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One Man and No Dog

An Entrepreneurial Theory of American Pacific Imperialism

Ronald Robinson, a distinguished historian of the British Empire, once said of the empire that it was "a gimcrack effort run by two men and a dog."[1] By this, Robinson meant that in instances of indirect rule, the administration of even the largest British possessions was undertaken by a tiny cadre of harried colonial administrators, where two men and their dog attempted to control the commercial and political activities of a peripheral area alone and without support. They were the "thin white line" governing Africa. This racially charged dynamic of a small group of white people trying to rule African or Asian people on behalf of a white foreign power characterized the imperial experience.

Nineteenth-century American Pacific imperialism was in many ways different from British imperialism. The British state outraced its investors into the Pacific. In the scramble for territory, British officials, usually the Royal Navy, signed treaties and agreements to establish protectorates in the region, many of which survived until the 1970s. There was often no substantial preexisting British commercial interest in these territories; no plantations or mines to protect. Due, in part, to their limited economic potential and marginal strategic significance, there was often no official British presence on many of these islands and next to no commercial impact. The thin white line was composed of government officials, who often administered affairs from neighboring islands.[2]

[1] Quoted in A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, "The Thin White Line: The Size of the British Colonial Service in Africa," *African Affairs* 79, no. 314 (1980): 26.

[2] Barrie Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire: Towards a History of Kiribati and Tuvalu* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 2001). For complications to this account, see Michael Goldsmith, "Missionaries and Other Emissaries of Colonialism in Tuvalu," *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 128, no. 4 (2019): 457–74. These issues are discussed at more length in Chapter 5.

Unlike the British, American investors and plantation owners preceded the state into the Pacific. Until the Spanish-American War, the state had never advanced to new areas that had not seen American entrepreneurs arrive and set up businesses first. For most of the nineteenth century, the American "thin white line" in the Pacific was made up of plantation owners and miners, instead of government officials. Like the British line, the daily life of Pacific Islands where American entrepreneurs set up shop was characterized by a small group of white people, mostly men, meddling in island affairs and attempting to rule Pacific peoples.

The central argument of this book is that these entrepreneurs affected the timing, scope, and duration of American Pacific imperialism. In every instance in which the United States later annexed territory – until and sometimes even after the Spanish-American War – these entrepreneurs worked hard to lobby the US government to entangle itself in local disputes in Pacific Islands. We present an economic theory of American imperialism that focuses on smaller business interests and how they affected American expansion in the Pacific in the middle of the nineteenth century, setting the stage for formal imperialism and later annexation. In the chapters that follow, we trace how these business interests influenced the American government to expand in places that in nineteenth-century eyes had no great strategic or economic import.

The conventional wisdom usually posits that these small-scale investors should have no influence on the workings of empires. Most economic theories of imperialism emphasize a British model, showing how powerful interests drove expansion. John Hobson, for example, believed the British public and most industries did not profit from empire; the amount of trade was too small to justify the economic and social costs. The financial elite, however, profited substantially by making loans on the periphery.[3] These financial elites won the war in the press, inciting the public to clamor for empire. Earlier twentieth-century Marxists and Liberals disagreed about who profited – whether it was big banks, exporters, the military, or entrenched India civil service – but they agreed that some powerful interest drove the British empire into Africa and Asia.[4] More modern work focuses on "gentlemanly capitalism," where powerful agents within British society, such as the landed aristocracy or service sector, drove imperialism.[5] In every instance, powerful financial interests have influence because they control, directly or indirectly, the affairs of state through

[3] Hobson, *Imperialism*.

[4] V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1985).

[5] P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I. The Old Colonial System, 1688–1850," *The Economic History Review* 39, no. 4 (1986): 501–25; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850–1945," *The Economic History Review* 40, no. 1 (1987): 1–26.

their size and ability to control public opinion. In the 1960s, American historians in the Wisconsin School adopted this approach as an explanation for American imperialism, especially in the Pacific, focusing on how powerful American interests wanted to expand to find markets for American products.[6]

This chapter presents a different vision of the economic origins of the American empire in the Pacific. Substantial economic interests did not push for most of the US acquisitions. This is unsurprising when you review the holdings described in the introduction. Unlike in Africa and India, there was no large market to secure, railroads to build, or existing colonial service to lobby for continued influence. The markets between China and the United States were very small, especially compared to the intense growth of the population and urban centers in the continental United States. Viewed geographically, they were small dots on the Pacific map. They were closer to a one-man-and-no-dog company than the powerful juggernauts of finance or trade described in much of the imperialism literature.

Our argument is that these smaller players sparked a wave of American imperialism in the Pacific long before the Spanish-American War. Chasing rising commodity prices, they spread out across the Pacific. When their profits were threatened, they lobbied for US protection. We develop this argument in three steps. In the first section, we explain why rising commodity prices disproportionately affected American entrepreneurs, leading them to enter the Pacific. In the second section, we describe how threats to their profits led them to clamor for the US government to exercise political and economic control over the territories in which they extracted or cultivated commodities. Finally, we explain the strategies entrepreneurs used and advantages they had in lobbying for US imperial entanglements.

1.1 AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURS, RISING COMMODITY PRICES, AND THE RACE TO THE PACIFIC

The central argument of this book is that the scale, timing, and place of American imperialism in the twentieth century largely followed an agenda put in place by American entrepreneurs reacting to nineteenth-century economic incentives. In making this argument, we first need to develop an account that explains why American entrepreneurs went abroad, why they located where they did, and how they are different from European entrepreneurs. This section describes the economic incentives driving entrepreneurs' decisions as a function of commodity price change and the lack of existing imperial holdings. We refer to this as the *price mechanism* because the central argument is that changing prices determined when and where imperialism would occur.

[6] LaFeber, *The New Empire*. See also for non-economic actors, Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

1.1.1 Europe, Existing Colonies, and Large Investors

Scholars of imperialism have long noted the importance of raw materials in explaining patterns of empire. One important economic fact about empire is that it provided metropoles with commodities that were not naturally abundant at home. For example, British colonies grew the tea, sugar, and tobacco enjoyed by consumers in London, and the cotton, rubber, and other valuable raw materials necessary for manufacturing in the metropole. We first describe the differences between the late nineteenth-century American and European experiences with raw materials, especially those grown in tropical regions. We show these differences made American entrepreneurs especially likely to search abroad for new sources of production when commodity prices changed.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, many European powers competed with one another to acquire territory in the periphery. The most famous example of this competition is the scramble for Africa. European empires competed fiercely for territory, dividing the overwhelming majority of Africa between them. This was a state-led process. The imperial lobby depended on the state to first secure territory before economic interests could advance into it.[7] This created the "imperialism of free trade": European states raced to gain new territories for security and economic reasons, using free trade as an informal tool to promote influence whenever possible.[8] The scramble for Africa is the most famous case, but the same process was playing out across the world, including in the Pacific.[9]

The creation of large European empires with substantial tropical holdings – the territories in the Pacific were added to imperial holdings in the Caribbean and elsewhere – at first meant, there was limited preimperial commercial activity. The scramble for Africa again provides the clearest example. When European states entered Africa, they first sought to elbow out other European states by forming trade agreements with local governments; only afterward did they spend much time thinking about the economic value of the territory they acquired. Germany provides an instructive example. It entered Africa determined to obtain its "place in the sun" amid more established European empires.[10] It acquired German East Africa without a clear idea of what crops

[7] Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876–1912* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991); Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*.

[8] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 1–15; Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*.

[9] Lorenz Gonschor, "Political Developments in the Pacific Islands in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, ed. Anne Perez Hattori and Jane Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 423–49; Charles Stephenson, *Germany's Asia-Pacific Empire: Colonialism and Naval Policy, 1885–1914* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009): 1–16.

[10] Arne Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism, 1856–1918: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004). On conflicting accounts of motives, see Joslyn Barnhart, "Status

might be grown there; after acquisition, Germany had to experiment with different crops to see how they might profit from their colonies.[11] In short, European empires often had unprofitable holdings in tropical regions.[12]

Commodity booms therefore tended to lead to investments in existing colonies. European empires were well positioned to take advantage of rises in prices. When commodity prices rose, the primary response by European investors was to diversify production in existing imperial possessions when possible. For example, when rubber prices skyrocketed during the mid-nineteenth century or during the Second World War, British and German companies extracted commodities from existing colonies, such as Benin or German Cameroon.[13] Similarly, when the price of cotton rose in Europe during the American Civil War and in the early twentieth century, European investors sought alternative sources in Africa and Asia.[14] Their large holdings made European empires less reactive to commodity price changes as the diversification of production could make existing holdings profitable. Entrepreneurs associated with European empires could start plantations or look for mining rights in locations where their government had preexisting claims. These entrepreneurs could count on imperial protection to secure their property and promote trade.

The European experience also foregrounded large economic interest groups. The enormous size of European holdings – India, for example – meant production in the periphery significantly affected European economies. There were also large opportunities to invest abroad, given the size of these colonies. Larger economic interests, such as manufacturers and finance, thus had incentives to press for certain kinds of imperial policies. Most discussions of imperialism focus on these large interests. Historical discussions, such as Hobson, Lenin, and Schumpeter, concentrate on the ruling class, banks, and similar broad

Competition and Territorial Aggression: Evidence from the Scramble for Africa," *Security Studies* 25, no. 3 (2016): 385–419; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Bismarck's Imperialism 1862–1890," *Past & Present*, no. 48 (1970): 119–55; Baranowski, *Nazi Empire*; Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism, 1856–1918*; John Anthony Pella, "World Society, International Society and the Colonization of Africa," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 28, no. 2 (2015): 210–28.

[11] Andrew Zimmerman, "'What Do You Really Want in German East Africa, Herr Professor?' Counterinsurgency and the Science Effect in Colonial Tanzania," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 2 (2006): 425–27.

[12] Earlier forms of empire, such as the British in North America, saw the creation of commercial projects at the same moment as the creation of empire, such as the Virginia Company. Later scrambles, such as in Africa, saw commerce follow the flag.

[13] James Fenske, "The Battle for Rubber in Benin," *The Economic History Review* 67, no. 4 (2014): 1012–34; Tristan Oestermann and Peter Geschiere, "Coercion or Trade?: Multiple Self-Realization during the Rubber Boom in German Kamerun (1899–1913)," in *The Political Economy of Everyday Life in Africa*, ed. Wale Adebanwi (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 92–114.

[14] Jonathan E. Robins, *Cotton and Race across the Atlantic: Britain, Africa, and America, 1900–1920* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2016).

groups.[15] More recent work emphasizes British landed wealth,[16] and some point to powerful economic interests on the British periphery, like major South African diamond and gold producers.[17] Despite disagreement over who was primarily responsible for imperialism, all agree that powerful economic groups were the driving force.

In sum, theories of empire set in a European context emphasize a state-led process where territory is first acquired by the state and then later made profitable. The animating factor in making these territories profitable is often (but certainly not always) credited to powerful economic interests. Empire was a big business.[18]

1.1.2 American Small Entrepreneurs

The United States was an upside-down British Empire. First, the United States was primarily an agrarian economy; it did not transition toward private finance and industrial production until the late 1870s.[19] This meant there was no need to search for markets for a growing volume of industrial goods. Nor were large, capital-intensive corporations yet present to fund expensive colonial projects, as they did for Britain during the nineteenth century.[20] Instead, as America's westward expansion shows, the primary imperial agents were often small-scale farmers who exhausted their life savings in search of land to grow crops. The growth of the United States also provided ample markets for investment.

[15] Hobson, *Imperialism*; Lenin, *Imperialism*; Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, trans. Heinz Nordem (New York: August M. Kelly, 1951).

[16] Cain and Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I"; Cain and Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II."

[17] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*.

[18] There were exceptions to this trend, such as the Royal Niger Company. John M. Carland, "Enterprise and Empire: Officials, Entrepreneurs, and the Search for Petroleum in Southern Nigeria, 1906–1914," *The International History Review* 4, no. 2 (1982): 191–206. The dominant pattern however was state-led.

[19] Richard Franklin Bensel, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David R. Meyer, *The Roots of American Industrialization* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Stephen N. Broadberry, "How Did the United States and Germany Overtake Britain? A Sectoral Analysis of Comparative Productivity Levels, 1870–1990," *The Journal of Economic History* 58, no. 2 (1998): 375–407.

[20] Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *The Visible Hand* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). On the rise of big business in the United States, see Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865–1896* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: Third Edition* (NYU Press, 1993); Leon Fink, *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). On the role of corporations in European imperialism, see Andrew Phillips and J. C. Sharman, *Outsourcing Empire: How Company-States Made the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Population growth in places such as Columbus, Chicago, and San Francisco provided new markets and economic opportunities for American investors and manufacturers (see Chapter 5). The American economy was fundamentally different from European economies.

Furthermore, there were no preexisting American territories in which US entrepreneurs could establish new enterprises when commodity prices rose, especially when those commodities were rooted in tropical countries. When commodity prices rose in copra or guano, American entrepreneurs could not go to an existing territory to diversify production. Entrepreneurs needed to set up shop in new locations. This was a byproduct of the United States not having a state-led empire in the nineteenth century. It changes the opportunity landscape for entrepreneurs.

These dual economic issues – an agricultural economy with growing domestic markets and limited tropical holdings – created a unique situation for nineteenth-century American entrepreneurs. The fate of the American economy did not rest in the hands of its investments abroad in the same way as the British economy relied on India. We therefore expect the US government to be indifferent to imperialism. There was no political or economic pressure toward imperialism: There was no incentive for a state-led process.

Yet, there were profits for entrepreneurs who were willing to travel abroad into the Pacific. Commodity booms and busts still occurred in the United States. Booms in fertilizers, oils, and sweeteners, for example, were common in the nineteenth century. When commodity prices rose, American entrepreneurs had incentives to look for new territory. Large businesses, as we explain later, were unlikely to capitalize on these opportunities due to limits in labor and land. But for individuals with limited economic opportunities, the lure of hot commodities and cheap land and labor provided significant incentives for them to move abroad.

1.1.3 Explaining the Timing and Location of Entrepreneur Decisions

Entrepreneur-led economic expansion saw investors, not the flag, chase higher commodity prices across the Pacific. We have explained how the structure of the American economy led small American investors to look abroad to make profits in booming tropical commodities. This section makes two arguments. First, cycles of commodity booms explain the timing and location of American investments abroad. Second, small enterprises have special advantages that make relocation feasible. We refer to this process by which commodity prices determined where and when imperialism eventually occurred as the *price mechanism*.

The nineteenth century was a period of commodity price booms and busts. Restrictions on supply often led commodity prices to rise. The American Civil War, for example, reduced the supply of cotton, leading to increases in global cotton prices. Demand also often changed. The emergence of new techniques for creating high-quality oil from copra, for example, enhanced demand for copra, causing prices to rise.[21] Price rises could be dramatic, and price volatility was common.[22]

Two important sources of variation in prices affected entrepreneurs' decisions about when and where to relocate abroad. First, the timing of commodity price rises varied. Guano and sandalwood prices boomed before the American Civil War, cotton prices during the war, and copra prices rose later. Second, the location of commodities varied across the Pacific. Different islands contained different endowments of commodities. For example, some islands contained substantial mineral wealth, whereas others were ideal for planting crops.

These two aspects of the price mechanism explain when and where entrepreneurs located abroad. The timing of commodity price rises conditions when investors look abroad, and the location of commodities explains where they move. This is represented in Figure 1.1, which depicts two ideal-typical boom-and-bust cycles for two different commodities. When commodity 1's prices are rising, we anticipate entrepreneurs enter foreign territories at specific times and specific places; entrepreneurs will locate to islands abundant in that commodity. When commodity 2's prices are rising, we expect the same pattern but at a different time and place. Investments should not occur during periods of sharp price declines. Entrepreneurs should thus move abroad in waves, chasing different commodities, and not at a single moment in time. This pattern, we will show, is easily observable.

The price mechanism has important implications for the scale and scope of American empire. Recall that state-led empires usually stake claims to territory first and then determine how to make the territory profitable. The focus was on gaining land, and large contiguous areas were prized. This is not the logic guiding entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are opportunistic and picky about their investments. They locate only where they perceive profits are most likely. The price mechanism therefore predicts the empire may appear disorganized if inspected visually: Entrepreneurs likely passed over islands or entire regions where profits were not readily apparent. The price mechanism also indicates that expansion will occur over a long period. There was no single entrepreneurial rush to the Pacific; instead, as commodity prices rose and fell, the American commercial presence ebbed and flowed.

Small-scale entrepreneurs were the most likely to react to the incentives produced by the price mechanism. First, the small size of many islands or island chains did not permit large corporations to achieve economies of scale. Limits to land and labor provided natural constraints on the size of operations. More

[21] These episodes are analyzed in more detail later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters.

[22] David S. Jacks, Kevin H. O'Rourke, and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Commodity Price Volatility and World Market Integration since 1700," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 93, no. 3 (2011): 800–813.

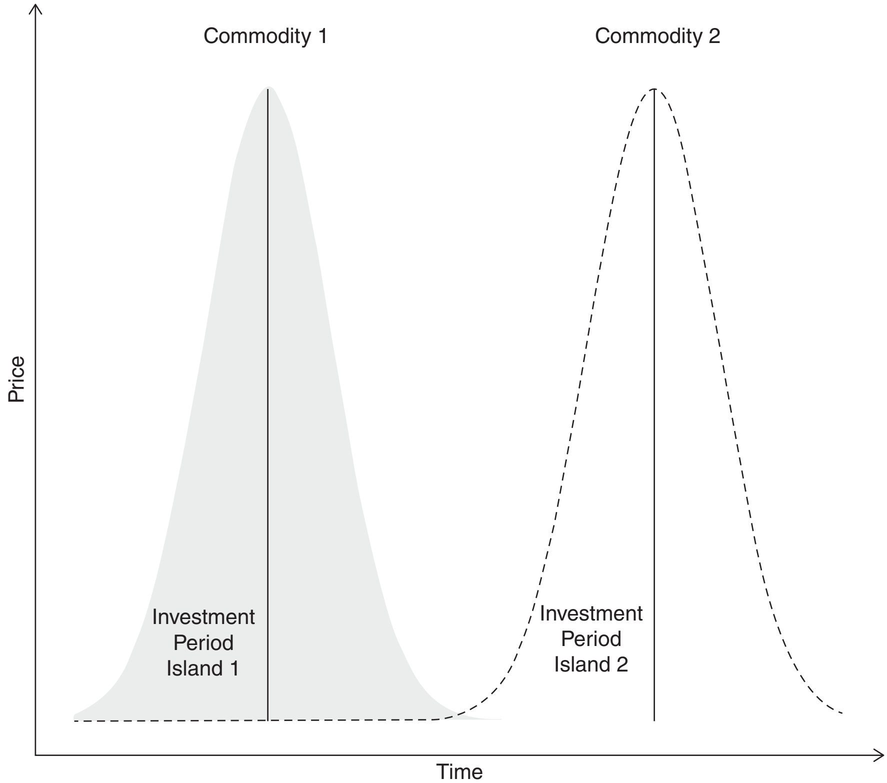

FIGURE 1.1 Prices as an incentive for investment.

importantly, identifying locations where enterprises could be successfully founded was difficult for many continentals. Identifying areas of opportunity required understanding the geography of the Pacific, whether a local government would be receptive to investment, whether there was an available labor supply, and other aspects of the political economy of specific islands. Most continental Americans lacked detailed knowledge of the Pacific. This kind of local knowledge was usually held by agents without substantial economic authority, such as beachcombers, missionaries' children, people working on ships, traders, or blackbirders (slavers).[23] We expect these peripheral agents

[23] On the influence of beachcombers, see H. E. Maude, "Beachcombers and Castaways," *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 73, no. 3 (1964): 254–93; Thomas Bargatzky, "Beachcombers and Castaways as Innovators," *The Journal of Pacific History* 15, no. 2 (1980): 93–102. On blackbirders, see Gerald Horne, *The White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas after the Civil War* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007). Other examples are discussed at greater length in the chapters to follow.

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played a critical role in setting up the first US economic interests on the islands.[24]

In sum, American entrepreneurs were especially reactive to commodity price changes in the nineteenth century because of the structure of the American economy. These price changes produced strong incentives for Americans to locate abroad and, we predict, influenced where and when they moved. The rest of this chapter explains their political importance.

1.2 THREATS TO PROFITS AND THE DRIVE TOWARD IMPERIALISM

The price mechanism captures the incentives that changes in commodity prices provided to small nineteenth-century American entrepreneurs. The *threat mechanism* explains why entrepreneurs favored American imperialism. The historical record is clear on this point. America's Pacific entrepreneurs often painted islands as "El Dorados" for the government, press, and public.[25] They pressed for imperialism, exerting pressure at home and abroad to secure protection for their enterprises. In short, they formed what we call "imperial lobbies."

This section describes the conditions under which entrepreneurs formed imperial lobbies. We argue this was a function of entrepreneurs' expectations for future profit. Entrepreneurs often faced threats to their profits – by foreign competition, their host government, or falling commodity prices – that they could not beat back alone. When these threats surfaced, they often looked to the United States to help them secure their interests. The threat mechanism links the type of commodity to the timing of the formation of imperial lobbies. The nature of some extractive commodities – like diamonds or gold – require immediate protection from home governments. These commodities produce immediate, high-stake threats that require protection. Other commodities – usually agricultural commodities – see delays in demands for protection. Economic threats materialize later and owe to different sources.

1.2.1 Extractive Commodities

We first discuss extractive commodities. Extractive commodities are naturally produced and are usually finite in supply. For example, oil and gold are extractive; they are produced slowly by nature, and once an oil or gold deposit is gone, it will not return (at least for a long time). In the nineteenth-century

[24] This argument about local knowledge is similar to the argument for social skill in Eric Grynaviski, *America's Middlemen: Power at the Edge of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[25] The term "El Dorado" is borrowed from Snyder, *Myths of Empire*. This is the subject of the next section.

Pacific, the primary extractive commodity was guano, as described in Chapter 2.

Many scholars think about the California gold rush as the paradigm of nineteenth-century extractive rushes. But the California gold rush was fundamentally different from the rushes characteristic of the Pacific. We therefore begin by distinguishing between two different kinds of extractive commodity rushes in the nineteenth century: rushes prompted by discovery and rushes prompted by price increases. Each type of commodity rush has different implications for the threats to entrepreneurs' interests and therefore to the likelihood of imperialism. Rushes of discovery – such as the gold rush – lead to an intensification, but not geographic expansion, of imperialism. Rushes driven by price increases, more characteristic of the Pacific, lead to the creation of imperial lobbies favoring the geographic expansion of imperialism, which is the primary dependent variable in this book.

Most of the famous cases of extractive commodities in the imperial era – diamonds and gold, for example – follow a familiar pattern where *discovery* of a mine or deposit leads a rush of entrepreneurs into a region. For example, when diamonds were discovered in South Africa, entrepreneurs rushed in. Within a year, thousands of prospectors were searching for diamonds.[26] The central characteristic of these rushes – like the gold rush in California – is that a process of discovery leads small entrepreneurs to stake claims in the hopes of getting rich.[27]

The extractive commodities present in the Pacific – especially the South Seas – were different because *price changes,* rather than discovery, led to rushes. The extractive commodities present in the Pacific varied sharply in price. When prices increased for an extractive commodity, entrepreneurs rushed abroad. Australian sandalwood traders show how a price change can drive a rush. Sandalwood was a valuable commodity for the China trade because it was one of the few goods – besides opium – that might be traded in exchange for tea,[28] but its value varied sharply during the nineteenth century. Studies of

[26] William H. Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867–1895* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987). One contemporary said that "rushing was the order of the day," as the diamond rush in South Africa was a set of rushes. The first was to the river where the diamonds were discovered. Then small prospectors rushed to the diamond fields where bigger finds were made. Finally, the British government rushed to acquire the land from the Orange Free State. William James Morton, *South African Diamond Fields: And the Journey to the Mines* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1877).

[27] The link of new finds and a rush is common and includes modern cases. See Tinashe Nyamunda and Patience Mukwambo, "The State and the Bloody Diamond Rush in Chiadzwa: Unpacking the Contesting Interests in the Development of Illicit Mining and Trading, c.2006–2009," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38, no. 1 (2012): 145–66.

[28] It was an extractive commodity because the only valuable wood came from mature trees. Modern studies have found that the oil that makes sandalwood valuable requires 25–100 years. See Jonathan E. Brand and Grant M. Pronk, "Influence of Age on Sandalwood (*Santalum*

Australian sandalwooders find that entrepreneurs reacted to price spikes in China by rushing to islands containing sandalwood in the Pacific; when prices fell, they remained at home.[29] Sandalwood rushes therefore occurred when prices changed, rather than when new "finds" were discovered.[30]

The primary threat for entrepreneurs interested in mining extractive commodities is competition. The difference between rushes driven by price change and rushes driven by discovery is important for thinking about the kinds of competition entrepreneurs might face. Discoveries were usually made in or near an empire's territory. Diamonds were discovered near territory claimed by the British Empire, and gold was discovered in California. The primary threat for entrepreneurs working diamond mines was competition from conationals, not other empires.[31] Since an empire already had control of the territory, property was secure from foreign competition; a discovery only produced intraimperial competition, such as shoot-outs by American gold diggers. This means extractive resource rushes driven by discovery usually do not lead to significant new acts of imperialism as the location of the find is usually on territory already held by the state or empire.

The threat to entrepreneurs' profits is different when price changes are the source of the rush. Rushes driven by price changes often led entrepreneurs into new parts of the world that had not been claimed. The United States was not the only country plying the waters of the Pacific. The French, British, Peruvians, Germans, Hawaiians, and others were also searching for favorable opportunities to extract resources. If another state annexed a territory, US entrepreneurs might be excluded from working the claim. Formerly worthless islands could become flashpoints in imperial competition as entrepreneurs from several states

spicatum) Oil Content within Different Wood Grades from Five Plantations in Western Australia," *Australian Forestry* 74, no. 2 (2011): 141–48; K. Lingard and M. Perry, "An Assessment of the Regulatory Framework of the Western Australian Sandalwood Industry," *Australian Forestry* 81, no. 2 (2018): 89–101. Only recently have large sandalwood plantations begun to open, especially in Western Australia.

29 Dorothy Shineberg, *The Came for Sandalwood: A Study of the Sandalwood Trade in the South-West Pacific, 1830–1865* (London: Melbourne University Press, 1967), 68–81; Pamela Statham, "The Sandalwood Industry in Australia: A History," in *Proceedings of the Symposium on Sandalwood in the Pacific; April 9–11, 1990* (Berkeley, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, 1990), 26–38.

30 Price increases continue to encourage investments in small or artisanal mines. See Timothy Laing, "Small Man Goes Where the Large Fears to Tread: Mining in Guyana: 1990–2018," *Resources Policy* 63 (2019): 5; Jacopo Seccatore et al., "An Estimation of the Artisanal Small-Scale Production of Gold in the World," *Science of The Total Environment* 496 (2014): 662–67; Daniel Tubb, "Muddy Decisions: Gold in the Chocó, Colombia," *The Extractive Industries and Society* 2, no. 4 (2015): 722–33.

31 This is also likely one reason why existing economic accounts of the origins of imperialism do not emphasize extractive commodities.

raced to secure holdings. International competition, therefore, was the primary threat entrepreneurs faced when working extractive commodity claims.[32]

The lurking threat of imperial competition shaped the formation of imperial lobbies, because annexation or expansion provided the most reliable means to protect their enterprises. When entrepreneurs perceived that deposits they wanted to mine might be seized by foreign competition, they lobbied for acquisition of the territory.[33] If their government formally acquired the island, it would provide several benefits. First, it prevented foreign governments from acquiring the same territory and thereby ensured the entrepreneur access to the find. In addition, if the US formally acquired an island, then imports from the island were not subject to tariffs, further increasing potential profits.

The threat of international competition for extractive commodities shaped the timing of the formation of imperial lobbies. Lobbies for imperialism in islands focused on cultivated commodities, as we show in the next section, often formed a decade or more after an enterprise was set up. Extractive commodities, however, saw the lobby form almost immediately. If foreign competition is a threat, then entrepreneurs are unlikely to wait to lobby for protection. Waiting would risk their capital investments. Instead, these entrepreneurs demand protection simultaneous to or before making capital investments in the technology or labor necessary for extraction.[34]

[32] Miles M. Evers, "Discovering the Prize: Information, Lobbying, and the Origins of U.S.-Saudi Security Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 29, no. 1 (2023): 104–28; David A. Lake, "Economic Openness and Great Power Competition: Lessons for China and the United States," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 11, no. 3 (2018): 237–70. For example, the desire to control supply and profits has driven competition over oil in the Arctic and Central Asia. See Jonathan N. Markowitz, *Perils of Plenty: Arctic Resource Competition and the Return of the Great Game* (Oxford University Press, 2020); Omar S. Bashir, "The Great Games Never Played: Explaining Variation in International Competition over Energy," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 2, no. 4 (2017): 288–306.

[33] A second strategy is secrecy. Commodity traders may try to keep the location and value of a deposit secret. In the South Seas context, this was difficult. Not only did it require complete secrecy by an entire crew (which was historically difficult to accomplish), but it was inapplicable to commodities such as guano, which were visible to passing ships.

[34] In some instances, price changes prompt discovery. This is historically important but it is beyond the scope of our theoretical arguments. In Chapter 2, we describe cases where the rising price of guano leads to expeditions of discovery. In these cases, the logic resembles that of price rushes: the need to protect new holdings leads to immediate threats. This resembles the British experience on the African Gold Coast. In the late nineteenth century, British investors sought the rights to mine gold within the Asante Empire. Like the entrepreneurs we describe in the Pacific, British entrepreneurs raced ahead of the empire to gain control of the gold mines. Fearing competition from French and German investors, the British Empire fought the Asante Empire to gain control over the future Ashanti Crown Colony. This is consistent with our argument: foreign competition meant the need for acquisition, similar to the cases described in this chapter. Raymond E. Dumett, "Edwin Cade and Frederick Gordon: British Imperialism and the Foundations of the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, West Africa," in *Mining Tycoons in the Age of Empire, 1870–1945: Entrepreneurship, High Finance and Territorial Expansion*, ed. Raymond E. Dumett (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 63–82; W. E. F. Ward, "Britain and Ashanti,

1.2.2 Cultivated Commodities

Cultivated commodities were the second type of commodity important to Pacific imperialism. The most common examples were linchpins for the American economy, such as corn, cotton, sugar, and tobacco. These agricultural commodities were the dominant kind of commodity imported by metropoles in the nineteenth century. This section describes three features of cultivated commodities relevant to the creation of imperial lobbies. First, due to several selection effects, entrepreneurs do not immediately form lobbies, as in the case of extractive commodities, because they only move to areas where they expect low or no competition, a favorable local government, and good land and labor conditions. Second, entrepreneurs often have more available options. They can try to secure protection from a host government or another imperial power, attempt to relocate, or pursue other strategies. Third, a range of exogenous shocks often overcome entrepreneurs' ability to cope with threats to profits, driving the creation of imperial lobbies.

One important difference between extractive and cultivated commodities is entrepreneurs' ability to choose the location for investment. Extractive commodities are usually fixed to a specific set of islands or even a single island. Cultivated commodities, however, can often be grown in different locations. For example, one might grow cotton or coffee on several prospective islands, such as Fiji, Hawaii, or Samoa. Another important difference between extractive and cultivated commodities is entrepreneurs' ability to finance their investment. Both types of commodities require an initial investment to pay for equipment and labor, but investments in cultivated commodities can be paid off over many more years. Plants regrow, and entrepreneurs often use the profits from the previous season to finance production in the next. These differences, we posit, are essential for thinking about different pathways to American imperialism in the Pacific.

We expect the political and economic climate to initially be beneficial to entrepreneurs in their host community due to two selection effects. First, we expect entrepreneurs to select islands with a favorable political and economic climate to do business. If the political and economic barriers were too high, they would select another island. In some cases, they may also choose to invest in domestic production at home. Second, if the environment was hostile, we do not expect the farm or plantation to survive its first months or years. If the host government refuses to cooperate – by threatening entrepreneurs' security, refusing a workforce for labor, or otherwise dooming the enterprise – the entrepreneur will never develop a robust interest in the location. These selection

1874–1896," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 15, no. 2 (1974): 131–64. On competition in the region, see Gallagher and Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," 166–175?; C. W. Newbury and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, "French Policy and the Origins of the Scramble for West Africa," *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 2 (1969): 253–76.

effects mean entrepreneurs are unlikely to immediately agitate for imperial control of the territory. The favorable initial climate provides expectation of profit. This is, after all, why they chose their location in the first place.

Moreover, entrepreneurs often have additional strategies available to resolve threats to profits in these early years. Once entrepreneurs establish themselves, they begin to cultivate ties to the host government, hoping to influence the host government and create a climate more favorable for their ventures, including better land deals, protection from competitors, or security against encroachment on their claims. We refer to this as the cultivation phase as the entrepreneur cultivates ties with the host government. The cultivation phase may take several forms, including but not limited to advocating for favorable laws related to land and labor, supporting native allies for important government positions, and attempting to place entrepreneurs directly into positions of power. This cultivation period often signals the beginning of imperial entanglements as American settlers on the islands enmesh themselves into island politics to fend off threats to enterprise.

If entrepreneurs face threats to their profits that these strategies cannot address – for example, the emergence of a new international competitor, a global decline in prices, or the emergence of a hostile faction in the government – then we expect them to lobby for protection. These threats are exogenous to the theory. However, most enterprises likely faced these threats due to global economic cycles and the instability of indigenous governments during the nineteenth century. We expect entrepreneurs will begin to lobby the United States for protection at these moments. Annexation had numerous advantages for these small producers: It would eliminate tariffs on exports to the United States, provide protection from foreign competitors and native governments perceived as hostile to the entrepreneurs' interests, and increase the availability of external financing.

In sum, the crucial difference between extractive and cultivated commodities is the timing of the formation of the lobby. Different kinds of commodities will produce calls for protection, and therefore imperialism, at different moments in the lifecycle of an enterprise. Whereas capital intensive mining operations will see immediate calls for protection, we expect plantations to move more slowly.

The threat mechanism and its implications for the timing of imperial lobbies is essential for rethinking the history of American empire. The conventional wisdom described in the introduction paints a picture of a single lobby forming at a single moment in time. The threat mechanism presents a very different picture. There was no "imperial lobby" but instead many "imperial lobbies." Because each threat is specific to an entrepreneur or an island, lobbying is also specific to the island. There were, in short, a Samoa lobby, a Hawaii lobby, and a guano lobby. There was also no single imperial moment. These threats materialized at dramatically different periods. We therefore expect to see imperial moments occurring throughout the nineteenth century. In the place of 1898 as the marker of empire, we point to a series of dates – 1856, 1874, and

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1889 – as key moments where imperial lobbies had a decisive influence on the trajectory of American imperialism.

1.3 AGITATING FOR ANNEXATION

Thus far, we have argued that the rise and fall of commodity prices affected where and when entrepreneurs located in the Pacific. When threatened, entrepreneurs formed imperial lobbies, pressing the American government for imperialism. This book demonstrates a perhaps surprising success rate for these lobbies. They often had their way. IR scholars might wonder why. How did a plantation owner, Hawaiian sugar company executive, or guano zealot convince the US government to protect their interests through imperial policies such as annexation or the use of force?

Political scientists usually overlook entrepreneurs' lobbying efforts as an explanatory factor explaining imperialism. Recall that the conventional wisdom finds that large economic interests drive sustained interest in imperialism. In the American historical context, the imperial lobby most political scientists concentrate on is set in 1898 and 1899, when public opinion and elite interests pressured the Senate and White House to adopt imperial policies. Yet, expansion in the absence of major lobbies was common. Nicholas Anderson refers to this as "inadvertent expansion" as agents in the periphery – not the core – drove expansionist politics.[35]

We describe the way lobbyists secured their interests from the US government as the *lobbying mechanism*. This relies on a positional theory of lobbying to explain entrepreneurs' influence. We develop the argument in two steps. The first section explores the conventional wisdom about American foreign policy, empire, and the formation of lobbies pressing for imperialism in the mid- to late 1890s. We describe these lobbies to demonstrate that entrepreneurs – without access to traditional sources of business power – could not rely on public opinion or domestic business interests to press for imperialism. The second section provides a *positional theory* that describes resources available to entrepreneurs owing to their position between societies, showing direct and indirect pathways by which they secured the US government's attention.

1.3.1 Lobbying in Nineteenth-Century America

In 1898, large segments of American society began to support imperialism. William Sumner, an early political scientist, lamented that every segment of American society – "the press, the platform, and the pulpit," as well as "the university also" – pressed the US government for imperial expansion, especially

[35] Nicholas D. Anderson, "Push and Pull on the Periphery: Inadvertent Expansion in World Politics," *International Security* 47, no. 3 (2023): 136–73.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009396356.002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the Philippines.[36] Substantial attention has rightly been paid to the crucial debates during and after the Spanish-American War between the imperialists and antiimperialists in the Senate.[37] Due to the inordinate attention on 1898 in the historical and IR scholarship, this section begins there. We distinguish the lobbies formed by small entrepreneurs in the Pacific from this larger, later-emerging lobby.

When IR scholars or historians of American imperialism consider imperial lobbies, they likely have the 1898 model in mind. Broad segments of American society were agitating for imperialism. Especially after the sinking of the *Maine,* the press and public began to demand a war with Spain.[38] After the war, they pressured the government to adopt imperial policies.[39] Public opinion was not the only factor. Major trade interests formed. There was the beginning of a logic to American holdings, connecting the China trade to the canal to the Caribbean islands necessary to connect the east coast to Asia.[40] The US Navy also wanted to expand, as we discuss in the Conclusion to this book. The situation for imperial lobbyists in 1898 was therefore very favorable. Diverse interests supported expansion, and public opinion supported their views. If American Pacific expansion *began* in the late 1890s, then expansion would be less puzzling because of the presence of a popular and well-resourced imperial lobby. However, if we examine imperialism before the 1890s, we need a different account. Specifically, a theory of lobbying before the 1890s needs to

[36] William Graham Sumner, "The Conquest of the United States by Spain," *Yale Law Journal* 8, no. 4 (1899): 171.

[37] Robert Beisner, *Twelve against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898–1900* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); E. Berkeley Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate, 1890–1920* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970); Taesuh Cha, "Republic or Empire: The Genealogy of the Anti-Imperial Tradition in US Politics," *International Politics* 56, no. 1 (2019): 33–48; Michael Patrick Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism: 1898–1909* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[38] For modern treatments of the media question, see John Maxwell Hamilton et al., "An Enabling Environment," *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 1 (2006): 78–93; Louis A. Pérez, "The Meaning of the Maine: Causation and the Historiography of the Spanish-American War," *Pacific Historical Review* 58, no. 3 (1989): 293–322.

[39] David Trask, in his seminal history of the Spanish-American War, describes how McKinley toured the country during the war. At each stop, he took the crowd's temperature. He began by making cautious statements – the United States should not become an empire – and the crowds were lukewarm. As he moved from city to city, he began to embrace more imperial rhetoric, and the crowds became increasingly enthusiastic. By the end of the tour, according to Trask, McKinley had turned from an anti-imperialist into an imperialist. Trask concludes the United States acquired the Philippines even though, "the pacific President [McKinley], cautious to the core, genuinely opposed overseas expansion. He accepted it eventually because over time, given the state of public opinion, he could divine no safe alternative." David F. Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* (New York: Free Press, 1981), 454–55.

[40] Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire.*

recognize that several strategies and resources available to imperialists in 1899 were not open to imperialists in earlier periods.

Before 1899, entrepreneurs had substantially different economic and social positions in society, leaving them unable to pull the same levers of power as imperial lobbies in later periods. First, American entrepreneurs had limited resources to pressure policymakers into supporting their imperial projects. As we noted earlier, entrepreneurs who went abroad built small-scale enterprises with limited capital. They could not easily pay for influence.[41] Second, American entrepreneurs were unlikely to have additional sources of social support. Few business organizations, media outlets, or civic associations were available to build "log-rolling" coalitions throughout the nineteenth century, and most enterprises were too small and unimportant to marshal support among the general public.[42] The vast majority of businesses at the time disdained foreign entanglements.[43]

Consequently, early entrepreneurs faced an uphill battle in garnering support for imperialism. There was no national imperial movement to frame their arguments, as there was in 1899. They did not have access to significant economic or political capital. They were not considered political, social, or economic elites worthy of attention by Washingtonians. And, there was not yet the kind of media – no Hearsts – to provide national attention to their stories.

[41] Modern lobbying did not exist until the mid-1870s and only influenced foreign policy in 1898 with the annexation of the Philippines. Robert C. Byrd, *The Senate, 1789–1989: Addresses on the History of the United States Senate*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 491–508; Dara Z. Strolovitch and Daniel J. Tichenor, "Interest Groups and American Political Development," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*, ed. Richard M. Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert C. Lieberman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 535–62. On earlier informal lobbies, see James D. McCabe, *Behind the Scenes in Washington. Being a Complete and Graphic Account of the Credit Mobilier Investigation, the Congressional Rings, Political Intrigues, Working of the Lobbies, Etc. [With Illustrations.]* (Washington, DC: Continental Publishing Company, 1873), 231; Pendleton E. Herring, *Group Representation before Congress* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1929), 32–33, 36–37; Kenneth G. Crawford, *The Pressure Boys: The Inside Story of Lobbying in America* (New York: Julian Messner, 1939), 40; Lately Thomas and Robert V. P. Steele, *Sam Ward: King of the Lobby* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 344–45.

[42] On economic and civic organizations, see Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 30–59; Elisabeth S. Clemens, *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890–1925*, 1st edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 2; Strolovitch and Tichenor, "Interest Groups and American Political Development," 544–45. On the rise of mass media in the nineteenth century, see Gerald J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Also see Thomas C. Leonard, *News for All: America's Coming-of-Age with the Press* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 184–85; Evan Thomas, *The War Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst, and the Rush to Empire, 1898* (New York: Bay Back Books, 2010).

[43] Narizny, *The Political Economy of Grand Strategy*, 51–53. See also the Introduction.

1.3.2 How Entrepreneurs Influenced Foreign Policy

If early entrepreneurs did not have access to traditional sources of lobbying power, then how did they convince the government to pursue imperialism before the Spanish-American War? This section builds on American politics and social networks literature to develop a *positional theory* of lobbying. We describe two routes to influence – direct and indirect – that enabled entrepreneurs to successfully lobby for imperialism.

The main asset American entrepreneurs had in advancing imperialism was their social position between societies, that is, as "intermediaries."[44] During the nineteenth century, the US government had very little information about its future colonial possessions. In many ways, this is the most important distinction between the US experience with imperialism and Europe's experience. Britain, Germany, and France had substantial colonial bureaucracies, large navies, and established trade and diplomatic relations with their colonies. Policymakers in these countries were kept well informed of happenings abroad. The United States, by contrast, was relatively inexperienced in the realm of foreign affairs. It had no experience with imperialism and no colonial bureaucracy until after the Philippine-American War (1899), a small navy and diplomatic corps, and weak trade and diplomatic relations with its potential colonies.[45] In subsequent chapters, we show that these limits meant the US government often had little to no information about an island before agitation by entrepreneurs began.[46] State agents may not have investigated the commercial opportunities present in a region, how much resistance should be expected from future subject populations, which local rulers would be helpful in securing cooperation, or any number of other questions upon which imperialism depends.

Entrepreneurs, who had significant information about the islands, therefore had an advantage. Their position living and working on the islands made them the primary – and sometimes the only – source of information the United States had on the region. The historical record shows the US government often turned to entrepreneurs located abroad to provide this information. The empirical

44 Eric Grynaviski, "Brokering Cooperation: Intermediaries and US Cooperation with Non-State Allies, 1776–1945," *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 3 (2014): 691–717.

45 David Healy, *US Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 252; Rhoda E. A. Hackler, *Our Men in the Pacific: A Chronicle of United States Consular Officers at Seven Ports in the Pacific Islands and Australasia during the 19th Century* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii, 1978), 17.

46 Goddard and Grynaviski describe this kind of relationship as an example of a structural hole, where the absence of ties between peoples or a people and a place create opportunities for individuals to manipulate the flow of information across borders. Stacie E. Goddard, "Brokering Change: Networks and Entrepreneurs in International Politics," *International Theory* 1, no. 2 (2009): 249–81; Grynaviski, *America's Middlemen*. See also Ronald Burt, *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

evidence in later chapters will draw this out, but it is essential to underscore its importance for theory building. For much of the nineteenth century, the United States was simply too small to invest in overseas diplomatic posts. They turned explicitly to entrepreneurs, hiring them to act as American representatives, often officially by providing them consular status. In addition, the US Navy was traveling the Pacific regularly for the first time. Ship captains needed supplies during these "show the flag" tours of the Pacific and often turned to conationals when arriving in islands to provide information, supplies, and entertainment. This "thin white line" on the islands was *the translation point* where island politics were narrated and interpreted for the US government.

Entrepreneurs could use their positional advantage to manipulate information to make imperialism more attractive to elites. Recall that conventional explanations of American empire highlight how elites' preferences and beliefs – in security, trade, or national mission – explain imperialism. If entrepreneurs understand these motives, they can manipulate elites by sending information that makes a specific act of expansion appear to serve those motives. For example, entrepreneurs could cite and exaggerate the commercial or strategic gains from imperial projects; they could also downplay the costs of imperialism, manufacturing fictious invitations for imperial rule or providing assurances that the local population could be integrated and "civilized" into society.[47] Again, the historical record shows this in action. Entrepreneurs exaggerated the murder of Americans, destruction of American property, foreign designs on the American West Coast, and the vast economic potential of islands or harbors, and they tried every dirty trick to cajole the US government to take action to protect their property.

Entrepreneurs' position between societies provided strategies to secure influence and opportunities for this kind of manipulation. We highlight two ways entrepreneurs used their monopoly on information to agitate for annexation, described in Figure 1.2.[48]

[47] Invitations for empire are discussed by Ronald Edward Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism in the Dark Continent* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1961). On the role of racial integration in debates over American imperialism, see Maass, *The Picky Eagle*. Also see Mona Domosh, *American Commodities in an Age of Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[48] Entrepreneurs did not always lobby for annexation. In some instances, like the Guano islands, bureaucratic procedures made lobbying unnecessary; for example, if an entrepreneur wanted the U.S. to annex an uninhabited atoll to secure his property rights, and then populate it with foreign labor, all he needed to do was fill out the appropriate paperwork to launch a process of U.S. expansion. Entrepreneurs only needed to lobby when they expected resistance to annexation. Jeffry A. Frieden, "The Economics of Intervention: American Overseas Investments and Relations with Underdeveloped Areas, 1890–1950," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (1989): 55–80.

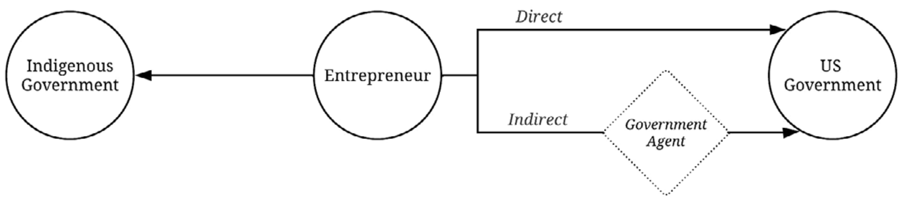

FIGURE 1.2 Two pathways for lobbying.

First, entrepreneurs could manipulate information *directly* to their central government. This is summarized in Figure 1.2. Entrepreneurs did not have direct access to lawmakers through traditional means (e.g., campaign contributions), but they could shape debates through other forms of lobbying. Lobbyists are often described as legislative specialists. Lawmakers in national legislatures have limited resources with which to process incoming information, develop positions, and identify opportunities. Lawmakers therefore turn to issue specialists – lobbyists – who effectively provide a "legislative subsidy" to lawmakers.[49] Gun control is a powerful example. Lobbyists usually do not change legislative minds about gun control; pro-gun or antigun lobbyists instead focus on providing evidence, statistics, or model legislation to lawmakers who already support their positions. This provision of talking points, information, and model legislation makes them powerful.

Entrepreneurs' social position makes them ideal candidates to provide legislative subsidies that might enhance imperialism. Legislative subsidies are most likely to be needed when extensive work is required to understand an issue. Given the nature of Pacific imperialism – the US government had limited information and the collection of information was costly – a set of agents to provide this legislative subsidy would have been beneficial to Washington lawmakers. These agents could brief and explain basic facts about the local political situation, potential strategic interests, and interests by foreign powers,

[49] Two additional factors may have made policymakers more receptive to entrepreneurs' information. The first was low partisanship, which meant policymakers were less inclined to toe the party line on an issue. The second factor was the structure of the political system: legislative sessions were shorter, turnover rates were higher, and there were fewer committees for lawmakers to develop expertise on many issues. Daniel Peart, *Lobbyists and the Making of US Tariff Policy, 1816–1861* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 5–8; Clemens, *The People's Lobby*, 85. On the role of information in lobbying, see David Austen-Smith, "Information and Influence: Lobbying for Agendas and Votes," *American Journal of Political Science* 37, no. 3 (1993): 799–833; Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth L. Leech, *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Richard L. Hall and Alan V. Deardorff, "Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy," *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 1 (2006): 69–84; Christopher J. Ellis and Thomas Groll, "Strategic Legislative Subsidies: Informational Lobbying and the Cost of Policy," *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 1 (2020): 179–205. Relatedly, see Milner and Tingley, *Sailing the Water's Edge*.

and they could answer legislators' questions. Sometimes this work might be done directly, through correspondence or at congressional hearings, but it was more often done through informal means, such as providing talking points in the media or press or through social networks.

By being the agent who provided legislative subsidies, entrepreneurs might influence the government to pursue imperial policies. They could craft positions that appealed to strategic or commercial interests, such as making a territory appear to be an "El Dorado" for American influence or trade, as described by Jack Snyder.[50] Entrepreneurs could also frame policies as fitting with legislators' ideological attitudes.[51] Entrepreneurs were ruthlessly practical. They might describe American expansion to one group as imperialism – and cite American pride or nationalism – and then to the next group as a form of antiimperialism, as an attempt to deter real empires (e.g., the British) from seizing land.

The second way entrepreneurs could agitate for imperialism was to manipulate executive or military agents in the field – the "men on the spot" described by Robinson and Gallagher.[52] During periods of imperial expansion, governments often station military or diplomatic personnel in foreign territories to gather information and protect their interests overseas. These agents in the field often had substantial decision-making power delegated to them. Ship captains were expected to make unilateral decisions about whether force was necessary to secure American lives and property; American Consuls were expected to represent US political interests and policy positions in the absence of a formal embassy; and American special agents (or other ad hoc government officials) were often empowered to make political decisions. The nature of the nineteenth century and the Pacific were important contextual features of this situation. Communication with the Pacific was difficult as the telegraph was not yet laid, ship communication was often irregular, and mail service was slow. Therefore, delegation was common and necessary, although finding high-quality agents was often difficult.[53]

[50] Snyder, *Myths of Empire*.

[51] See, for example, the role of ideological framing by lobbyists in "Buy America" legislation. Dana Frank, *Buy American: The Untold Story of Economic Nationalism* (Beacon Press, 2000). Similarly, see the public relations campaigns used by American oil companies. Jacob Matz and Daniel Renfrew. "Selling 'Fracking': Energy in Depth and the Marcellus Shale," *Environmental Communication* 9, no. 3 (2015): 288–306; Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

[52] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*. Also see Robert D. Long, *The Man on the Spot: Essays on British Empire History*, Contributions in Comparative Colonial Studies (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1995).

[53] Francis B. Loomis, "The Proposed Reorganization of the American Consular Service," *The North American Review* 182, no. 592 (1906): 361–62; Thomas G. Paterson, "American Businessmen and Consular Service Reform, 1890's to 1906," *Business History Review* 40, no. 1 (1966): 81–82.

Entrepreneurs often had access to these "men on the spot," providing opportunities to manipulate them. First, entrepreneurs were sought out for their local knowledge. When government agents arrived in the Pacific, they did not have a sufficient understanding of local politics to know when or if their governments' interests were jeopardized. Consequently, they would lean on local entrepreneurs to gain knowledge about an island, providing opportunities for entrepreneurs to manipulate information.[54] Second, entrepreneurs were often sought out for social reasons.[55] Stuck on the island, government agents would socialize with entrepreneurs, who came from the same country and spoke the same language. They often attended church together, drank together, and spent holidays together. Third, entrepreneurs were sought out by government agents for business purposes. When ship captains arrived, for example, they often sought conationals to provide provisions, ship repairs, or translation services (see Chapters 3 and 4). Some government agents were expected to establish commercial enterprises to supplement their paltry government salaries (see Chapters 3 and 5). As a result, they tended to develop shared interests with entrepreneurs, which may have made them more receptive to entrepreneurs' information and the information's credibility.[56]

Entrepreneurs who favored imperialism could manipulate agents in the field using their positional resources. Their ability to frame local politics often allowed them to portray intervention as high reward, low cost, leading to favorable reports back home. Moreover, they could encourage more direct intervention. Usually, entrepreneurs were well enough informed about naval politics that they understood government agents' orders. For example, they could frame an episode of unrest as a threat to American lives and property, thereby securing intervention if naval policy required intervention in that case. This ability to frame local politics – each chapter shows – created opportunities for mischief and mayhem by the US government, even if Washington was unaware (at least partly) it was happening.

[54] William Barnes and John Heath Morgan, *The Foreign Service of the United States: Origins, Development, and Functions* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, 1961), Ch. 9; Paterson, "American Businessmen and Consular Service Reform, 1890s to 1906."

[55] Diplomatic historians have long noted that intimate, personal friendships are important for diplomacy. See, for example, Frank Costigliola, "Pamela Churchill, Wartime London, and the Making of the Special Relationship," *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 4 (2012): 753–62; Thomas J. Balcerski, *Bosom Friends: The Intimate World of James Buchanan and William Rufus King* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). We suspect these factors are augmented in a Pacific context, when Americans visiting the islands on shore leave after months at sea must rely on other Americans for news and supplies. The cases bear this out in pronounced ways.

[56] Wilbur J. Carr, "The American Consular Service," *The American Journal of International Law* 1, no. 4 (1907): 897. Also see Hackler, *Our Men in the Pacific*; Ferry de Goey, *Consuls and the Institutions of Global Capitalism, 1783–1914* (New York: Routledge, 2015), Ch. 2; Brett Goodin, "The Business, Personality, and Discretionary Power of American Consuls in North Africa, 1797–1805," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2017): 609–33.

Entrepreneurs' positional resources were augmented by their practicality. Until 1898, the headwinds of imperialism were not behind their backs in the Pacific. While they often talked annexation, their primary goal was protection. They were content for any ad hoc arrangement that saw the US government protect their interests. In the cases that follow, we explain that these arrangements were a form of imperialism. In some cases, the United States formally acquired the territory. In other cases, the US government entered an imperial condominium to rule the islands or support American agents in their efforts to control the government. This de facto imperialism – at times in the professed goal of protecting indigenous sovereigns against foreign competitors who threatened American entrepreneurs – allowed entrepreneurs to be flexible. Their ability to frame even the most naked imperialist practices as antiimperialist measures was premised on their unique knowledge and their ability to manipulate parties' understandings of what one another wanted and desired.

In sum, imperial lobbies had the advantage of position. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the American government knew little about the Pacific. Ship captains and entrepreneurs with experience in these islands were prized, and they used this position to secure influence. To nineteenth-century eyes, when these figures spoke to the media or to persons in Washington, they were interesting if nothing else. In an era when people's impressions about the world were popularly informed by Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and Verne's *Mysterious Island*, they were people to be listened to.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

To assess the role of entrepreneurs, we examine every case of imperialism and many cases of nonexpansion in the nineteenth-century Pacific in the region we refer to as the central South Pacific. It is roughly a triangle, with Hawaii at the northern tip, French Polynesia at its southeastern tip, and Fiji and Vanuatu at the southwestern tip. We focus on these islands for several reasons. First, the cases are diverse.[57] The islands vary dramatically during the period in population size; type of climate (which matters for crops); political, ethnic, and religious factions; extent of missionary presence; and a variety of other factors. Second, we believe it is a fair test of our argument that entrepreneurs led state expansion. We can learn comparatively little from states further west, such as New Zealand or Papua New Guinea, which would see relatively little attention from the United States, as they were either firmly under the thumb of other stronger empires well before the United States was founded or were so remote there was simply no prospect for American imperialism. Most importantly, the region permits structured comparisons, as described in the following section.

[57] On diverse case selection, see Jason Seawright and John Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008): 294–308.

This book uses two well-established methods to show the role of entrepreneurs. First, we use structured, focused comparisons between cases.[58] In doing so, we emphasize between-case comparisons where expansion did and did not occur. This is perhaps the most important methodological innovation. Most studies of imperialism in political science only emphasize cases where imperialism occurred. They search for a common factor (e.g., a strategic rationale) and then use the Method of Agreement to show all the cases exhibit this feature.[59] The central problem with this approach is that there are dozens of cases where the factor of interest is present and expansion does not occur. For example, there were larger markets, more important ports, better potential naval stations, and other souls to save on other islands. To avoid the problems inherent with selection on the dependent variable, we dedicate a full chapter to examine cases where expansion did not occur.[60] Not only is this approach more methodologically sound, we show that it presents a fuller view of American interests in the Pacific.

The second method we use is process tracing. Process tracing enables us to examine the mechanisms and processes that first drive entrepreneurs to the islands and then end with them lobbying for imperialism.[61] To organize this evidence, we focus on the observable implications of our argument, described earlier in the chapter, and summarized in Table 1.1. We focus on three mechanisms. First, the *price mechanism* suggests that entrepreneurs followed profits, not the state, into the Pacific. If this is the case, we should expect to see the timing and location of entrepreneurs' decisions correlate with price changes. The price mechanism would be incorrect if entrepreneurs reacted to changes in government policy – they were following the flag – and not commodity booms. Second, the *threat mechanism* suggests entrepreneurs formed imperial lobbies after their profits were threatened. The central argument is that the first imperial lobbies were formed for economic, not ideological or strategic, reasons. We deduce slightly different observable implications for extractive commodities (e.g., guano) and cultivated commodities (e.g., sugar and copra) due to expected differences in timing of threats. Finally, the *lobbying mechanism* suggests how entrepreneurs gained influence. We closely follow politics on the islands and at home to show how issues came to the attention of Washington, the US Navy, or other government officials and how entrepreneurs garnered attention for

58 Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

59 For an important exception, see Maass, *The Picky Eagle*.

60 Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis* 2, no. 1 (1990): 131; Bear Braumoeller and Gary Goertz, "The Methodology of Necessary Conditions," *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 4 (2000): 844–58.

61 Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013); David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (2011): 823–30.

TABLE 1.1 *Observable implications of mechanisms.*

Mechanism	Causal process observation
1. Prices	a. *Timing:* Entrepreneurs only locate abroad when the price of a hot commodity is high or rising. b. *Selection:* Entrepreneurs select an island with endowments of a hot commodity and a favorable climate (politically and economically) for investment. c. *Nonexpansion:* Entrepreneurs do not locate to islands where hot commodities are absent or there is an unfavorable climate (politically and economically) for investment.
2. Threats	a. *Threats to profits:* Entrepreneurs perceive a threat to profits, such as from the emergence a hostile faction in local government, a global decline in prices, or international competition. b. *Extracted commodities:* When extractive commodities are at issue, entrepreneurs immediately form an imperial lobby upon locating to the island. c. *Cultivated commodities:* When cultivated commodities are at issue, there is a delay between when entrepreneurs locate to the island and when they form a lobby.
3. Lobbying	a. *Lack of interest:* Policymakers had little interest in annexing the island before entrepreneurs' lobbying efforts. b. *Direct pathway:* Entrepreneurs educate the central government on island politics, framing direct intervention or annexation to appeal to policymakers' strategic, commercial, or ideological interests. c. *Indirect pathway:* Entrepreneurs educate government agents in the field on island politics, encouraging reports about the low costs and high rewards of direct intervention or annexation. d. *Policy rationale:* Policymakers' strategic or ideational rationales for imperialism are based on information from entrepreneurs' lobbying efforts.

imperial policies. The lobbying mechanism is important as it connects entrepreneurs' interests to imperial policymaking.

We largely rely on original archival research for our evidence. Americans operating outside US borders did not need to register or otherwise submit paperwork in the nineteenth century. As a result, there is no convenient registry or database that would make a quantitative analysis possible. In addition, while there are excellent secondary sources, especially on Hawaii, they often do not discuss the full range of cases, do not concentrate on the business history in the islands, and do not examine the correlation with prices, lobbying, or other similar issues. Therefore, a direct evaluation of archival material is the most appropriate way to evaluate whether the observable implications are present.

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In Chapter 5, we examine cases of nonexpansion. Most theories of American imperialism only focus on cases where imperialism was present; in doing so, they create problems associated with selection on the dependent variable. By contrast, this book examines all islands in the region where imperialism did not occur.

We present three arguments as corollaries to the arguments in this chapter, showing that the absence of entrepreneurial activity explains the absence of imperialism in closely compared cases. First, if the price mechanism is correct, we should expect to see US inattention to islands that lack a commodity or the land and labor necessary for sustained cultivation. Second, if an enterprise fails (e.g., due to the entrepreneur dying or being jailed), then we expect the path toward imperialism would begin (US economic activities would begin in the islands), but imperialism would not be the result because of the absence of an imperial lobby. Third, if islands are already controlled by foreign empires, we expect American entrepreneurs who chose to relocate to those islands will enmesh themselves in the foreign empire's legal, social, and economic networks. This is a selection effect argument. To create an enterprise in the first place, entrepreneurs need to be able to navigate the foreign empire sufficiently well to purchase land and make a profit. When profits are threatened, they are thus more likely to turn to the foreign empire for assistance.

1.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an entrepreneur-led theory of imperialism. It makes three arguments. First, American entrepreneurs were especially reactive to price changes, driving them across the Pacific. We expect the timing and location of their investments will follow changes in commodity prices over time. Second, we emphasized that entrepreneurs turn into imperial lobbies when they face threats to their enterprises, either in the form of price changes or foreign competition. To preserve their investments, they seek protection from their home governments. Finally, we presented a positional theory of lobbying that explains entrepreneurs' ability to successfully lobby the US government.

These arguments create a different picture of American imperialism in the Pacific than conventional accounts. The conventional wisdom portrays an empire of large holdings that had strategic or substantial economic importance. This chapter shows that from the nineteenth-century perspective, this is a strange reading of the historical record. Few believed the US possessions had any immediate significance for the American navy or the economy. The still strengthening American state – still recovering from the Civil War and trapped in seemingly unending conflicts in the American West – did not lead the way into the Pacific. Instead, it was the small entrepreneurs, chasing their narrow self-interest, who led the United States abroad.