Global Fields and Imperial Forms: Field Theory and the British and American Empires*

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This article develops a global fields approach for conceptualizing the global arena. The approach builds upon existing approaches to the world system and world society while articulating them with the field theory of Bourdieu and organizational sociology. It highlights particular structural configurations ("spaces of relations") and the specific cultural content ("rules of the game" and "symbolic capital") of global systems. The utility of the approach is demonstrated through an analysis of the different forms of the two hegemonic empires of the past centuries, Great Britain and the United States. The British state tended toward formal imperialism in the 19th century, characterized by direct territorial rule, while the United States since WWII has tended toward informal imperialism. The essay shows that the difference can be best explained by considering the different historical global fields in which the two empires operated.

Much ink has been spilled recently on the complexities of the concepts "empire" and "imperialism." But decades of scholarship converge on at least two points relevant for thinking about modern imperial formations (Howe 2003a). First, *empire*, in the most basic sense, is a transnational political formation by which one state exerts political power and control over subordinate territory and peoples, and so *imperialism* is the process of extending or maintaining that control (Abernathy 2000; Daalder 1968; Doyle 1986:11–9; Howe 2003a; Maier 2006:25–76). Second, empire can take different forms or modes, each entailing respectively different practices and policies. One typical difference is between "formal" or "informal" modes of exercise (Doyle 1986; Robinson and Gallagher 1953). *Formal empire* involves acquiring and directly ruling new territory. This form of empire is colonial: the metropolitan state claims full sovereignty over subordinated territory and people (Abernathy 2000:19; also Fieldhouse 1982; Fieldhouse and Emerson 1968). *Informal empire* involves a variety of methods besides direct territorial rule to construct a network of power encompassing nominally independent nation-states. This involves financial and military aid to cultivate client states, large-scale networks of military bases, sporadic military interventions ("gunboat diplomacy"), temporary military occupations, or covert operations to manipulate political outcomes in foreign countries (Daalder 1968; Doyle 1986; Fieldhouse and Emerson 1968; Osterhammel 1999:18–21; Robinson and Gallagher 1953; Steinmetz 2005). Informal imperialism has thus been

variously named "imperialism without colonies" (Magdoff 1972), "quasi-colonial control" (Osterhammel 1999:20), or "nonterritorial imperialism" (Steinmetz 2005). Elements of both informal and formal empire were combined in various ways in early modern empires: Spanish colonialism in the Americas (Pagden 1995), Anglo and Dutch trading companies (Adams 1996; Boxer 1965), and Portuguese *feitorias* (factories or trading posts) and *prazos* (landed estates) since the 16th century (Steinmetz 2005:351–52; Young 1994:49–54). But most scholars agree that as the early forms dissipated, formal and informal imperialism emerged as key organizational forms of *modern* empires (in the rough chronological sense) (e.g., Doyle 1986).

If existing scholarship agrees on the rudimentary distinction between formal and informal empire, however, it has not addressed the question thereby begged: What accounts for the different organizational forms of imperialism? Why would a state opt for informal rather than formal exercises of imperial power, or vice-versa? Ever since the founding theories of Hobson and Lenin, scholars have attempted to explain *when* or *why* imperialism occurs (Mommsen 1982). But explanations for empire's different *forms* are comparably lacking. The present essay makes a first step through a comparative-historical analysis of British and U.S, imperial forms during their respective cycles of hegemony (1815–1918; 1946–present). The British and U.S. empires are good to think with because they encapsulate the difference in modern imperial forms while sharing important characteristics. On the one hand, both states experienced similar cycles. Both were globally *hegemonic*—defined as economic preponderance over the world system. Both also experienced subsequent economic competition marking relative hegemonic decline (Arrighi 1994; Boswell 2004; Chase-Dunn, Jorgenson, Reifer, and Lio 2005; Kennedy 1987; Wallerstein 1984, 2002). On the other hand, amidst these similar cycles, the two states constructed very different imperial forms. During its hegemonic phase and its subsequent phase of competition, Britain annexed various colonial territories around the world. In some instances, Britain employed informal imperialism (Robinson and Gallagher 1953), but its predominant mode was *formal* empire. Alternatively, the United States has largely refrained from seizing overseas territories during its comparable period of hegemonic maturity and decline. Since WWII, the United States has established bases around the world but not long-term colonies. It has sent its military to intervene into the affairs of weaker countries but quickly cut and run (making for temporary occupations rather than sustained colonial rule). It has cultivated a network of client states using covert operations, threats of force, embargoes, and economic leverage (often propping dictatorial regimes friendly to U.S. interests), but it has not annexed them as colonial domains. Compared to the British empire, the United States empire since WWII has tended toward the *informal* mode (Magdoff 1972; Porter 2006; Schwabe 1986:30; Smith 1981; Steinmetz 2005; Wood 2003). Informal imperialism, therefore, has been seen as constituting a distinct "American way" of empire as opposed to British imperialism (Bender 2006). Even America's recent occupation of Iraq reveals the difference. After WWI, Britain seriously contemplated turning Iraq into a colony akin to its other overseas colonies, but the United States has always insisted that it would only occupy Iraq temporarily. At most, the United States plans to turn Iraq into a nominally independent client state with a strong American military presence— a classic exercise of informal empire (Ho 2004; Steinmetz 2005:350).

This difference constitutes the main puzzle of the present essay. Why did the British state tend toward formal empire during its hegemonic cycle while the United States has tended toward the informal mode? Scholars have highlighted the difference in British and U.S. imperial forms but have not offered systematically tested

explanations for it (e.g., Bergesen and Schoenberg 1980; Howe 2003b; Mann 2003; Porter 2006; Steinmetz 2005). The only explanations that can be found have highlighted *metropolitan* or domestic determinants. One such explanation draws upon American "exceptionalism" that insists that the United States has been unique for its enduring "liberal, democratic, individualistic, and egalitarian values" forged by the nation's founding moments (Huntington 1982; Kammen 1993:6; Lipset 1996). For explaining imperial forms, the argument is that the United States has been inherently unwilling to adopt formal empire because its "democratic culture and institutions" (Ikenberry 2002:204), "the nature of its political culture" (Pagden 2005:54), its "unalterable foundation" in anti-colonial and liberal principles (Schwabe 1986:30), or its lack of an aristocratic class (Porter 2006; Pratt 1958:114; Schwabe 1986:30; Smith 1994:148). The problem with this argument is that the United States did in fact construct a formal empire. Beginning in the late 19th century, the United States acquired a series of territories that were not slated for eventual statehood and were therefore similar to European overseas colonies: Puerto Rico, Guam, Samoa, the Panama Canal Zone, the Philippines, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Midway Islands, and a string of smaller islands in the Pacific constituting the former Japanese mandates (Burnett and Marshall 2001; Go 2005; Leibowitz 1989; Thompson 2002). It was only *after* these acquisitions (that is, after the years ending WWII as the United States attained hegemonic maturity) that the United States ceased imperial expansion in the formal mode and shifted to informal exercises of power (Smith 1981).

A different metropolitan-centered approach might refer to domestic public opinion and electorates that shape policymakers' decisions (Strang 1990:857; 1992:378–79). But this explanation is insufficient too. Polls in the United States (of which legislators were aware) revealed that the majority of Americans in the aftermath of WWII preferred that the U.S. government seize former colonies not only of Japan but also of Britain and France (Gilchrist 1944:642). While the United States did take the former Japanese mandated territories (now parts of Micronesia), it did not take the colonies that the polls had asked about. Further, if metropolitan opinion determined imperial forms, we would expect U.S. policymakers to have been concerned about metropolitan opinion when they calculated after WWII about whether to take new colonies. But as we will see below, their policy articles, memos, and other related documents do not reveal such a concern. At most, they were concerned about global opinion; that is, views toward formal empire among actors in other states. These limitations suggest that while metropolitan dynamics might play a role in shaping imperial forms, we might fare well to look beyond metropolitan dynamics. Accordingly, the point of this article is focus upon the global factors that help explain Britain's and America's different imperial forms. Specifically, this article argues that the explanation demands a consideration of the larger *global fields* in which the two states were embedded.

TOWARD A GLOBAL FIELDS APPROACH

In itself, making the analytic move from the metropolitan/domestic/national to the global is not novel. A number of theoretical approaches across the social sciences would already urge us to look at global or international features to explain state actions. These range from international relations theory to world systems theory to theories of "world society." Yet each of these approaches carry particular conceptualizations of what constitutes the global "system" and its global dynamics. They each also offer distinct categories for explaining how the global arena impacts state action. At stake in the concept *global fields* is not just whether to consider domestic

as opposed to global or international factors. At stake is how to most fruitfully conceptualize the "global," its dynamics, and the way it impacts state action. To better understand my global fields approach, therefore, an examination of existing approaches and their distinct conceptual frameworks is necessary. They can be divided into two main sets of theories: "materialist" and "cultural."

Materialist Theories of the Global: RIR and HWS

One of the obvious contenders for thinking about the global environment in relation to state action would be classical or *realist international relations theory* (RIR). This approach conceptualizes the "international system" as consisting of self-interested states rationally competing for power. All states seek power, the only difference between states is their material capability, particularly military resources. What matters, therefore, is the relative distribution of material capabilities across the international system: state action is explained by reference to a state's material capabilities (for a review, see Walt 1998). Morgenthau's (1978) classic realist perspective contends that states with the most capabilities will continually expand. Strong states expand because they can; weak states expand because they cannot. Varieties of this position—including "offensive realism" and "defensive realism"—clarify that states with the most capabilities will only expand under certain conditions (Mearsheimer 2001; Rendall 2006; Walt 1987). One is when they are unconstrained by opposing powers. When a state monopolizes military power, as in a "unipolar system," it will likely expand. But when there is a "bipolar" or "multipolar" system—as when resources are more equally distributed between two or more states—states will not expand, lest they invoke the ire or suspicion of their peers and create the possibility for further military escalation or perhaps war (Mearsheimer 2001:2–35, Ch. 9; Taliaferro 2001). This is known as the "security dilemma" (Jervis 1978).

RIR does well to look beyond domestic factors to consider the global system, but note the particular way it theorizes the global arena: it treats the international "system" as but the sum total of states with differing capacities (Strang 1991:142–43). As with methodological individualism, the main actors—in this case utility-maximizing states—exist prior to their interactions (Finnemore 1996b:327–28). There is no sense of sustained relations *between* actors. Nor is there a sense of states' embeddedness in a dynamic constitutive global structure that might shape their identities, interests, or particular strategies. State interests and strategies are given (Wendt 1994). Differences over time between "international systems" (as in between unipolar or multipolar systems) are only differences in the contingent distribution of capabilities (Finnemore 1996b:327). A different materialist approach that would overcome such an conceptualization is *hegemony/world systems* theory (HWS), which defines the "world system" as a structure of economic interaction (Bergesen and Schoenberg 1980; Boswell 1989, 1995; Chase-Dunn and Rubinson 1979; Gaddis 1991; Wallerstein 1984, 2002). Unlike RIR, the key for understanding the global system is socioeconomic hierarchy, not material-military capacity. Furthermore, unlike RIR, HWS does not see actors (in this case, states) as existing prior to the "system." Instead, it sees their exchange relations as constitutive of the overarching structure: core, semiperiphery, and periphery. Historical variations in this system come in the form of variations between the actors' interrelations. For understanding imperialism, these variations are critical. When a single core state dominates the world economy, colonization is less likely. Enjoying a comparative economic advantage, the hegemon opposes colonial expansion because colonialism restricts trade through imperial preferences.

Alternatively, when the hegemon faces economic competition from rising core states, the hegemon experiences relative decline and is more willing to exercise imperialism in the formal (colonial) mode. Formal imperialism enables the core state to obtain privileged access to raw materials and markets and thereby ward off competition (Bergesen and Schoenberg 1980; Boswell 1989, 1995:4–5; Chase-Dunn and Rubinson 1979).

Global Culture: Neoinstitutional/World Society and Norm IR

Unlike RIR, HWS fruitfully injects a sense of a relatively autonomous structure into the global arena, but cultural approaches would suggest that it overlooks how global *cultural* structures might also be constitutive and determining (Eyre 1996:94–98). One variant—*neoinstitutionalist/"world society"* (NIWS)—sees "world society" as a cultural order of organizational models and templates that states adopt automatically; the models are taken-for-granted (Jepperson and Meyer 1991; Meyer 1980, 1999; Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez 1997; Schofer and Meyer 2005). The sovereign nation-state itself is one such taken-for-granted model, and as the nation-state template has become dominant in global culture since WWII, world society had ended up "supporting the nation-state system in the most unlikely parts of the world" (Meyer 1980:117). In this approach, therefore, global culture is constitutive (rather than derivative of state preferences or the economic structure) because it provides the key actors (nation-states) with their very identity and form.

Another variant of the cultural approach, which I call *norm IR* (NIR), adds to NIWS by theorizing global culture as a series of "norms" (defined as appropriate standards of behavior). This approach shows how norms emerge and how they impact states' identities, interests, and actions (Eyre and Suchman 1996; Finnemore 1996a; Katzenstein 1996; Klotz 1995). Global norms are created by a variety of "norm entrepreneurs"—for example, NGOS, activist networks, or transnational organizations—who "socialize" states to adopt certain policies that meet the norm (Finnemore 1996a; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Global structure consists not of taken-for-granted templates but of a variety of actors struggling to compel others to conform to new norms. The adoption of such norms defines states' identities and interests (Finnemore 1996a:22–24; Klotz 1995:17–20).

These approaches extend beyond RIR and HWS by focusing upon global culture but, as with all of these approaches, they conceptualize the global arena and its impact upon state action in particular ways. NIWS, for instance, treats world society as culturally consensual, consisting of shared models that states must adopt to be legitimate. Cultural forms are not articulated with strategy or struggle between actors (Finnemore 1996a:138). Furthermore, NIWS brackets how global culture impacts the forms and activities of hegemons. Instead, it emphasizes the diffusion of models from more powerful Western countries: "modern world cultural models of the proper nation-state and national society tend to arise in core countries, given the resources and capacities there" (Meyer 1999:138). Weak latecomer states adopt certain organizational forms to obtain "external recognition," that is, the "right to exist" (Meyer 1980; Meyer et al. 1997:157–58). While the approach does not rule out the possibility that powerful states might be constrained by global culture, the causal mechanisms pinpointed in this scholarship speak only about latecomers. These are "taken-for-grantedness," "international coercion" (either direct or indirect), or "normative emulation"—all of which aim to grasp how the actions and forms of states that are "less powerful or considered less legitimate" are constrained by "those

countries (or groups of countries) with more power in the international system"
(Dimaggio and Powell 1983; Henisz, Zelner, and Guillén 2005:874; Mizruchi and
Galaskiewicz 1993). Some critics note, therefore, that NIWS emphasizes the "uni-
directional" spread of norms and does not account for "cultural feedback": how a
powerful hegemon and not just weak latecomers might be constrained or shaped by
the cultural features of the world polity (Finnemore 1996b:341).

   NIR brings us closer to an examination of such feedback by emphasizing how
global norms pushed by entrepreneurs can redound to shape core states' actions. But
the reasons given for *why* a core state would adopt a new norm once it is pushed
into the global arena by norm entrepreneurs are specific. Drawing upon psychological
theories of identity, existing theory and research argues that powerful states adhere
to new rules (such as new rules of war, as in the Geneva Convention) because of
their "desire to gain or defend one's pride or esteem" or maintain their "honor" and
"duty" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:903–04; also Finnemore 1996a:69–88). State
leaders in powerful states "conform to norms in order to avoid the disapproval
aroused by norm violation and thus to enhance national esteem (and, as a result,
their own self-esteem)" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:904; Klotz 1995:27–30, 166–
68). Some studies in this vein therefore treat the adoption of new norms as "ends
in themselves" (Finnemore 1996a:129). They do not, for example, specify how a
state's cultural work may be related to a state's global *strategic* interests. Another
mechanism pinpointed in the literature has to do with domestic electorates. Norm
entrepreneurs push domestic publics to in turn push their state elites. State elites
oblige for fear of being elected out of office (Klotz 1995; Price and Tannenwald
1996:150). This mechanism better pinpoints how adherence to a new norm serves
other interests beyond psychological self-satisfaction, but it is limited to domestic
interests. In such a story, state elites are not strategically oriented to global concerns
or other actors in the global arena; their cultural work is only in relation to their
electorates at home.[1]

UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL FIELDS

Each of the foregoing existing approaches carry some helpful guides for explaining
the difference between Britain's and America's imperial forms, but I suggest that a
global fields approach offers one way to synthesize, expand, and supplement their
insights. Drawing upon Dimaggio and Powell's (1983) notion of the "organizational
field," Bourdieu's founding notion of the "field" (1977, 1984, 1990, 1994), and re-
lated "field theory" (Martin 2003), I conceptualize a *field* as an arena of struggle
in which actors compete for a variety of valued resources, that is, different species
of "capital" that are potentially convertible to each other (see also DiMaggio 1991;
Fligstein 2001; Friedland and Alford 1991; Hannan, Carroll, and Pólos 2003). Fields
consist of two related but analytically separable dimensions: (1) the objective con-
figuration of actor-positions and (2) the subjective meanings guiding actors in the
struggle, that is, the "rules of the game" and particular types of cultural or symbolic
capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:97; Dimaggio and Powell 1983; Haveman and
Rao 1998; Martin 2003:21–28). The actors can be individuals or corporate actors;

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[1]Some studies in this tradition do speak of a state's global interests as opposed to domestic interests
when they stress that states follow certain norms in order to "belong" to the international community
(Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:903; Klotz 1995:27–30, 166–68). This is more akin to the neoinstitutional/
world society approach whereby states adopt certain forms to be "legitimate" but self-avowedly remains
within a psychological framework.

the "capitals" pursued by any particular actor in the field might be multiple (e.g., economic capital, political capital, or symbolic capital); and the "rules of the game" can vary across fields or across time. For our case, which aims to understand the actions of powerful states, we can think of a *global field* or "global political" field as a worldwide arena in which states or other actors (corporations, nongovernmental institutions, international organizations) compete with each other over species of capital.[2] And since we are dealing with modern states, the global field at stake in the analysis can be seen as emerging as early as the 16th century when European actors began reaching across the globe to construct a worldwide (as opposed to just a regional or interregional) network of connections and field of competition (Wallerstein 1980; cf. Abu-Lughod 1991).

To think of a global field pushes beyond metropolitan-centered explanations because it highlights relationality (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:96; Swartz 2005:9–16). According to Bourdieu, for example, individuals' capacities and orientations (i.e., "habitus") is always formed in and relation to the configuration of the field; and the fields into which actors enter are already formed with particular dynamics and content (Bourdieu 1990b:56; Swartz 1997:100–16). Actors' actions must thereby be understood in relation to these wider spaces of relations. A fields approach similarly pushes beyond RIR because phenomena are not to be understood by adding up the individual capacities of actors. In field organizational theory, the capacities and forms of any given organization do not emerge from qualities intrinsic to the organization but in relation to other organizations and existing forms circulating in the field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In these ways, a global fields approach is more akin to the international or world environment discussed in HWS, NIWS, and NIR. But it also offers a way to synthesize them. Rather than stressing either the material or cultural dimensions of the global arena, a fields approach incorporates both. The concept field in Bourdieu's sense refers to the configuration of actors (the multidimensional "field of forces") *and* the classificatory schemes and rules of the game that circulate globally and that actors use as they strategize and struggle for position (i.e., the "rules of the game") (Bourdieu 1991:230). *Field* is an inclusive concept orienting analysts to both objective positions and cultural meaning, to both objective "positions" and cultural "stances" (Swartz 2005:17).

Field theory also carries critical supplements to existing approaches. First, whereas world systems theory defines the global system as a socioeconomic hierarchy (core, semiperiphery, and periphery) from which derive political hierarchies, the concept "global field" incorporates other possible relations and positions that constitute its overarching "topography" (Martin 2003:4–14); a field is a *multidimensional* "space of relations" (Bourdieu 1991:232). Therefore, fields are not only characterized by hierarchical socioeconomic relationships but also a range of other "vectors" (Martin 2003:6) such as network relations, lateral exchanges, and structural correspondences (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Swartz 1997:120–24). Furthermore, where world systems theory stresses that the resources that actors in the system pursue are economic, a field approach would recognize that global fields offer a variety of forms of "capital"—including political capital (ability to attract political allies) or symbolic capital (legitimacy) (Bourdieu 1977, 1991; Swartz 1997:75–94). Some sectors of

[2]Bourdieu's field theory has typically taken the actors to be individuals, but as he states explicitly, and as organizational theory has capitalized upon, fields can also apply to transorganizational relations (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:232). For recent work applying field theory to transnational law, see Dezalay and Garth (2003).

world systems research allude to these sorts of forms of capital (Wallerstein 2002), but as they define the world system in mostly economic terms, they are rendered secondary in importance or as an outcome of economic position (Finnemore 1996; Meyer 1980). Alternatively, in a fields approach, all forms of capital might be part of the "struggle for position" (Swartz 1997:143–76).

Existing cultural approaches might also consider these cultural elements of the global system, but a fields approach offers added value. For instance, while NIWS has less to say about the impact of global culture upon strong states than it does on weaker states, a fields approach emphasizes that *all* actors in the field are engaged in the struggle for various species of capital, all players are enabled and constrained by the specific configurations of the field and its cultural rules: or in classic field theory as articulated in studies of electromagnetism, *any* position in the field is "susceptible" to a "field effect" (Martin 2003). This means, first, that the concept "field," unlike "world society," connotes struggle and conflict (as in the sense of a "battlefield")—and even powerful players are involved in it (DiMaggio 1991:289; Martin 2003:29–31; Suchman 1995:576; Swartz 1997:120). It also means, second, that global culture does not just consist of taken-for-granted cultural models that only weak states adopt to obtain legitimacy (where legitimacy is the "right to exist") (Meyer and Scott 1983; Suchman 1995:573–82). Bourdieu stresses, for example, that players who monopolize economic capital also strive to match it with symbolic capital in order to render their economic monopoly legitimate (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:117; Swartz 1997:124). In terms of global fields, it follows that stronger states would also be interested in obtaining symbolic capital; just that, given their different position in the objective configuration of the field, they would seek out a different type of it. Rather than seeking cultural capital in the form of "credentials" that give them a "right to exist" (for they already have such credentials), core states would seek symbolic capital that authorizes them to maintain or enhance their dominant position (Bourdieu 1977:117). They seek a "capital of trust" that sustains *symbolic domination*: powerful states do cultural work not to exist but to rightfully occupy and enhance their dominant position in the field (Bourdieu 1997:83). Finally, powerful states would not just adopt cultural forms in a taken-for-granted manner. Field approaches to organizations, for example, have emphasized that organizations respond to the cultural environment strategically, even if the range of responses is delimited by features of the environment (Barman 2002; DiMaggio 1991; Oliver 1991; Suchman 1995). Hence, as powerful states seek symbolic capital to win "trust," they do so through what Suchman (1995:574–78) calls "strategic" and "pragmatic" legitimacy, aiming for symbolic capital as a strategy of power amidst their struggle in the field (see also Bourdieu 1990a:62–75; DiMaggio 1991).

It is here where a fields approach also builds upon while extending NIR. NIR also speaks of global culture's impact upon powerful states while emphasizing strategy. State elites adhere to new norms to win elections or to maintain their "self-esteem." But a fields approach offers categories for thinking of other mechanisms. By stressing the relational character of symbolic work in the field, it would hypothesize that states' symbolic work is not just oriented to domestic electorates but other players and states in the global arena. Strong states might aim for symbolic capital because it legitimates their global rather than domestic domination. Relatedly, such symbolic capital would not just be accrued for psychological purposes. Seeking symbolic capital would be pursued not just for self-esteem but because it might similarly help strong states win hearts and minds and thereby enlist the support of actors in the field (i.e., political capital). Thus, the adherence by strong states to global "norms" might not be an end

in itself. Powerful states' cultural work can serve further global purposes, precisely because fields facilitate the convertibility of capitals.

In sum, a global fields approach offers a synthesis of existing approaches while also adding logically interrelated categories for extending them. This is not to say that a fields approach is a "theory" in the sense that it specifies a particular field configuration or cultural content that in turn explains all outcomes. As Dimaggio and Powell (1983:65) stress, a "field cannot be determined a priori but must be defined on the basis of empirical research." Conceiving of the world environment as a global field is instead an orienting guide and "provisional theory" that offers a conceptual frame for inducing explanations and specifying mechanisms amidst the examination rather than *a priori* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:100, 104; Martin 2003:12, 24). Still, thinking of the global environment as a field alerts analysts to features of the global space that might be otherwise overlooked. It orients analysts to multidimensional objective configurations of positions and the subjective dimensions that serve as the "rules of the game" and as cultural or symbolic capital (rather than just "norms" or taken-for-granted models). It also orients analysts to processes and mechanisms that might be elided in existing approaches. By highlighting conflict and strategy, it maintains that actors' "moves" are driven by the accumulation of various capitals while recognizing that the strategies they pursue are dependent upon the particular configuration of the field and the content of capitals available at any given point in the "game." It also stresses that fields enable capitals to be convertible to each other, which is partially why actors might struggle for a variety of capitals rather than only a single type.

For the cases at hand, a fields approach offers an orienting approach. Foremost, it would hypothesize that differences between field properties—discernible only in concrete empirical analyses—in turn shape variations in states' strategies and associated policies. Different fields offer distinct opportunities for certain strategies while denying others, depending upon the relative positioning of the players at any given time, the strategies those other players are adopting, and the cultural models of action that the field valorizes. Additionally, the symbolic work of states is dependent upon the cultural content of the field itself. Different fields valorize different forms of symbolic capital and/or make some capitals convertible to others (Bourdieu 1977:117, 1990:62–75). Again, the strategies that actors employ amidst the struggle are *relational* to the configuration and content of the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:97; Swartz 1997:117). Particular configurations and cultural content give distinct form to the struggle among actors, specifying the character of capital at stake and the rules of the game by which that capital is sought.

The rest of this essay aims to demonstrate the utility of this fields approach. It does so by looking, first and foremost, at the two different time periods in which the United States and the United Kingdom diverged in their imperial forms: that is, the U.S. and U.K. cycles of global power (1815–1918; 1945–present). It examines particular field configurations and cultural content during each of those periods that might have shaped the states' strategies. This approach isolates different historical fields, but it also incorporates Haydu's (1998) imperative to consider different historical time periods while recognizing that one period might have affected the latter period. This is compatible with the premises of field theory. While a fields approach would first compare two different global fields at two different points in time, it would also consider that the field configuration and content at the latter point is partially generated endogenously over time. The objective positions taken by actors and "rules of the game" at one moment flow from the struggles and processes of the prior moment.

This is partially because of the configuration of the field itself. Bourdieu stresses that dominated groups eventually struggle to change the rules of the game that have kept them dominated in the first place, thereby challenging "doxa" with new "heterodoxy" (Bourdieu 1977:164–69). The very structure of fields of struggle contains the seeds for their own transformation.

For data, I use secondary sources that discuss U.K. and U.S. imperialism, case studies of foreign policy, and various studies of the international economic and political system. Because the existing literature on British imperialism is larger than on U.S. imperialism, I supplemented the U.S. case with primary documents from *Foreign Relations of the United States* (U.S. Department of State 1940–1980, hereafter referred to as FRUS), which contains all transcripts, memos, policy papers, and reports on U.S. foreign policy from key policy-making agencies (the executive office, the National Security Council, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the State Department and its committees, ambassadors' reports, etc.), and other published writings of policymakers. I look at all of these sources to see which factors impacted decision-making processes about imperial forms. Finally, I use quantitative data on various aspects of the global fields in the two time periods. I begin by first considering RIR and HWS to show their explanatory limits. I then show that overcoming their limits demands an understanding of differences in field topography—specifically the *political ecology* of the field. In the subsequent section, I examine the cultural content of the global fields and reveal the mechanisms by which global culture impacted imperial forms.

IMPERIAL STRATEGIES AND FIELD CONFIGURATION

As noted, RIR defines the "system" in terms of the distribution of military capabilities and explains state action accordingly. In particular, this approach would pinpoint the Cold War as a "bipolar" system that affected American interests. While the United States was economically dominant, its military capabilities were challenged by those of the U.S.S.R. In such a situation, the United States would not expand in the territorial mode because it would exacerbate the geopolitical rivalry and lead to war (Jervis 2001). This bipolar situation might then explain America's reluctance to colonize and why it instead preferred informal imperialism. The problem is that this approach cannot explain Britain's formal imperialism. In the 19th century, the British state faced a world situation akin to that of the United States. While British naval power was no doubt supreme for much of the century, in certain periods it faced a situation closer to a "multipolar" system wherein rivals like Russia and France posed a potential military threat (Anderson 1986:4–17; Kennedy 1987:152–55; Mandelbaum 1988; Martel 1991:680–82; Parry 2001; Wallerstein 2002). RIR theory would predict British restraint akin to American restraint during the Cold War, but the British repeatedly seized new territories throughout the period (Rendall 2006). The "systems" as RIR would define them looked the same for Britain and the United States, but they did not lead to similar outcomes.

HWS offers a different approach by considering variations in the politicoeconomic structure of the world system. When one core state is economically hegemonic, it seeks to accrue economic capital through free trade rather than through mercantilist colonialism; formal empire emerges only when the hegemon experiences decline (Wallerstein 1984, 2002:360–61). This approach, however, has explanatory limits. On the one hand, it is well established that both the United States and Britain during their respective periods of hegemonic maturity sought to open up peripheral areas for new markets and materials and tended toward free trade (Cain 1999:40; McCormick

Table 1. U.S.-U.K. Hegemonic Phases and Formal Imperialism (Colonial Annexations)

Phase	Britain	United States
Ascent		
U.K.: 1720–1815	46	27
U.S.: 1803–1945		
Hegemonic victory/maturity		
U.K.: 1816–1872	35	1
U.S.: 1945–1973		
Competition/decline		
U.K.: 1873–1939	63	0
U.S.: 1973–present		
Total	144	28

Sources: Complied from Stewart (1996) for British annexations; for United States, Tir, Schafer, Diehl, and G. Goertz (1998); Henige (1970); and www.worldstatesmen.org (accessed 3/16/06). Includes all territories annexed by the United States but not made an equal state (i.e., annexations whereby the new territory was immediately incorporated as a equal self-governing state, e.g., Texas, are excluded); includes strategic trust territory; excludes temporary military occupations; protectorates; leased lands (e.g., Guantanamo Bay). Hegemonic phases: follows "long waves" identified by Boswell (1989).

1995:49–55; Robinson and Gallagher 1953). On the other hand, England in fact acquired colonies during its period of hegemonic maturity and opened those colonies to free trade (Cain 1999:39–40). The United States did not (see Table 1). Furthermore, according to HWS, the United States should have inaugurated a new round of territorial colonization amidst its fall from hegemonic status (beginning ca. the 1970s), just as Britain did in the late 19th century. But it did not and instead initiated the informal mode (Bergesen and Schoenberg 1980:263–66). While a state's relative standing in the world system may shape its geopolitical and economic interests (i.e., free trade and global stability), it does not explain whether those interests are realized through formal or informal imperialism (Doyle 1986:273).[3]

A global fields approach can help by urging us to consider structural configurations of the field besides the relative distribution of capabilities or the hegemon/nonhegemon and core-periphery hierarchies. Specifically, we might consider the *political ecology* of the field, which includes variations in the "spatial differentiation" of political forms (Hobson 2002:16–20; Ruggie 1983). Comparative-historical work on the expansion of the international system highlights that the political-ecology of the system can be divided into three major political units: (1) recognized sovereign nation-states, (2) colonial dependencies of sovereigns, and (3) "unrecognized" territories and polities. The first category contained the seeds for the modern nation-state: it included those powerful states emerging from the Westphalia system that

[3]A different WS argument would point to the secular historical development of capitalism. As capitalism becomes based upon property relations, colonialism is no longer necessary and informal imperialism becomes the political engine for global capital accumulation (Wood 2003). This argument, however, is not fully worked out in existing WS literature; nor can it explain why the British mixed and mingled informal and formal imperialism in the 19th century (e.g., in the mid 19th century Britain colonized some areas but also engaged in informal imperialism in Latin America; Wood's argument that there is a secular development of capitalism that explains American informal empire cannot account for this).

Table 2. Field Topograhy: Proportion of World's Land Surface Occupied by Recognized Polities and Unrecognized

		Percent World's Land Surface Occupied by:			
Hegemon	Year	Recognized: Sovereign States	Recognized: Colonies	Total Recognized (Sovereign States & Colonies)	Unrecognized Areas
U.K.	**1816**	**24**	**11**	**35**	**65**
	1878	54	14	68	32
	1914	53	31	84	16
U.S.	**1946**	**71**	**20**	**91**	**9**
	1960	92	8	100	0
	1973	97	3	100	0

Sources: Data calculated from information in Goertz and Diehl's (1992a) territorial changes data set; the Correlates of War Project (2005) on state system membership; for colonial holdings and areas, Clark (1936); Henige (1970); *Statesman's Yearbook* (1864–); Banks (1976).

constituted members of the European-based "international society." They engage in formal treaties with each other and see each other as equal sovereigns (Bull and Watson 1984; Krasner 1988; Watson 1992:202–13). The other two categories differentiate between two types of states that HWS would otherwise categorize together as "peripheral" states. Dependencies or colonies are "entities that sovereigns claim to possess or control" (Strang 1991:149). Unrecognized polities constitute the frontier of the sovereign system: they are neither formally subordinated to metropolitan states as dependences but neither are they recognized as sovereign. They are therefore "considered by Western states to be outside Western state society" (Strang 1991:151; Watson 1992:214–27).

Following this scheme, there were two related differences between the British and U.S. periods of hegemony that traverse the core-periphery hierarchy. First, in the first half of the 19th century—before England began its major territorial drive—most of the world (65 percent of the earth's land surface) consisted of unrecognized territories (see Table 2). Even in 1878, just before the great imperial scramble, 32 percent of the world's land surface was unrecognized. Much of this territory was in Africa, but the scramble at the turn of the century then turned most of that territory into dependent territory. Therefore, by the time the United States reached hegemony in the mid 20th century, the field had changed significantly. In 1946, only 9 percent of the world's land surface was unrecognized. The rest of the field was occupied by sovereign states and European empires. Second, not only was most of the field already populated by recognized territory when the United States rose to power, a vast amount of that recognized territory had become colonial dependencies of European powers. Twenty percent of the world's land surface was already occupied by European colonies in 1946, compared with only 11 percent when the British entered. This included most of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean; that is, the majority of peripheral areas in the world system.

How did this difference impact imperial forms? To simply state that the United States entered the global field at a time when most of the world was already recognized and colonized is not an explanation. As Martin (2003:4–14) notes, field theory

begins with an analysis of topography but this only the first step. For our purposes, needed is an understanding of how the historical differences in field configuration impacted the strategies of the two states as they struggled to obtain capital. I suggest that the differences impacted imperial forms by shaping the *opportunity structure for formal imperialism*. First, Strang (1991) shows that, historically, sovereign states most typically seize unrecognized territories. Colonizing territory of another sovereign state is a costly zero-sum game resolved only through purchase or war between sovereigns. Seizing unrecognized territory is not as problematic. This means that the British state had a greater opportunity to seize new territory and construct a formal empire than did the United States. While Britain annexed new land at an average annual pace of about 100,000 square miles during its period of hegemonic maturity (e.g., between 1815 and 1865)—nearly all of it previously unrecognized territory (Shaw 1970:2)—the United States entered a field dominated by recognized states (either sovereign states or existing colonies of other sovereigns). Of course, given the supremacy of American military power after WWII, the United States could have readily seized European colonial territories for its own. Hence the second point: the amount of preexisting colonial territory held by allied sovereigns. Because most of the previously unrecognized territories in the peripheral world were held as colonies of European powers, the United States had a special opportunity to employ preexisting European imperial networks to realize its economic and political goals. Unlike Britain, the United States could outsource territorial rule to the preexisting colonial empires rather than seizing its own territories.

This is seen when we consider how both hegemons pursued their goals of accruing economic capital and maintaining geopolitical order. As noted, both Britain and the United States during their hegemonic periods aimed to access peripheral markets and materials. But for Britain, given that the field consisted of so many frontier areas that were unrecognized, Britain had to realize this goal by seizing unrecognized areas and ruling them as colonies. As Sir Charles Dilke noted, reflecting upon British expansion in the mid 19th century, Britain had to secure "large markets" and raw materials in "almost all those territories in the globe *which did not belong to the European races*" (Dilke 1890:462). Direct seizure and colonial rule was necessary to open up frontier areas and secure them for trade, that is, for controlling land, protecting settler producers, and articulating local labor systems to export production. In brief, given the topography of the global field, formal empire was necessary to establish the *social* conditions for economic extraction, production, and trade (Tomlinson 1999:60–74). As Joseph Chamberlain remarked in 1896: "We, in our colonial policy, as fast as we acquire new territory and develop it, develop it . . . for the commerce of the world" (Platt 1968:365). At the same time, annexation was necessary as a *political* process, that is, for maintaining security and order (Platt 1968:153; Porter 1999:10–11). Most British annexations began as enterprising merchants, landowners, and vanguard settlers pressed the home government to annex the territory in order to create stable conditions and provide protection in the frontier (Robinson 1972). Contiguous areas around Bombay, in and near Australia, and in Malaya became increasingly important to British trade by the late century; these were the unrecognized frontier areas, which Britain annexed (outlying parts of India in 1815 and 1818; Western Australia in 1832; New Zealand in 1841; and the Malaya/Straits Settlements in 1867) (Cain 1999:34; Darwin 1997:630; Fieldhouse 1973:99–103; Tomlinson 1999:60–61). The scramble for Africa later in the century followed the same logic (Hynes 1976; Platt 1968:363–65).

The situation was very different for the United States. The United States aimed to expand its trade like Britain did, but because so many of the areas that it targeted for

trade were already part of European empires, the United States could access them without having to colonize them directly. Because European colonialism had already laid down the sociopolitical conditions for realizing economic goals—articulating social systems to the world market and maintaining political security—all the United States had to do was support European colonialism while compelling metropoles to open up their colonies to U.S. trade. Policy papers from the State Department explicitly stated that this was the overarching postwar strategy. To realize its "trade, investment, and transportation interests" in peripheral regions and to be able to "access to raw materials," the United States should not dismantle European colonial structures but support them. European rule offered "stability," for example, sociopolitical conditions and preexisting administrative machinery, which would facilitate investment. As long as American capital was afforded "equal treatment," America's "economic goals...should be achieved through coordination and cooperation with the colonial powers." In exchange, the United States would provide financial aid to European powers, which was sorely needed due to the devastation of WWII (FRUS 1950:V, 1527, 1535). In fact, the United States pursued this policy in nearly all peripheral regions in which it projected trade interests (Louis and Robinson 1994). The result was a rapid influx of economic aid given to European colonies through the "Economic Cooperation Administration" program founded after WWII (Orchard 1951:67–68). The costs of the program in the 1950s reached approximately 7.5 billion dollars in aid, with the French and British colonial empires receiving approximately 6.5 billion and the Portugese, Belgian, and Netherlands empires receiving the rest (Orchard 1951:70–72). This set an economic pattern through the 1950s: developing countries absorbed one-third of U.S. overseas investments while generating "more aggregate profit than the two-thirds invested in Europe, Japan, and Canada" (Mc-Cormick 1995:136). The State Department therefore concluded in 1950: "the colonial relationship [between Europe and its dependencies]...is still in many places useful and necessary" (FRUS 1950:V, 1527).

Besides relying upon preexisting empires to pursue its economic goals, the United States also relied upon them to pursue its geopolitical goals. Both Britain and the United States sought to maintain strategic defensive positions against rivals and maintain hegemonic stability by creating worldwide military networks. For England, this imperative—conjoined with the struggle to obtain economic capital—drove the annexation of unrecognized areas (Burroughs 1999:323–24; Kennedy 1976:154–57). Britain seized contiguous areas to India to defend possible Russian or French encroachment and maintain safe trade routes; it seized Hong Kong, Singapore, Aden, the Falkland Islands, Fiji, and Lagos—among others—for the same purposes (Darwin 1997; Kennedy 1987:154–55; Porter 1999:11–12). By WWII, out of the 30 countries wherein the United Kingdom maintained military bases, only three were not British dependencies (Harkavy 1982:58–59). Alternatively, because the global field was populated by European empires after WWII, America's struggle to maintain global order and contain rivals—in this case the U.S.S.R.—could be realized by relying upon European imperial networks rather than constructing a formal empire of its own. The United States first gave financial and military aid to European colonial regimes so that European colonies could serve as a bulwark against Soviet expansion—for example, the United States supported the French military in Indochina and the Dutch in Indonesia, where anti-colonial movements took on an ostensibly communist character (Fraser 1992; Rotter 1984). Similarly, until the mid 1950s at least, the United States relied upon the long-established British presence in key areas like the Middle East as a bulwark against Russian influence (FRUS 1947:V,

495, 524, 1950:III, 620; Kolko 1988:20; Louis and Robinson 1994). The United States also relied upon the European empires to construct its own overseas basing system. Prior to WWII, the United States had only a limited overseas basing system, with bases only in its own colonies (Harkavy 1982:66–67, 100). By the end of WWII, however, military strategists planned for an extensive worldwide network of security, and so designed to give aid to European empires in exchange for establishing U.S. bases in European colonial territories. The United States gave loans to Britain and France so they could reestablish their overseas empires after the war; in exchange the United States was granted the use of their overseas colonies for military bases or transport nodes (Harkavy 1982:127–53; Louis and Robinson 1994; Sandars 2000:42–61). The State Department therefore noted that there was a "favorable factor" to the fact of European colonialism's "repression"; namely, "that of US strategic interests, since we are in a position to use this area in time of war" (FRUS 1950:V, 1573, 1528; Kolko 1988:19). The remarkably rapid expansion of the U.S. basing system around the world in the post-WWII period was only possible due to the existing global spread of colonialism (Harkavy 1982:113–25). Out of the top 39 territories in Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific wherein the United States maintained troops from 1950 to 1960 (measured in terms of number of troops), seven were U.S. colonies (excluding Japan, which the United States ruled after WWII temporarily), one was a former U.S. colony (the Philippines), and 20 were colonies or protectorates of European countries. Close to 70 percent of America's troop outposts in the peripheral world, therefore, were established under the umbrella of colonialism (U.S. Department of Defense 2004). A secret memo in the State Department appropriately stated: "the security interests of the United States at the present time will best be served by a policy of support for the Western Colonial Powers" (FRUS 1950–1953:III, 1078–79; see also FRUS 1952–1954:III, 1081; Fraser 1992:115). America's global power was built not upon the ashes of the European empires but upon their persisting structure. This is why "the British Empire took some two hundred years to reach its peak, [but] the global security system of the US a mere ten years" (Sandars 2000:6). While the British had to annex frontier territory around the world to establish bases, making for a slow and piecemeal process of expansion (Harkavy 1982:46–50; Hyam 1999:31), the United States could rely upon the colonial domains already constructed by its predecessors.

In short, while both Britain and the United States pursued similar goals related to their cycles of hegemony (i.e., seeking security capital and also economic capital in the form of raw materials and markets), their strategies differed due to the different opportunity structures presented by respectively different configurations of their global fields. Given the fact that the field into which the United States entered consisted almost entirely of sovereign territories and colonies of America's allies, the United States had the opportunity to employ "vertical" rather than horizontal (i.e., colonial) organizational forms—as Powell (1990) might put it—to accrue economic and security capital. In contrast, Britain did not have this opportunity. The British indeed supported allied empires when and where they could: the Prussian empire as a check against France and Russia, the Ottoman empire as a defensive bulwark and for safe trade routes (Mandelbaum 1988:27; Porter 1999:11; Reddaway 1940:262–66). But these were exceptions. While allied sovereigns of the United States controlled all colonial areas, thereby serving as a tool against America's rival (the U.S.S.R.), Britain faced a field in which its enemies (e.g., France) controlled colonial areas. Because of this, and because the field offered vast areas of unrecognized territory to colonize, the British accrued their economic and security capital through direct

territorial control. The different field configuration faced by Britain led to a different organizational model: formal empire.

NEW CULTURAL CONTENT: ANTI-COLONIAL NATIONALISM

The foregoing difference between the 19th- and 20th-century global fields only partially explains the different imperial forms. While the United States relied upon European empires to realize its imperial goals from 1945 to the 1960s, some colonies had already obtained independence by that time. Furthermore, by the mid 1960s, the European empires finally crumbled. This meant that the United States could no longer rely upon them and a host of countries became independent. Why didn't the United States colonize those areas and instead exercise informal imperialism? To answer, we must consider an additional feature of global fields besides their objective configuration: their *cultural content*. Cultural approaches to the global system already theorize this feature of the world system. Associated research has further pinpointed new cultural models and norms that emerged after WWII: the nation-state, its associated principles of self-determination, and a decolonization "norm" (Crawford 1993; Goertz and Diehl 1992b; Jackson 1993; Mann 2003:118–20). These insights are important for our story. As I will now show, a key cultural difference between the 19th- and 20th-century global fields has to do with the global proliferation of anti-colonial nationalism and its associated universal principles of self-determination. But the proliferation of anti-colonial nationalism did not shape America's informal imperialism as a taken-for-granted model. Nor was it a "norm" that the United States adopted only to appeal to domestic electorates or enhance its self-esteem. Rather, the proliferation of anti-colonial nationalism mattered because it reshaped the terrain of struggle, turning an anti-colonial stance into convertible symbolic capital.

Anti-Colonialism as Symbolic Capital

A number of studies have shown that anti-colonial nationalism first emerged in the late 19th century. It was manifest in the establishment of the Indian National Congress (1885), Islamic revival movements in the Middle East, the Philippine and Cuban revolutions against Spain (1896), the Pan-African Congress in 1900, and the Philippine-American War (Furedi 1994:27–28; Grimal 1978:4–36). The fact that European colonialism had taken over nearly all of the peripheral world was itself a factor that propelled anti-colonial nationalism. European colonialism had offered education and political experience to colonized elites while generating discontent and redefining local identities into nationalized spatial boundaries (Anderson 1986:237–39; Grimal 1978:36–47). In accordance with Bourdieu's (1977:164–69) notion of field change as emerging from dominated groups challenging existing "rules of the game," anti-colonial nationalism was generated endogenously to the field. Where colonial states had seized new territory, anti-colonial nationalism later emerged in dialectic and heterodoxic response (Goswami 1998). The period between the world wars was a critical turning point. Preexisting imperial boundaries were reinscribed after WWI, much to the disappointment of anti-colonial nationalists; Ghandian populism during the 1920s received global attention (Easton 1964:366–77); and the 1930s depression laid down the socioeconomic conditions for anti-colonial protests across Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean (Fraser 1992:108; Furedi 1994:10–27). World War II then weakened colonial structures, armed colonized peoples, and raised questions about the strength of European empires and their future viability (Holland 1985:1–12). After

the war, as the United States achieved hegemonic maturity, anti-colonial nationalism spread to the farthest reaches of imperial world (Crawford 1993; Goertz and Diehl 1992b; Jackson 1993). As NIR approaches would have it, it was especially promoted by a variety of "norm entrepreneurs." These included nationalist elites organizing in forums such as the 1948 Bogota Conference of Latin American states, the Bandung conference, and later the United Nations (Fraser 2003:117–19; Pratt 1958:139–40).

This global diffusion of anti-colonial nationalism changed the field of struggle in at least two ways. First, it increased the threat of resistance to formal imperialism. As a symbol, anti-colonial nationalism and its principle of universal self-determination was different from tribal or localized identities of the 19th century; it mobilized disparate groups within and across imperial space. Italy's attempt to recolonize Ethiopia in the late 1930s, for example, evoked an outcry in parts of Europe and across the peripheral world, making it one of the first instances of "a Third Worldwide reaction to an instance of Western intervention" (Furedi 1994:23). This rising threat of resistance animated by the symbol of anti-colonial nationalism therefore led powerful countries to reconsider their traditional relations with the peripheral world. Anti-imperialist thought emerged in Britain, leading to the Labor Party's anti-imperial stance and various colonial reforms designed to appease anti-colonial sentiment (e.g., promises of political autonomy to India before WWII) (Cooper 2005; Howe 1993; Louis 1978:99–103). A new model for dealing with colonies also emerged as a response: international mandates or "trusteeships." Originally proposed to President Wilson by Jan Smuts of South Africa, and later to FDR by Chiang Ki Shek, the idea was that such trusteeships would be useful for dealing with colonies left over from the losers of war. It was later considered applicable to all colonies. Trusteeships meant direct territorial control over peripheral areas; the difference was that it vested ultimate oversight in allied core powers rather than a single nation so as to ensure the "welfare" and "development' of the inhabitants (Louis 1978). Important here is that the trusteeship idea was a strategic response to anti-colonial sentiment. FDR had warmed to the idea on the recognition of a "palpable surge toward independence" in colonial areas (Sherwood 1950:573). The State Department noted that "the use of trusteeship . . . frequently avoids the controversial issue of the extension of sovereignty over the area by any State" (FRUS 1952–1954:III, 1086). This was very different in the 19th century, when colonies of a war's losers were seized by victors as natural spoils of the war—such as when England took some of Napoleon's holdings in 1815 and when the United States took Spanish colonies in 1898.

Second, because of anti-colonial nationalism's capacity to mobilize resistance, it shifted the cultural terrain of competition between powerful countries. As it spread throughout the field, the U.S.S.R. tried to use it as *symbolic capital* convertible to political capital. This had begun during WWI with Lenin's anti-imperial rhetoric and calls for national self-determination (Koebner and Schmidt 1964:282–84). But beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s, policy papers by the State Department became increasingly worried that the U.S.S.R. would penetrate anti-colonial nationalist movements. "The USSR has sought," warned the State Department in 1950, "to play the role of the champion of the colonial peoples of the world [and] gain the sympathy of nationalist elements" (FRUS 1950:V, 1525). Policymakers feared that the U.S.S.R. would use this "sympathy" as a tool of advancement, shaping anti-colonial nationalist movements into communist movements that would overthrow European empires and replace them with independent regimes allied with the U.S.S.R. For the U.S.S.R., adopting a stance of anti-colonialism and national self-determination became convertible symbolic capital. Anti-colonial nationalism became something that

core powers could use to win over peripheral peoples as allies amidst geopolitical
struggle. The Cold War's geopolitical competition (which Britain had also faced in
the 19th century) thus articulated with the rising threat of anti-colonial nationalism
(which Britain did not face).

This global shift in field cultural content was critical for shaping America's post-
war strategies. It first explains why the United States eventually ceased its support
of European empires despite the fact that it had previously found it useful to sup-
port them. The United States supported European empires to accumulate economic
capital and construct a global defense system, but the new factor of anti-colonial
nationalism complicated the strategy. On the one hand, when and where nationalism
was perceived as relatively well developed and strong, the United States came to
dissuade the continuance of European colonialism. Continued support of European
powers would be fruitless, for strong anti-colonial nationalist movements would ef-
fectively overthrow them while creating instability and disorder (Emerson 1947:269;
Hearden 2002:113). It would also, as the State Department and various policymakers
claimed, damage America's "reputation" and push nationalist forces to the U.S.S.R.
The State Department repeatedly warned of Soviet "propaganda" in the colonial
world that played upon anti-colonial sentiment and thereby urged that the United
States would have to avoid portraying itself as a supporter of the European empires
(Darby 1975:175; FRUS 1950–1953:III, 1078–79). The United States thus ceased its
support of European rule where nationalism had developed earlier (like India or
Malaysia). It also stopped supporting French suppression of colonial nationalists
in Vietnam and Dutch rule in Indonesia because anti-colonial forces had proven far
too resistant to repression (Fraser 1992:116–17). On the other hand, when and where
American policymakers perceived anti-colonial nationalism to be relatively weak or
nascent, the United States was more willing to continue to prop European colonial-
ism (FRUS 1952–1954:III, 1105). In most of Africa in the early 1950s, the United
States continued to support the European empires because nationalism was perceived
to be weaker there, and the efforts of the U.S.S.R. to "win" over nationalists had
been "unsuccessful" (FRUS 1950:V, 1528, 1525). The United States only stopped its
support as nationalism and the threat of communism developed more strongly in the
late 1950s and early 1960s. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles feared that proto-
nationalists in Africa might "identify the Soviet Union with 'the oppressed colonial
peoples of the world'." He then insisted that the United States should aid the nation-
alists and thereby "consolidate its cultural and moral position with respect to the
Africans." America's "prestige" was at stake (FRUS 1955–1957:XVIII, 18–9). The
State Department had summarized the policy in its famous policy paper of 1950:
"In most dependent areas of the world the security interests of the United States at
the present time will best be served by a policy of support for the Western Colonial
Powers [But where nationalist movements] have so effectively challenged European
administration . . . it is in the interest of the United States to accept the situation as it
is and to encourage the progressive and peaceful transfer of administration from the
imperial power to the local inhabitants" (FRUS 1950–1953:III, 1078–79; also Westad
2005:113).

It followed from the same reasons that the United States would not initiate a new
round of direct territorial rule over postcolonial areas. Direct rule by any core power
(whether European or American) was not a viable option for dealing with periph-
eral areas. First, it would arouse nationalist resistance, thereby raising the costs of
occupation. As Dulles noted in 1953, the peoples of the Near East and South Asia
are "suspicious of the colonial powers" and so "the day is past when [nationalist]

aspirations can be ignored" (Lucas 2000:147). President Eisenhower told Winston
Churchill in 1954 that "should we try to dam up [nationalism in the Middle East]
completely, it would, like a mighty river, burst through the barriers and could cre-
ate havoc" (Lucas 2000:147). Second, recolonization would arouse the indignation
of postcolonial countries and nationalist movements around the world, pushing all
of them toward the U.S.S.R. As the National Security Council stated in a secret
memo: "The peoples of the colonial states would never agree to fight Communism
unless they were assured of their freedom" (FRUS 1952–1954:XIII, Part 1, 1259).
The strategy was clearly stated in a famous 1952 State Department article identi-
fying the "General Objectives of US Policy Toward Colonial Areas" (FRUS 1952–
1954:III, 1082–87). It stated that America's main objective was to "favour the pro-
gressive development of all dependent peoples toward the goal of self-government"
(FRUS 1952–1954:III, 1082). The reason was that: "substantial advocates toward
self-government have been made in a number of territories and more than 500 mil-
lion people have achieved independence. Nationalist movements are gaining strength
in non-self-governing territories throughout the world. U.S. policy must be based
on the general assumption that nationalism in colonial areas is a force, which can-
not be stopped but may, with wisdom, be guided.... It is clearly in the interest
of the United States to give appropriate encouragement to those movements, which
are noncommunist and democratic in character. [This would] contribute toward the
building of colonial areas into bulwarks against the spread of communism. The very
fact of a demonstrated U.S. in democratic nationalist movements will strengthen the
hand of these groups against their communist counterparts" (FRUS 1952–1954:III,
1084–85). U.S. policy, therefore, should "seek the alignment with the democratic
world of dependent peoples and those achieving self-government or independence;
in particular to maintain and strengthen their friendship and respect for the US.
The importance of this objective is clear in view of the Soviet Union's obvious bid
for the sympathies of colonial peoples" (FRUS 1952–1954:III, 1087). The article en-
hanced its views by quoting the Philippine Representative to the United Nations:
"the true goal of all dependent peoples is freedom *and not enslavement by a new
master*" (FRUS 1952–1954:III, 1085; emphasis added).

   In short, given the changed field, supporting self-determination rather than squash-
ing it by recolonization became part of an effort in "strategic legitimation" aimed
at the global arena (Suchman 1995:575). On the one hand, domestic opinion did
shift with the proliferation of anti-colonial nationalism. While popular opinion in
the United States immediately following WWII was procolonial (Gilchrist 1944:642),
by the late 1950s and 1960s African-American groups and other left-leaning actors
aligned with decolonization movements (Jackson 1993:136–37). On the other hand,
this was late in the game, and these electorates were not yet powerful enough to
pose a serious threat (not least since the Civil Rights Act was not passed until 1964).
More important was *global* strategy. For state elites, an anti-colonial rather than a
colonial policy was necessary not just to win votes at home but as symbolic capital,
which was in turn transferable to political capital: the United States made appeals to
anti-colonial sentiment in order to accrue political support amidst its global struggle
to contain Soviet power. Policy documents and memos thereby reveal concern not
over domestic electorates but global publics. As one explained: "Now that the issue
of 'colonialism' is being moved front and center by the Soviets the essential thing it
seems to me *is that we free ourselves from the vice* .... The United States should stand
for freedom from all forms of oppression, for self-government, and for independence
based upon self-determination" (FRUS 1955–1957:XVIII, 27, 1951:VI, pt. 1, 8–9).

Another document did speak of a new "climate of opinion" against colonialism but, like all the other documents of the time, it did not refer to domestic opinion. It instead referred to a global opinion, insisting that the United States should adopt an anti-colonial stance because "the hold which the US has had on the imaginations of the hundreds of millions of peoples of these [colonial and postcolonial] areas can be maintained only if the US makes it unmistakably clear that it is with them and not against them" (Emerson 1947:271).

From Formal to Informal Imperialism

To more clearly see how the changed cultural content directly thwarted recolonization, and how it led to informal rather than formal imperialism, I here discuss two exemplary cases where the United States considered establishing some form of direct territorial control but instead opted for *informal* imperial methods. The case of Iran in the late 1940s and early 1950s is informative case because Iran's oil fields were vital to America's postwar needs. It is also informative because, as American policymakers calculated as to how to handle Iran, they declared that whatever policy they enacted would serve as a "model" and "test case" for how the United States might deal with strategically important territories in the new postwar order (FRUS Department of State 1955:341). Finally, Iran was nominally independent but a British protectorate, giving Britain the right to station troops and attain privileged access to Iranian resources. Therefore, the United States might have agreed with its ally to establish its own territorial control. In fact, the possibility of extending control was considered. President Roosevelt and later military strategists entertained the idea of establishing Iran as an international trusteeship, which would have established American control with the aid of America's allies. Yet the ultimate decision was to not establish a trusteeship. The reason was fear of nationalist uprising, which would raise the cost too high. "No matter how drawn up or proposed," read the final decision in a State Department memo, "the plan would appear to Iran, and doubtless to the world, as a thinly disguised cover for power politics and old-world imperialism. Iranians are highly suspicious of foreign influence in the country and would unquestionably resent any extension of foreign control there . . . . The Department's judgment is that the trusteeship could only be imposed on Iran, a sovereign, allied nation, by force of arms" (FRUS 1955:345).

But how would the United States realize its goals in the region if not by supporting British imperialism or by establishing territorial control? After consideration, the State Department proposed that, rather than turning the region into a trusteeship, the United States should send financial aid, technicians, and advisors for handling the oil concessions. This was a way of exerting influence that the NSC and the State Department considered more palatable to nationalists because Iran would retain internal sovereignty (FRUS 1955:345). Later, in 1951 when the Iranian premier Mohammed Musaddiq challenged this economic influence by nationalizing Iranian oil fields, the United States again considered direct intervention—this time beginning with a military invasion. But this option was disavowed on the grounds that it would "provoke a communist rising with Soviet backing in northern Iran" and turn Iran into "another Korea" (FRUS 1950:V, 593–635). The preferred solution was to act covertly so as to try to hide American influence. Accordingly, the recently formed CIA (1947) orchestrated the overthrow of Mussadiq and the restoration of the Shah, providing financial aid so as to win the Shah's loyalty (Louis and Robinson 1994:474). Various techniques of informal empire thereby replaced the practices of formal empire.

A second case lies in America's decision to not reestablish colonialism in the Philippines in the 1950s. The United States had granted the islands independence in 1946, but the postcolonial regime throughout the subsequent decade faced serious problems. The peasant-based guerilla communist movement, known as the Huks, had been gaining ground in the 1950s. In the eyes of the State Department, the regime of Philippine President Quirino was giving the communists credibility by its blatant corruption. This was a serious problem because the Philippines was an important geopolitical site in the region, and the United States had established postcolonial military bases there. Thus, unless Quirino's regime was overthrown, communism would spread. To deal with this issue, the State Department considered the possibility of a U.S. military occupation to suppress the communist movement, in which case, the Department noted, "the process of recolonizing the Philippines will be well advanced." But the State Department ultimately decided against such a "recolonization" on the grounds that it would invoke the ire of nationalists and push the Philippines even further to communism. The communists would "have the support of the Nationalists just as Ho's regime [in Indochina] has had." The State Department therefore rejected the option of "recolonization" because, as its memo warned, "we shall not get away with it" (FRUS 1951:VI, pt. 1, 8–9). The preferred solution was to use the CIA. Rather than initiating a new round of colonization that would diminish America's symbolic capital and push the Philippines toward communism, CIA agents manipulated the Philippine elections to ensure the victory of Ramon Magsaysay over Quirino. The United States then established Magsaysay as America's preferred client in exchange for an influx of aid (Kolko 1988:63–64).

The Comparative Context

In short, as direct colonial rule was no longer an option given anti-colonial nationalism and the competition for symbolic capital, the United States was constrained to employ "informal" means to exert influence. It follows that if anti-colonial nationalism had not become a consideration, some form of direct control would have been employed. This is seen in the deviant case of the Japanese mandated territories in the Pacific. The territories had been controlled by Japan. After WWII, upon prompting from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. senators, the United States seized them as strategic Trust Territories to complete the Asian-Pacific defense system (1947). This, therefore, was the exception: the only case where the United States established sustained direct control over foreign territory after WWII (Perkins 1962:323). The reason why U.S. policymakers found it acceptable was twofold. First, the Cold War had not yet taken off, so there was little threat of Soviet anti-colonial propaganda. Indeed, the United States established control in consultation with the Soviets. Second, and relatedly, U.S. policymakers stated that they had no fear of nationalist resistance because the islands were small, distant, and the population sparse (Louis 1978:483). A new round of colonization was only feasible where anti-colonial resistance did not exist. Even then, given the anti-colonial climate around the globe, the new round was constrained to take the form of trusteeship rather than traditional formal rule.

This specific case of the Japanese territories more directly reflects the global conditions faced by Britain in the 19th century. First, anti-colonial nationalism had not yet spread throughout the field, in part because colonialism itself had not yet encompassed the globe. Therefore, the threat of resistance was minimal. The only available data on anti-colonial resistance are suggestive. From 1816 to 1868 (just before the "new imperialism" of that century), local populations had posed armed resistance

to European conquests in about 24 percent of all cases (21 conquests out of 89 to-tal). Indeed, in the early stages of colonial rule, native elites were often incorporated into colonial states as collaborators and therefore welcome colonial control because it propped their local powers (Eldridge 1978:219–21; Robinson 1972). Alternatively, from 1868 to 1918, as anti-colonial nationalism spread, local populations posed resistance in 73 percent of all cases of conquest (58 out of 80 total conquests) (calculated from Goertz and Diehl 1992a).

Resistance was not absent in the 19th century, but it had not taken the form of anti-colonial *nationalist* resistance. Given the fact that nationalism as a politico-cultural model and symbol had not yet proliferated, the British considered resistance "tribal and sporadic." "Nationalist movements, where they did exist, were often seen as small, unrepresentative minorities" (Johnson 2003:86). Nationalist resistance, therefore, was not a critical factor in European calculations about whether to extend control over new territory. The "scramble for Africa" occurred as European states staked out new territorial domains by partitioning territory among themselves. If local resistance surfaced, it occurred only *after* European states had already staked their claims and declared sovereignty (Fieldhouse 1982:209–22). And even in those cases of resistance, they were localized along ethnic, tribal, or other lines and therefore were not seen by European powers as a major impediment to colonial control (Johnson 2003:86). The only exception here is Latin America, where nationalists had already overthrown Spanish rule by mid century. But this exception proves the rule: in Latin America, the British did what the United States did to postcolonial nations in the 20th century. Rather than establishing colonial control, the British engaged in *informal* imperialism precisely because British policymakers feared that local resistance would be too strong due to nationalist sentiment in the region (Knight 1999:129).

The fact that anti-colonial nationalism was not yet part of the global field had a second implication: except in regard to the exceptional case of Latin America, competition between Britain and her rivals could not take the form of struggles to win nationalist hearts and minds. Competition between military rivals in the 19th-century was structurally similar to that in the 20th century. The British feared the military power of Russia and France (and later Prussia) just as did the United States in the 20th. But as noted earlier, given the fact that so much of the 19th-century field consisted of "frontier" areas, core powers including the British had to directly seize new territory to contain the influence of rivals (e.g., the British took colonies to prevent Russian expansion during the mid century) (Doyle 1986:249–56; Hyam 2002:203–10). Geopolitical rivalry took the form of territorial competition. Winning the loyalty of peripheral peoples and using them to contain rivals necessitated ruling them directly. And as historians have suggested, if there was symbolic capital at all to be accrued, it was to be accrued by accumulating more colonies. Core powers attained "prestige" in the 19th century not by supporting nationalist movements (which did not exist anyway) but by having colonies and by "developing" them under their presumably benevolent hand (Doyle 1986:287; Hyam 1999:28–30, 2002:204). Different global fields thereby valorized different forms of symbolic capital.

CONCLUSION

This article has drawn upon Bourdieusian and organizational sociology to show that the difference between Britain's and America's imperial forms can best be explained by understanding the global fields in which the two states were embedded. First,

unlike the British in the 19th century, the United States entered a field populated fully by allied sovereigns and their respective empires. This provided the opportunity denied to England. Rather than having to construct its own formal empire after WWII, the United States used preexisting imperial networks to accrue economic and security capital. Second, unlike Britain, the United States entered a field wherein anti-colonial nationalism had proliferated around the globe. This changed the terms of geopolitical struggle. For Britain, containing the influence of rivals dictated establishing new colonies, thereby ruling colonial bodies and territory to maintain global support for its efforts. By contrast, with the new anti-colonial climate of the mid-to-late 20th century, warding off the threat of rivals demanded a different strategy. Containing the power of the U.S.S.R. could no longer be realized through maintaining territorial bulwarks—whether European or American—but rather by adopting an anti-colonial posture to win nationalist hearts and minds, using anti-colonial nationalism as symbolic capital. America's "special way" of empire has not been determined by America's internal characteristics but rather by the distinct structural configuration and cultural content of the global field in which it was embedded.

This is not to say that metropolitan or domestic factors are completely irrelevant for understanding state actions. The point, rather, is that it is dangerous to presume—as exceptionalism does—that national characteristics can be reduced to fixed, essential, unchanging "values" that unilaterally determine state action. It might be better to think of shifting and internally conflicted metropolitan "cultures." Second, when we do consider metropolitan factors such as domestic public opinion, they must be considered *relationally*. The point of a fields approach is to think of the "domestic" and the "foreign" as potentially interactive and mutually constitutive within a larger global series of relationships and connections. We might think of anti-imperial public opinion in the metropole in the 20th century, for instance, as a "heterodox" position that is connected to anti-colonial nationalism across the global field and, as NIR theory would suggest, to various "norm entrepenuers" (Bourdieu 1977:164–69).

As opposed to isolating domestic or metropolitan factors from the wider global arena, existing theories that already highlight the global arena as an important scale of determination offer a more fruitful entry. Yet theorizing the global arena as a *field* offers a synthetic approach that encapsulates the insights of existing approaches while also expanding them. Existing approaches emphasize either material structures or cultural structures of the world system, but a fields approach urges analysts to recognize that the global arena is constituted by both the objective configurations of positions and the cultural content of the "game." Conceptualizing the world arena as a field does not analytically privilege one dimension or the other *a priori*. Furthermore, more than a synthesis, a global fields approach offers an important supplement to existing approaches by highlighting dimensions and mechanisms as yet unspecified. While HWS defines the system in terms of a strict economic hierarchy of core-periphery (or a "world mode of production," international division of labor (Bergesen 1980), "world economy" or hegemon/nonhegemon (Wallerstein 2004)), a fields approach alerts us to other configurations; in this, the particular political ecology of recognized and unrecognized areas that traversed the global economic hierarchy. And in regard to existing cultural approaches, a fields approach highlights struggles for capitals and insists that *all* actors and not just weak latecomers are involved in such struggles; that core states are thus shaped by, rather than only being shapers of, global political culture; and examines not taken-for-granted models but strategies dependent upon the configuration and cultural content of the field. Finally, a fields approach highlights states' globally oriented struggles and strategies

and the convertibility of symbolic capital (rather than just "norms"). In short, a global fields approach offers added value to existing cultural approaches by stressing that all positions in the field are constrained by the field's cultural characteristics; that cultural models circulating in the field reshape the terms of strategic struggle in which even core states are involved; and that core states seek symbolic capital to legitimate and enhance their global position.

While this article has focused upon the British and American empires, the approach advanced here might help explain the imperial forms of other states. The United States, for instance, has not been the only state that has eschewed formal empire since WWII (Boswell 1989:182). This might have to do with the particular configuration and content of the current global field that has impacted *all* states, not just the United States. A fields approach might also be informative of future empires. It is hereby telling that as China currently penetrates Africa in search of raw materials, it is not doing so by direct colonization but by means much closer to informal imperialism (Pan 2007). Despite whatever differences there are in metropolitan cultures, dynamics, or political institutions between China and the United States, China is currently adopting the *same* mode of imperialism as the United States. A focus upon domestic characteristics would be unable to explain this similarity. An analysis of the particular configuration and cultural content of the current global field just might.

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