

aggression. This study makes clear the diverse forms and methods of imperialism across time and space in both the British and American cases.

*Patterns of Empire* is an important, boldly presented study that deserves a wide readership. Its macrocomparative method and wide scope will prompt debate on specific points, but this is a result of the book's ambition and breadth. In sum, this is a significant contribution to the growing literature on empire in American history and will shape the future research agenda.

Jay Sexton  
Corpus Christi College  
University of Oxford  
Oxford, England

doi: 10.1093/jahist/jas342

*Liberty's Swest Guardian: American Nation-Building from the Founders to Obama.* By Jeremi Suri. (New York: Free Press, 2011. viii, 358 pp. \$28.00.)

This is an innovative, ambitious, and provocative study. In a single volume, Jeremi Suri analyzes the history of American nation building at home and abroad. Relying on six examples from the American Revolution through the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, he attempts to identify common patterns of failure and success and to explain why the United States remains so committed to creating an international order based on pluralist principles. The result is a work that offers important insights but frequently presents complex histories in a reductive and instrumental way. "The history of nation-building," Suri argues, "is filled with conflicts and contradictions" (pp. 266–67). So is this book.

Much of the problem stems from Suri's determination to draw clear, relevant conclusions for contemporary policy makers out of a complex past that is not easily reduced to a set of basic lessons. Suri is certainly correct to emphasize the unity of nation and state created by the U.S. Constitution and the achievement of a plan for the expansion of a large republic. Yet he also slides into broad, sweeping generalizations that obscure more than they reveal: "People felt they mattered as they had not before. Government now had to serve the people. Farmers and merchants, not kings and aristocrats, made the government" (p. 19). While Suri does note the exclusion of women, African Americans, and Native Americans

from the Revolution's promise, the broader ideological and cultural contests of that moment, so well documented by historians such as Alfred Young, Linda Kerber, and Gary Nash, are left out of the narrative. Suri acknowledges the flaws of Reconstruction, citing W. E. B. Du Bois, Kenneth Stampp, and Eric Foner on the failures of the federal effort. Yet here, too, he cannot help but offer a positive spin: "Standardization and unity trumped diversity and independence. Reconstruction solidified order, stability, and growth among a single people tied to a single territory" (p. 57). How does this square with the rapid return of conservative white government, the rise of sharecropping and segregation, and the denial of Reconstruction's constitutional promises for another hundred years? William Howard Taft and his colleagues may have ultimately created a means for local elites to move toward self-government in the U.S.-occupied Philippines, but it seems more than a stretch to argue that the regime established in the wake of a brutal counterinsurgency campaign was "a version of Madisonian pluralism in action" (p. 105).

Suri's later chapters are much stronger, and his excellent discussion of U.S. failure in Vietnam raises important parallels with current dilemmas in Afghanistan. The book's overall conclusions, stressing the need for credible partners, the essential nature of political legitimacy, and the value of specific, concrete projects that directly benefit those on the ground, are also well presented. Suri is certainly right that "nation-building can only work when the people own it," yet one wishes that he had more fully explored the tensions at the center of America's experience at home and abroad (p. 41).

Michael E. Latham  
Fordham University  
Bronx, New York

doi: 10.1093/jahist/jas444

*Guantánamo: An American History.* By Jonathan M. Hansen. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011. xviii, 428 pp. \$35.00.)

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, has caused tensions between the United States and Cuba. Cuba's attitude toward the American enclave contributed to a critique of U.S. foreign