

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a classical building with tall, fluted columns. Several American flags are hanging from the building's facade, arranged in a diagonal line from the bottom left towards the top right. The lighting is somewhat dim, giving the image a serious and historical feel.

Stephen Burman

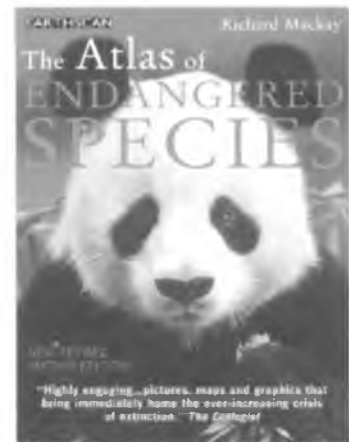
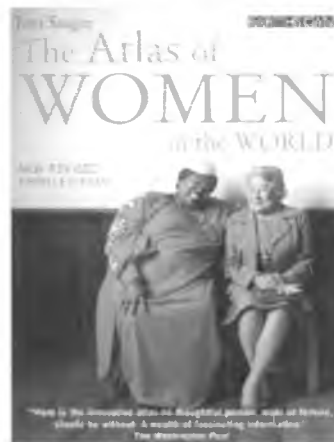
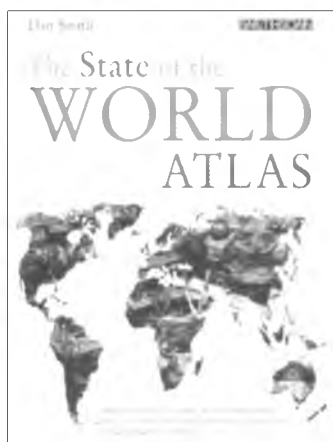
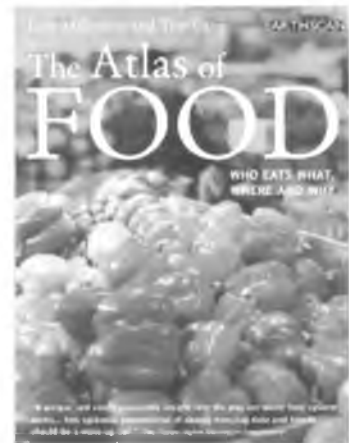
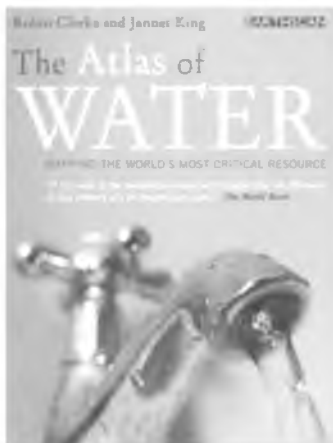
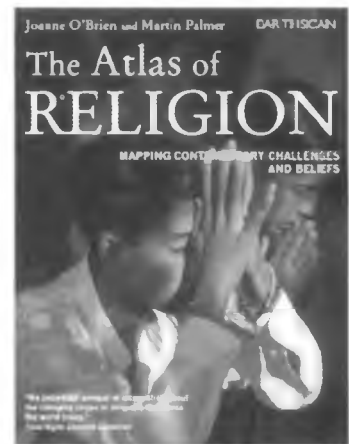
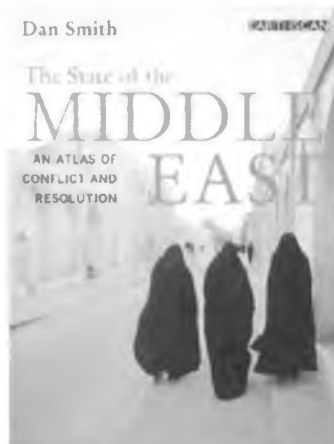
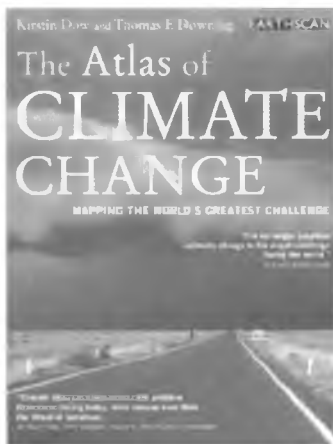
The State of the
AMERICAN
HOW THE
USA SHAPES
THE WORLD **EMPIRE**

"I applaud this long-awaited atlas.
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would graphically represent some of
the major impacts of the
US presence in world order.
This does a terrific job."

Stephen Gill, York University

Stephen Burman is Dean of Humanities at the University of Sussex, UK.
His books include *America in the Modern World: The Transcendence of US Hegemony* and *The Black Progress Question: Explaining the African-American Predicament*, which received a Gustavus Myers Award for outstanding work in the field of human rights.

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THE STATE OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

HOW THE USA SHAPES THE WORLD

STEPHEN BURMAN

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This one is for George

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Stephen Burman
April 2007



Introduction

AN IMPERIAL HISTORY?

The USA is the only nation whose influence is truly global. The demise of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s left it without a military rival and, in the 21st century, its international role has been described increasingly in terms of empire. This is not intended to imply the territorial conquest and direct rule characteristic of past empires, such as those of the Romans, Ottomans, and British, but is a useful construct within which to consider America's multifarious role in shaping the contemporary world.

Many Americans may be reluctant to consider their country as an imperial nation. In the Declaration of Independence of 1776, the Founding Fathers declared, as the first principle of their philosophy of government, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal" – a sentiment not compatible with an imperial mentality. Throughout its history, the USA has not generally sought or retained colonies, even when its power has permitted it to do so. In the aftermath of the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson used American influence to dismantle European empires and to create a just peace on the principle of self-determination. Later, in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a speech on the day before Pearl Harbor, looked to create a world based on four essential human freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. These principles came to underpin the UN Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, which many would argue has guided US foreign policy since the Second World War.

There is another perspective on American history, however, which paints a different picture. The settlement of North America by Europeans can be seen as an invasion of land that belonged to native inhabitants, and US treatment of native Americans in the century or more after independence bore all the hallmarks of what today we call ethnic cleansing. Fifteen percent of the total area of the USA is land that was purchased under duress from Mexico as a condition of the end of the Mexican–American War of 1846–48. In foreign policy, too, the USA showed empire-building tendencies. In 1823, President James Monroe formulated a doctrine that the USA would act to prevent European powers interfering in the affairs of the Americas. At the beginning of the 20th century, in 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt extended the Monroe Doctrine to assert the right of the USA to intervene in the

“THE UNITED STATES
IS UNIQUE BECAUSE
WE ARE AN EMPIRE
OF IDEALS.”

RONALD REAGAN
US PRESIDENT
1980–88