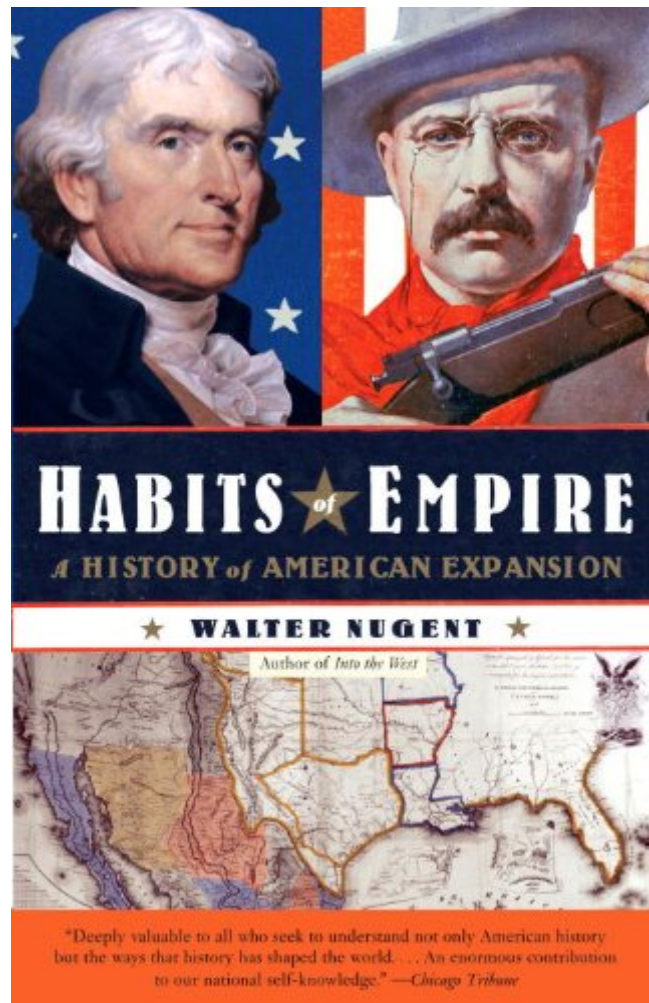




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Habits Of Empire



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Synopsis

Since its founding, the United States' declared principles of liberty and democracy have often clashed with aggressive policies of imperial expansion. In this sweeping narrative history, acclaimed scholar Walter Nugent explores this fundamental American contradiction by recounting the story of American land acquisition since 1782 and shows how this steady addition of territory instilled in the American people a habit of empire-building. From America's early expansions into Transappalachia and the Louisiana Purchase through later additions of Alaska and island protectorates in the Caribbean and Pacific, Nugent demonstrates that the history of American empire is a tale of shifting motives, as the early desire to annex land for a growing population gave way to securing strategic outposts for America's global economic and military interests. Thorough, enlightening, and well-sourced, this book explains the deep roots of American imperialism as no other has done. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Walter Nugent's book on American expansion is a sober commentary on how the U.S. government

has had a habit of being aggressive when it came to territorial acquisitions or exerting its influence around the world. Nugent points out that even in its infancy, the government tried to expand into what is now Quebec and Eastern Ontario. The book also chronicles events such as the Louisiana Purchase, the takeover of what was northern Mexico, the expulsion of Indians from their rightful lands and temptation of obtaining Cuba from Spain. It was in this era that Nugent called America Empire I. Empire II consisted of obtaining territory outside of the continental U.S. including Samoa, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Alaska, Midway Island and Hawaii, the last acquisition was indeed very unlawful and was tantamount to a coup over Queen Liliuokalani. Empire III was described by the author as the time where America did not obtain land but rather used its influence to dominate areas of the Middle East and South Asia with its foolish dreams of imposing Democracy in areas of the world that never heard of such of thing and the results of which have been disastrous. The book was well thought out with the history being detailed in an orderly, chronological manner. We should be careful to wish for a powerful government to influence the world, for it might well push its influence on US for the worse. Five stars.

Because of this book I learned that "Remember the Alamo" was all about preserving slavery in Texas and not necessarily a valiant stand against an oppressive dictator. The information provided by the author is excellent and I learned a lot. However, he does analyze the past in terms of present day political correctness. There was a context for America's actions in the past that may be difficult to understand in the present. While Exceptionalism, open immigration policy, and Manifest Destiny are part of that context, America also invested heavily in transportation and communication infrastructure and had a vibrant, widely accessible, and strong free press that contributed to a strong sense of a nation. Other countries and territories that were in the path of America's expansion simply didn't have the means or the societal structure to stand up against it.

If you enjoy the illusion and arrogance that we as a people are morally superior, this book may be disturbing. We were and still are an imperialist nation. But we were no worse than the others. The details of how we achieved our expansion, by force, lies, diplomacy, illegal immigration, legitimate purchases, but most of all by rapid population growth are fascinating, in many ways better than fiction.

Nugent covers a lot of ground in this book, but it is unfortunately well-trodden ground. Other works on American expansion studied this same subject with more analytical weight. But his ability to

synthesize information is commendable.

Short and sweet. If you are wanting to read a book that glorifies American expansion as the heroic spread of democracy and the bringing of "civilization" to the barbarians...don't buy this book. This is a very dry but informative look at the facts. No glorious tales of The Alamo defenders or American liberation of enslaved peoples here. The facts speak for themselves and this book is obsessed with documenting names, dates, numbers and quotes from many sources. It is also really nice that it has lots of maps that show not only the various geographical regions and the stages of US expansion but also the identity of the peoples from whom we took those regions. This is an excellent resource and reference book.

If you love American history, this is a great read on our country's history with foreign policy. Interesting facts you never learned in school. Even if you disagree with the author's premise of America being an empire, it is a fascinating read.

Candid and engrossing!

Outstanding. Excellent and very informative. Great read. The downside is that you may not have the same view of this country after reading it. Pay particular attention to the Polk/George W. comparison. Our country has not been kind to non-whites and Catholics over the past 300+ years. What really surprised me was that a very high birthrate allowed us to conquer new territories.

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