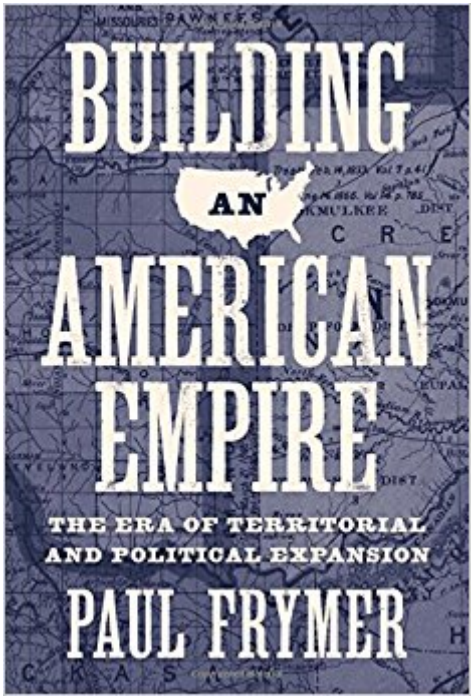
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Building An American Empire: The Era Of Territorial And Political Expansion (Princeton Studies In American Politics: Historical, International, And Comparative Perspectives)



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Synopsis

How American westward expansion was governmentally engineered to promote the formation of a white settler nationWestward expansion of the United States is most conventionally remembered for rugged individualism, geographic isolationism, and a fair amount of luck. Yet the establishment of the forty-eight contiguous states was hardly a foregone conclusion, and the federal government played a critical role in its success. This book examines the politics of American expansion, showing how the government's regulation of population movements on the frontier, both settlement and removal, advanced national aspirations for empire and promoted the formation of a white settler nation.Building an American Empire details how a government that struggled to exercise plenary power used federal land policy to assert authority over the direction of expansion by engineering the pace and patterns of settlement and to control the movement of populations. At times, the government mobilized populations for compact settlement in strategically important areas of the frontier; at other times, policies were designed to actively restrain settler populations in order to prevent violence, international conflict, and breakaway states. Paul Frymer examines how these settlement patterns helped construct a dominant racial vision for America by incentivizing and directing the movement of white European settlers onto indigenous and diversely populated lands. These efforts were hardly seamless, and Frymer pays close attention to the failures as well, from the lack of further expansion into Latin America to the defeat of the black colonization movement.Building an American Empire reveals the lasting and profound significance government settlement policies had for the nation, both for establishing America as dominantly white and for restricting broader aspirations for empire in lands that could not be so racially engineered.

Book Information

Series: Princeton Studies in American Politics: Historical, International, and Comparative Perspectives
Hardcover: 312 pages
Publisher: Princeton University Press (May 2, 2017)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0691166056
ISBN-13: 978-0691166056
Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.3 x 9.4 inches
Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: Be the first to review this item

Best Sellers Rank: #204,550 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #110 inÃ Â Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Historical Geography #143 inÃ Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Ideologies & Doctrines > Nationalism #208 inÃ Â Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Historiography

Customer Reviews

"Ranging across a wide array of topics and scholarship, this book remaps large parts of American history. In FrymerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s telling, the nationÃ¢â ¬â„¢s territorial expansion emerges as a far more fascinating and perilous journey than we had imagined."--Edward L. Ayers, author of the Bancroft Prize-winning In the Presence of Mine Enemies: The Civil War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863"Building an American Empire is a profound achievement in the study of American state formation. Through a dazzling array of sources and a painstaking analysis of federal land policy, Frymer beautifully demonstrates how the Ã¢â ¬Ëœweak Ã¢â ¬â„¢ American state could nonetheless pursue a project of dramatic territorial expansion. In the process, he both highlights the centrality of settler notions of membership to the path of American political development as well as the ideological and racial diversity that persisted at the edges of federal power. This is a foundational work that all students of American politics will have to reckon with, one that links the national experience to global projects of colonial state formation and that captures the deep interrelation between race, empire, and state building in U.S. history."--Aziz Rana, author of The Two Faces of American Freedom"In this sweeping, authoritative, clearly written, and bracingly revisionist history of the formative era of American land policy, Paul Frymer shows how governmental institutions worked, often in hidden ways, to create a settler society dedicated to white supremacy. It has been fifty years since a scholar has analyzed the mechanisms of territorial expansion in such detail, making Building an American Empire essential reading for specialists in the history of immigration, state building, race relations, and American political development."--Richard R. John, Columbia University, author of Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications"Building an American Empire is full of interesting ideas, facts, and insights. Frymer argues that the American state vigorously engaged in acquiring and governing land, and built a predominantly white society that employed racial removal and envisioned a marginal role for Native Americans and free blacks."--David Brian Robertson, author of The Original Compromise: What the Constitution's Framers Were Really Thinking"Frymer has crafted an intellectually ambitious, important book that addresses one of the most significant questions in American history: how did a tiny coastal federation with a weak state effectively settle a rich and

contestedÃ¢â ¬â ¢not to mention already occupiedÃ¢â ¬â ¢land mass?"--Brian Balogh, author of A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America

Paul Frymer is professor of politics and director of the Program in Law and Public Affairs at Princeton University. He is the author of Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America and Black and Blue: African Americans, the Labor Movement, and the Decline of the Democratic Party (both Princeton).

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