" followed "right purpose." For the bureaucrats charged with managing these territories, America's new colonial possessions were not only a responsibility to be borne with a sense of duty, but also an abundant opportunity to demonstrate to the world the genius of American progress. To be sure, Congress and the American public soon lost interest or grew opposed to their nation's new "responsibilities," but the officials who took up the task of governing the new possessions brought with them a belief in the transformative power of science, infrastructure, and rational administration.[4] Although colonial officials never hesitated to include rhetorical flourishes about the "republican" nature of their empire, the ability to operate outside the normal constraints of democratic politics was what they found most attractive about the colonies. For these technocratic reformers – many of whom were disgusted by the corruption and spoils politics that characterized the nineteenth-century American state – the new possessions presented an opportunity to apply the most modern theories of Progressive governance in an environment where checks on their power were minimal. There would be no political machines to dislodge, no voters to placate, and no institutional legacies to overcome in the colonial periphery. Managed by this "blessings-of-civilization trust," to borrow Mark Twain's famous (and bitterly sarcastic) characterization of the US imperial state, the colonies would become a vast billboard to advertise their nation's arrival as a world power.

Although American empire is often dismissed as a weak imitation of the more potent European form – or, more troubling, its existence simply denied – it was far more capable and its goals were far more ambitious than is often recognized.[5] In an age when the transformative power of the state was still a politically charged issue at home, American colonial administrators constructed powerful and activist colonial regimes to engage in social engineering projects that often exceeded those attempted by the domestic state.[6] They built highways and railroads. They established agriculture experimentation stations and regulated narcotics. Civil service rules were in place from the earliest days of colonial administration.[7] As a result of the colonial state's extensive education programs, English became the *lingua franca* of the Philippines.[8] Model prisons were built according to contemporary theories of criminology, and extensive public health investments reduced tropical diseases

[4] Michael Adas, *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 165.

[5] This fact, of course, is hardly forgotten by the millions of people who were ruled by the United States. For an example of the generally dismissive accounts of American formal empire, see, for example, Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of American Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004). The eleven states that came directly or indirectly under American rule during this period were Hawai'i, Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Liberia.

[6] Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 37.

[7] Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Random House, 1989); Peter W. Stanley, *A Nation in the Making: The Philippines and the United States: 1899–1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Richard E. Welch, Jr., *Response to Imperialism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

[8] Karnow, *In Our Image*, 202.

and infant mortality, and provided Manila with its first sewer system.[9] Yet much like domestic Progressive programs, these projects were bundled within a paradigm of white and specifically *American* cultural superiority. As one newly arrived official wrote in a passage that captures both the ambitious nature of colonial thinking and the racial lens through which the entire project was seen,

> A new government is being created from the ground up, piece added to piece as the days and weeks go by. It is an interesting phenomenon, this thing of building a modern commonwealth on a foundation of medievalism – the giving to this country at one fell swoop all the innovations and discoveries which have marked centuries of Anglo-Saxon push and energy.[10]

Only seven years after McKinley's address in Omaha, Theodore Roosevelt faced another foreign policy dilemma that would have equally far-reaching consequences. The Dominican Republic, deeply in debt to European creditors, was preparing to default on its loans, and Roosevelt, fearing that German, British, or even Italian interests might intervene to force Santo Domingo to maintain payments, offered to take responsibility for the debt. Unlike McKinley, however, Roosevelt (in his inimitable style) famously conceded that he had "about the same desire to annex it as a gorged boa constrictor might have to swallow a porcupine wrong-end-to."[11] That Congress and the American public would never support such an action was, of course, the unspoken subtext. Instead of outright annexation, Roosevelt brought the Dominican Republic under American control through a unique partnership between American bureaucrats and Wall Street bankers whereby the United States arranged for a private loan to refund Dominican debt in exchange for the effective transfer of Dominican sovereignty to a US-controlled protectorate.[12] Although the policy faced fierce opposition in Congress, where Roosevelt was accused of usurping the Senate's treaty-making rights and engaging in illegal negotiations with foreign powers, this controversial neocolonial solution, later dubbed "Dollar Diplomacy" by the press, would serve as the model for subsequent colonial regimes in Haiti, Nicaragua, and Liberia during the Taft administration.

The American system of empire would change yet again a few years later – this time under the Democratic administration of Woodrow Wilson. His arguments for national self-determination in other parts of the world notwithstanding, Wilson ordered the invasion of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1915 and 1916,

[9] Stanley, *Nation in the Making*.

[10] Daniel Williams quoted in Julian Go, "Global Perspectives on the U.S. Colonial State in the Philippines," in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives*, ed. Julian Go and Anne L. Foster (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 1. See also Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during US Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Julian Go, "Chains of Empire, Projects of State: Political Education and U.S. Colonial Rule in Puerto Rico and the Philippines," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (April 2000): 333–62.

[11] Theodore Roosevelt to Joseph Bucklin Bishop, February 23, 1904, in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Morison, v. IV, 734.

[12] My thinking about Dollar Diplomacy has greatly benefited from the diplomatic historian Emily S. Rosenberg's work. See, for example, her outstanding history of this era, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

respectively, expanding on Roosevelt's receivership and bringing the entire island of Hispaniola under direct American administration. During these "interventions," as they were euphemistically known, American officials – many of whom were transferred from the Philippines – were charged with bringing development and stability to these beleaguered nations along the model developed in the Philippines, relying yet again on Wall Street for financial support. Meanwhile, Wilson's appointees in the Philippines, although they were no less committed to "right action" than their predecessors, began a slow process of "Filipinization," which drew down the number of American officials and nationalized large parts of the colonial economy, replacing the private railroad corporations and banks with state-owned enterprises. By the 1920s, when the empire had become a political liability for both the Democratic and Republican parties, the United States began to liquidate many of its colonial possessions and protectorates, finally granting effective independence to the Philippines (1935) and ending its occupation of the Dominican Republic (1924) and Haiti (1934), but keeping Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, and several small island nations (Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands) under its control until the present day. The American age of formal empire and Progressive nation building, which had begun with so much sound and fury in 1898, would end quietly less than forty years later as the last marines steamed out of Port-au-Prince and Manuel Quezon entered Malacañang Palace as the first president of the Philippine Commonwealth.

EMPIRE AND THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

Whether this well-known history of American imperialism is presented as the "first great triumph" or as the tragic social experiment that it was, it is traditionally understood as the *natural* outgrowth of structural and cultural factors such as industrialization, racism, and Manifest Destiny.[13] Lost in this decades-long quest to locate the origins of imperialism in American culture and political economy, however, are the institutional developments and interbranch politics that underlay the vigorously contested expansion of American power in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia in the years after the Spanish–American War. In their quest to transform the United States from a prosperous industrial republic into an imperial power, a diverse set of bureaucrats and executive officials in the emerging American foreign policy state confronted the same obstacles – conditions of mass democracy, a weak central state, and the complex constraints of the US Constitution – that earlier reformers had encountered in their efforts to rationalize the administration

[13] Warren Zimmermann, *The First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2002). In a passage that seems to capture the general thrust of most historical scholarship, the English historian V. G. Kiernan writes of the American experience in the Philippines, "Fully committed to empire-building as the U.S. in the first years of the century might appear to be, the annexations of 1898 proved before long a deviation from the main line of advance, a passing fantasy or a specific tonic for a spell of domestic sickness." V. G. Kiernan, *America: The New Imperialism: From White Settlement to World Hegemony* (London: Zed Press, 2005 [1978]), 157. For a general overview, see Edward P. Crapol, "Coming to Terms with Empire: The Historiography of Late Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 16 (Fall 1992): 573–98.

of the domestic American state.[14] Time and time again, the indifference of the American people to an empire that was too far and too foreign, as well as tenacious and strategic opposition from colonized people, stymied the efforts of the president and these officials.

Yet the lack of support and funding from Congress for an expansive American empire was always the most difficult obstacle to overcome. After a brief burst of pro-imperial enthusiasm (a period that generated a number of quotable, but ultimately irrelevant, speeches), Congress quickly soured on the "imperial experiment." At first, colonial bureaucrats *did* try to build public support for their imperial policies. They sponsored exhibits at fairs; they tinkered with customs laws to create favorable investment environments; and they solicited positive press coverage to advertise the good works they were doing in America's showcase of democracy. Such strategies quickly proved unsuccessful for some rather straightforward reasons: Members of Congress from both parties remained uninterested in populations that could not vote, and the American public's racism and fear of possible economic competition from their *own colonies* made them indifferent and occasionally hostile to the new American colonies. The empire, quite simply, was bad politics in a mass democracy. And, in an age before the "imperial presidency," Congress saw no reason to defer to the executive in foreign affairs. Using its formal powers over appropriations and tariffs, as well as its informal powers to mold public opinion, Congress's attempts to control and limit overseas empire were extremely effective. Such opposition could have easily spelled a quick end to American empire, but it did not.[15]

This book asks why. Accordingly, it confronts three broad, but perplexing, theoretical and substantive questions:

1. How did American executive officials engage in these ambitious nation-building projects with such limited congressional and public support?
2. Why did the United States distance itself from a policy of formal colonialism so quickly after creating institutions designed to manage its new colonial possessions?
3. How did the essential tension between American mass democracy and imperial governance shape the expansion of the American empire?[16]

[14] See Go, *Patterns of Empire* for a comparison of the American and British empires.

[15] For other theories of imperial expansion, see David B. Abernathy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires 1415–1980* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Alexander Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). In recent years, the debate over empire has generated fierce debates in the academic and popular presses. See, for example, Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Neil Smith, *America's Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003). For two pioneering collections of essays from historians and sociologists that have focused on the state and American empire, see Go and Foster, eds., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*; Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

[16] I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this phrase.