

## State, Market and Colonization: Notes on Empire in Nineteenth-Century U.S. History

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### Abstract

Arguing for the need to adopt “empire” as a crucial concept to understand U.S. history, the essay offers a critical overview of recent historiographies on the nineteenth-century United States that allows on the one hand to grasp the imperial and colonial character of U.S. nineteenth-century territorial expansion, on the other hand, it accounts for nineteenth-century U.S. industrial growth and market building both as a quest for independence on the world market and as an expansive imperial process. In this respect, an understanding of colonization and industry as the two driving forces of nineteenth-century U.S. history can prove crucial for a comprehensive interpretation of Friedrich List’s and Henry Charles Carey’s national project for capitalist development.

**Keywords:** American Empire; Colonization; State; Capitalism; National Economy.

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## 1 Empire in Early U.S. History

Adopting “the imperial as a way of seeing”<sup>1</sup> U.S. history, Paul Kramer argued, allows to go beyond the rather sterile debate on whether and when the United States actually was or had an empire, and to accept as a fact the existence of a consistent pattern of U.S. imperial thought and politics. Against exceptionalist historiographies denying the applicability of the concept of empire to the United States, as for the concepts of State and class, interpretations of U.S. history as an imperial and colonial history have often represented an insightful critique of American power, of its functioning and of its self-representations. However, such interpretations, currently piled up into a massive body of literature, often underestimated the relevance of empire in U.S. history between the American Revolution and the Civil War. On the contrary, if an “American way of life” ever existed, as William Appleman Williams noted, empire was a foundational part of it, since “Americans thought of themselves as an empire at the outset of their national existence ... having matured in an age of empires as part of an empire.”<sup>2</sup> Recently, in his interpretative synthesis, Tiziano Bonazzi reconstructed the imperial context from which the American Revolution emerged, tracing its origins back to the British need, after the Seven Years War, to look at empire “*through the eyes of the State*” in order to more strictly govern the colonies. In this perspective, the foundation of the United States should be understood as a reaction to this critical imperial reorganization, as the birth of a State, stretching the international system of European States beyond the Atlantic.<sup>3</sup> Still, understanding empire as a context in the “age of imperial revolutions”<sup>4</sup> is not enough to fully account for the imperial dimension of early U.S. history.

Following Jane Burbank’s and Frederik Cooper’s definition of empires as power structures that create, exploit and govern differences, or precisely as “expansionist polities” where “different peoples ... will be governed differently,”<sup>5</sup> empire stood as a foundational political project of the new republic. Against British colonial rule and against traditional republican thought, the revolutionary élites invoked a different kind of imperial politics and the building of a State that could be “republic and empire at the same time,”<sup>6</sup> triggering a struggle over the concept of empire, which would have continued over the course of U.S. history, as Piero Bairati reconstructed.<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Franklin’s expansive vision of the British empire, Thomas Jefferson’s “empire of liberty,” Alexander Hamilton’s depiction of the federal government as aimed to preserve “the Union of so large an empire”<sup>8</sup> and James Madison’s reflections on the advantages of “an extensive territory”<sup>9</sup> for republican government, are but a few examples of how an imperial lexicon permeated U.S. political thought since its beginning.<sup>10</sup> In some ways, to American revolutionaries, “empire” was the name of political power itself: the specific, historical name denoting the kind of territorially expansive State they projected to build. Summarizing the

1. Paul A. Kramer, “Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World,” *The American Historical Review*, 5 (2011): 1350.
2. William Appleman Williams, “The Age of Mercantilism: An Interpretation of the American Political Economy, 1763 to 1828,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 4 (1958): 420. See also: William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1959; William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.
3. Tiziano Bonazzi, *La rivoluzione americana*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018.
4. Jeremy Adelman, “An Age of Imperial Revolutions,” *The American Historical Review*, 2 (2008): 319-40.
5. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, 8-10.
6. John G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975, 531.
7. Piero Bairati, ed., *I profeti dell'impero americano. Dal periodo coloniale ai nostri giorni*. Torino: Einaudi, 1975.
8. Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist XXIII*, in *The Federalist Papers*, London: Penguin, 1987, 188.
9. James Madison, *Federalist LXIII*, in *The Federalist Papers*, 373.
10. Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990; Karl-Friedrich Walling, *Republican Empire: Alexander Hamilton on War and Free Government*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999; Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire. The Language of American Nationhood*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000; Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty. A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

different imperial levels of early U.S. history, John Pocock explained how American Independence emerged at the same time as the aftermath of a crisis in British multiple monarchy and as an expansionist claim over North America, soon institutionally organized through federalism in the new State.<sup>11</sup> In both senses, “empire” should be an inescapable conceptual framework for studying the founding of the United States.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the expansionist dynamic through which the new republic tried to fulfill its aspiration forces historians to extend an imperial interpretation of U.S. history to the whole nineteenth century. The annexation of Western territories, the removal of Native Americans, the invasion of Mexico, the definition of the Monroe doctrine, all represented crucial moments of an imperial and colonial development.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, without denying the importance of 1898 as the turning point from a continental-territorial to a global-commercial vision of empire, the traditional notion that U.S. imperialism started only in the late nineteenth century should be reconsidered.<sup>14</sup> Recent historiographies, which I will now discuss, further substantiated the need for an imperial history of the nineteenth-century United States. On the one hand, Daniel Immerwahr, Paul Frymer and Adam Dahl accounted for the inner imperial and colonial logic of westward expansion and of the political thought legitimizing it. On the other hand, A.G. Hopkins and Marc-William Palen reconstructed the imperial meaning of industrial development and of industrial thought, both for national independence and for global commercial expansion. Both perspectives will prove crucial for a deeper understanding of Henry Charles Carey’s and Friedrich List’s national economy and of their insight into nineteenth-century U.S. capitalism.

## 2 Expansion and Colonization

As Daniel Immerwahr points out in his *How to Hide an Empire* (2019), the United States was never just a union of States, but, since its independence, it was “a collection of states *and territories* ... a partitioned country, divided into two sections, with different laws applying in each.”<sup>15</sup> The invention of “territory” itself as a distinct political category is proof of a fundamentally imperial, differentiated and hierarchical way of conceiving government. By telling the story of the “Greater United States” and of its forgotten subjects, Immerwahr not only traces the existence of a “persistently ignored”<sup>16</sup>

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11. John G.A. Pocock, “Empire, State and Confederation: The War of American Independence as a Crisis in Multiple Monarchy,” in *A Union for Empire. Political Thought and the British Union of 1707*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; John G.A. Pocock, *La ricostruzione di un impero: sovranità britannica e federalismo americano*. Manduria: Lacaita, 1996.
  12. On the imperial meaning of the American Revolution, see also: Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: a History of the Northwest Ordinance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987; Marc Egnal, *A Mighty Empire: the Origins of the American Revolution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988; James G. Wilson, *The Imperial Republic: A Structural History of American Constitutionalism from the Colonial Era to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*. Aldershot-Burlington: Ashgate, 2002; Gary Lawson e Guy Seidman, *The Constitution of Empire: Territorial Expansion and American Legal History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004; Eliga H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf, *Empire and Nation. The American Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005; Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006; Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011; Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth. The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
  13. On empire and imperial processes in nineteenth-century U.S. history: Ernest N. Paolino, *The Foundations of the American Empire: William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973; William Earl Weeks, *John Quincy Adams and American Global Empire*. Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1992; Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny. American Expansionism and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1996; Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003; Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2011; Marco Mariano, *L’America nell’“Occidente.” Storia della dottrina Monroe (1823–1963)*. Roma: Carocci, 2013.
  14. Even excellent contributions still tend to ignore or minimize the U.S. nineteenth-century imperial expansion, for example: Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *The Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2-009.
  15. Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire. A Short History of the Greater United States*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019, 10.
  16. *Ibid.* 35.

U.S. empire back to the Revolution, but he also argues for the need to understand it in specifically colonial terms. In this respect, Immerwahr depicts the all-Indian territories created after 1834 as the nation's "first colony"<sup>17</sup> and argues that African Americans were treated like "colonized subjects," since "empire isn't just landgrabs."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the nineteenth-century westward expansion stood as the first act in the longer story of the Greater United States, the story of "a violently expansive empire of settlers, feeding on land and displacing everything in its path."<sup>19</sup> In depicting this process, Immerwahr highlights the tensions between the movements of frontiersmen, such as Daniel Boone, and Washington's and Jefferson's determination to turn expansion into a "controlled process,"<sup>20</sup> which account for the federal government's role in politically directing the pace of colonization. Moreover, Immerwahr reconstructs how the United States annexed fifty-nine small islands in the Pacific and the Caribbean before 1863 to import guano as a manure for western lands,<sup>21</sup> a forgotten episode which reveals an interesting connection between imperial expansion and economic development. Immerwahr's book is largely dedicated to the U.S. empire after 1898, as such reproducing some of the problems of previous historiographies. However, it stands as a relevant demystification of American imperialism and of its colonial functioning.

A deeper account of the concrete functioning of empire and colonization in the nineteenth century, is offered by Paul Frymer in his *Building an American Empire* (2017), which, in the wake of the American Political Development School, reconstructs the efforts of the federal government to control territorial expansion through land policies. To Frymer, the U.S. foundational imperial aspiration was quickly translated into "a project of population control and settlement with the use of land policy very much at the center,"<sup>22</sup> thus in a project of colonization with the American State at its core. This, however, in the first decades largely meant opposing unrestrained westward movements and favoring a slow, compact and coherent expansion that could both avoid conflicts on the frontier and foster economic development: as Jefferson put it, it meant "advancing compactly as we multiply."<sup>23</sup> To do so, Frymer argues, land ordinances "carefully managed and designed to harness the nation's strengths (its increasing population of settlers and citizen soldiers) in order to minimize its weaknesses (a small and weak military and bureaucracy)."<sup>24</sup> Thus, in declaring a monopolistic authority over western land and in controlling its sale and distribution through surveys, the federal government played a critical role in managing "the task of settlement by regulating its direction, pace, and scale — moving preferred populations onto contested territory in order to engineer the demography of the region."<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, claiming that the federal government was particularly active does not mean arguing that it always succeeded. On the contrary, the American State "struggled for control, winning and losing, asserting and bumbling as it went along."<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, Frymer points out that, though crucial, "the American State was *also* importantly weak,"<sup>27</sup> often lacking the military and bureaucratic means to enforce its decisions, which left a significant amount of "racial diversity"<sup>28</sup> and uncontrolled movements to deal with in the long term. In this respect, Frymer's historical interpretation of the American State is significantly nuanced, but also precise, following Brian Balogh's argument that the federal government

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17. Ibid. 16.

18. Ibid. 14.

19. Ibid. 18.

20. Ibid. 31.

21. Ibid. 46-58.

22. Paul Frymer, *Building an American Empire. The Era of Territorial and Political Expansion*. Princeton Studies in American Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017, 1-10.

23. Thomas Jefferson, *Letter to John C. Breckinridge*, August 12, 1803, in Id. *Writings*. New York, The Library of America, 1984, 1138.

24. Frymer, *Building an American Empire*, 35.

25. Ibid. 9.

26. Ibid. 36.

27. Ibid. 12.

28. Ibid. 13.

structured national rules to ensure an ordered development<sup>29</sup> and Ira Katznelson's accounts of the State's "flexible" capacity to mobilize resources, coordinating and galvanizing rising capitalist enterprises.<sup>30</sup> Still, by describing the federal government as the engine of territorial expansion, even with its fallacies, Frymer's contribution allows to go beyond the debate about the strength or weakness of the nineteenth-century American State<sup>31</sup> and to account for the concrete ways in which it operated. To Frymer, the American State can be better understood as a "conventionally weak state" that constantly tried to exert its coercive power by "harnessing and strategically controlling society."<sup>32</sup> Land policies stood as the State's political tool both in governing society and in governing expansion, or rather in implementing expansion as a white-settler colonization of the North-American continent. This required making war, implementing "the politics and logistics of removal"<sup>33</sup> and restraining "population movements"<sup>34</sup> to guarantee a white-only settlement of the West. Furthermore, reconstructing the specific role of the State in imperial expansion, Frymer proves the need for bridging and connecting histories of the American State and histories of the American empire, which too often proceed on separate paths.

From a very different methodological perspective, but reaching similar conclusions, Adam Dahl's *Empire for the People* (2018) investigates the ideological and conceptual underpinnings legitimizing U.S. territorial expansion. In doing so, Dahl unveils the imperial and colonial foundations of U.S. democratic thought, showing that native dispossession and settler colonialism constituted its "basic conceptual logic."<sup>35</sup> Federalism itself and its institutional implementation did not represent "an alternative to colonial empire but rather an alternative mode of colonial expansion," operating through the principle of "federative replication" and guaranteeing the equality of the units of empire. Still, the Northwest Ordinance could include new States on "an equal footing," institutionalizing "a form of empire without colonial dependence," precisely because it allowed a preliminary violent process of colonial dispossession, the removal of Natives and the expansion of slavery.<sup>36</sup> Thus, federalism, despite its "post-colonial" and equalitarian shape, kept colonial dispossession as its substantial precondition. In this precise sense, to Dahl federalism solved the imperial crucible of how to govern differences by violently erasing them. Moreover, against democratic interpretations of the U.S. Constitution and of the Declaration of Independence, Dahl investigates "the coloniality of constituent power," arguing that, since the eighteenth-century, American democratic thought rested upon a "labour-value theory of empire"<sup>37</sup> which legitimized democratic sovereignty as an expanding settler sovereignty. Through the Vermont Constitution of 1777, Dahl reconstructs how colonization stood as the American form of democratic constituent power, both negatively as the power to dissolve old orders and positively

29. Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight. The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

30. Ira Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity: The Military and Early American State-building," in *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, 82-110.

31. On the debate on the American State, see: William J. Novak, "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," *The American Historical Review*, 3 (2008): 752-72; "AHR Exchange On the 'Myth' of the 'Weak' American State," *The American Historical Review*, 3 (2010); Raffaella Baritono, "Uno Stato a 'bassa intensità'? L'esperienza storica statunitense," in *Lo Stato globale*, eds. Raffaella Gherardi and Maurizio Ricciardi, Bologna: CLUEB, 2009, 81-110; Raffaella Baritono, "Un Leviatano suo malgrado. Stato e nazione negli Stati Uniti tra Guerra civile e ascesa mondiale," in *Nazionalizzazione e modernità: Italia, Europa e Stati Uniti (1861-1901)*, eds. Tiziano Bonazzi, Daniele Fiorentino, and Annunziata Nobile, Ariccia: Aracne, 2014, 51-73; Max M. Edling, *A Hercules in the Cradle. War, Money and the American State, 1783-1867*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014.

32. Frymer, *Building an American Empire*, 71.

33. Ibid. 77.

34. Ibid. 71.

35. Adam Dahl, *Empire of the People. Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018, 16.

36. Ibid. 24-6.

37. Ibid. 32.

as the power to constitute new ones, providing “the foundation of an imperial-democratic polity,”<sup>38</sup> in which colonization replaced revolution as the means of exercising constituent power. Therefore, Jefferson’s political thought, which captured this colonial doctrine “in distilled ideological form,”<sup>39</sup> cannot be simply described as a radically democratic thought.<sup>40</sup> Besides, pushing his analysis deep into the nineteenth century, Dahl takes into account the disavowal of Native presence implicit in Alexis de Tocqueville’s geographical depictions of North America, in Walt Whitman’s poetry, in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s writings and in John O’Sullivan’s “safety-valve theory of colonization,”<sup>41</sup> showing a pervasive strain of imperial-colonial thought.

Moreover, such reading of nineteenth-century U.S. history, can help assess the sectional conflict between Northern and Southern States as a struggle for “land and more land,”<sup>42</sup> as W.E.B. Du Bois noted, as the clash of two competing imperial visions resting on two expansive political economies. Interestingly enough, both Dahl and Frymer interpret the Republican Party’s free labor doctrine as an intrinsically imperial claim over the West and as a project of white-settler colonization that grounded the party’s opposition to slavery and its dreams of racial separation. To Dahl, Abraham Lincoln’s and William Seward’s concept of free labor was a “colonial thinking”<sup>43</sup> that, claiming western lands for white workers, involved native removal and racial separation. As we will see, the same can be said of Henry Carey’s thought, which gave scientific-economic shape to the Republican free-labor doctrine. Accordingly, Frymer identifies the 1862 Homestead Act, approved in the middle of the Civil War, as the highest attempt to foster western settlement, while regulating it and while “manufacturing whiteness,”<sup>44</sup> thus politically fabricating racial demographics “by incentivizing white Americans and Europeans to settle the West with the promise of free land.”<sup>45</sup> Consequently, in the Republican outlook, the free-white colonization of Western territories had to be mirrored by the black colonization of Africa or of Central America, a project that, since the foundation of the American Colonization Society in 1816, had broad support and persisted as Lincoln’s goal long into the Civil War. In other words, keeping the West free from slavery required a “second removal”<sup>46</sup> that in Frymer’s perspective should be understood as a further attempt by the federal government to manage population movements. A failed attempt, that still tells much about “the politics of colonization”<sup>47</sup> at the heart of the Republican Party’s program. As Dahl puts it, “just as the safety-valve theory displaced class conflict by projecting it onto a geographic elsewhere, racial colonization restored national unity by transporting the source of racial conflict (i.e., the colored race) to Central America.”<sup>48</sup> In both accounts, the sectional conflict stands as a strife between “two competing imperial imaginaries: an empire of free soil and free labor and an empire of slavery and domination.”<sup>49</sup> In Frymer’s words, “both sides endorsed expansion, but in different directions and forms, with different methods, and with very different goals” and both shared “the assumption that America was a white nation.”<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the nineteenth-century U.S. territorial expansion over North America should be casted as a process of empire building; as a process of colonization, which required the removal of Native Americans and the racial separation from African Americans; as a process regulated and governed by the

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38. Ibid. 48.

39. Ibid. 49.

40. For example in: Antonio Negri, *Il potere costituente. Saggio sulle alternative del moderno*. Roma: Manifestolibri, 2002, 179-240.

41. Dahl, *Empire of the People*, 102-123.

42. William E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, ed. David L. Lewis, New York: The Free Press, 1992, 28.

43. Dahl, *Empire of the People*, 138.

44. Frymer, *Building an American Empire*, 128-171.

45. Ibid. 132.

46. Ibid. 220-62.

47. Ibid. 262.

48. Dahl, *Empire of the People*, 139.

49. Ibid. 126.

50. Frymer, *Building an American Empire*, 132.

American State through land policies, culminating in the Homestead Act; as a process whose ideological legitimation shaped the colonial foundations of U.S. political and democratic thought. Moreover, Dahl and Frymer allow a reassessment of sectional conflict as a struggle between imperial claims and of the Republican Party's political program as an intrinsically imperial and colonial expansionist doctrine. In this respect, colonization emerges as the driving force of the nineteenth-century U.S. imperial history.

### 3 Market and Industrial Development

Nonetheless, territorial expansion still does not fully account for the multifaceted relevance of empire in nineteenth-century U.S. history. Two further contributions focus more specifically on the imperial dimension of U.S. industrial development, commercial policies and market building before and after the Civil War. A. G. Hopkins, in his *American Empire* (2018), combines "global, imperial, and insular approaches"<sup>51</sup> to study empires as "agents of globalization," accelerating and extending "the flows and velocity of goods, peoples, and ideas across the world."<sup>52</sup> To Hopkins, if the need for imperial history is self-evident for the period after 1898, the decades between the Revolution and the Civil War should be understood in imperial terms as well, because of the imperial and neocolonial trade relationships in which the United States was still embedded. Hopkins as well places the State and its functioning at the center of his account, interpreting the American Revolution as a reaction to the dialectic of the British military-fiscal State and of its mercantilist economic system, which made the thirteen colonies autonomous right before the moment when a stricter political control became necessary.<sup>53</sup> Still, "the achievement of formal independence was not the end of the empire story"<sup>54</sup> in North America, because the United States continued to rely on British capital for investments and on British markets for agricultural exportations, even transplanting some "key features of Britain's military-fiscal state,"<sup>55</sup> such as the central bank and the public credit system. Since his *Report on Manufactures*, Alexander Hamilton had clearly highlighted the link between the fiscal and commercial strengthening of the American State, the acceleration of economic development and the achievement of effective independence from Great Britain.<sup>56</sup> However, to Hopkins long into the nineteenth century, the United States remained a "decolonizing State" trying to make the transfer of power a reality and struggling to overthrow the persisting colonial ties with Great Britain, which increasingly oriented the U.S. economy towards a pattern of "dependent development" based on exportations of agricultural products, especially southern cotton and midwestern grain.

Thus, during the greater part of nineteenth century, the United States was still engaged in a "protracted exercise in decolonization,"<sup>57</sup> which required the growth of national industries and the structuring of a diversified national market as political-economic tools in a long "struggle for independence."<sup>58</sup> In Hopkins' perspective, the advocates of the so-called American System precisely caught, in the first half of the century, the need for grounding political independence in economic development, thus bringing the Hamiltonian program into a new context of accelerated industrial growth, British free-trade hegemony and sectional conflict. In particular, Friedrich List's and Henry Carey's

51. A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire. A Global History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018, 13.

52. Ibid. 25-41.

53. Ibid. 45-94.

54. Ibid. 98.

55. Ibid. 131.

56. On the fiscal building of the early American State, also see: E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse. A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790*. Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1965; Max M. Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government. The Origins of the United States Constitution and the Making of the American State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; Matteo Battistini, "A National Blessing: debito e credito pubblico nella fondazione atlantica degli Stati Uniti d'America," *Scienza & Politica. Per una storia delle dottrine*, 48 (2013): 13-31; Max M. Edling, *A Hercules in Cradle. War, Money and the American State, 1783-1867*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014.

57. Hopkins, *American Empire*, 7.

58. Ibid. 142-90.

economic thought, but also, among others, Henry Clay's politics, aimed "at achieving national economic independence through neomercantilist policies of tariff protection, transport improvements, and managed sales."<sup>59</sup> In this respect, mid-nineteenth-century national economy, later translated in the Republican Party's program, had the anti-colonial goal of overthrowing the imperial ties with Great Britain by completing the financial and commercial structuring of the American State and of its national market. Only after the Civil War, when the national economic program of the Republican Party was fully implemented and the U.S. industrial growth took off, the United States could solve its "classic postcolonial dilemma: how to make formal independence effective."<sup>60</sup> At the same time, Hopkins maintains that "it is hard to argue that the United States created a continental empire in the nineteenth century,"<sup>61</sup> limiting the actual existence of an American empire to the few decades after 1898 and before 1945, when the United States "ceased to be an empire" and became "a hegemon."<sup>62</sup> Hopkins' formulation clearly proposes once more some of the exceptionalist schemes he supposedly wants to challenge through his global history. However, his understanding of the decolonizing meaning of nineteenth-century U.S. economic development and protectionism stands as a precious foothold for a more accurate historical interpretation, without contradicting accounts, such as Frymer's and Dahl's, of the strictly imperial and colonial character of U.S. territorial expansion. As a matter of fact, the two aspects should be kept together, since this duplicity of the U.S. imperial aspiration was already present at the outset of the American Revolution, as a claim of independence against Great Britain and as a claim of sovereign expansion over North America.

In any respect, Hopkins fails to see a further imperial element both of U.S. economic development and of List's, Carey's and the Republican Party's national economy, presented in Marc-William Palen's *The "Conspiracy" of Free Trade* (2016),<sup>63</sup> which reconstructs the Anglo-American debates over trade and empire, and particularly the struggle between the free-trade "Cobdenite" school and the protectionist "Listian" school in the United States. Even if defining nineteenth-century U.S. protectionism as simply "Listian" is inaccurate, since such a self-proclaimed school never existed and since List was himself deeply influenced by earlier American protectionists, Palen's perspective can be very useful. Above all, his book explains that the List-Carey economic doctrine was not limited to the call for protection as a means of national development, but it had a long-term understanding that, as American industries became internationally competitive, the United States would need more access to foreign markets and that imperial means might be required to access them.<sup>64</sup> In this respect, while calling for protection for infant industries and for the building of a national market in order to make U.S. economy independent from British markets and capitals, List's and Carey's protectionism was at the same time laying the grounds for the coercive opening of foreign markets and for the establishment of a U.S. industrial and commercial hegemony over the world market. Thus, List, Carey and their disciples saw national industrial development only as the first necessary step towards imperial commercial expansion on a global level. In other words, they understood how imperial expansion could only be produced by strong and accelerating industrial development. In this regard, protectionism was not only a program for domestic prosperity but also a "globalizing ideology."<sup>65</sup> Palen often fails to explicitly recognize the role of the State in such processes and in accounting, as Hopkins does, for how national economy prescribed its commercial and fiscal strengthening as a necessary step towards independence and empire building, often getting trapped in distinctions between "formal" and "informal" imperialism. Nonetheless, he has the merit of accounting for the long-term imperial side of the national-economic doctrine that, in Hopkins' perspective, was struggling to "decolonize" the U.S. economy. For both, industrial development stood as the material foundation of national indepen-

59. Ibid. 160.

60. Ibid. 187.

61. Ibid. 237.

62. Ibid. 32.

63. Marc-William Palen, *The "Conspiracy" of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalization, 1846–1896*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

64. Ibid. 1–32.

65. Ibidem.

dence and of imperial expansion.

To Palen, since the late 1850s, Carey and his disciples had a crucial political role in making the Republican Party “a protectionist party *en bloc*”<sup>66</sup> and in establishing such a commercially expansive imperial vision as the party’s core economic program, which would have later been implemented since the 1890s by politicians such as James Blaine and William McKinley.<sup>67</sup> In this respect, Palen’s goal is to challenge the established interpretation of the free-trade character of late-nineteenth-century American imperialism. On the contrary, it was economic nationalism, that “played a crucial role in American imperial expansion in the late nineteenth century, and thus in controlling the more regionalized course of U.S. economic globalization for decades to come.”<sup>68</sup> Following this reassessment, the U.S. overseas expansion since 1898 should be reinterpreted as a consequence of “the imperialism of economic nationalism — not the imperialism of free trade”<sup>69</sup> and any understanding of the *laissez-faire* character of late-nineteenth-century U.S. capitalism should be carefully reconsidered. Only by reconstructing the political hegemony of protectionism and economic nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century, is it possible, in Palen’s perspective, to understand the rise of the United States as a global industrial and imperial power over the world market in the first decades of the twentieth century. Consequently, contrary to traditional interpretations and common sense, List’s and Carey’s national economy should be recast as an intellectual and political root of later American globalization.

Taking Hopkins’ and Palen’s contributions together, we can more deeply account for the relevance of empire in nineteenth-century U.S. history, arguing that economic and industrial development represented the root of U.S. effective independence from the persisting imperial and neocolonial British commercial hegemony and the root of U.S. imperial expansion towards foreign markets. Accordingly, List’s and Carey’s national economy and later the Republican Party’s economic policy stood as a decolonizing program for national economic independence, as an imperial program for a global commercial expansion of U.S. industrial power over the world market, and as a call to strengthen the American State in order to produce industrial development, national independence and imperial expansion.

#### 4 Conclusion: National Economy and Empire

Overall, according to the discussed literature, long into the nineteenth century the United States was still placed in an imperial commercial relationship with Great Britain. It was territorially expanding over the North-American continent through imperial and colonial means, which ideologically reflected in the conceptual foundations of U.S. political thought. It was fractured by a sectional conflict over the terms of imperial expansion. Moreover, industrial development was already laying the commercial grounds for later U.S. imperial expansion. Only by acknowledging all these elements, is it possible to account for how the U.S. industrial and imperial rise since the 1890s was politically, economically and intellectually produced in the previous century. In addition, recent historiography has the merit of taking a step further in assessing the role of the American State in imperial processes, through colonial dispossession, land policies, population control, infrastructural investments and later through commercial policies. In this respect, historical accounts have no choice but to keep State and empire together in studying the nineteenth-century United States. It is not possible to understand the history of the American State without acknowledging its original imperial and colonial logic of action and it is not possible to understand the history of American empire without acknowledging how it was concretely implemented through the State. Moreover, in describing the imperial and colonial conceptual foundations and political aspirations of the Republican Party’s program and of its major political and economic ideologues, the discussed literature provides a crucial background for a deeper historical and political understanding of Friedrich List’s and Henry Charles Carey’s economic thought. The

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66. E. Peshine Smith to H. C. Carey, quoted in Palen, *The “Conspiracy” of Free Trade*, 30.

67. Palen, *The “Conspiracy” of Free Trade*, 84-115; 172-205.

68. Ibid. XXXV.

69. Ibid. XXXVI.

main scholarly accounts on List and Carey focused on their protectionism as a means of industrial development,<sup>70</sup> while few acknowledged its inner imperial outlook,<sup>71</sup> no one took into account Carey's specific drive for a governed continental expansion and only Karl Marx realized that Carey's political economy ended up in a theory of the State.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, an interpretation holding these elements together could prove both original and comprehensive. On the one hand, it could illustrate how Carey, in his economic science of free labor, conceived the U.S. territorial expansion over North America as a process of settler colonization which had to be tightly regulated by the federal government and to harness unrestricted westward movements in order to be instrumental to economic development. In this precise sense, Carey's political economy stood as one of the ideological roots of the Republican homestead policy. On the other hand, such approach could show List's and Carey's national economy as a program not only for national independence on the world market, but also for a State-managed industrial growth and for imperial global expansion in the long run. In this regard, Carey's doctrine, politically implemented by his disciples since the 1860s, constituted a crucial pillar of later Republican protectionism and economic policies. My research will try to bring forth how Carey's political economy linked colonization and industrial growth into a general insight on American capitalism and on the conditions for its global rise, which required a strengthened government as the political engine of development and a stricter connection between State, capitalism and empire.

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70. Among others, on Carey: Paul K. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity. America's First Political Economists*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; Nicholas G. Onuf and Peter S. Onuf, *Nations, Markets, and War. Modern History and the American Civil War*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006; Heather Cox Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth. Republican Economic Policies during the Civil War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997; Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes. The Economic Origins of the Civil War*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009. On List: Harald Hagemann, Stephan Seiter, and Eugen Wendler, eds., *The Economic Thought of Friedrich List*. Abingdon-New York: Routledge, 2019; Michael Liebig, "Friedrich List and the American System of Political System," *Executive Intelligence Review*, 12 (1999): 25-29; Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy. The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; Eugen Wendler, *Friedrich List (1789-1846). A Visionary Economist with Social Responsibility*. Heidelberg-Berlin: Springer, 2015.

71. As for Carey, an exception is: Bairati, *I profeti dell'impero americano*, 179-181. As for List: Onur U. Ince, "Friedrich List and the Imperial Origins of the National Economy," *New Political Economy*, 4 (2016): 380-400.

72. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. New York: Penguin, 1978, 886.

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