Some mistakes can be spotted, mostly concerning China. For example, it is not true that the Chinese Red Army protected its bases in the years 1928–34 by using 'techniques of guerrilla warfare rather than fighting frontal battles'. The statement that, during the Long March (1934–35), the communists fought 'a full-dress battle on average every two days' (p. 51) belongs to the realm of propaganda, not to serious history (see for example Sun Shuyun, *The long march* (2006)). The supposed communist 'aggressiveness in confronting' (p. 52) the Japanese has similarly been put into question: even more than the Guomindang regime, they privileged the consolidation of their army in view of the incoming civil war. The description of the violence against supposed landlords that went along with the 1946–52 land reform underestimates the degree of manipulation of the peasants by the communist apparatus (pp. 53, 87).

The account of the choice of a 'Chinese path' towards socialism in the late 1950s follows too closely China's official discourse, or perhaps some outdated Western historians (pp. 96–8). In fact, from 1956 onwards, Mao Zedong attempted to be the 'Soviet-betrayed' faithful heir of Stalin. He did not criticize the Soviet model but tried to apply it more radically to China. Thus the Great Leap Forward (1958–61) emphasized an ultra-rapid industrialization, not the promotion of peasants. It is not true that, during that fateful period of widespread famine, 'As disasters accumulated, the Party backed off the most radical measures' (p. 102). The disasters were denounced at the Party's highest level as early as 1959, but the first genuine countermeasures had to wait till 1961. And the statement that 'Mao himself accepted some of the blame for the disaster' should be seriously qualified: he was forced to retreat somewhat at that point, but took a terrible revenge during the Cultural Revolution on whoever had dared to criticize him, however indirectly. There is a startling assertion that the political 'death toll in the Soviet Union was far higher than in China, where no large-scale executions occurred' (p. 112), at least during the Cultural Revolution. The contrary has been amply demonstrated (for example, most recently by Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals in *Mao's last revolution* (2006)). It is actually most probable that executions in China, from the late 1940s, represented three to five times those of the Soviet Union under Stalin, presently estimated at under one million (see Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Margolin, et al., *The black book of communism: crimes, terror, repression* (1999)). Consequently, the proportion of victims among the populations of the two countries has been found to be roughly similar. Finally, the presentation of a Mao struggling 'to overcome the inequalities associated with China's modern development' (p. 113) should be seriously counter-balanced with the obstinate setting up, during the 1950s, of a comprehensive caste system, in which one's destiny (education, employment, accommodation, political status, even marriage) was fully shaped by the so-called 'class origins', duly transmitted to one's children. China is obviously Strayer's weak point. Nevertheless, his highly readable and generally reliable book has more virtues than vices.

Transnational nation: United States history in global perspective since 1789

By Ian Tyrrell. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Pp. vii + 286. Paperback £17.99, ISBN 978 1 4039 9368 7.

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Transnational history, which charts networks of exchange, migration, and power across national boundaries, has been championed as an alternative to nation-based historiography. In this compact book, Ian Tyrrell, an Australia-based historian of the US, instead employs it effectively to expand the parameters of one nation's past. It is no secret that US history as commonly studied has emphasized not simply uniqueness but separation from and even incommensurability with global patterns – a position often given the shorthand label 'exceptionalism'. Tyrrell's *Transnational nation* furthers the growing countertrend of bringing US history into a more considered dialogue with global frameworks of analysis – a movement that took off after the La Pietra conferences of 1997–2000, sponsored by the Organization of American Historians, among others. Dedicated to the 'La Pietra gang' as part of its first wave of books intended to reach history classrooms, Tyrrell's overview brings distinctive strengths to the group, which includes Thomas Bender's *Nation among nations* (2006) and my own *America in the world* (2007).

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As US historians enlarge their vistas they tend to emphasize one of three 'Cs' that preoccupy world historians: contexts, comparisons, or connections. Whereas Bender's book sketched the larger global context for five episodes in US history and mine conducted a series of internationally comparative forays over the course of US development, Tyrrell's text is explicitly connective. Organized thematically inside a loose chronology, its topics encompass the myriad ways that the American nation was 'produced transnationally' (p. 3) through flows of people, ideas, goods, and capital, including how events abroad influenced Americans and how Americans exported their ways overseas. Tyrrell has read widely in the literature of trade and migration as well as what Akira Iriye labels 'transnational affairs': contacts between societies too independent and varied to be subsumed under the domain of state relations. The vivid individual stories and episodes that Tyrrell chronicles are not merely used as examples of larger patterns; they are the facts from which his always-judicious generalizations – including some comparative insights – emerge. His book is thus the most empirical account so far of a nation that, contrary to its dominant mythology, was often decisively shaped by its transnational ties.

A strong body of work on Atlantic history has now transformed approaches to colonial North America, and after the Spanish–American War of 1898 US commitments overseas become too obvious for textbooks to overlook. But the period between the achievement of US independence in 1783 and the formal commitment to empire has conventionally been cast in continental and even isolationist terms. One of the signal contributions of Tyrrell's book is that it pries open US engagements with the rest of the world in the 1800s, characterizing that era as a time of economic and cultural openness that would not be equalled until the 1980s. Tyrrell implicitly agrees with Eric Rauchway's *Blessed among nations* (2006) that 'the world made America' in the nineteenth century through the export trade, migration, foreign investment, and technology transfer. But, in contrast to Rauchway's one-dimensional account, Tyrrell also emphasizes Americans' anti-bank and anti-immigrant attitudes, as well as a tariff policy that repudiated free trade in order to build a diversified national economy – an import substitution programme much like those that the US would discourage in developing nations a century later.

The ongoing tension between global integration and national insularity emerges as the dominant motif of Tyrrell's book. It explains the ebb and flow of US engagement with the wider world as different domestic groups' agendas won out and American policymakers externalized their own ambivalence. The struggle between inclusive and exclusionary immigration policies provides one of the richest and most complex examples, since it overlaps with the history of racial ideas, state power, and foreign policy. Vacillation between openness and closedness also governs Tyrrell's treatment of the years between 1925 and 1970, an innovative periodization that is bookended by the immigration restrictions of 1924 and the national crisis of Vietnam, Watergate, and OPEC. Tyrrell divides this era into contrasting chapters, one that shows how the two world wars and the Cold War extended US global outreach, and another that suggests that hardened racial attitudes and narrowed patriotism limited Americans' global cultural integration. According to Tyrrell, state and society reversed their roles after the First World War. Before that, transnational social and economic contacts were legion, while the state detached itself politically from the international community; after that, the state joined international agreements and alliances while the American people turned inward to exceptionalism. Only with the 'new globalization' of the late twentieth century did both state and society look outward, although Americans brought to their global encounters new versions of the same old tension between their pride in national distinctiveness – sometimes reframed as a messianic mission to the world – and their resentment of global interdependence.

Tyrrell suggests rather than imposes this overarching interpretation on his narrative, whose strongest elements are its close analyses of specific transnational topics. An innovative chapter on 'How culture travelled' accompanies American missionaries, businessmen, tourists, artists, and reformers abroad, detailing their activities and the influences with which they returned. Another, on 'The empire that did not know its name', follows recent scholarship in linking US continental and overseas expansion, but adds an interesting section on the 'moral imperialism' of missionaries and purity reformers. Here and elsewhere Tyrrell draws from his previous research by including examples from Australia and the Pacific and by widening his interpretations of anti-alcohol campaigns, suffrage and reform movements, and environmental impacts into broader narratives that include Europe and the British Empire. Throughout the book, he effectively employs a strategy of moving 'inside-out' from US to world history, one that is opposite but complementary to Bender's 'outside-in' approach that situates American developments within larger global trends.

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The primary audience for Tyrrell's book – scholars and students of US history – should be nudged away from insularity by its engaging details. Yet global historians will also be interested in Tyrrell's incidental discussion of American variations on world patterns: the factors that spurred US economic development, comparative analysis of immigration to the US, the course of US state-building, and the workings of US empire. Embedded within the book's transnational narrative are thoughtful mini-essays that link American developments to those elsewhere and offer comparative assessments.

Transnational nation will help world historians to understand better the vexed and conflicted history of the US relationship to global engagement. And, while the specific American combination of global pull and national insularity may be unique, its broad outlines are not, as the histories of China, Japan, Russia, or England would show. Without intending to, *Transnational nation* provides an attractive template for producing a globally-informed history of any modern great power.

L'Esprit économique impérial (1830–1970): groupes de pression & réseaux du patronat colonial en France & dans l'empire

Edited by Hubert Bonin, Catherine Hodeir, and Jean-François Klein. Paris: Publications de la Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 2008. Pp. 844. Paperback €70.00, ISBN 978–2-85970–037-9.

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For decades after John Hobson's analysis of the 'economic taproots' of colonialism and Lenin's definition of imperialism as the 'highest stage of capitalism' at the beginning of the twentieth century, through Robinson and Gallagher's 'economics of free trade', down to 'development theory' in the 1960s, economic and commercial arguments dominated much of the debate on European overseas expansion. Many historians disagreed with such perspectives about the primacy of commerce, however, suggesting that politics (and geopolitics) played the key role in the conquest of much of the earth's surface by European powers and other imperial states, such as the United States and Japan. Since the 1970s, with the cultural turn in history, emphasis has shifted to the realm of ideas and representations as the substructure for imperialism.

Now there appears to be a rediscovery of the economics of empire, with new works on particular businesses, patterns of trade, and commercial relations between the colonizing and colonized countries. This huge book – it weighs several kilograms – is one example, bringing together the work of many French historians and studies taken from recent doctoral theses. The themes, periods, and places covered are numerous in the thirty-odd chapters, and there is a lengthy introduction and no fewer than four conclusions. The chronology ranges from French economics and the colonization of Algeria in the 1830s through to the war in Indochina in the 1950s. There are specific chapters on those areas; on other French colonial regions in sub-Saharan Africa, Tunisia, Djibouti, and Reunion Island; on French spheres of commercial and financial influence in China and Egypt; and on metropolitan France.

The thrust of the book, as the subtitle indicates, is on commercial networks that extended into the world of politics and even education. A particularly useful section provides cases studies of colonial activities undertaken by the business elites in Bordeaux, Marseille, Toulon, Lyon, Le Havre, Mulhouse, and the industrial Nord region of France. Other chapters treat organizations such as the Paris Chamber of Commerce, the Comité des forges (the syndicate of mine-owners), and the *instituts coloniaux* (lobbying and colonial promotion institutes set up around France). Several chapters look at theorists of colonial expansion, such as Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, and one examines the teaching of 'colonial economics' in French universities and schools. One author looks at the links between missionaries and capitalists, another at the commercial relations between France and Germany in the colonial world.

Trying to calculate whether colonialism did or did not return a profit to the great powers, at the end of the balance sheet, is a difficult and ultimately fruitless effort. Jacques Marseille, in *Empire colonial et capitalisme français: histoire d'un divorce* (1984), doubted that, in a general sense, imperialism was worth it for the country as a whole, though he said that particular sectors and companies did make substantial profits. The contributors to this volume do not reject that thesis, but they develop a subtle analysis of the various institutions, individuals, and firms closely tied to the colonial enterprise and the ways in which their interests were interlinked. Bankers, merchants, and other businessmen frequently promoted colonialism,

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