

Isles of Empire: The United States and Its Overseas Possessions



Isles of Empire examines the United States century-long rule of island possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific, revealing a venture of mixed idealism and exploitation, uplift and neglect, that has been shaped by underlying national ambivalence. These possessions rank as the worlds largest remaining territorial Empire, though it is rarely recognized as imperial. Peter C. Stuart points out that economic linkage to one of the worlds richest nations has left the inhabitants of these dependencies better off financially than most of their regional neighbors, but collectively, the poorest of Americans. Each of these islands exhibits advances in schooling, health, and sanitation; yet these advances hide behind overpopulation, environmental deterioration, and the Americanization of indigenous cultures. Through research in the United States and each of the dependencies, (Puerto Rico, United States Virgin Islands, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa) Stuart found the possessions to have gained much self-government, but remain locked in constitutional subordination. He brings many important questions to the surface about the capacity of the United States to govern others and the future of its external realm in a world increasingly hostile toward colonialist possessions.

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