"The Touch of Civilization"

Sabol, Steven

Published by University Press of Colorado

Sabol, Steven.
"The Touch of Civilization": Comparing American and Russian Internal Colonization.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/51250

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=1949102

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
Introduction

This work compares the process and practice of nineteenth-century American and Russian internal colonization—a form of contiguous, continental expansion, imperialism, and colonialism that incorporated indigenous lands and peoples. Both the republican United States and tsarist Russia exercised internal colonization, yet they remain neglected in many studies devoted to nineteenth-century imperialism and colonialism. Scholars generally ignore the United States in studies that compare empires and colonization because, as Amy Kaplan argued, “United States expansion is often treated as an entirely separate phenomenon from European colonialism of the nineteenth century.”1 Similarly, scholars often neglect Russian colonial expansion because, as Taras Hunczak noted, it was “a continental state, its expansion has been viewed largely as a process of unification and consolidation.”2 The contiguous nature of both the United States and Russia, and the proximity of colonized regions, seems to exclude each from discussions of nineteenth-century empires, colonialism, and internal colonization. Historian James Belich reiterated a slightly different element of this concept, positing that, even now, “American westward migration is seldom seen in the context of other great migrations—pan-Anglo, pan-European, or global. This is partly because it happened to be overland and ‘internal,’ yet in this it was no different from the Russian migration to Siberia or Chinese migration to Manchuria.”3

The United States and Russia blurred the distinctions between their metropolitan origins and their newly incorporated territories by amalgamating
them into a single polity. The seamlessness to American and Russian movements reinforced perceptions of expansion rather than empire or colonization. American and Russian expansions appeared more natural—almost as organic extensions of physical and geographical boundaries. Nonetheless, American and Russian contiguous expansion echoed European overseas expansion, where every “settler frontier required the active political, military, and fiscal engagement and support of an aggrandizing state.” In both cases, expansion started slowly, often clumsily, but accelerated during the nineteenth century without any clear understanding of the people and their number, societies, histories, and traditions and the problems American and Russian troops, settlers, or officials might encounter. The United States and Russia were not accidental empires; instead, they were opportunistic, deliberate, and aggressive empires.

Few scholars dispute that France, Great Britain, Holland, Belgium, and, to some extent, Germany, were imperial powers. Up to and during the nineteenth century, these European empires colonized most of Africa and much of Asia, and Spain and Great Britain remained the United States’ most serious imperial rivals in North and South America. Russia was clearly an imperial power in Siberia, the Caucasus, and central Asia. In comparison, however, scholars frequently neglect the United States in conversations about nineteenth-century empires. Nonetheless, the United States colonized the Louisiana Territory, Texas, California, and all the land between the oceans. The United States incorporated these territories largely through imperial negotiations with France, Great Britain, and Spain, but it also won this territory through conquest against Mexico, Great Britain, and indigenous peoples, such as the Sioux, Comanche, Iroquois, Kiowa, Navajo, and dozens of other tribes. Thus, it suggests that the nineteenth-century United States colonized, but it had no colonies. The United States was an empire but not imperial. In Russia, a comparable argument emerged, in this sense at least: the Russian Empire colonized, but it had no colonies. Russia was, however, imperial.

Russia’s expansion began in the fifteenth century, and, ultimately, it colonized Ukraine, Poland, Finland, the Baltics, Siberia, Alaska, the Caucasus, and central Asia. It acquired much of this territory through conquest over the Turks, Tatars, Poles, Chinese, Kazakhs, Bashkirs, Turkmen, Ossetians, and dozens of other peoples. Up until the nineteenth century, Russia’s principal imperial rivals lay in Asia: the Ottoman Turks and the Qing Dynasty in China. In the nineteenth century, Great Britain sporadically challenged Russia, but it had few serious imperial adversaries as it expanded across the continent. The ostensible absence of colonies during the nineteenth century should not hide the fact that both the United States and Russia colonized territories and organized internal
colonization, which was the process and mechanism of American and Russian expansion and imperial rule over indigenous populations.

This work provides a critical, comparative examination of internal colonization exercised by the United States and Russia and experienced by two indigenous populations—the Sioux and the Kazakhs—to negate the “tendency to isolate the study of American history, to overemphasize the uniqueness of the American development and to exalt national pride.” It seeks to incorporate the United States into the wider nineteenth-century colonial and imperial “international context” typically accepted for European imperialism and colonialism. This comparison is broad in scope, temporarily and geographically.

At the heart of this study is, of course, the issue of empire and internal colonization. Was the United States an empire? Did it colonize land and people? Did it exploit and hold dominion over alien peoples? Was it territorial or economic imperialism or both? Was it internal colonization? These are processes typically associated with nineteenth-century European imperialism and colonization. On the surface, the answer to all these questions appears to be yes. Certainly, Alexis de Tocqueville thought so when he wrote that their “starting-point is different, and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway destinies of half the globe.” Yet, as Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan noted, in their introduction to the edited essay collection *Imperial Formations*, “What scholars have sometimes taken to be aberrant empires—the American, Russian, or Chinese empires—may indeed be quintessential ones, consummate producers of excepted populations, excepted spaces, and their own exception from international and domestic laws.” Scholars do not question that Russia was an empire, that it colonized land and peoples, that it exerted control over the economy and exercised internal colonization. Scholars do not often compare Russia to other nineteenth-century empires.

In the United States, however, it appears to be an unsettled interpretation of the American experience, although as Sandra M. Gustafson argued, the idea of an American empire “waxed and waned, but it has never been entirely absent” in American historiography. In 1988 Lloyd C. Gardner explained the discrepancy in his presidential address to the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. He reminded his audience that the “American empire was still ‘the empire that dare not speak its name’” because, he observed, “we are still very far from agreed about the circumstances of its creation, and its purpose.” American geographer Jedidiah Morse understood its purpose, however, when he wrote in 1792, “it is well known that empire has been travelling from east
to west. Probably her last and broadest feat will be America.” He exuberantly prophesized that “we cannot but anticipate the period, as not far distant, when the American Empire will comprehend millions of souls, west of the Mississippi. Judging upon probable grounds, the Mississippi was never designed as the western boundary of the American empire.” Thus, by comparing the United States and its expansion with tsarist Russia, this study will demonstrate more clearly Stoler and McGranahan’s theory that the United States and Russia were “quintessential” empires that mirrored one another in theory and practice, but neither was an exception or exceptional.

In order to answer these questions, this work examines the process of internal colonization using the conquest and internal colonization of the Sioux and the Kazakhs as key case studies. These two nomadic, militarily powerful societies represented distinct challenges and obstacles to American and Russian expansion. That should not suggest that the Apache, Navajo, or Cheyenne easily succumbed to American power or that the Uzbeks, Chechens, or Turkmen posed any less of an obstacle to Russian expansion. This comparative study examines the process of American and Russian internal colonization to construct very different empires, which bear no relation to each other, and the subsequent comparable consequences for the Sioux and the Kazakhs during American and Russian imperial expansion.

Specifically, this study examines American and Russian internal colonization practiced against the Sioux and the Kazakhs. In particular, it examines how and why perceptions of the Sioux and Kazakhs as ostensibly uncivilized peoples, and similarly held American and Russian perceptions of the northern plains and the Kazakh Steppe as “uninhabited” regions that ought to be settled, reinforced American and Russian government sedentarization policies and land allotment programs among the Sioux and Kazakhs. In addition, it compares the processes practiced by the two empires and the various forms of Sioux and Kazakh martial, political, social, and cultural resistance evident throughout the nineteenth century.

As different as American and Russian expansion and conquest of continental interiors might initially appear, the consequences for the Sioux and the Kazakhs are remarkably similar; and the solutions devised by the United States and Russia to deal with intractable nomadic peoples share many parallels and results. In both cases, the colonizing power expressed absolute confidence in its civilizing mission and realized its own greatness through territorial expansion and the introduction of progress, prosperity, and stability and social, economic, and political order. Martial, cultural, and intellectual resistance by the Sioux and Kazakhs to the superior power and, by extension, its general civilizing
tendencies, produced in the minds of Americans and Russians only two possible outcomes for the Sioux and the Kazakhs: assimilation or extermination. The process of internal colonization of the Sioux and the Kazakhs and its comparison deepens our understanding of and redirects attention to the United States and Russia as active participants in the nineteenth-century imperial conquests undertaken by other European powers in Asia and Africa. It reveals a universal struggle between civilization and savagism—between internal and external colonialism—and negates the tendency to study the United States and Russia in isolation or as singular national histories. When viewed through a comparative prism, American expansion no longer seems exceptional or a rejection of “old Europe” for something uniquely “American” but rather as part of a global process; and Russian expansion and conquest, and its subsequent treatment of its indigenous populations, no longer appears more brutal, more autocratic, more Russo-centric.

Comparing American and Russian colonization of the northern plains and the Kazakh Steppe—particularly the relationship between the expanding power and the indigenous Sioux and Kazakhs—serves to connect the conquests to the nineteenth-century global colonizing experience. Trade, land, and security motivated both the United States and Russia to expand, and the greater wealth, superior technology, power, and population eventually eclipsed both Sioux and Kazakh abilities to resist colonization. Throughout the nineteenth century, intensified migration and the occupation of land by American settlers and Russian peasants on land previously, but historically, claimed by the Sioux and the Kazakhs resulted in sporadic contact and conflict in proportion to American and Russian formalized control. Contested claims to the land between colonizer and colonized critically undermined their relations.

After 1850 Americans and Russians assumed more formal control of Sioux and Kazakh indigenous sovereignty as the machineries of internal colonization subordinated Sioux and Kazakh political decision-making to the colonizers’ socio-political and economic structures. Sioux and Kazakh political, economic, social, and cultural dependence and collaboration intensified as American and Russian policies altered and eventually vitiated Sioux and Kazakh sovereignty. Motivated by stereotypes and misperceptions of the Sioux and Kazakhs, Americans and Russians created an environment that made expansion and internal colonization—and, ultimately, civilizing the nomads—part of the national mission. As Helen Carr noted, colonizing powers reformulated policies derived in part from misperceptions of the indigenous peoples and the urgency to occupy the land and settle the nomads into agriculturalists that justified “removal of land as the granting of civilization.”
Americans and Russians embraced numerous preconceived images of the Sioux and Kazakhs as they ventured into the plains and steppe—particularly notions of their own superior culture, society, and civilization when compared to the savage nomads. In the nineteenth century, the Jeffersonian belief in agrarian social theory intensified, the “agricultural paradise” that anticipated the “imaginary figure of the wild horseman of the plains . . . replaced by that of the stout yeoman.” The Russian government similarly perceived Russian peasants as carriers of the agrarian ideal, the purveyors of modernity and equal to American pioneers. This portrait of American pioneers appeared in an unvarnished stereotype, and Robert L. Mason’s distilled imagery resonated for many readers. In 1927 he wrote,

The frontier cabin in America should be emblazoned upon her coat of arms. The historical movement of this cabin across the whole of the American continent from the first built by the English at Jamestown in 1607 to the last built on the final frontier of Alaska has always heralded the vanguard of civilization. When we think of the frontiersman, wherever he may be, we see the cabin with its fort-like aspect and its primitive rifleman protected behind its heavy walls; of its peaceful smoke filling the valley showing a home under durance—but a home nevertheless—making a way in the wilderness for the mighty tread of civilization. . . . It suggests clean-mindedness and good citizenship. It implies the loss of sordidness which often goes hand in hand with the wealth of a country—and ours is wealthy.

This elegant vision of the past reveals the mythology spawned by the American expansion westward. The frontier cabin was a home, it was protection, and it represented civilization in the wilderness. The cabin helped to conquer the frontier. Scholars, however, understand that the American expansion across the continent was more than a cabin, more than a simple expansion of civilization that defeated the wilderness. American expansion and internal colonization was complex, but often lost in the conversation was that the United States differed little from other contemporary empires.

As scholars take note of indigenous populations’ reactions to colonialism and colonization, a tendency developed to neglect the ideology or motivation of the colonizing power. Yet there are complimentary narratives that make understanding both sides critical to understanding the whole. One of the consequences of colonialism and colonization was that indigenous sociopolitical or economic institutional norms that functioned in a pre-colonized era decayed and became inoperative or dysfunctional, which isolated the community from its constituent parts. Expansion resulted in conflict that ultimately forced the Sioux and
Kazakhs to settle onto land deemed by the colonizer as sufficient for occupation and agriculture.24

American and Russian expansion and internal colonization in some cases destroyed native sovereignty and institutions, but Sioux and Kazakh social, cultural, and spiritual vestiges adapted and survived in various ways. Both the colonizer and colonized reacted and adapted to the relationship as it evolved. For example, the Americans and the Russians adopted administrative tactics that suited their colonizer sensibilities. According to Jeffrey Ostler, American power “manifested itself through reservation agencies administered by the Indian Office.”25 The government expected Sioux leaders, identified by reservation agents, to maintain order within this alien political environment. Restrictions placed on the Sioux and Kazakhs obstructed mobility and forced settlement and impoverishment, not assimilation. Russia did not establish reservations but instead confined Kazakhs to volosty (administrative units) and uezdy (districts) to raise livestock or farm—an environment just as restrictive as the American reservation system. It was two different solutions, but one similar result.

In response to American and Russian internal colonization, the imperial expansion produced diverse forms of resistance among the Sioux and Kazakhs; however, internal colonization also shaped their adaptive strategies. Adoption and adaptation meant survival. The internal colonization practices established by the United States and tsarist Russia did not exterminate the Sioux or the Kazakhs, as sundry nineteenth-century observers predicted. Sioux and Kazakh society weakened, their cultures radically altered, and individuals were economically dislocated and impoverished; yet they survived despite dispossession and the intensive cultural, social, political, and economic consequences of internal colonization. The concerns that the Sioux and the Kazakhs must perish or assimilate did not, and likely could not, predict the powerful forces that ultimately aligned to sustain greatly weakened Sioux and Kazakh communities and preserve cultural attachments and symbols, language, and religious beliefs. And yet some scholars regard American expansion as somehow worse—an unparalleled “colonial occupation” and “one of the greatest known land thefts in human history.”26 This inherently comparative statement assumes that no other colonial occupation was continental in scope and that American expansion was an exceptional “theft.”

This comparison, at its core, is a macro rather than a micro examination. It is designed to compare how and why two nineteenth-century expanding powers colonized two different peoples, yet one is clearly understood and accepted to be an empire (Russia) and the other is not (United States). It compares two different nineteenth-century colonizing states that exercised dominion over two different peoples on two separate continents. It traces the policies to colonize
different lands and peoples in order to illuminate that the United States and tsarist Russia were quintessential nineteenth-century empires, no different from Great Britain, France, Belgium, or any other imperial, colonizing power at that time. The comparative prism that examines the internal colonization by the United States and Russia changes the historical narrative, however slightly, to incorporate the two contiguous empires into nineteenth-century imperial and colonial history.

This work does not fully compare the Sioux and Kazakh peoples, although they figure prominently throughout this work. It does examine the indigenous peoples’ response to American and Russian imperialism, which influenced the dynamics of nineteenth-century internal colonization. To the extent possible, this study contextualizes the Sioux and Kazakhs in their world, as they endured the loss of sovereignty and territory to the United States and Russia.

This work does not assume that the Sioux or Kazakhs were passive recipients or victims of American and Russian civilization, mere nonparticipants in the process of internal colonization. In fact, the Sioux and the Kazakhs resisted American and Russian expansion and conquest with martial vigor, and at other times, they deployed more subtle means. Both the Sioux and the Kazakhs influenced the course of events; they managed the variegated social, political, economic, and cultural changes wrought by internal colonization. Most importantly, the Sioux and the Kazakhs survived—a fate few believed possible in the nineteenth century. They lost sovereignty over various aspects of their lives but retained a small degree of autonomy and managed to sustain their society, language, culture, and, to some extent—certainly in the Kazakh case—a meager economy.

The Sioux and the Kazakhs adapted to and adopted the changes occurring all around them. The Americans and Russians incorporated the Sioux and the Kazakhs into their empires and compelled the nomads to adapt and adopt alien cultural, social, economic, and political structures. In so doing, the Sioux and Kazakhs adjusted to the new environment and survived. To paraphrase Frederick Jackson Turner, the plains and the steppe were not a land without people, but a people without land.27 People were there, and they resisted internal colonization. The Sioux and the Kazakhs were not static societies but changed before, during, and after colonization. The typology and imagery of nomadism reinforced perceptions that extinction was the only possible outcome rather than recognition that the Sioux and the Kazakhs could adapt and survive.28

In the nineteenth century, travelers and visitors to the United States and tsarist Russia typically had two very different impressions of both places. America was lively and energetic, and its government was democratic, forward-looking,
and progressive. The American people expressed optimism, faith in the future, and a belief in their own destiny. Russia, on the other hand, was dark and forbidding, the people quite gloomy and fatalistic. Writers often depicted the Russian peasant as backward, ignorant, dirty, and as superstitious as the land and people the empire colonized in Siberia, the Caucasus, and central Asia. Foreigners often described Russia and its government as backward in the extreme: autocratic, ruthless, brutal, and despotic. Indeed, these seemingly entrenched stereotypes, often expressed by Americans and Russians themselves and just as frequently contradictory, prevailed in the literature of the day.

These two opposite characterizations extend the gap for this comparison, or so it seems. How can two countries and two peoples, depicted in such contrary ways, end up in the same place: expanding empires that internally colonized indigenous peoples? What philosophies and ideologies were at work? What typologies and images pervaded American and Russian perceptions and attitudes about the Sioux and the Kazakhs? What were the principal motivations for expansion and internal colonization? What were the consequences for the Sioux and the Kazakhs? America had its “Indian Problem,” Russia its “Nationality Question,” and each pursued policies designed to resolve the problem or answer the question. There were clearly diverse opinions about the Sioux held by different segments of American society, and, periodically, prominent individuals and groups disagreed with the common typologies, perceptions, attitudes, and imagery used to characterize not just the Sioux but all Indians. And not all Russians—high official or lowly peasant—thought, much less cared, about the Kazakhs or the steppe. But are the United States and tsarist Russia comparable? This study seeks to demonstrate that internal colonization by the United States and tsarist Russia are indeed comparable, but not in every facet; and there were notable differences.

This work takes a broader focus than many other comparative histories, covering a wide temporal space, from the earliest contacts between the Americans and the Sioux and the Russians and the Kazakhs up to the first decade of the twentieth century. Although the starting points for American and Russian expansion occurred at different times, by the later part of the nineteenth century, the processes and mechanisms of internal colonization and resettlement reveal more similarities than differences. Chapter 1 of this study examines Sioux and Kazakh societies, at least to the extent possible, in their social, cultural, and economic milieu. Chapter 2 examines the early phases of contact between Europeans and the Sioux and Russians and the Kazakhs, up to the nineteenth century. Chapter 3 examines the American and Russian conquest, as well as Sioux and Kazakh resistance, and the early evolution of American and Russian internal
colonization policies. Chapter 4 examines American and Russian perceptions and attitudes—particularly the typologies and imagery that influenced colonial policies in the steppe and plains. Chapter 5 and chapter 6 examine those policies and the consequences for the Sioux and the Kazakhs—most particularly those related to land, civilization, sedentarization, and assimilation—from the latter half of the nineteenth century to roughly the start of World War I.

The year 1914 was a global and historical turning point—unquestionably so for the United States and tsarist Russia. The consequences of the First World War changed the course of global European imperialism and colonialism. The war dramatically changed relations between the colonizer and the colonized in India, Africa, Asia, the United States, and Russia. Russian society agonized tremendously during the war and experienced untold suffering during the 1917 revolutions and Civil War. Moreover, the 1917 Russian Revolution, with the subsequent Bolshevik victory, ushered in a dramatically different relationship in the Kazakh Steppe in the 1920s and early 1930s. The Sioux, however, resided in a strong, confident United States that fully emerged economically and militarily on the world stage. By the 1930s, the Sioux and the Kazakhs existed in a different world—one that transformed the social, political, economic, and cultural landscape that existed just a decade before. The United States experienced a somewhat different revolution in the 1930s, in the midst of the Great Depression; and the federal government attempted to reform, once again, the relationship between Indians and the government with the introduction of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act. The United States and the Soviet Union took interesting, but considerably different, approaches in the 1930s to deal with the legacies of internal colonization.

**Sources**

This work relies principally on published primary and secondary sources to interpret American and Russian typologies and imagery of the colonized lands and peoples. An extensive amount of American government-related materials is available to scholars, such as Indian agent and US Army reports published by the Government Printing Office (GPO). The Russian government also produced a significant amount of material for scholars to examine, though not as broad as in the United States. Other valuable published materials include memoirs, travelogues, and the personal papers of leading officials.

In the nineteenth century, American, Russian, and foreign writers were characteristically comparative, frequently fixated on the innate weaknesses and backwardness of the indigenous populations they encountered and observed in
comparison to their own. In most cases, the context for these works was comparative empire, expansion, and national pride. Nineteenth-century Americans moving westward were a more literate people than Russian peasants—a fact that is reflected in the types of sources used in this comparison. Americans wrote decidedly about the land and the people they encountered. The Sioux in the 1860s and 1870s were a particularly popular topic. Americans migrating westward, crossing the Great Plains, wrote extensively and frequently about their journeys, adventures, hardships, and encounters with Indians. Many travelers published memoirs, diaries, and histories, and others deposited their accounts with state historical societies’ libraries or in university libraries. These unofficial sources and literary works remain an extensive, invaluable resource not replicated in Russian imperial history.

The meager amount of unofficial sources might frustrate a student of Russian expansion and colonization of the Kazakhs and the steppe, when compared to the richness of American materials, particularly if he or she is trying to examine and evaluate perceptions and attitudes among peasants. Russian intellectuals and writers certainly produced a copious amount of material about the Russian Empire—most notably, about the Caucasus and the Far East—but the Russian peasants who migrated eastward into Siberia and settled on the Kazakh Steppe in the nineteenth century simply did not record their journey with the same tenacity that Americans did. Russian government officials, military men, scientists, and others did produce a valuable written record of time spent among the Kazakhs—their way of life, religion, economy, etc.—but it is a profile in which the historian must tease out typologies, imagery, perceptions, and attitudes. By the 1890s, Russian officials frequently asked Russian peasants questions that usually dealt with points of origin or destination. They rarely posed an official question—“What do you think of Kazakhs?”—to Russians moving east. Moreover, Russian peasants tended to be an illiterate lot, and those sources are scant at best to understand Russian peasant perceptions and attitudes about the Kazakhs. Thus, this comparative study necessarily uses—cautiously—foreign visitors’ sources (books and articles) more in the Russian case than in the American.

When foreign travelers met with Russian officials and peasants, they typically recorded those conversations and reproduced them for a European or American reading public that demonstrated a curiosity about the forbidding tsarist empire. Many of these works tend to describe Russia in decidedly harsh terms—despotic, oppressive, secretive, and suspicious of foreigners—the quintessential autocratic police state. Americans too perceived the Russians in contradictory images. The publisher of the 1814 edition of The Life of Field Marshal
Souvarof noted, “The national character of the Russians is the subject of much animated discussion. They are represented . . . as a compound of ferocious barbarism and vicious profligacy [or] they are pictured with all the virtues as well as the strength of an infant and growing people.” Many of these authors viewed the Russian Empire with skepticism, and they held preconceived notions of what they expected to see and experience. Nonetheless, by sifting through the authors’ biases and judgments, scholars can detect themes and tropes that reveal much about imperial and popular perceptions and attitudes about the Kazakhs. But these writers also understood that their readers had preconceived notions about the Russian Empire and the lands and people it conquered and colonized; writers used similar typologies and imageries to describe the Kazakhs that they thought readers could easily comprehend. The descriptions almost mirror each other, whether describing a Sioux or a Kazakh, a simple reference to nomadism dehumanized the individual and locked him into a specific form: backward, uncivilized, wandering, primitive, etc.

In both cases, official records are a valuable source, but as will become clear, the language used in these reports and documents requires scholars to extrapolate perceptions and attitudes and tease out the comparable meanings. Russian official documents tended to report information such as bureaucratic information and statistics; rarely are personal perceptions or attitudes overtly expressed. Official American sources, such as reservation agents’ reports are, fortunately, not quite so reserved. The popular press is another source, even in Russia, from which to glean perceptions and attitudes. Scholarly works, literature, and even artistic impressions reveal a lot about American and Russian sensibilities during the nineteenth century; they reflect society and influence it. There is little debate that James Fenimore Cooper’s The Leatherstocking Tales “established the Indian as a significant literary type” in the United States. The works of Cooper, Mayne Reid, and others were translated in French and available to Russian writers and social elites. These works, as well as comparable Russian literature about colonized regions and people, unquestionably influenced Russian writers and the public. This literature helped shape perceptions and attitudes about the empire and the colonization of the Caucasus, Siberia, the Kazakh Steppe, Turkestan, and the Russian Far East.35

Despite the discrepancy of sources, scholars can reap sufficient information from primary and secondary sources to understand American and Russian perceptions, attitudes, typologies, and imagery about the Sioux and the Kazakhs in order to understand how and why policies were developed and implemented. Central to the perceptions and attitudes expressed by American and Russian commentators, scholars, writers, pioneers and peasants, government officials,
and travelers was the idea of the other, the exotic, and a clear demarcation between “us” and “them.” In her work *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt noted that nineteenth-century travelogues also conveyed control, dominance, and a sense of superiority over the landscapes and peoples that Europeans and Americans encountered and colonized. Americans eagerly consumed these books and articles, and for “literate Americans in the antebellum period, Indians were everywhere in the print culture—in books, the journals of learned societies, and popular magazines.” Kazakhs, however, appear somewhat irregularly in Russian popular media of the day; Russian novelists and other writers were far more fascinated with the conquest of the Caucasus, contemporaneous to the conquest of the Kazakh Steppe.

This leads, naturally, to a question of language. This study uses both primary and secondary Russian- and Kazakh-language sources; however, when possible, it cites English-language sources instead in order to reach a broader audience. Nevertheless, in some cases, such as the collected works of certain Kazakh intellectuals or Russian government documents, no English-language version exists. For example, in the early 1830s, Aleksei Levshin traveled to the steppe and spent time with the Kazakhs observing their culture; experiencing (to the extent possible) the nomadic life; eating their food; and recording their folktales, histories, and traditions. His book *Opisanie Kirgiz-kazach’ikh, ili Kirgiz-kaisatskikh, ord i stepei*, first appeared in 1832 and was republished in 1996 after the Soviet Union collapsed. No English-language version exists. A comparative study also requires a necessary understanding of the historiographical trends evident in both American and Russian history—specifically when dealing with issues of American and Russian conquest and colonization of the Sioux and the Kazakhs.

A novice to American history quickly learns that numerous historiographical diversions and interpretations tie American expansion west to Manifest Destiny, the frontier, slavery, cowboys and Indians, the different gold rushes, and so on, as well as the ubiquitous American exceptionalism. In the history of the West, it is sometimes difficult to disentangle myth and reality. That overstates the historical complexities of the American West, but the point is that American history in general, and the West in particular, seems to be in a state of constant reinvention. Professional historians, however, will call it a reinterpretation—particularly the reinterpretation of the West. Writing in the early twentieth century, Frederick Jackson Turner, the father of American frontier theory, suggested that if American scholars, “with our own methods of the occupation of the frontier, we should compare those of other countries which have dealt with similar problems—such as Russia, Germany, and the English colonies in Canada, Australia, and Africa—we should undoubtedly find most fruitful results.”
Russian historiography of the empire’s conquest and colonization of Siberia and central Asia remains equally encumbered with its myths and realities. Russia too follows its own exceptionalist historiographical path, but one that differs from the American narrative yet still remains richly embedded with nationalist, rhetorical uniqueness. A student of Kazakh history soon learns that there were at least two conflicting interpretations of Russian expansion into the Kazakh Steppe and the colonization of the Kazakh people: voluntary unification or violent conquest. Soviet scholars—Russian and Kazakhs—used the term prisoe-dinenie (unification) or the more ambiguous, benign word sblizhenie (coming together). Both words suggest a voluntary unification of lands and peoples; they belonged together rather than apart. This interpretation was especially prominent during the Soviet period, although in the 1920s, numerous interpretations proliferated about the expansion, conquest, and internal colonization of the Kazakhs. Post-Soviet Kazakh scholars generally reject both interpretations, arguing instead that it was conquest and imperialism. Consequently, to decipher Russian expansion, conquest, and internal colonization within this historiographical maze, and mapping and mining the tsarist, soviet, and post-Soviet historiography, requires patience and perseverance. Interestingly, some Russian scholars were already comparing Russia’s expansion eastward with America’s expansion west.

Writing in 1905, the Russian statesman and historian P. N. Miliukov observed, “Both Russia and the United States have been colonized, not at a prehistoric stage of their existence, but in recent historic times. Hence, the settlement and the exploitation of the natural resources of the country form the very warp of their historical texture. Most of the important features of their economical, social, and political development must be referred to this process of colonization.” In the 1950s, American scholar Donald W. Treadgold, urged students of Russian imperial history to employ Turner’s frontier thesis to the Russian case, believing that it could “serve as a basis for a general theory of frontier movements in modern times.”

Turner’s influence on frontier and borderlands’ studies in the Kazakh Steppe and Siberia received limited scholarly attention; it was too schematic and marginalized differences between the colonizing peasants and the indigenous Kazakhs. Among post-Soviet Kazakh scholars, the opportunity to cast off the restrictive Soviet interpretative shackles invigorated subsequent scholarship; however, the new interpretations generally conclude that the conquest and colonization of the Kazakhs and the steppe was violent, aggressive, and the worst sort of imperialism. It is hardly a nuanced interpretation but rather nationalist in tone and content. These Kazakh scholars fail to observe what Richard White
described as a “middle ground” in which a complex cultural, social, and economic exchange happened daily.46

American, Russian, and even Kazakh scholars, however, generally failed to embrace comparative history, except in very limited cases. Comparative nomadism frequently attracted Kazakh scholars, but, otherwise, comparative history remains an infertile field in post-Soviet historical investigations. In American history, the two topics that seem to attract the most attention from scholars working within a comparative framework are the frontier and slavery, which are still hotly debated topics, even without using comparative methodologies.47 Nonetheless, in the last two decades, other scholars moved beyond the frontier comparisons between the United States and Russia in ways that expand the expectations for comparative history, including Peter Kolchin, Anne Lounsbury, Irena Grudzinska Gross, Margaret Ziolkowski, Mark Bassin, Sonja Luehrmann, and Kate Brown.48

Comparative history should illuminate that which might not be evident when examined in isolation. Many scholars referred to the United States as an empire as it crossed and colonized the continent; some scholars might reject that interpretation. What is the evidence? By comparing the United States to a state that exercised a similar process, the comparison illuminates the similarities and differences that strengthen the assertion that the United States and tsarist Russia were comparable empires. Moreover, it might illuminate why one empire implemented certain policies and practices of internal colonization that were not pursued in the other. It can further reveal colonial practices that failed in other contexts, such as Asia or Africa, but perhaps succeeded in the United States or Russia. Why did each state employ sedentarization policies? Why did the United States and Russia each establish inviolable boundaries—first to restrict their own populations and later to contain the natives? Ultimately, both the United States moved well past the Indian Territory and Russia pushed further south past the Kazakh Steppe into Turkestan. Why did the United States create reservations but not Russia? What made lands that most observers agreed was suitable chiefly for livestock suddenly appealing for settlement? The comparison reveals some answers but still masks others that this work attempts to uncover.

As scholars embark upon these new fields of investigation, it is important to situate the comparative history as a legitimate exercise within broader historical inquiry and interpretations. What is comparative history? It is not a methodology or analytical technique used by most scholars. George M. Frederickson, the most prominent advocate for comparative history, argued that it is “a way of isolating the critical factors or independent variables that account for national differences.”49 Michael Adas, another proponent, claimed that comparing the
United States with an appropriate case allows scholars to place American history in “broader global frames of reference that allow us to identify and explore underlying commonalities in major patterns of societal development across time and space.”50 Neither of these are precise definitions but rather explanations of comparative historical, methodological utility. Marc Bloch suggested there were two, perhaps more, types of comparative framework. One is the “universal comparison,” in which a scholar examines two societies widely divergent in temporal and geographic space so that specific “phenomenon can obviously not be explained either by mutual influence or by a common origin.”51 The other is Bloch’s frequently cited “historical comparison,” which examines parallel contemporary societies “exercising a constant mutual influence, exposed throughout their development to the action of the same broad causes” but of “common origin.”52 But even Frederickson admits that there is still no clear definition, and so scholars are left to their own devices to employ a comparative structure, as Carol L. Higham suggests, in order to compare “two regions, experiences, nations, or peoples [so that] one can learn about their similarities and differences.”53

Comparison clarifies and refutes myths and misinterpretations based upon the isolated analysis in which there is nothing to test the assumptions, theories, or historical explanations. It is, as Frederickson argued, a mechanism to compare systematically “some process or institution in two or more societies that are not usually conjoined within one of the traditional geographical areas of historical specialization.”54 The comparative prism used to examine the United States and tsarist Russia is through the mechanisms of imperialism and internal colonization of the Sioux and the Kazakhs, the plains and the steppe.

If the argument in this comparative work is that the United States was an empire comparable to the Russian Empire, that it exercised imperial control over the Sioux similar to Russian imperial control over the Kazakhs, it is necessary to define imperialism. Scholars, however, still debate what defines an empire as well as its corollary imperialism. For the purposes of this comparative study, A. Dirk Moses’s relatively simple definition is best. Moses argued, “There is a consensus that empire means domination of one society by another, usually backed by military force. Imperialism is a process and set of policies to acquire such domination whether by annexation or through less formal means.”55

The process of imperialism, colonialism, and colonization, wonderfully and somewhat brutally described—first in 1726 by Jonathan Swift, in his satirical story Gulliver’s Travels—seems eerily familiar. According to Gulliver,

they go on shore to rob and plunder; they see a harmless people, are entertained with kindness; they give the country a new name; they take formal
possession of it for their king; they set up a rotten plank of a stone for a memorial; they murder two or three dozen of the natives, bring away a couple more by force for a sample, return home, and get their pardon. Here commences a new dominion acquired with a title by divine right. Ships are sent with the first opportunity; the natives driven out or destroyed, their princes tortured to discover gold; a free license given to all acts of inhumanity and lust, the earth reeking with the blood of its inhabitants: and this execrable crew of butchers employed in so pious an expedition, is a modern colony sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbarous people.\textsuperscript{56}

For more than a century, scholars seriously debated the concepts of empire, imperialism, and the corollary, colonialism. In that sense, to consider what some scholars might regard as classical empires—for example, Persian, Han, Roman, Mongol, and Ottoman—they were all contiguous empires. It was the creation of modern empires through maritime expansion that began in earnest during the sixteenth century when historians and others observed the origins of both American (under Spanish, British, Dutch, and French maritime expansion) and Russian “imperialism.”

In 1902 the British scholar J. A. Hobson, an unabashed critic of empire and imperialism, argued that modern imperialism, particularly the “Scramble for Africa,” was an extension of excessive and aggressive nineteenth-century nationalism. Hobson insisted that it was the “debasement of . . . genuine nationalism, by attempts to overflow its natural banks and absorb the near or distant territory of reluctant and unassimilable peoples, that marks the passage from nationalism to a spurious colonialism on the one hand, Imperialism on the other.”\textsuperscript{57} He did not necessarily distinguish between external imperialism and internal expansion, nor did he apply his theories to internal colonization. But Hobson did consider the United States to be a recent imperial power, becoming one only after the Spanish-American War and the annexation of Hawaii.\textsuperscript{58} He applied the economic motivation to imperial expansion, an element certainly emphasized later by Scott Nearing, the American economist, political activist, pacifist, and leading advocate for self-sufficient living, who argued in his book, \textit{The American Empire} that the “chief characteristics of empire exist in the United States. Here are conquered territory; subject peoples; an imperial, ruling class, and the exploitation of that class of the people at home and abroad.”\textsuperscript{59} For Nearing, American expansion westward was clearly brazen imperialism and internal colonization, although he did not use that term. Vladimir Lenin, well before leading the Bolsheviks to power in Russia in 1917, earlier described Russia’s expansion as “internal colonialism,” which, he argued, was driven by the need for economic exploitation
by the Russian metropole (or center) of the periphery or borderlands. He also mistakenly used Karl Marx’s definition of a colony “in the political-economic sense” as “the existence of unoccupied, free lands, easily accessible to settlers,” to which he acknowledged that the lands Russia conquered and colonized physically and politically occurred long before being incorporated economically into the imperial networks. The point is that critics of imperialism and colonialism often referred to the United States as an empire. Russia was unquestionably one, even if these same critics only marginally examined the process of expansion across the continent as internal colonization, a concept that slowly gained some acceptance later.

In the early to mid-nineteenth century, Americans often debated the idea of an American Empire but often embedded it with other ideologies such as Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine. At various times before the American Civil War, advocates eagerly demanded actions against, for example, Mexico, Cuba, and Nicaragua. It created, as Brady Harrison argued, a “conflict between idealism and adventurism, between the desire to improve the human condition and the desire to take the land, wealth, and even life of Indians, or Mexicans, or Central Americans, [and] represents a powerful, persistent contradiction in U.S. culture.”

The difference in the American and Russian case was that neither was an overseas empire; rather, both expanded into contiguous territories. This fact seems to be the major obstacle to describing the American expansion as empire-building and internal colonization. In 1961 historian Thomas A. Bailey explained the obstacle this way: “Still another source of misunderstanding was the alleged absence of a far-flung American colonial empire until 1898.” According to Bailey, an “authentic world power” seemingly bore the burden of “overseas liabilities, as well as huge armies, navies, and national debts.” Consequently, a point often “missed during the nineteenth century was that the United States practiced internal colonialism and imperialism on a continental scale. When Western European nations expanded, they had to go overseas; when we expanded, we had to go west.” Moreover, he wrote, “One reason for associating our advent as a world power with 1898 is the popular but erroneous assumption that the acquisition of the Philippines marked a complete break with the past. We are told that hitherto we had shunned colonizing (which is untrue), that we had formerly been isolated (which is untrue), and that thereafter we were internationalist (which is also untrue).” Bailey used the terms in the abstract; he did not define them.

Americans portrayed themselves as reluctant “imperialists,” performing a humanitarian service, a civilizing mission, to oppressed peoples—ironically mimicking British ideological and philosophical justifications for that country’s
civilizing, imperial missions around the globe. Russians also debated the concept of empire—its civilizing mission—but prior to the nineteenth century, the expansion, usually referred to as the “gathering of the lands,” suggested the reconstitution of ancient Rus’ along “historical, dynastic and religious grounds.” Few Russians ever doubted that Russia was an empire engaged in imperialism. It was only later in the nineteenth century that Russia justified its imperialism with a civilizing mission comparable to the United States or Great Britain.

In order to contextualize the United States and Russia into the community of nineteenth-century empires, it is important to recognize that both countries extended their control and domination of indigenous populations with internal colonization. This is not a new concept, but scholars still debate the definition of internal colonization. In the nineteenth century, some European officials used the term to describe Hapsburg and Prussian resettlement. By the 1930s, US scholars used the internal colonialism theory to “characterize relations between the northern and southern parts of the United States.” In 1946 George C. Guins, a former Russian government official who immigrated to the United States in 1941, wrote that the “development of the United States and Russia took place by means of internal colonization, which spread of itself, by the natural shifting of the population, and not because of government policy.” By the 1960s, social scientists in the United States employed the theory to examine the economic exploitative policies in urban areas and the western United States, Palestine, Ireland, and elsewhere. As with the basic concepts of imperialism and colonialism, the notion of internal colonization lacks precision and clarity. Scholars Carol Chiago Lujan and Gordon Adams provided a basic definition best suited for this study: “Internal colonialism occurs when one group (or government) subjugates another within the same country.” This work modifies this definition to use the related concept—internal colonization rather than colonialism—because colonization extends to the resettlement of peoples (i.e., pioneers and peasants), “usually in frontier areas, loyal to the metropole to ensure security and encourage economic development of semi- or unoccupied land within a national or imperial territory.”

In both cases, the United States and Russia exerted political, social, economic, and cultural control over the Sioux and the Kazakhs. They applied direct and indirect rule strategies in order to colonize the Sioux and the Kazakhs; they used coercion, military power, and social and cultural distinctiveness designed to subjugate these indigenous populations with the goal of assimilating them into what was considered the mainstream of the colonizer’s social, economic, cultural, and political structures. The United States and Russia justified this by employing other European imperial characteristics, such as humanitarianism,
civilization, and Christianity. The difference between American and Russian internal colonization and European external colonialism was that the Americans and Russians considered expansion part of the national territorial integration. It was, Peter Calvert argued, that “internal colonization parallels in all important respects external colonization and that in fact they are in essence the same process, differentiated only by their geographical location (the ‘blue water’ fallacy).” Coupled with the theory of internal colonization, comparative history, as Robert J. Hind argued, should preserve “seminal value for scholars who are attracted to the comparative study of society and history. The treatment of certain metropolitan societies, or the experience of certain sections of a metropolitan society and that of their colonial counterparts, in a comparative war and within an internal colonial framework might help identify features of their respective experiences that could pass undetected, or be given insufficient emphasis, or be misinterpreted, if they were studied separately by other means.”

The United States and Russia were contiguous empires that paralleled a comparable process called the settler revolution manifest as well in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. According to James Belich, within the Anglo world, this revolution took three forms, but evident in both the American and Russian expansion, conquest, and internal colonization are “networks, the establishment of ongoing systems of long-range interaction, usually for trade; empire, the control of other peoples, usually through conquest; and settlement, the reproduction of one’s own society through long-range migration.”

Shifting the examination of empires from individual narratives—the isolated examination that differentiates between overseas and contiguous empires or European empires from non-European empires such as the United States—allows scholars to analyze shared or common characteristics. It further unlocks different prospects to investigate various processes of empire in order to reconsider the definitions and interpretations. It might not result in a new historical narrative or historical reinterpretation of the American or Russian past; but the new prism sheds light on the nuances of empire and the common traits, processes, typologies, and tropes used to define that history. The comparative analysis further contextualizes the United States and Russia within the broader, global imperial and colonial expansion into Asia and Africa to provide greater understanding of the structural difficulties and interconnectedness that empires ultimately shared. All nineteenth-century empires and colonial regimes employed complex and sophisticated strategies to conquer and assimilate segments of colonized peoples into the colonial system: the Americans and Russians were not unique or exceptional empires, although their structures and processes frequently differed from their European counterparts in Asia and Africa.
The Indian scholar Partha Chatterjee argued that one key component to imperial, colonial governments was that the universalist claims made by the dominant regime typically excluded native peoples. Colonial regimes categorized natives by differences—language, social structure, religion, governance—that required the active colonial intervention and guidance imposed by the colonizer. Empire and colonialism also revolved around a humanist ideal predicated on the belief that the social and cultural benefits justified the policies implemented by the colonizing power in order to advance the welfare of the colonized people. Anthony Pagden described this as a “language of interests and benefits” that established criteria and standards of human development and progress, from the primitive to civilized.

It was, essentially, the intellectual ideologies and debates of empire that the United States and Russia shared with their nineteenth-century European contemporaries, which also severely devastated “indigenous institutions of governance” and the native “economic systems, ideologies, and identities.” These imperial ideologies rested on an “integrated system of beliefs, assumptions and values, not necessarily true or false, which reflects the needs and interests of a group or class at a particular time in history.” The European expansionist impulse, according to the conclusion of British explorer-missionary David Livingstone, rested upon an ideological troika stimulated by the three C’s: commerce, Christianity, and civilization. Americans and Russians subscribed unabashedly to those concepts, although each perceived their imperial, expansionist missions as very different from European imperialism.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Americans emphasized assimilation far more than Russians did; however, the United States intervened much more intensively with its social, political, cultural, and economic policies against the Sioux than the Russians did with their internal colonization of the Kazakhs. The reason was because, in the United States, as John Wunder noted in his work “Retained by the People”: A History of American Indians and the Bill of Rights, before 1871 Americans practiced an expansion and colonialism similar to the Europeans. Wunder referred to this process as “Old Colonialism,” a course that had “as its primary goal the physical acquisition of valuable western and southern lands and the physical subjugation of its peoples.” By the 1870s, he argued, Old Colonialism gave way to “New Colonialism” after the United States had acquired its continental limits and started to experience “new settler demands for lands protected by existing treaties.” This New Colonialism was “an especially virulent strain” that “attacked every aspect of Native American life—religion, speech, political freedoms, economic liberty, and cultural diversity.” Old Colonialism was, in a sense, motivated by the desire to integrate indigenous
lands; New Colonialism was the demand to assimilate indigenous peoples. By the 1870s, Russia altered its policies in the Kazakh Steppe, chiefly to make room for more peasants to settle there following the 1861 Russian serf emancipation. The Russian government also determined to integrate further the Kazakhs’ social, political, and economic structures into the empire comparable to Wunder’s New Colonialism. They eventually abandoned the concept of integration to the reimagined and perceived imperial need to assimilate—the so-called Russification policies in effect in the last two decades of tsarist rule.

The American and Russian alchemic strategies often manifested as just brute force, but other approaches included education, Christian missionaries, and economic integration—all grounded in the colonizers’ common suppositions about nomads, about the land, and about the right of the colonizer to manage indigenous peoples. It was, therefore, assumed that the Sioux and the Kazakhs lacked the civilization and the social and political structures to advance without the direct guidance of, and the policies implemented by, the Americans and the Russians. Both deployed different strategies, with comparable objectives and outcomes. The ultimate key to American and Russian policies was, however, education, which became the blunt instrument of internal colonization’s social and cultural beachhead against the Sioux and the Kazakhs.

The United States, far more than Russia, embraced a paternalistic attitude with its policies and programs. The United States intruded more deeply and broadly, with its social and cultural agenda, to guide the Sioux from dark barbarism to the enlightened path of civilization. The Russian government generally inclined to exclude the Kazakhs from the assimilative cultural and social sphere. Instead, it devoted its energies to civil and administrative mechanisms to guide the Kazakhs from their nomadic habits toward civilization rather than adopt the more intrusive cultural, social, and economic tools employed by the Americans. The Russians expressed their policies as integration rather than assimilation; they generally used the word *sblizhenie*, or “drawing together.” Conquest and internal colonization was brutal and successful. At the same time, the Americans and the Russians distanced themselves from those they subjugated. It was not a physical or geographic remoteness but rather a social, cultural, and political distance between colonizers and colonized.

**NOTES**


6. As Edward G. Gray noted, in the United States, “[o]ur nation, we generally believe, was forged in a war against empire, our founding principles emerged out of an intellectual assault on empire, and our individualistic citizenry has little appetite or interest in foreign conquest. Obviously rhetoric and reality are very different and historians have long recognized that elements of American imperial conduct date from the very founding of the nation.” Visions of Another Empire: John Ledward, an American Traveler Across the Russian Empire, 1787–1788, Journal of the Early Republic 24, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 348.

7. Interestingly, many scholars identify Russia’s imperial expansion beginning in 1552, when it captured Kazan from the Golden Horde, the last vestige of the great Mongol Empire. In a sense, the Russian Empire was born on the carcass of its imperial predecessor. See Andreas Kappeler, The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History, trans. Alfred Clayton (New York: Pearson Education, 2001), 21–32.


10. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Century Co., 1898), 1:559. A German traveler to Russia also observed a comparative future for the United States and Russia, noting that a “time will come when the greatest part of civilized Europe, being over-peopled, will be unable to maintain its industrious inhabitants without the importation of grain; two granaries will remain from which to draw supplies, North America and the country of the black soil in the centre and south of Russia.” Baron von Haxthausen, The Russian Empire, Its People, Institutions and Resources, trans. Robert Farie (London: Chapman & Hall, 1856), 2:54.

11. Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan, “Introduction: Reconfiguring Imperial Terrains,” in Imperial Formations, ed. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 11. The authors define imperial formations as “polities of dislocation, process of dispersion, appropriation, and displacement.” This system creates “new subjects that must be relocated to be productive and exploitable, dispossessed to be modern, disciplined to be independent, converted to be human, stripped of old cultural bearings to be citizens, coerced to be free” (11).

12. In a recent comparative essay, Russian historian Victor N. Zakharov observed that Russia’s “imperial expansion does not differ either in methods or aims from the policies of other
powers.” Zakharov only briefly mentioned the United States in his examination of nineteenth-century empires, noting that “[o]ne may comment on the obvious analogy between the exploration of Siberia and other fringes of the Russian Empire on the one hand, and colonization of the ‘Wild West’ in North America, exploration of South Africa and Australia by white colonizers etc, on the other hand.” “The Russian Empire: Main Features and Particularities,” in Europe and Its Empires, ed. Mary N. Harris and Csaba Lévai (Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press, 2008), 49, 52.


14. Gardner identified the two conflicting interpretations: “One side takes as its major premise that the ‘empire’ (usually put inside quotation marks) was created in the postwar era, a byproduct of the Cold War. Thus it took the special circumstances of a political and military vacuum in Europe, the collapse of the classic nineteenth-century colonial empires, and the perceived menace of Russian expansionism to make an American ‘empire.’ All, or mostly all, are outside forces.

The other side argues that the Cold War empire was itself a manifestation of long-term trends in American expansionism. To understand what happened after 1945, therefore, one has to pursue the story back to the thrust into Asia, and still earlier to the transcontinental wars that began with the creation of an independent empire in 1776. The emphasis here, of course, is on internal forces.” “Lost Empires,” Diplomatic History 13, no. 1 (1989): 2.


24. In 1887 the Cheyenne River agent highlighted the difficulties, writing that “the drawbacks to successful agriculture are so great as not to be overcome with any reasonable amount of labor . . . Since about 1872 efforts have been put forth by every agent to make agriculturists of these Indians, but the soil and climate will not allow it.” US Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1887* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1887), 17.


28. There is an essential point about this comparative study: throughout this work, reference will be made very generally, generically even, to the Americans or the Russians as well as the Indians or the Kazakhs. The United States and Russia were that different, but what happened to the Indians and the Kazakhs was not. Specialists might be justified to criticize this approach, but it is an unavoidable hazard in this comparison.

29. Foreign observers were some of the most critical, perhaps none more so than Lady Frances Parthenope Verney in her book *How the Peasant Owner Lives in Parts of France, Germany, Italy, Russia*. She described the Russian peasant unflatteringly, asserting, “The peasant class comprises five-sixths of the whole population—a stolid, ignorant, utterly unprogressive mass of human beings.” Even more harshly, the “Russian peasant cares neither for liberty nor politics, neither for education, nor cleanliness, nor civilization or any kind.” *How the Peasant Owner Lives in Parts of France, Germany, Italy, Russia* (London: Macmillan, 1888), 138–39.

30. One example of this depiction of Russia comes from an anonymous collection, translated from German into English, that described Russia under Nicholas I as a place where the “concentrated power of a military government, which can bring to bear, through the impulse of a single will, not impeded or deterred by the slightest opposition, all the resources of an immense territory, and an almost innumerable population, against one or more of its neighbours, for the accomplishment of any aggressive purpose—which can conceal its projects, and watch its opportunities of action—must be considered, in the common course of things, a fair object of jealousy to other states, and of dislike to most free nations.” Captain Anthony C. Sterling, *Russia under Nicholas the First*, trans. from German (London: John Murray, 1841), vii.


Court and People: Including a Tour in Norway and Sweden (New York: Baker & Scribner, 1850); Charles Rudy, "Despotic Russia, Part II, Adventures in the Steppes of Russian Asia and the Frosty Caucasus," Reformed Quarterly Review (July 1886), 325–55; Paxthausen, Russian Empire; Robert G. Latham, The Native Races of the Russian Empire (London: Hippolyte Bailliere, 1854); Sterling, Russia under Nicholas the First; Esther Singleton, ed. and trans., Russia, As Seen and Described by Famous Writers (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1904). Not all travel accounts were critical or pejorative. Robert Lyall, a Scottish traveler, dedicated his book The Character of the Russians, a Detailed History of Moscow to Tsar Alexander I. The Character of the Russians, and a Detailed History of Moscow (London: T. Cadell, 1823). See also Astolphe Marquis de Custine, T he Empire of the Czar, or, Observations on the Social, Political, and Religious State and Prospects of Russia, made during a Journey through that Empire, trans. from French, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1843); Madame de Stael, Ten Years' Exile; or, Memoirs of That Interesting Period of the Life of the Baroness de Staël-Holstein, Written by Herself, during the Years 1810, 1811, 1812, and 1813, and Now First Published from the Original Manuscript, by Her Son, trans. from French (London: Treuttel & Würtz, Treuttel, Jun. & Richter, 1821).

33. Léger Marie Philippe Laverne, T he Life of Field Marshal Sourcarof; with Reflections upon the Principal Events, Political and Military, Connected with the History of Russia, during Part of the Eighteenth Century, trans. from French (Baltimore: Edward J. Coale, 1814), iii.


39. It is not the intention of this study to analyze the historiographical and philosophical debates of New West history, which remains best left to the scholars involved. Instead, see as a seminal example, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000).


47. But, in a global perspective, Michael Adas argued that frontiers "all were ultimately subdued and subordinated by the expansive settler societies that sustained moving frontiers that threatened to deprive them of their lands and destroy their ways of life. This shared outcome not only provides intriguing possibilities for comparative research on indigenous warfare and frontier conflict, it suggests important transregional themes in the ethno-cultural history of frontiers as well as larger global processes that were exemplified by recurring outcomes in each, quite distinctive, frontier locale.” "Settler Colony to Global Hegemon," 1715.


49. Frederickson, "From Exceptionalism to Variability," 587.


58. Ibid., 24.


64. See chapter 2 in Kappeler, Russian Empire.

65. In fact, as historian Alfred J. Rieber alluded to in a rather short essay, during the second half of the nineteenth century and the growth of the popular press in Russia, the "proliferation of public organizations and institutions, the organization of scientific exhibitions and art exhibits created a new setting for the spread of popular culture. With them came fresh opportunities to draw the public into supporting imperialism, the one form of mass participation in politics acceptable to the autocracy, and to lionize the imperialist." Moreover, Rieber continued, "Russians systematically and self-consciously pursued and legitimized imperial aims in direct imitation of the West." Russian Imperialism: Popular, Emblematic, Ambiguous,” Russian Review 53, no. 3 (July 1994): 332–33.


70. Moses, "Empire, Colony, Genocide." 23.

71. Steven Wyn Williams writes that “[a]lthough the notions of colonialism and colonization found their most explicit development during the period of expansionist policies and overseas imperialism emanating from Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and onwards, a form of colonialism (that is, internal colonialism) within certain countries (for example, Great Britain), seen usually as a stage of national integration, was also taking place.” Internal Colonialism, Core-Periphery Contrasts and Devolution: An Integrative Comment,” Area 9, no. 4 (1977): 273. See also Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

72. Peter Calvert, "Internal Colonisation, Development and Environment," Third World Quarterly 22, no. 1 (February 2001), 53. As Michael Adas argued, “Much of what nineteenth-century Americans thought, said, and wrote about the Indians of the American frontiers was shared, often with remarkably little variation, with the settler societies of the other neo-Europes, which were just as deeply committed to subduing their own indigenous peoples. Although the phrasing might differ, the ‘banjo bards’ of frontier expansion in all of these areas justified settler occupation and the consequent dispossession of pre-contact peoples with strikingly similar appeals to the need to ‘open up’ and render productive rich lands and critical resources that had long gone to waste.” “Settler Colony to Global Hegemon,” 1716.


74. Belich, Replenishing the Earth, 21.


81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.