

Empire for Liberty

Richard H. Immerman

Princeton University Press (May 2010)

Hardcover \$24.95 (256pp)

978-0-691-12762-0

While the idea of imperial domination, as opposed to democracy, is not one with which many Americans are comfortable, the US, in fact, has *always* been an empire. That is, it has always proceeded toward expansion as an empire for liberty. So says Richard H. Immerman, noted historian of US foreign relations, who conversed with a spectrum of professional scholars, political scientists, diplomats, and colleagues in order to explore the development of America and its historical efforts to extend its brand of liberty.

The author delineates the actions of six men he considers the most influential in the process. These ambitious leaders did not work alone, and Immerman documents their collaboration with presidents and lawmakers. Benjamin Franklin, a well-traveled intellectual, recognized value in America's population growth, advocated British alignment with US policy and trade, and, when negotiations failed, supported and signed the Declaration of Independence.

An admirer of both Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams encouraged the Louisiana Purchase, believing it was America's destiny "to be the most populous and most powerful people." He also favored westward expansion.

William Henry Seward influenced the opening of trade with Japan and facilitated the purchase of Alaska, while Henry Cabot Lodge believed in America's destiny as a ruler and worked to "take control" of the isthmus, Hawaii, the Philippines, and Guam.

John Foster Dulles espoused acquiring markets and securing worldwide investments. His goal for "security against attack" was to diminish the powers of the East, especially the Soviets; he wanted to "protect" Vietnam and the Middle East from Communism.

Immerman's final example is Paul Wolfowitz, a scholar of history and politics with a focus on the Holocaust and Hiroshima. Convinced that America must "replace evil with good," he urged the invasion of Iraq, which "may turn out to be the greatest strategic blunder in US history," according to Immerman.

The author's comprehensive research and writing skills make *Empire for Liberty* an exciting illumination of the rise of America's empire. Focusing on political moves, the book defines America's people, resources, and resolutions of conflict from the time of George Washington through the election of Barack Obama; it is an accomplished analysis of the causes behind the events that formed the US. It will be of special interest to those who seek to understand where we've been in order to plan action for the future.

MARY POPHAM (May / June 2010)

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