



Another Image of the U.S. in Cook-Lynn's Polemics: a Domestic Colonizing Nation

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Résumé – Ce fait subtil échappe à nombre d'observateurs de la culture américaine: la colonisation des amérindiens brille par son absence dans les écrits des érudits américains, tandis que ces derniers présentent les activités coloniales extérieures des Etats-Unis comme une œuvre moralement nécessaire et bienfaisante; le but d'un tel exercice étant de projeter une image non-impérialiste des Etats-Unis. Cependant, la romancière et critique amérindienne, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, dépeint le pays de l'Oncle Sam comme une vraie puissance coloniale tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de ses frontières. Cet essai jette donc un regard critique sur la représentation impériale des Etats-Unis qu'offrent les œuvres de cette dernière, une critique qui balaie du revers de la main la mesquinerie des érudits américains quant à leur déni de la colonisation intérieure américaine. L'essai conclut que masquer l'impérialisme interne des Etats-Unis est un leurre pour Cook-Lynn, une victime de la colonisation des amérindiens.

Mots clés : colonialisme/impérialisme, traités, amérindiens, intérieur, public.

1. Introduction

Upfront, anyone who studies U.S. history in a serious way quickly realizes the absence of domestic imperialism in its mainstream scholarship. As an outsider looking in U.S. culture, I am struck by the glaring absence of empire in it. Deploying a scholarly discourse tainted with diplomatic savvy, this culture presents U.S. outside colonial deeds as morally upright, altruistic, and benevolent, while skipping its domestic imperialism altogether. In her contribution to *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), Amy Kaplan locates a cognitive gap between the academic study of U.S. culture and the diplomatic history of U.S. imperialism, an ideological gap which, she claims, has prevented most Americanists from recognizing the imperialistic side of U.S. culture – a denial syndrome. Engrained in the U.S. unconscious, this deceiving attitude has fooled many (foreign) scholars for years to the point of inducing most to trivialize some historical givens about the United States: that this nation has known “multiple histories of continental and overseas expansion, conquest, conflict, and resistance which have shaped the cultures of the United States and the cultures of those it has dominated within and beyond its geopolitical boundaries” (Kaplan, 1993: 4). Despite this stark reality, mainstream scholarship overwhelmingly represents America as the good guy in imperial matters. American studies provides a cogent example: though colonialism

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remains pervasive in the shaping of U.S. culture, American studies discourse masks it. Ironically, however, this discipline is centrally concerned with the "the study of American culture, past and present, as a whole," according to Henry Nash Smith's classic working definition of the discipline (in Maddox, 1999: 1). Although Lucy Maddox (1999: vii) dubs American studies "an academic enterprise devoted to the interdisciplinary study of American history and culture," it fails to take on the domestic imperialism of the United States.

A victim of United States domestic colonialism, Cook-Lynn has witnessed, in part, the gradual diminishment of Indian nations as sovereign entities. Thus, unlike most American scholars who see it as *un-American* to recognize imperialism as one of the tenets of U.S. culture, she has become one of the sharp-tongued speakers against U.S. internal colonialism. To the hegemonic narration that skews reference to American internal imperialism, she opposes a domestic imperial image of the U.S. and simultaneously bashes U.S. politicians and scholars for condoning the nation's colonial venture. Teddy Roosevelt and Frederick Jackson Turner's infamous "Frontier Thesis" that drove and moved Americans to conquer the West as well as Wallace Stegner – Cook-Lynn's literary foe – come to mind, in this vein (CL, 1996; 2001: 53-4; 2007a: 143; Fixico, 2003: 130).

As one might infer from the above paragraphs, mainstream scholarship has commended the United States for its benevolent colonial activities outside continental America but has fallen short of recognizing its invasion of Indian nations as colonialism, too. But representing U.S. external imperialism in philanthropic terms and negating its domestic colonialism prevail beyond U.S. borders as well. To use George Lamming's flowering style (1953/1997: 19), this "myth has eaten through the consciousness" of outsiders "like moths through the pages of ageing documents." As a result, scores of foreign scholars, who have uncritically bought into the hegemonic and deceptive narration of America, echo the dominant discourse and perpetuate its one-sided image of the United States. Therefore, factoring in Cook-Lynn's representation will add another dimension to its dominant image we have internalized. Although the United States stands for its noble values and principles, incorporating the domestic imperial practices of this nation in our representation of it can reflect a critically balanced view of American culture.

The previous paragraph locates the main drive behind this essay which has two articulations. The first one historicizes American imperialism and provides the mainstream image associated with its colonial deeds; the second one elaborates on



Cook-Lynn's representation of the United States as a domestic colonizing nation and treaty breaker.

2. Historicizing American imperialism: mainstream image

The behavior of the United States since 2001 has revived debates about its status as a colonial power; it has critics wonder whether the new equalizer of Europe is seeking to expand its imperial territories. In an unprecedented military adventure, the United States (under NATO) has invaded Afghanistan and Iraq and put in place an impressive new network of military bases in strategically sensitive zones stretching from the Arabian Gulf to South Asia, besides its covert intelligence operations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The United States, the only lion in the forest, has been acting alone in search of monsters to destroy, in the course of its current offensive against a new global totalitarian threat made apparent by the attacks of 11 September 2001.

In her unsettling questions about the imperial status of the United States relating to its post-9/11 (re)actions, Kaplan (2004: 2) wonders whether the United States should be classified as imperial or hegemonic, whether it is self-interested or benevolent, whether the American Empire most closely resembles the British Empire or the Roman one, and whether it is in its decline or in ascendancy. In their economic interpretation of American imperialism, market-expansionism historians and mainstream diplomatic scholars argue that this nation has actually morphed into an imperial power: "The United States has a record of sustained expansion beyond the limits that it occupied at any given moment in time," William A. Williams (1969: xii) comments, arguing that "expansion," the major theme of the nation's history, has been slighted. Instead of probing expansion, he contends, the vast majority of historians, along with other academics and nonacademic intellectuals, emphasized the term *frontier*, though his own discussion of U.S. expansionism overlooks the colonization of Indian nations.

This substitution of *frontier* for *expansion* might have led some scholars to misread the imperial status of the United States, or show ambivalence concerning its colonial capability; most have simply eclipsed the colonization of Indian nations. William A. Williams, Walter LaFeber (1963 & 1989), Robert L. Beisner, Richard V. Alstyne, Richard J. Barnet, and Thomas J. McCormick (1967), among others, have interpreted American diplomacy as colonialist since the 1960s. They have argued that expansion is simply a polite word for empire. But most American scholars have made an *economical use* of the term imperialism in reference to U.S. imperial activities ever since, despite Beisner's effort to dispel its distortions. He



notes, for instance, that the annexation of Puerto Rico was not seen as “imperialistic,” since the native population did not resist the takeover; nor was the conquest of the Philippines “imperialistic,” because the local populace did resist but were treated benevolently and finally let go. Beisner (1975: 26-7; italics in the original) adds that most members of the new “economic school” contribute to the confusion, going to great lengths “to distinguish among varying *isms*, generally arguing that most Americans were not colonialists, who wanted to govern other peoples, but rather ‘expansionists,’ ‘open door expansionists,’ ‘informal imperialists,’ or ‘anticolonial imperialists.’” The economical use of imperialism by scholars thereafter make me wonder about the impact Williams and other mainstream diplomatic scholars have had on Americanists. Worse, the colonization of Indian nations has been taken for granted and slighted.

U.S. domestic imperialism generally receives scant attention in mainstream scholarship. While market-expansionism academics and diplomatic scholars advance the economic impetus of American imperialism, they overlook the colonization of Indian nations. They argue that the rapid agricultural and industrial transformation coerced the nation to adopt a foreign policy that eventually helped lay the foundation of the American empire, but they neglect the nation’s domestic imperialism. Although they demonstrate that U.S. political economy promoted American empire, they fail to scrutinize the internal colonization of Indian nations.

Lately, however, some American scholars position the United States as an imperial power, following the robust rhetoric of empire of the Bush administration. After scrutinizing America’s imperial behavior outside the United States, they present the nation as a quasi-territorial global empire whose nodes of control are the military bases stationed in many semi-sovereign states throughout the world. In particular, Philip S. Golub, a contributing editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique* and instructor in international relations and political economy at Université Paris 8 and American University of Paris, affirms that the United States is currently in “the business of bringing down governments, leaving in place imperial garrisons.” He further charges that this nation has been flexing its war muscle to demonstrate that its Empire cannot be challenged with impunity. Moreover, after reviewing the White House’s 2002 *National Security Strategy* and delving into the views expressed by leading ideologues of American Empire, Golub (2004: 763-786) claims that the main objective of the American Republic’s power is to deter the emergence of powerful, hostile challengers to its Empire.



As can be inferred from the above paragraph, American scholars who study U.S. imperialism *essentially* focus on its outside invasions. They disclaim imperialism as the driving force behind U.S. invasions of Indian nations, if they consider this domestic colonialism at all. Clearly, through the lenses of most American scholars, the *ongoing* colonization of Indian tribes falls outside the realm of imperialism.

It is important to historicize American imperialism, because the United States' vision of itself, as Cook-Lynn contends in her *Notebook* (2007a: 180), is embedded in a history of imperialism.

There are parallels between current military deployments of the United States and its expansionist euphoria of the late 1890s. The first significant imperial actions of the United States outside continental America, however, dated back to 1846, when it began sending troops into Mexico (Williams, 1972: 62-63). This was later followed by the establishment of U.S. colonies in Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico, an outcome of the 1898 Spanish-American war. Additionally, American strategic bases in Hawaii, Wake Island, and its commercial expansion in China with the Open Door policy catapulted the United States into the class of nations governing overseas colonial territories and definitely changed its status to a formal colonial empire (Williams, 1972: 135-202; Go, 2004: 18). Not only do critics link this expansionist period to its post-9/11 global military invasions but they equally charge that current U.S. imperial drive mandates a reconfiguration of world politics (Golub, 2004: 763; Judis, 2004: 52).

In light of the foregoing, Robert Jervis' identification of the Bush doctrine as the establishment of American Empire breaks no new ground – scholars have long recognized the thrust of expansionism as a continuous impulse in American history, tracing it back to the 1890s, when the nation's industrial and financial community definitely adopted expansionist ideology (Jervis, 2003: 365-388; Williams, 1972: 4). Reflecting an imperial propensity as a pattern of U.S. culture, the next few paragraphs review some elements that support an imperial view of the United States.

First, market-expansionism scholars and the mainstream among diplomatic historians argue that American leaders were concerned with empire building as soon as the nation became independent. These critics regard the outburst of the 1890s as the beginning of a long career of American imperialism. The United States, a nation which sees itself as omnipotent and invincible as its technological achievements seem to imply, became an empire by any historical definition of the term. From 1776 to the outbreak of World War II, it increased its dominion from



400,000 square miles to 3,738,393 square miles, roughly expanding to overseas possessions and territories of 711,604 square miles and a continental domain of 3,026,789 square miles (Barnet, 1972: 17). Though its continental domain is greater than its overseas possessions, most mainstream historians have minimized its domestic imperialism, an internal domination which has devastating consequences on Native Americans.

Second, the United States remains “the number one nation.” Besides assuming total control of strategic trust territories and other bases, the nation began its ascendancy to world hegemony in the 1940s and definitely became the world superpower in the 1990s. Since then, and as Golub has noted (2004: 773-774), advocates of U.S. *imperium* have seen the nation through imperial lenses: the Roman Empire becomes their role model and Victorian Britain their inspiration. Charles Krauthammer, a neoconservative columnist – the Pulitzer Prize-winning syndicated columnist and a political commentator for *The Washington Post* and *Fox News* – asserts that “America bestrides the world like a colossus. Not since Rome destroyed Carthage has a great power risen to the heights we have.” Mortimer Zuckerman, another conservative commentator for *U.S. News & World Report* and the *New York Daily News*, cheers the U.S. newfound reign: “France had the seventeenth-century, Britain the nineteenth, and America the twentieth. It will also have the twenty-first.” Some prominent politicians of the nation share these views relating to the lion’s share claims by the United States. For example, Jesse Helms, the late Republican Senator from North Carolina and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1995 to 2001 declared in 1996: “We remain uniquely positioned at the center and that is where we must stay... by being the standard-bearer of moral, political and military might and right, an example to which all others aspire.”

Third, the United States uses commodities to Americanize or conquer others. In addition to its ubiquitous imperialism that has been understood solely in terms of territorial expansion, some scholars have begun telling a complementary story of U.S. imperialism which entails the use of commodities for civilizing purposes. In their cultural analyses of U.S. economic imperialism, for example, Matthew F. Jacobson (2000) and Mona Domosh (2004: 453-467) have come up with the representational differences between civilizing through colonization and civilizing through the sale of goods.

Fourth, U.S. economic hegemony supports its imperial status. Since imperialism has morphed into economic influence lately, the U.S. dollar has become a key node in the nation’s consolidation of its imperial status. The



economy of the capitalist world being tied to the U.S. dollar, this nation has creatively used its monetary might and other techniques of control to effectively dominate the globe, catapulting the United States into the world hegemon. By definition, the hegemon predominates over the global economy to the point that the rest of the world depends on its growth; it sets the so-called universal rules that apply to everyone equally, but which match its own interests (Boswell, 2004: 517-24; Williams, 1985: 46). Clearly, U.S. imperialism, which initially depended on its economic expansionism, is currently tied to an emerging global economy structured around the logic of corporate capitalism under American pupillage.

Fifth, the cultural imperialism of the United States shines over the planet. The nation increases its imperial influence through export of its movies, magazines, television programs, and educational models. As one scholar accurately notes, the commodification of American culture “colonizes the leisure time of people worldwide” (Rydell, in Kroes, 1999: 463).

Last but not the least, an imperial creed, the benchmark of an empire, complements this list of elements supporting an imperial view of the United States. U.S. expansionists have regularly supplied the nation with the ideological justification behind an empire, i.e., an imperial creed. The American imperial creed has shifted from “manifest destiny” to “the American century” to “world responsibility.” Its constant metamorphosis underscores the United States resolve to carry out its global imperial role amid changing circumstances. Barnett (1972: 21) elaborates on its latest creed, that of “world responsibility,” which dated back to World War II:

The imperial creed rests on a theory of law-making. The goal of U.S. foreign policy is to bring about a world increasingly subject to the rule of law. But it is the United States which must “organize the peace.” The United States imposes the “international interest” by setting the ground rules for economic development and military deployment across the planet. Thus the United States sets rules for Soviet behavior in Cuba, Brazilian behavior in Brazil, Vietnamese behavior in Vietnam. Cold War policy is expressed by a series of directives on such extraterritorial matters as whether Britain may trade with Cuba or the government of British Guiana may have a Marxist dentist to run it. Cicero’s definition of the early Roman Empire was remarkably similar. ... Today America’s self-appointed writ runs throughout the world, including the Soviet Union and China, over whose territory the U.S. government has asserted the right to fly military aircraft. The United States, uniquely blessed with surpassing riches and an exceptional history, stands



above the international system, not within it. Supreme among nations, she stands ready to be the bearer of the Law.

In the same vein, the U.S. project to install anti-missiles in some republics of the former Soviet Union constitutes an additional proof of American imperial capabilities, as is its robust rhetoric during the 2008 Russian military attack on Georgia.¹

In sum, U.S. imperial creed, territorial expansion, economic leverage, cultural hegemony, advanced technology, diplomatic maneuvering, and military might account for its imperialism and reinforce its status as an empire. Empire is definitely embedded in U.S. culture and shapes Americans' perception of world affairs.

Though the above elements support an imperial view of the United States, the nation does not understand itself as an empire. In addition to neglecting its domestic imperialism, the United States casts itself as a "caregiver" to the world when feeding its colonial craving. It maintains a colonial agenda under the banner of bringing justice to bear upon injustice throughout the globe and spins an image of public goods provider to rationalize its involvements in extraterritorial matters. As the following paragraphs substantiate, the United States has erected extraterritorial involvements as a long-standing tradition in its interactions with less powerful nations worldwide.

The United States must use its power to "promote education, and advance stable and just government," William J. Bryan, Woodrow Wilson's first Secretary of State agreed with the President, who commissioned the United States to spread its institutions and principles to the rest of the world (Williams, 1976: 144). Henry Kissinger provided another apt illustration when he reportedly made the following declaration (in Dorfman, 1983: 8), in the wake of the military overthrow (on 9/11/1973) of Salvador Allende, a democratically elected president of Chile: "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people." Clearly, U.S. imperial projects are oftentimes hidden in a discourse of rescue. Alongside Williams, Barnett and Said, Cook-Lynn bluntly equates this attitude with America's cocksureness. Moreover, she (2007a: 62-86) attributes the domineering behavior of the United States to its imperial mentality, the driving force behind its global interventions. These interventions, which particularly target Central and South American countries, range from

¹ On 20 August 2008, Poland and the United States signed a missile defense shield agreement allowing the United States to install a missile defense shield in Poland. Russia invaded Georgia from 7-26 August 2008.



political regime change to outright war (Barnet, 1972: 4-24; Williams, 1976: 144; Said, 1993: 287).

For colonial purposes, the United States has intervened in the world with the regularity of a conveyor belt. The resentment voiced by American foes and allies over its decision to police the world *in solo* constitutes overwhelming evidence of its thrust of imperialism. U.S. military-technological might breeds anti-Americanism because the United States flaunts power and ignores all restraints, which is indicative of its imperial mentality (Eisenstein, 2004: 33; Golub, 2004: 763-786; Go, 2004: 18-23; Judis, 2004: 50-59). Moreover, Barnet locates imperialism at the heart of U.S. interventions and reveals that at least one American military offensive had occurred in the Third World every year between 1945 and 1971. This trend has grown exponentially and peaked during the 1991 Gulf War, when the United States deployed 650,000 troops to fight the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, its ally.

As Williams and others have argued, the United States has relied on Providence to carry out its domestic and overseas imperial activities. John L. O'Sullivan initially used the phrase "manifest destiny" to advocate U.S. annexation of Texas, in July 1845. In an editorial in *The Democratic Review*, O'Sullivan denounced foreign principalities that were allegedly interfering with U. S. territorial expansion, because they were "checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." Additionally, in December 1845, he wrote another editorial in the *New York Morning News* about Oregon. O'Sullivan portrayed the United States as a unique political society glowing in the white light of "manifest destiny," claiming that God had given Oregon to the United States to further develop "the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government" entrusted to Americans. This evocation of "manifest destiny" sanctions U.S. expansion over the continent as a God-given right.² O'Sullivan's "magical incantation," Robert L. Beisner (1975: 76-77) and William A. Williams (1976: 97) claim, spoke for all the millions caught up in a mission to extend American civilization.

Under the influence of this "magical incantation," then, most American scholars have neglected U.S. domestic colonialism, seeing its examination as an *unpatriotic, un-American, and/or anti-American* act. Among others, Frieda Knobloch's *The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West* (1996) is an exception which argues agriculture as a colonizing force in the settling of the American West. A large number of U.S. scholars rather focus on its overseas

² See Manifest Destiny at http://lawlib.lclark.edu/blog/native_america/?p=20 (consulted on 2/6/2007).



empire, as is evidenced in recent works by Laura Briggs, Donald E. Pease, Amy Kaplan, and Philip S. Golub.

Briggs' *Reproducing Empire* (2002) discusses the constitution of American Empire in Puerto Rico. Though Pease and Kaplan's edited book, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), represents a major paradigm shift in American studies for underscoring the denial of empire at the heart of American culture, its overriding emphasis is rather on the dialectical relationship between U.S. cultures and international relations. Clearly, this study illuminates American imperial deeds in a context of the global dynamics of empire-building. Furthermore, in exploring the political and economic histories of American imperialism in *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (2002), Kaplan leads the way in integrating imperialism into the cultural history of the United States. While she writes the nation into the transnational history of empire, her integrating the "domestic" with the "foreign" in American history is terse on the colonization of Indian nations, however. Finally, applying historical and sociological analysis to make sense of the post-Cold War imperial behavior by the United States, Golub's *Power, Profit and Prestige* (2010) argues that an embedded culture of imperialism has shaped U.S. foreign policy. Definitely, as Alstyne (1960: 1) once commented, the U.S. experience was from the very beginning grounded on the idea of "an *imperium* - a dominion, state or sovereignty that would expand in population and territory, and increase in strength and power."

Again, despite Alstyne's serious conclusion regarding American imperialism, most mainstream historians have minimized U.S. domestic imperialism, a neglect which makes it a virtuous thing, according to Cook-Lynn (2001: 186-7). Clearly, although Williams and other revisionist historians have examined U.S. foreign activities from a new angle, breaking with the traditional interpretations of its overseas imperialism as a civilizing mission, it is left to others to engage the neglect of its domestic imperialism. A leading figure among them is Cook-Lynn who, against a rose-colored image popularized in mainstream scholarship, paints an ugly picture of the United States as a domestic colonizing nation. Squarely refuting the mainstream's overriding neglect of U.S. internal colonialism, Cook-Lynn pins down the colonization of Indian nations in her fiction and essays. Because the colonization of Indian tribes is treated as a *non-issue*, she advances an oppositional view of U.S. domestic imperialism to counter its scant attention in mainstream scholarship. So, the next section examines U.S. internal imperialism and the denial syndrome associated with it, in light of her polemics.



3. The usa: A domestic colonizing nation and treaty breaker

Three catch-all texts dealing with Cook-Lynn's imperial representation of the United States serve as appropriate entry points to this section. First, she carves the United States as "an efficient colonizer and determined assimilator known throughout the world for its power to persuade and conquer" (2007a: 3). Her second projection, equally critical of the United States, paints this nation as "the most brash violator of human rights [and] the single global power frighteningly disguised as a benign democracy" (2007a: 83). Lastly, her diagnosis concerning the oxymoronic nature of U.S. imperial culture bears underscoring: "What America wants in its race relations with American Indians is to steal and occupy the land, to kill and otherwise destroy the land's inhabitants, and yet provide an ethical example throughout the world of a democratic and 'good' society developed for the purpose of profiting from that activity" (2001: 52).

All three texts magnify the contradiction at the heart of cultures of United States imperialism. In addition, Cook-Lynn (2007a: 72) once admitted that "The elites who have shaped America and continue to do so receive scant attention from the media for their defects; and those who wish to reveal them are rebuffed in countless ways." In light of this admission, the above texts might indicate that the neglect of U. S. domestic imperialism triggers Cook-Lynn to make it the overarching theme of her oeuvre. Seeking to educate the public about this neglect, she equates U. S. internal colonialism with the destruction of Indian lives and cultures and refutes the idea that the United States colonized American indigenous nations for their own good. Moreover, the U. S. colonization – both inside and outside its boundaries – remains the overriding theme of her intellectual production. In her view, the United States remains the world's last colonial power that continues to dominate territories without the consent of the indigenous inhabitants (2007a: 87-113).

Cook-Lynn's initial understanding of imperialism comes primarily from her experience of the Sioux colonization. She (2007a: 25) positions the United States as an internal colonizing power, because she is affected by its domestic imperialism: "Indian societies are the most strictly colonized enclaves in this country or in many other democratic societies. Law has said that enforced colonization of Indians is just. Thus, the legacy of colonization is everywhere in Indian law and history." This specimen illustrates her dissection of federal Indian policies to evidence the colonization of Indian nations and present an imperial view of the United States, which is mostly materialized through rampant anti-Indianism, in her opinion (2001: 53-4).



I previously stated that the United States has heavily relied on Providence to carry out its imperial deeds and that O'Sullivan's magic "manifest destiny" formula was deployed to sanction its expansion over the continent as a God-given right. As one might expect, Cook-Lynn confronts this doctrine, heightening its adverse effects on Indians (2007b: 14): "The Americans' history, in my view, what is called the manifest destiny colonization of this continent, is one of the crimes of human history." O'Sullivan's "manifest destiny" doctrine, she holds, is as devastating to Indian nations as is the neglect of Indian colonization in mainstream scholarship. Taking issue with this construct, then, she argues that U.S. domestic expansionism fomented an ideology of racial superiority and entitlement to land which called for driving out Indians to extend the boundaries of a "chosen nation" and satisfy land-hungry populations. In her view, the "manifest destiny" doctrine was an effective colonizing weapon; it targeted Indian nations that stood in the way of American conquest and ultimately took away their legal, cultural, economic, and political rights. Cook-Lynn showcases the inherent sovereignty of pre-colonial Indian nations to substantiate her claim. Indian nations had known governments of varying sophistication and complexity prior to European invasion. They were sovereign and depended on no other political power to legitimate their acts of government. European powers interacted with these nations through official government-to-government channels to legitimate their transactions. Moreover, at its inception, the United States honored Indian nations and negotiated additional treaties of peace and friendship with them for its survival (Deloria & Lytle, 1998; Deloria & DeMallie, 1999; Deloria & Wilkins, 1999; C-L, 2004a: 21-33; 2004b: 5-10).

The ultimate occupation of the continent reveals that the evocation of "manifest destiny" transcends Texas and Oregon. The nineteenth-century, it must be stressed, marked the beginning of U.S. expansion of its national borders from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. Political scientist Albert Weinberg (1935: 43-71) notes that by the decade of the 1840s, the notion of continental expansion and the concept of "manifest destiny" had become the dominant ideological constructs. In the wake of Weinberg, Ronald Takaki (1993: 166-184; 225-266) and Devon A. Mihesuah (2003: 42-61) recall that the American expansionist effort in the century under consideration fomented an ideology of racial superiority that called for Indian subjugation.

For a balanced story's sake, it is important to underscore that U.S. domestic imperialism was contested in the nineteenth-century, though. Anti-imperialists attacked President Jefferson's purchase of the Louisiana Territory (1803) as



imperial. Evangelical Christians organized mass protests against the Cherokee removal, when Georgia relied on a Supreme Court decision and expelled them from their land, despite their treaty rights to it.³ Beisner's *Twelve Against Empire* (1968) focuses on the anti-imperialist movement in the 1890s, while Williams' *America Confronts a Revolutionary World* (1976: 155) sheds some light on the anti-imperialist fight against the extension of the continental empire into Hawaii, Cuba, the Philippines, and China. Former Presidents Grover Cleveland (1885-1889) and Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893) were anti-imperialists. Cleveland opposed and vetoed the annexation of Hawaii after planters engineered a coup deposing the monarchy. The movement gained momentum in the last decade of the century and led to the creation of the American Anti-Imperialist League in 1898. This association opposed U.S. imperialism because it violated the credo of republicanism, especially the need for consent of the governed. Other works discuss the anti-imperialist mainstream since the time of the Vietnam War (Williams, 1985: 198). Although they have never been the dominant ones, diverse voices have protested against American expansion during the major episodes of territorial aggrandizement. So, Cook-Lynn's oeuvre adds an internal dimension to the anti-imperialist movement, in light of this information.

In addition to confronting the "manifest destiny" doctrine, Cook-Lynn examines U.S.-Indian treaties to demonstrate the colonization of Indian nations. Treaty discussions make up a lion's share in her study of Indian socio-political situation – i.e., the colonization of Indian nations – for three reasons: first, treaties ground U.S.-Indian relations; second, they provide a historical understanding of tribal-federal affairs; third, their violations by the United States entail an expression of its domestic imperial mindset.

Treaties are basic documents of diplomacy in which two nations agree to regulate their future relations according to a set of mutual principles. Although they have legal and political importance, the major requirement in fulfilling them is good will: "Legal points are not nearly as important as the desire and ability of each nation to undertake positive and affirmative steps to ensure that the pledge of faith is not carelessly broken" (Deloria, 1988: 33).

Treaties between the United States and Indian nations involved, among other things, sales of land and property rights that the tribes possessed and that the United States wanted to acquire. Because they are the original owners of the land, Courts have held that tribes keep the right to use it unless they expressly give up

³See <http://www.americanforeignrelations.com/A-D/Anti-Imperialism-The-roots-of-american-antiimperialism.html#ixzz15n4PVLkh> (consulted on 11/18/2010).



that right. Known as the “reserved rights doctrine” from the start of European invasion, the Supreme Court upheld this principle in *United States v. Winans*, ruling that U.S.-Indian treaties are “not a grant of rights to the Indians, but a grant of rights from them - a reservation of those not granted” [198 US 371 (1905)]. Actually, the Court compared U.S.-Indian treaties to contracts between “two sovereign nations,” thereby recognizing them as having the same legal standing as foreign treaties. They are even recognized under the U.S. constitution as the “supreme law of the land,” and by tribal tradition and custom as “sacred covenants” (Wilkins, 1997: 11; Luna, 2000: 94). In sum, U.S.-Indian treaties acknowledged the inherent sovereignty of Indian nations and their rights to self-government.

Even prior to the view held by the Court in the previous paragraph, the United States did end the agreement between equals phase circa 1820. Moreover, it has fabricated other legal instruments for U.S. domestic colonial goals, inaugurating what I call *colonization by abrogation*. Three examples stand out.

First, the Supreme Court introduced the discovery theory into federal Indian law in 1823 in *Johnson v. McIntosh* [21 U.S. 543 (1823)]. The facts of the case are as follows: In 1775, Thomas Johnson and other British citizens purchased land in the Northwest Territory, then in the colony of Virginia, from members of the Piankeshaw Indians. This purchase was arranged under a 1763 proclamation by the King of England. Johnson left this land to his heirs. In 1818, Congress sold 11,000 acres of Johnson’s land to William McIntosh. Upon realizing the competing claims on the land, Johnson’s heirs sued McIntosh in the United States District Court for the District of Illinois to recover the land. The District Court ruled for McIntosh, reasoning that his title was valid since it was granted by Congress. McIntosh’s claim, which was derived from Congress, was superior to Johnson’s claim, which was derived from the non-existent right of Indians to sell their land. Johnson’s heirs appealed to the Supreme Court. In a unanimous decision, the Court held McIntosh’s claim to have precedent over Johnson’s, affirming the District Court. In an opinion, Chief Justice John Marshall discussed the history of the European discovery of the Americas and the legal foundations of the American colonies. He focused on the manner in which each European power acquired land from the indigenous occupants and announced the discovery doctrine, i.e., a European power gained title to the land it discovered. Through the Revolutionary War and the treaties that followed, the Court reasoned, the United States earned the exclusive right to extinguish the “right of occupancy” of the indigenous occupants and “to grant the soil.” The Court established that European settlers



who *discovered the land* had the “sole right of acquiring the soil from the natives” and that Indians themselves did not have the right to sell property to individuals.

The Court upheld the European notion that Indians had only marginal occupation rights to their homelands before European invasion. This disregard of Indian rights occurred after the United States had signed hundreds of treaties with various Indian nations, a legal and historical fact which corroborates Indian nations’ claim to inherent sovereignty (Churchill, 1985: 30-35; Deloria and DeMallie, 1999; C-L, 2001: 52-65). Besides impairing Indian rights to transfer lands to other European nations, this theory rationalized land grabbing and assimilation policy. In addition to taking away Indian title to the land, it negated the sovereignty of Indian nations among worldwide nations.

Second, the Court issued a landmark decision in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* to further the colonization of Indian tribes. In 1830, the state of Georgia forbade the Cherokee nation from operating under its constitution. In its decision, the Marshall Court denied the sovereign right of the said nation, reasoning that “the Cherokees were not a foreign nation capable of filing an action in the Supreme Court against a state of the union” (in Deloria and Lytle, 1998: 16). In dismissing the case, the Supreme Court stated that Indian tribes are “domestic dependent nations” and could not turn to the Court. This dismissal allowed Georgia to strip this nation of its government. Prior to the case, however, the federal government treated Indian tribes as foreign entities in conducting official business with them. Below is its abridged historical context, an adaptation from David H. Getches’ *Cases and Materials on Federal Indian Law* (2005: 95-104).

When the United States was under the Articles of Confederation, a Continental Congress committee condemned the “avaricious” attempts of people in the southern states to get Indian lands “by unfair means,” citing this as “the principal source of difficulties with the Indians.” Also, in 1789, President George Washington (1789-1797) personally complained before the Senate that “the treaty with the Cherokees has been entirely violated by the disorderly white people on the frontiers.” Armed invasions of Indian country in the western lands of Georgia and North Carolina took the lives of hundreds of Indians and dispossessed the tribes of their treaty-protected lands. By the 1820s, most remaining Cherokee land, once spread over five states, was located in Georgia; removal was touted by this time as the final solution to the land issue. Then, gold was discovered on tribal lands in 1827 and Georgia increased its demands on the United States to remove the Cherokee nation.



The Cherokees established for themselves a solid state. Their constitution declared the Cherokee nation to be absolutely sovereign and autonomous on its soil. This nation had an agricultural economy, a written language, and a formal government, including a legislature, and courts. The tribe's 1830 memorandum after Congress passed the Removal Act reminded the federal government that the sovereignty of the Cherokees was secured by treaties with the United States and asserted in the Cherokee constitution (Getches, 2005: 96):

We wish to remain on the lands of our fathers. We have a perfect and original right to remain without interruption or molestation. The treaties with us and the laws of the United States made in pursuance of treaties, guaranty our residence and privileges, and secure us against intruders. Our only request is, that these treaties may be fulfilled, and these laws executed.

But Andrew Jackson was convinced that Indian nations could no longer exist as independent enclaves within the states of the union when he became President (1829-1837). Either Indians must move west or become subject to the laws of the states. Assured of presidential sympathy, the Georgia legislature passed a law at the end of 1828 which added Cherokee lands to certain northwestern counties of Georgia. A second law declared all Cherokee laws void effective June 1, 1830, prompting the Cherokee nation to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Finally, the Supreme Court carved the sovereignty of tribal nations in another landmark case involving Samuel A. Worcester [31 U. S. (6 Pet.) 515, 560-561 (1832)]. The facts of the case are as follows: In September 1831, Worcester and others, all non-Indians, were indicted in the Supreme Court for the Gwinnett County in Georgia for "residing within the limits of the Cherokee nation without a license" and "without having taken the oath to support and defend the constitution and laws of the state of Georgia." They were indicted under a 1830 statute of the Georgia legislature entitled "an act to prevent the exercise of assumed and arbitrary power by all persons, under pretext of authority from the Cherokee Indians." Worcester pleaded that he was, on 15th July, 1831, in the Cherokee nation, out of the jurisdiction of the Court of Gwinnett County; that he was a citizen of Vermont, and entered the Cherokee nation as a missionary under the authority of the President of the United States, and has not been required by him to leave it, and that, with the permission and approval of the Cherokee nation, he was engaged in preaching the gospel; that the state of Georgia ought not to maintain the prosecution, as several treaties had been entered into by the United States with the Cherokee nation by which that nation was acknowledged to be a sovereign nation, and by which the territory occupied by them was guaranteed to them by



the United States. Worcester argued that Georgia could not maintain the prosecution because its statute violated the U.S. constitution and treaties between the United States and the Cherokee nation. However, the Superior Court of Gwinnett overruled the plea: Worcester and others were tried, convicted, and sentenced to the penitentiary for four years.

In an opinion delivered by Chief Justice Marshall, the Court held that the Georgia statute, under which Worcester was prosecuted, violated the U.S. constitution, treaties, and laws of the United States. Noting that “treaties and laws of the United States contemplate the Indian territory as completely separated from that of the states; and provide that all intercourse with them shall be carried on exclusively by the government of the union,” Marshall argued, “The Cherokee nation, then, is a distinct community occupying its own territory in which the laws of Georgia can have no force” (in Getches, 2005: 96). However, while ruling that the Georgia statute interfered with the federal government’s authority and was unconstitutional, the Marshall Court equally encapsulated the status of Indian nations (in Deloria and Lytle, 1998: 17):

Indian nations had always been considered as distinct, independent political communities, retaining their original natural rights, as the undisputed possessors of the soil, from time immemorial, with the single exception imposed by irresistible power, which excluded them from intercourse with any other European potentate than the first discoverer of the coast of the particular region claimed. A weak state, in order to provide for its safety, may place itself under the protection of one more powerful, without stripping itself of the right of government, and ceasing to be a state.

This phraseology is ambiguous on the sovereignty of Indian nations. Among others, David E. Wilkins (1997: 22) rightly argues that the Marshall Court creates the confused state of tribal-federal relations.

In a way, the Marshall Court bears primary responsibility for the continuing colonization by abrogation, which began with Indian removal to federally designated reservations in the 1820s; this phase was completed by the 1850s. Next, Indian nations lost their independent status from 1871 to 1887, a time period when the federal government regarded them as wards entitled to its protection (Cohen, 1982: 106). The peak of Indian colonization is yet to come with allotment and assimilation policies.

To promote an agricultural lifestyle among Indians and open up more lands for colonial settlements, an allotment policy was implemented from 1887 to 1928. It sought to terminate Indian communal landholding and assigned reservation lands



to Indian individuals, a good number of which ended up in non-Indian hands. In *New Indians, Old Wars* (2007a: 183), Cook-Lynn estimates that this policy “reduced treaty-protected lands by two-thirds and brought poverty and death to thousands of Indians.” While allotment took away Indian lands and disrupted Indian communal lifestyle, assimilation policy destroyed many Indian cultures.

The disastrous outcomes of both policies – as exposed in the Meriam Report – led Congress to pass the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) to encourage Indian self-determination and economic development. This empowerment period spanned the years 1928 to the early 1940s; it was short-lived because the trend to incapacitate tribal governments quickly took over, inaugurating the termination and relocation phases. This turnaround in congressional Indian policy resulted in the dramatic departure from the reforms spearheaded by John Collier, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Felix S. Cohen of the Interior Department.

Against U.S. imperial drive to terminate Indian nations, these two reformers of federal Indian policy believed that Indians and their cultures should not be lost to the encroachment of the dominant culture. Both lobbied for the repeal of the 1887 General Allotment Act (the Dawes Act). A proponent of cultural pluralism and the repeal of the Dawes Act, Collier argued against noxious Indian policies. Ultimately, his efforts led to the Meriam Report. Moreover, in collaboration with Cohen – the primary legal architect of the Indian New Deal and drafter of the Indian Reorganization Act – they got this groundbreaking Act passed in 1934, reversing five decades of assimilation policies.

The authors of *Cases and Materials on Federal Indian Law* comment that following calls from Capitol Hill – Congress – to repeal the Indian Reorganization Act and to move away from tribal self-government as official policy, Collier, Commissioner of the BIA since 1933, resigned in 1945. Similarly, Cohen, who took office in the Interior Department in 1933, resigned from this Department in 1948 after federal policy shifted from one of support for tribal governments to that of terminating tribal sovereign status. In consistency with this new goal of federal Indian policy, the Hoover Commission issued its Report on Indian Affairs in 1949, recommending “complete integration”: Indians were required to move “into the mass of the population as full, taxpaying citizens” (Getches, 2005: 199).

In order to remove Indians from what remained of their nations and force them to assimilate into the American culture, Congress promulgated termination and relocation laws in the 1950s. In Cook-Lynn's view, laws passed during this phase practically ended treaty-protected nationhood for indigenous people all over



the United States and treated Indian nations as colonized people (2007a: 206): “These termination and relocation laws were meant to end treaty responsibilities (such as health and education and, certainly land claims) and urbanize large reservation populations to be based in cities such as Seattle, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Oakland.” Particularly, she claims that the passage of Public Law 280 in 1953 materialized Indian disempowerment. This statute granted states of the union criminal and civil jurisdictions in matters involving Indians as litigants on Indian reservations and abrogated their resolutions in tribal or federal courts. She is virulently critical of PL 280 in her *Notebooks* (2007b: 164), because it eliminated Indian law and order structures, caused endemic chaos in Indian Country, and definitely destroyed indigenous social formations.

The current self-determination policy officially started in the 1960s. Despite the erosion of Indian sovereignty, Indian nations are now encouraged to manage their own affairs. Nevertheless, this phase cannot be the end of the story, if U.S.-Indian history is any guide. The United States craves domination and has more colonizing tools in store for Indian nations, I suspect.

The foregoing tracks the evolving process of Indian colonization. Further studies might investigate the discrepancy between the scholarship of U.S. historians on the American overseas empire and their neglect of Indian colonization. It is abhorrent to establish futile distinctions among nations of people who have known colonialism with its woes of oppression and exploitation. It is an ethical question. Fanon (1971: 88) excoriates: “All forms of exploitation resemble one another ... All forms of exploitation are identical because all of them are applied against the same ‘object’: man.” While most mainstream historians have neglected the colonial violence at the heart of U.S.-Indian history, Cook-Lynn’s fiction and non-fiction foreground it. A leading figure in the decolonization debate of Indian nations, Cook-Lynn, imputes the colonization of the continent to the discovery doctrine and vehemently critiques U.S. politicians and scholars for shadowing Indian sovereignty since the beginning of colonization in America (1995: 46-51; 2004a: 21-33; 2004b: 5-10).

The U.S. Supreme Court bears the responsibility of Indian colonization for one reason. Legal scholars claim this Court to be the most remarkable legal institution in the entire world (Kluger, 1975; Patterson, 2001; Lau, 2004; Byrne, 2005). Though it creates no laws, commands no army, and generally remains aloof from the political battles that often occupy the executive and legislative branches of the United States government, its written opinions often change the course of



American history. The Supreme Court bears the primary responsibility of what I term *colonization by abrogation*, because it allows this to happen. Cook-Lynn's relentless critiques of U.S. judicial system are grounded in its historic role in Indian subjugation. Although the Court is supposed to render impartial justice, it chooses otherwise – to side with imperialists.

Cook-Lynn's scrutiny of what I call the *dance of the Supreme Court* brings an insight into U.S. domestic imperialism. She scrutinizes the unsettling role of this institution in the Indian colonization process. If the Court initially upheld the supremacy of Indian treaties over state laws in *Worcester v. Georgia* and ruled that Georgia could not impose its laws on the Cherokee nation, it chipped away at Indian sovereignty in its subsequent decisions. She slashes the Court for its cover-ups of the illegal taking of Indian lands and for facilitating the colonization of American Indians. Her scholarship examines the Court's distortion of the basic understanding behind U.S.-Indian treaties and tracks its interpretation of law to legitimate U.S. politico-colonial actions to suppress Indian nations.

Cook-Lynn claims that the U.S. judicial system masks justice. Her research on U.S.-Indian relations establishes the Court's dismissal of the extra-constitutional status of Indian nations, deciphers the ways in which Congress exercises a claimed plenary power over them, a right that was conferred by the Court. She locates U.S.-Indian treaties in historico-legal contexts to argue what she sees as a travesty of justice. Cook-Lynn thus uncovers the subversion of Indian sovereignty and validates Indian claims to sovereignty. For her (2001: x and 8), failure by scholars to contextualize honestly the facts of U.S.-Indian history has resulted in the disavowal of Indian nationhood and sovereignty, i.e., their colonization by the United States.

Cook-Lynn's hard look at U.S.-Indian relations seeks to illuminate usurpations of tribal sovereignty. She argues, on numerous occasions, that encroachments on Indian treaties violate Indian sovereignty as acknowledged therein, an unmistakable sign of U.S. domestic imperialism. A case in point is the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, which established peace between the Sioux and the United States and set a 26 million acre reserve apart for the "absolute and undisturbed use and occupation" of the Sioux nation. The United States violated this treaty as well. On its violation, she (2007b: 49) comments: "The diminishment of these reserved lands and the structures of tribal poverty developed by law and occupation and congressional and executive order has been the history of the last one hundred years for Sioux Indians in the Northern Plains." The United States champions in treaty breaking, a fact which prompts Vine Deloria, Jr., (1969: 28) to ridicule it for



lecturing Russia on treaty commitments: “America has yet to keep one Indian treaty or agreement despite the fact that the United States government signed over four hundred such treaties and agreements with Indian tribes. It would take Russia another century to make and break as many treaties as the United States has already violated.”

U. S. violations of tribal sovereignty disregard treaty principles that were intended to protect Indian nations against American colonial ambitions and abuses. In particular, the Court’s dismissal of two of these enlightens its choice of colonization over justice.

First, it has put aside the “Canons of Construction,” which caution that treaties are to be construed in a manner favorable to Indian nations; that treaties are to be interpreted as they would have been understood by Indian nations, should competing interpretations arise. In other words, their interpretations must not affect Indian tribes adversely (Getches, 2005: 129).

Second, the Court has condoned U.S. intrusion into Indian self-government in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, despite treaty restrictions. Ultimately, its actions have resulted in a record of broken treaties and unfulfilled promises. Scathingly, Helen H. Jackson (1881/1995: 337-338) has concluded her analysis of how U.S. perfidy devastated the Delaware, Nez Percé, Cheyenne, Winnebago, Ponca, Sioux, and Cherokee Indians:

It makes little difference, however, where one opens the record of the history of the Indians; every page and every year has its dark stain. The story of one tribe is the story of all, varied only by differences of time and place; but neither time nor place makes any difference in the main facts. Colorado is as greedy and unjust in 1880 as was Georgia in 1830, and Ohio in 1795; and the United States Government breaks promises now as deftly as then, and with an added ingenuity from a long practice.

Charles F. Wilkinson argues that one fundamental barrier American Indians have faced is that public understanding of their distinctive issues comes slowly. He adds (in Williams, Jr., 1997: 134): “Their special rights are complex and history-based, emerging from the deep past rather than being ignited by the fire of the moment. In every instance, the Indian position is fragile because it ultimately depends on the capacity and willingness of the majority society to explore unfamiliar intellectual terrain.” Like Wilkinson and Robert A. Williams, Jr., (1997: 6), Cook-Lynn seems convinced that a better public understanding of the historical contexts of U.S.-Indian treaties can move “American Indians from the margins to the center of a history of the legal traditions that have determined Indian



tribalism's rights and status in America." And, as legal scholar Felix S. Cohen (in Wilkins, 1994: 2) comments, the status of American Indians "is not a matter of race or birth but is a matter of contract and consent." Terminating these special arrangements, encroaching upon the sovereign rights of these indigenous nations, speaks volumes to U.S. imperial mentality, when seen against the working definition of imperialism by George H. Nadel and Perry Curtis (1964: 1):

Imperialism is the extension of sovereignty or control, whether direct or indirect, political or economic, by one government, nation or society over another together with the ideas justifying or opposing this process. Imperialism is essentially about power both as end and means. Underlying all forms of imperialism is the belief – at times unshakable – of the imperial agent or nation in an inherent right, based on moral superiority as well as material might, to impose its pre-eminent values and techniques on the "inferior" indigenous nation or society.

As Antony Anghie (2004: 7) concedes, colonialism is about territorial dispossession and economic exploitation. Because public ignorance about U.S.-Indian treaties contributes to public indifference to the internal colonization of Indians, Cook-Lynn discloses their historical contexts, hoping that her efforts can lessen this trivialization of Indian subjugation. Therefore, her elaboration on treaty contexts is a strategic invitation to contemporary Euro-American scholars, who challenge the legality of Indian claims to sovereignty, to revisit U.S.-Indian treaties (2001: 24):

The reality is that from the beginning, the indigenous peoples in North and South America have behaved as nations among other nations, with complex governing and social systems, and a history of treaty-signing with the United States that has been largely ignored and dismissed by American and European scholars.

Against the views of treaty dismissal advocates (i.e., U.S. domestic imperial apologists), she argues that treaties should regulate U.S. Indian relations, an implicit call to end the continuing colonization of Indian nations (2004a: 31-32):

The imperialistic ideology that informs the laws and policies that contribute to the oppression of Indian nations must be acknowledged, challenged, and criticized by scholars so that the writing of history is not seen as mere lip service to global affairs in which democratic ideals are said to be foremost considerations. Simply stated, the disempowerment of Indian individuals and nations in America, along with its social, political, and economic consequences, constitutes a flagrant abuse of national sovereignty.



Cook-Lynn is fighting back popular views that Indian treaties be relegated to oblivion, a hard evidence of an ongoing U.S. domestic imperialism. Treaties sealed the fate of the United States and tribal nations centuries ago, she maintains. Because these legally-binding documents established elementary principles of sovereignty and possessory rights for Indian nations, she opposes U.S. colonial strategies to incorporate Indian treaty rights and land ownership into the ethnic heap of multiculturalism. Consequently, she sees Euro-American scholars who dismiss Indian treaties as accomplices in the U.S. colonization of Indian tribes. Also, she denounces America's cavalier attitude toward Indian nations, critiques its creation of second-class citizens out of sovereign tribal people through colonization, and demands that Indian treaties regulate U.S.-Indian relations. Like Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan Quiche Indian woman and a leading advocate of Indian rights, Cook-Lynn attaches a great importance to U.S.-Indian treaties and agreements. She (2001: 34) believes, like Menchú, that these legally-binding contracts "should be fully respected in order to establish new and harmonious relationships based on mutual respect and cooperation." For her (2001: 55), the only satisfactory alternative remains "the return of lands and the return of assets and the return of the symbols of social order (education, police) to those from whom they were stolen," a consequence of U.S. domestic imperialism.

As her advocacy for Indian land rights in the above text might indicate, Cook-Lynn makes land dispossession a symbol of Indian colonization and holds U.S.-Indian land conflicts as a logical consequence of U.S. internal imperialism: colonialism "has always been about land and resources," she writes in *New Indians, Old Wars* (2007a: 73). Thus, she places land dispossession at the heart of American colonization of Indians, connects the land back to the identity of the colonized, and definitely makes it the essence of an indigenous people (2001: 103):

If we cannot save our homelands, our Indian reserved lands where ancient ideas about god and the universe reside... we can never save our cultures or our languages. If we cannot save the land we will become extinct, for there is no more important value to a native people than the lands of their ancestors. It is in the land that the native finds his morality, his life, his origins, and his survival.

Moreover, Indian land and Indian nations constitute the two sides of the same coin for her (2007a: 199): "Without the possession of land, there are no tribal nations and there is no concomitant relationship between colonials and indigenists." She endows the land with unique nurturing elements for Indian tribes, the dispossession of which entails their cultural, spiritual, and physical passing. As is evidenced in her concern with the illegal / colonial appropriations



of Indian (Sioux) land, this concept grounds her diatribe against U.S. land-snatching policies and underlies her fight for land repossession. Her scholarship, which primarily calls for the return of the Black Hills to the Sioux nation, is rooted in this reality, as is her critique – in *Aurelia* (1999c) – of the destruction of the Missouri River and the flooding of 550 square miles of treaty-protected lands for hydropower along this River. Land restoration tops her prerequisites for any type of meaningful and lasting reconciliation between the United States and Indian nations.

Here lays the crux concerning the hypocritical stance of colonizing nations, the United States included. Colonizing powers made themselves a rule to hold title to a territory if they defeat the native populations and formally annex their lands. However, title to Indian land by right of conquest was a rare occurrence, because Indian treaties of cession were mainly the result of negotiation and purchase (Deloria and Cadwalader, 1984: 193; Cook-Lynn, 1999b: 22-77; 2001: 53-65; 2004a: 21-33). As Vine Deloria, Jr., and Raymond J. DeMallie concur (1999: 745), a large number of treaties were formally negotiated but were never ratified by Congress or rejected by Indian nations themselves after the Senate amended them unacceptably. But the United States has claimed them to be signed, sealed, and delivered:

More critical to the status and rights of American Indians are treaties that were negotiated in good faith but were not ratified by the Senate. If Indian treaties have the same dignity – that is, legal standing – as the treaties of foreign nations, then, the United States should not claim lands cited in treaties it formally rejected. A glance at Royce's *Indian Land Cessions* shows several tracts of land, of not inconsiderable acreage, that are listed as having been ceded to the United States in treaties that were not ratified.

Cook-Lynn equates U.S. unorthodox land grabbing with imperialism and reclaims confiscated lands. This activist for land repossession endlessly claims that Sioux Indians are solely interested in land reform and that no monetary compensation will be enough to deter them from demanding the return of snatched lands (1988: 1-17; 1999a: 103-112; 1999b: 170; 2007a: 7). Because the experienced materiality of colonialism is often grounded in the dispossession and repossession of land, her land repossession demands seek to undermine U.S. domestic colonialism. She exposes U.S. land frauds, confronts the colonial approach with which the nation is plundering Indian resources, and worries about American colonial greed. Her big noise about land repossession aims at decolonizing Indian nations – a call for decolonization.



This ongoing U.S. colonization of Indian nations locates Cook-Lynn's works in a colonial context – a fact she acknowledges in her latest piece of scholarship, *A Separate Country: Postcoloniality and American Indian Nations* (2012). Indeed, Cook-Lynn rearticulates the colonization of Indian nations as a continuing tragedy in this critical study: to suggest otherwise, she holds (xvi), is “an outrageous fraud perpetuated by scholars, thinkers, politicians, and historians.” Clearly, a postcolonial context remains beyond Cook-Lynn. In addition to *A Separate Country*, *Aurelia* (1999c), her political novel, is another grim reminder of the ongoing interference of Euro-Americans in the lives of the Sioux. Therefore, her scholarship and other writings, which seek to acquaint the public with the continuing colonization of Indian nations, equally urge Indian scholars to focus on decolonization strategies. As she hammers home this point in *New Indians, Old Wars* (2007a: 20-21), the colonized should not “simply collaborate with the laws of their masters, make the best of it, sign peace treaties, and watch the lands and lives of indigenous populations be overtaken.” They must fight back: Cook-Lynn fights back by advancing a critical and oppositional view of U.S. imperialism, both at home and abroad. Coupled with her numerous texts deployed throughout this essay, her acerbic viewpoints in the following wrap-up paragraphs equally underscore the intensity of her fight, besides projecting a stark, gloomy, and nasty colonizing picture of the United States.

Cook-Lynn represents the United States as a colonizing nation, both at home and abroad (2007a: 68):

All of the nations of the past, one supposes, as one contemplates history, rose to empire as hard fighters, pagans, and adventurers. But none has been so successful as has the inchoate United States of America in convincing the world, and itself, of its own moral destiny, making believe that it has the right to colonize the resources of the world simply because it is good, pretending that it can impose world order on others who are bad by paying off its collaborators, declaring that it can decide who will be eligible to stake its claim and who will not.

The above text, which essentially locates the United States as a colonizing nation, stresses its unparalleled imperial stature: this nation is a rounded colonial power, both internally and externally. Prior to the 1960s, however, the myth of American exceptionalism has led the public to view U.S. imperialism in benevolent terms. In particular, the business community and policy makers have taken the position that the United States seeks to liberate native people through colonialism. In an anti-imperialist rhetoric tainted with altruism, they have vaunted the nation as mending what its predecessors had broken. Apologists of American expansion



have even argued that the United States exempts Empire from the burdens of exploitation and domination, downplaying U.S. imperialism (Barnet, 1972: 20; Dirks, 2006: 335).

Against the above views, revisionist historians have argued that every expansionist power has felt uniquely justified to colonize others; as a result, they have interpreted U.S. diplomacy as colonialist since the 1960s. Arguing expansion as a polite word for empire, they have challenged the exceptionalism of United States imperialism, applying the same standard to assess its imperial history. While these revisionist historians have brought a new perspective on U.S. overseas imperialism, they have eclipsed its domestic aspect. Cook-Lynn jumps in here, taking up the neglect of U.S. internal colonialism. In addition to foregrounding the colonization of Indian nations, her works underscore the public's ignorance about American domestic imperialism (2007a: 83; italics in the original):

What is accepted by Americans is that it is an anticolonial country going about "freeing" others and promoting democracy around the world, promoting "rescue missions" in other sovereign territories for people "less fortunate." The truth about American history is this: *America is the first settler-colonial country to achieve great power in our time*, its power emerging from its earliest days as it spread political terrorism against the tribal nations; as it stole civilian and tribal property; as it coerced the support of its victims, turning them into proxies for their own agendas; as it eroded citizens' rights in tribal enclaves; as it committed atrocities among civilian populations; and as it claimed its political cover when the places of the victims became the breeding ground for chaos.

She does not refrain from critiquing the United States for claiming its innocence after wrecking Indian nations and creating chaos in their places (2001: 94):

Since America rarely admits to its crimes and since many of the major scholars both Indian and white do not analyze as criminal the events of a history of colonization in America, another major false idea about America's beginnings has, therefore, to do with America's "innocence." The western story, in particular, describes America's good intentions, America's innocence, nobility, grandeur, naivete, trust, optimism. America is, according to this false idea, a new and empty land, a land of hope and endless opportunity, a land of grand possibilities whose indigenous inhabitants have been and are willing to sacrifice themselves for the new order. This theme of innocence and hopefulness is pervasive, but it says nothing about the fact that Indians are exempted from this hopeful vision.



In light of her virulent criticism of the Iraqi invasion and oppositional stance on American imperialism at home and abroad, the above view goes beyond Indian nations (2007b: 14):

The Americans' history, in my view, what is called the manifest destiny colonization of this continent, is one of the crimes of human history. And, now, it would seem that America will move on from this dark and bloody ground, to the winning of the entire globe, if what is going on in the Middle East is any measure. The deaths of thousands of Iraqis and the destruction of their cities and their civilization, their art and geography, seem to be inconsequential. Modern Americans have become the Spanish Conquistadors who burned to the ground the temples of the Incas, the Mayas, and the Aztecs...

By extension, then, she blames American imperialism for creating social, economic, and political chaos in other nations as well. In any case, her view that the United States plays out its imperial destiny abroad fittingly serves as hard evidence (2007a: 72):

If there is one policy behind the scenes that links the Iraqi experience in the twenty-first century to the Lakota/Dakota Sioux experience of the nineteenth, it is the policy of imperialistic dominance. Trampling on the sovereignty of other nations for most of its several centuries of nationhood has been the legacy of the American Republic's power. This is a history that American mainstream thinking ignores as it goes to war around the globe.

Locating the will to win the entire world as the dominant feature of American culture, Cook-Lynn hereby accuses the United States of doing as it pleases both at home and abroad, playing havoc with its colonized. She establishes a common denominator between Iraqi and Indian invasions and solidly connects the Iraqi case to U.S. domestic colonialism tainted with an Americanization ideology (2007a: 65-86). An anonymous reviewer of *New Indians, Old Wars* nicely puts this analogy on her behalf:

[T]he Indian Wars of Resistance to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial effort to seize native lands and resources must be given standing in the face of the ever-growing imperial narrative of America – because the terror the world is now witnessing may be the direct consequence of events which began in America's earliest dealings with the natives of this continent.⁴

⁴ See <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/37fsp4qb9780252031663.html> (consulted on 5/24/2015).



So, by claiming that the United States continues to subjugate people throughout the globe, Cook-Lynn positions this nation as a global colonizing power, and connects its Empire-building practices back to practices by other colonial powers. Conclusively, her scholarship presents a rounded picture of U.S. imperialism: it addresses its domestic and outside invasions.

Though the above extracts are from her essays, Cook-Lynn is equally critical of American imperialism in her fiction. In addition to *Aurelia* (1999c) mentioned earlier, her first novel, *Then Badger Said This* (1983), stabs at the ongoing colonization of the Sioux nation. Besides emphasizing Indian oppression, her creative writing charges that the trivialization of U.S. domestic imperialism “encourages colonial America not only to see itself through rose-colored glasses but also, more significantly, to applaud its continuing infringement on its own principles of due process and fairness to Indian nations” (2007a: 112). To be sure, her scholarship and other writings offer a unique insight into the cultures of United States imperialism, underscore the pervasiveness of imperialism in American culture, and definitely magnifies the denial associated with U.S. domestic imperialism (2007a: 71-2):

The unfeeling coarseness of America has rarely been exposed because the mainstream refuses to look at the Indian-white history of the early centuries, but the foreign policy of violence and expansionism has never been lost on American Indian experiences and lives. The elites who have shaped America and continue to do so receive scant attention from the media for their defects; and those who wish to reveal them are rebuffed in countless ways.

Cook-Lynn hereby recognizes that some mainstream scholars are equally critical of Indian subjugation. Her acknowledging anti-imperial forces in the United States entails one thing: the narratives of U.S. overseas imperialism have shaped her representation of this nation as a global empire-builder. In addition to scholars who have interpreted U.S. diplomacy as colonialist, Felix S. Cohen, Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., and Helen H. Jackson are included in her pantheon as reference intellectuals. While she identifies Cohen as a foremost scholar who “assisted an academic culture in understanding the importance of defending the moral and legal rights of minority populations in America and in defending the situation of American Indian populations, indigenous populations, in specific ways” (1999d: 16), she praises Berkhofer, Jr., for showing in *The White Man's Indian* how the Indian was created and for arguing to move beyond that condition (1997: 15-16). She lauds Jackson because as early as 1881, she published a historical account of the U.S. government's injustice to American Indians in *A Century of Dishonor* and



followed suit with *Ramona* (1884), which presented a bleaker condition of Indians. Beyond addressing U.S. domestic imperialism, these three have defended Indians against U.S. colonization. Her reference to them as model intellectuals confirms the coexistence of mainstream anti-imperial scholars alongside advocates of American Empire, though anti-imperialists have never been the dominant force in the nation.

4. Conclusion

In addition to being a global colonizer, the United States is mainly represented as a domestic colonizing power and a treaty breaker in Cook-Lynn's art. She is unrelenting in her accusations of the United States in her essays and novels, constantly charging America with looking at the speck of sawdust in the eye of other countries while forgetting a plank in its own eye. She seems unforgiving, bashing the United States whenever the occasion arises. Humans are not perfect, nor are nations of people. Unlike Cook-Lynn, I hope for appropriate change in the colonial policy of the United States and believe in its culture of democracy, though I remain perplexed by its manipulations of Indian nations. For now, it is challenging to square its acclaimed democratic culture with its continuing colonization of Indian nations.

Definitely, U. S. scholars prioritize American overseas activities and neglect the nation's domestic imperialism by reducing the colonization of Indian nations to a *non-issue*. Cook-Lynn exemplifies this internal colonialism with invasions of Indian nations. Accordingly, a domestic imperial image of the United States crisscrosses her oeuvre, complementing its one-sided picture available in mainstream scholarship. Her study of U.S. internal colonialism, which sends a loud and clear message about the daunting task of Indian decolonization, equally acknowledges the limits of her works to affect it. Her call to Indian scholars, for that matter, is a demand for collective effort to achieve it.

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