



# **The Education of an Anti-Imperialist: Robert La Follette and U.S. Expansion (Studies in American Thought and Culture)**

*Richard Drake*

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Robert M. La Follette (1855-1925), the Republican senator from Wisconsin, is best known as a key architect of American Progressivism and as a fiery advocate for liberal politics in the domestic sphere. But "Fighting Bob" did not immediately come to a progressive stance on foreign affairs.

In *The Education of an Anti-Imperialist*, Richard Drake follows La Follette's growth as a critic of America's wars and the policies that led to them. He began his political career with conventional Republican views of the era on foreign policy, avidly supporting the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars. La Follette's critique of empire emerged in 1910, during the first year of the Mexican Revolution, as he began to perceive a Washington-Wall Street alliance in the United States' dealings with Mexico. La Follette subsequently became Congress's foremost critic of Woodrow Wilson, fiercely opposing United States involvement in World War I. Denounced in the American press as the most dangerous man in the country, he became hated and vilified by many but beloved and admired by others.

La Follette believed that financial imperialism and its necessary instrument, militarism, caused modern wars. He contended they were twin evils that would have ruinous consequences for the United States and its citizens in the twentieth century and beyond.

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