

# Becoming a World Power



*Dewey at Manila Bay, May 1, 1898* (painting by Rufus Zogbaum): American Expansionism Triumphant. What artistic elements make this a heroic painting? (CORBIS)

## American Stories

### Private Grayson Kills a Soldier in the Philippines

In January 1899, the U.S. Senate was locked in a dramatic debate over whether to ratify the Treaty of Paris concluding the recent war with Spain over Cuban independence. At the same time, American soldiers uneasily faced Filipino rebels across a neutral zone around the outskirts of Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Until recent weeks, the Americans and Filipinos had been allies, together defeating the Spanish to liberate the Philippines. The American fleet under Admiral George Dewey had destroyed the Spanish



naval squadron in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898. Three weeks later, an American ship brought from exile the native Filipino insurrectionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo to lead rebel forces on land, while U.S. gunboats patrolled the seas.

At first, the Filipinos looked on the Americans as liberators. Although the intentions of the United States were never clear, as in a later intervention in Iraq, Aguinaldo believed that, as in Cuba, the Americans had no territorial ambitions. They would simply drive the Spanish out and then leave. In June, therefore, Aguinaldo declared the independence of the Philippines and began setting up a constitutional government. American officials pointedly ignored the independence ceremonies. When an armistice ended the war in August, American troops denied Aguinaldo's Filipino soldiers an opportunity to liberate their own capital city and shunted them off to the suburbs. The armistice agreement recognized American rights to the "harbor, city, and bay of Manila," while the proposed Treaty of Paris gave the United States the entire Philippine Islands archipelago.

Consequently, tension mounted in the streets of Manila and along 14 miles of trenches separating American and Filipino soldiers. Taunts, obscenities, and racial epithets were shouted across the neutral zone. Barroom skirmishes and knifings filled the nights; American soldiers searched houses without warrants and looted stores. Their behavior was not unlike that of English soldiers in Boston in the 1770s.



**IMAGE**  
U.S. Soldiers in  
the Philippines,  
1899

On the night of February 4, 1899, Privates William Grayson and David Miller of Company B, 1st Nebraska Volunteers, were on patrol in Santa Mesa, a Manila suburb surrounded on three sides by insurgent trenches. The Americans had orders to shoot any Filipino soldiers in the neutral area. As the two Americans cautiously worked their way to a bridge over the San Juan River, they heard a Filipino signal whistle, answered by another. Then a red lantern flashed from a nearby blockhouse. The two froze as four Filipinos emerged from the darkness on the road ahead. "Halt!" Grayson shouted. The native lieutenant in charge answered, "Halt!"—either mockingly or because he had similar orders. Standing less than 15 feet apart, the two men repeated their commands. After a moment's hesitation, Grayson fired, killing his opponent with one bullet. As the other Filipinos jumped out at them, Grayson and Miller shot two more. Then they turned and ran back to their own lines shouting warnings of attack. A full-scale battle followed.

The next day, Commodore Dewey cabled Washington that the "insurgents have inaugurated general engagement" and promised a hasty suppression of the insurrection. The outbreak of hostilities ended the Senate debates. On February 6, the Senate ratified the

Treaty of Paris, thus formally annexing the Philippines and sparking a war between the United States and Aguinaldo's Filipino nationalist revolutionaries, who represented a small but growing percentage of the population.

In a guerrilla war similar to those that Americans would fight later in the twentieth century in eastern Asia and the Middle East, Filipino nationalists tried to undermine the American will by hit-and-run attacks. American soldiers, meanwhile, remained in heavily garrisoned cities and undertook search-and-destroy missions to root out rebels and pacify the countryside. The Filipino-American War lasted until July 1902, three years longer than the Spanish-American War that caused it and involving far more troops, casualties, and monetary and moral costs.

**How did** all this happen? What brought Private Grayson to "shoot my first nigger," as he put it, halfway around the world? For the first time in history, regular American soldiers found themselves fighting outside North America. The "champion of oppressed nations," as Aguinaldo said, had turned into an oppressor nation itself, imposing the American way of life and American institutions on faraway peoples against their will. It would not be the last time.

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### Conclusion: The Responsibilities of Power



The war in the Philippines marked a critical transformation of America's role in the world. As the United States exerted its influence on the world, so also did global events influence the American people. Within a few years at the turn of the century, the United States acquired an empire, however small by European standards, and established itself as a world power. In this chapter, we will review the historical dilemmas of America's role in the world in the late nineteenth century when expansionism was increasing worldwide. In

this global context, we will examine the motivations for intensified expansionism by the United States in the 1890s and how they were manifested in Cuba, the Philippines, and elsewhere. Finally, we will look at how the fundamental patterns of American foreign policy to this day were established for Latin America, eastern Asia and the Middle East, and Europe. Throughout, we will see that the tension between idealism and self-interest that has permeated America's domestic history has also guided its foreign policy.

## STEPS TOWARD EMPIRE

The circumstances that brought Privates Grayson and Miller from Nebraska to the Philippines originated deep in American history. As early as the seventeenth-century Puritan migration, Americans worried about how to do good in a sinful world. John Winthrop sought to set up a “city on a hill” in the New World, a model community of righteous living for the rest of the world to imitate. “Let the eyes of the world be upon us,” Winthrop had said. That wish, reaffirmed during the American Revolution, became a permanent goal of American policy toward the outside world.

### America as a Model Society

Nineteenth-century Americans, like the Russians, French, English, and Chinese, continued to believe in their nation's special mission in the world. But only the United States claimed a mission of democratic representative government. The Monroe Doctrine in 1823, pointing out the differences between autocratic Europe and republican America, warned Europe's monarchies to keep out of the New World and not to interfere with emerging Latin American independence movements. In succeeding decades, distinguished European visitors came to observe the “great social revolution” in the United States. They found representative and responsive democratic political and legal institutions, vibrant Protestantism, boundless energy, and an ability to apply unregulated economic activity and inventive genius to stupendous achievements of production.

In an evil world, Americans then, as now, believed that they stood as a transforming force for good. But how could a nation committed to isolationism—to avoiding entanglements with European nations—do the transforming? One way was to encourage other countries to observe and imitate the good example set by the United States. Other nations, however,

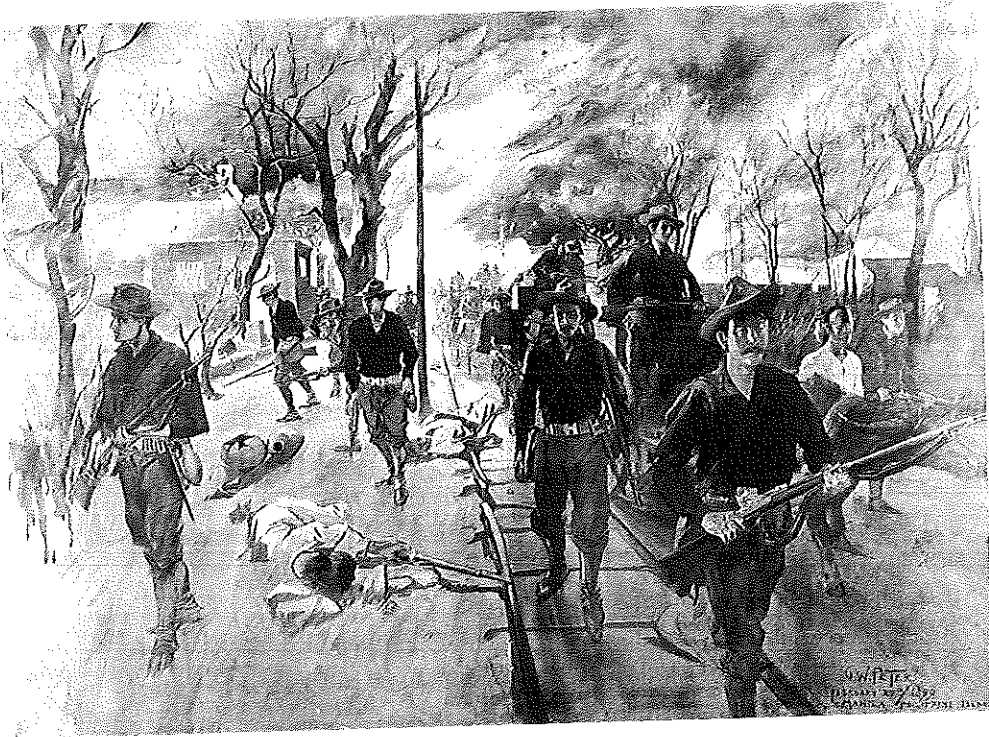
were often attracted to competing models of modernization, such as socialism, or preferred their own religious traditions, such as Islam. Such differences often led to a more aggressive American foreign policy, as seen in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York City and the Pentagon.

Patience and passivity are not characteristic traits of the American people. Therefore, throughout the country's history, American leaders have actively and sometimes forcefully sought to impose their ideas and institutions on others. These unclearly intentioned international crusades, as in recent years in the Caribbean, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, have not always been well received. Hence, the effort to spread the American model to an imperfect world has been both a blessing and a burden—for others as well as for the American people.

### Early Expansionism

Persistent expansionism marked the first century of American independence. Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana in 1803, the taking of Indian lands during the War of 1812, and the midcentury pursuit of “Manifest Destiny” spread the United States across North America. In the 1850s, Americans began to look beyond their own continent as Commodore Perry in 1853 “opened” Japan, and southerners sought more cotton lands in the Caribbean. Although generally not entangled with European affairs for most of the century (as Washington and Jefferson had advised), the American people and government were very much entangled elsewhere. To the Mexicans, and to the Cherokee, Creek, Iroquois, Shawnee, Lakota, Navajo, Nez Percé, and other Native American nations, the United States was far from isolationist, a concept that referred only to Europe.

After the Civil War, Secretary of State William Seward spoke of an America that would hold a “commanding sway in the world,” destined to exert



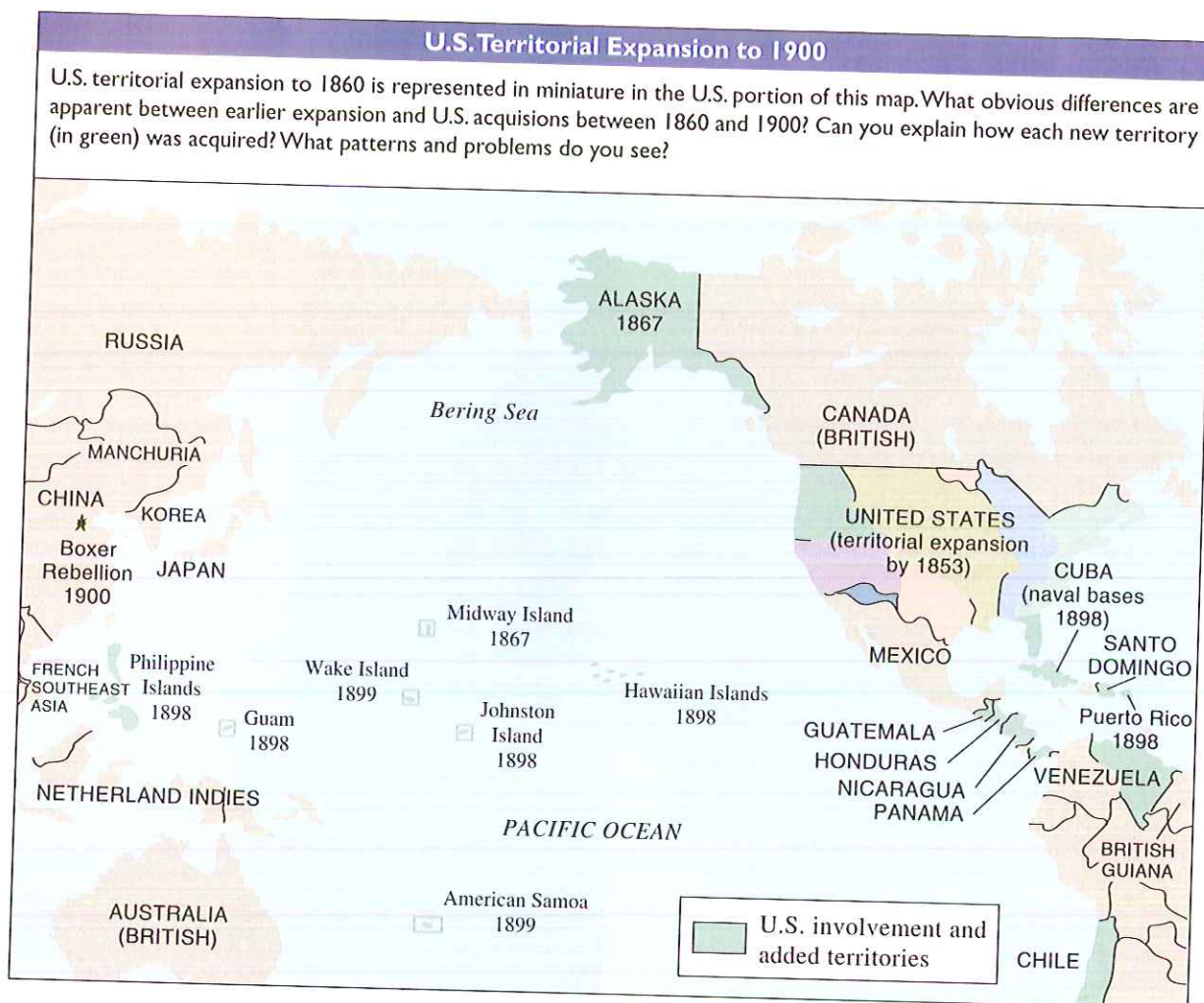
**Waging War in the Philippines** When the United States went to war against Spain in 1898, partly to help the Cubans win their independence from imperial Spanish rule, no one could have imagined the ironic outcome. Within a year, Americans would impose imperial rule over the Philippines, marching through and burning villages (as the Twentieth Kansas Volunteers are doing here) and waging war against civilians in a faraway Asian land. How did that happen? (Above: Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago; right: Keystone-Mast Collection [24039], URL/California Museum of Photography, University of California at Riverside)



commercial domination “on the Pacific ocean, and its islands and continents.” He purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867 for \$7.2 million and acquired a coaling station in the Midway Islands near Hawaii, where missionaries and merchants were already active. He advocated annexing Cuba and other Caribbean islands, tried to negotiate a treaty for an American-built canal through Panama, and dreamed of “possession” of the entire North and Central American continent and ultimately “control of the world.”

In 1870, foreshadowing the Philippines debates 30 years later, supporters of President Grant, arguing the strategic and economic importance of the Caribbean, tried to persuade the Senate to annex Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola. Opponents responded that annexation violated American principles of self-determination and government by consent. They also claimed that brown-skinned Caribbean peoples were unassimilable. Expansionism, moreover, might involve foreign entanglements, a large and expensive navy,





bigger government, and higher taxes; the Senate rejected annexation.

Although reluctant to add territory outright, Americans eagerly sought commercial dominance in Latin America and Asia, with a canal through Central America to facilitate interoceanic traffic. But American talk of building a canal across Nicaragua produced only Nicaraguan suspicions. In 1881, secretary of state James G. Blaine sought to convene a conference of American nations to promote hemispheric peace and trade. Latin Americans may have wondered what Blaine intended, for in 1881 he intervened in three separate border disputes in Central and South America, in each case at the cost of goodwill. Conditions worsened in 1889. A barroom brawl in Chile resulted in the death of two American sailors, and President Harrison threatened war, demanding “prompt and full reparation.” After Chile complied, Blaine held the first Pan-American Conference to improve economic ties among the nations of the Americas.

U.S. economic influence spread to the Pacific. In the mid-1870s, American sugar-growing interests in

the Hawaiian Islands were strong enough to put whites in positions of influence over the monarchy. In 1875, they obtained a treaty admitting Hawaiian sugar duty-free to the United States, and in 1887, the United States also won exclusive rights to build a naval base at Pearl Harbor. Native Hawaiians resented the influence of American sugar interests, especially as they brought in Japanese to replace native people in the sugarcane fields, with some 200,000 arriving between 1885 and 1924.

In 1891, the nationalistic queen Liliuokalani assumed the throne and pursued a policy of “Hawaii for the Hawaiians.” Two years later, white planters, fearful that the queen might turn to Japan for support, staged a coup with the help of U.S. gunboats and marines and imprisoned the queen. With the success of their bloodless coup, called by one journalist a revolution “of sugar, by sugar, for sugar,” the whites sought formal annexation by the friendly Harrison administration. But when Grover Cleveland, who opposed imperial



Queen Liliuokalani—Portrait, 1887



expansion, returned to the presidency for his second term, he stopped the move. The sugar growers waited patiently for a more desirable time for annexation, which came during the war in 1898.

## American Expansionism in Global Context

American forays into the Pacific and Latin America brought the United States increasingly into contact and conflict with European nations. The nineteenth century was marked by European imperial expansionism throughout much of the world. In southern and southeastern Asia, the British were in India, Burma, and Malaya; the French in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos; the Dutch in Singapore and the East Indies; and the Spanish in the Philippines. These and other colonial powers divided China—its Manchu dynasty weakened by the opium trade, internal conflicts, and European pressure—into spheres of economic influence. A Chinese newspaper editorial complained that other nations “all want to satisfy their ambitions to nibble at China and swallow it.” The Russians wrested away Manchuria, and Japan took Korea after intervention in a Korean peasant rebellion in 1894. In addition, China was forced to cede Taiwan and southern Manchuria to Japanese influence and control.

In Africa, Europeans scrambled to gain control of both coastal and interior areas, with England, France, Germany, Portugal, and Belgium grabbing the most land and exploiting African peoples. Only two independent African nations existed in the late nineteenth century: Liberia, founded in 1822 by Americans to resettle free blacks, and the fragmented kingdom of Ethiopia,



World Colonial Empires, 1900

which thrashed the Italians when they invaded in 1896. With nearly all of Africa divided, the only way imperial powers could acquire more land was to fight one another. Thus, in 1899, war broke out in southern Africa between the British and the Boers, descendants of Dutch settlers—a war waged with a savagery Europeans usually reserved for black indigenous peoples. The English killed cattle, destroyed Boer farms, and drove civilians into camps where an estimated 20,000 women and children perished from starvation and malnutrition. The British won, but at a horrific cost.

Africa was not then of interest to the United States, but in the Pacific and the Caribbean, it was inevitable that the United States, a late arrival to imperialism, would collide with European rivals. Moving outward from Hawaii closer to the markets of eastern Asia, the United States acquired a naval and

coaling station in the Samoan Islands in 1878, sharing the port with Great Britain and Germany. American and German naval forces almost fought each other there in 1889—before a typhoon ended the crisis by wiping out both navies. Troubles in the Pacific also occurred in the late 1880s over the American seizure of several Canadian ships in fur seal and fishing disputes in the Bering Sea, settled only by the threat of British naval action and an international arbitration ruling, which ordered the United States to pay damages.

Closer to home, the United States sought to replace Great Britain as the most influential nation in Central America and northern South America. In 1895, a boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guyana threatened to bring British intervention against the Venezuelans. President Cleveland, needing a popular political issue during the depression, asked Secretary of State Richard Olney to send a message to Great Britain. Invoking the Monroe Doctrine, Olney’s note (stronger than Cleveland intended) called the United States “practically sovereign on this continent” and demanded international arbitration to settle the dispute. The British ignored the note, and war loomed. Both sides realized that war between two English-speaking nations would be an “absurdity,” and the boundary dispute was settled.

Despite expansionist bluster, these encounters showed that the United States in 1895 had neither the means nor a consistent policy for enlarging its role in the world. The diplomatic service was small and unprofessional. No U.S. embassy official in Beijing spoke Chinese. The U.S. Army, with about 28,000 men, was smaller than Bulgaria’s. The navy, dismantled after the Civil War and partly rebuilt under President Arthur, still had many obsolete ships and ranked no higher than tenth in the world. By 1898, things would change.

## EXPANSIONISM IN THE 1890S

In 1893, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner wrote that for three centuries “the dominant fact in American life has been expansion.” The “extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries,” he thought, indicated still more expansionism. Turner struck a responsive chord in a country that had always been restless and optimistic. With the western frontier declared closed, Americans would surely look for new frontiers, for mobility and markets as well as for morality and missionary activity. The motivations for the expansionist impulse of the late 1890s resembled those



that had prompted Europeans to settle the New World in the first place: greed, glory, and God. We will examine expansionism as a reflection of profits, patriotism, piety, and politics.

### Profits: Searching for Overseas Markets

Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana bragged in 1898 that “American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours.” Americans such as Beveridge revived older dreams of an American commercial empire in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. American businessmen saw huge profits beckoning in heavily populated Latin America and Asia, and they wanted to get their share of these markets, as well as access to the sugar, coffee, fruits, oil, rubber, and minerals that were abundant in these lands.

Understanding that commercial expansion required a stronger navy and coaling stations and colonies, business interests began to shape diplomatic and military strategy. Senator Orville Platt of Connecticut said in 1893: “A policy of isolationism did well enough when we were an embryo nation, but today things are different.” But not all businesspeople in the 1890s liked commercial expansion or a vigorous foreign policy. Some preferred traditional trade with Canada and Europe rather than risky new ventures in Asia and Latin America. Some thought it more important to recover from the depression than to annex distant islands.

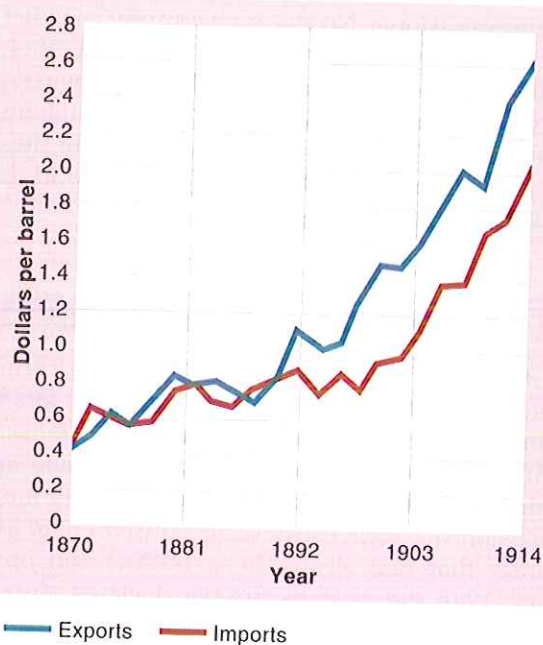
But the drop in domestic consumption during the depression prompted businesses to expand into new markets to sell surplus goods. The tremendous growth of American production in the post-Civil War years made expansionism more attractive than drowning in overproduction, cutting prices, or laying off workers, which would increase social unrest. The newly formed National Association of Manufacturers, which led the way, proclaimed in 1896 that “the trade centers of Central and South America are natural markets for American products.”

Despite the 1890s depression, products spewed from American factories at a staggering rate. The United States moved from fourth place in the world in manufacturing in 1870 to first place in 1900, doubling the number of factories and tripling the value of farm output. The United States led the world in railroad construction and such mass-produced technological products as agricultural machinery, sewing machines, electrical implements, cash registers, and telephones. Manufactured goods grew nearly fivefold between 1895 and 1914. The total value of American exports tripled, from \$434 million in 1866 to nearly \$1.5 billion in 1900. By 1914, exports had risen to \$2.5 billion, a 67 percent increase over 1900. The increased trade continued to go mainly to Europe rather than Asia. In 1900, for example, only 3 to 4 percent of U.S. exports went to China and Japan. But interest in Asian markets continued to grow (the number of American firms in China rose from 50 in 1870 to 550 by 1930), especially as agricultural output continued to increase and prices stayed low.

Investments followed a similar pattern. American direct investments abroad increased from about \$634 million to \$2.6 billion between 1897 and 1914. Although the greatest activity was in Britain, Canada, and Mexico, most attention focused on actual and potential investment in Latin America and Eastern Asia. Central American investment increased from \$21 million in 1897 to \$93 million by 1914, mainly in mines, railroads, and banana and

#### American Foreign Trade, 1870–1914

After a rather gradual increase in trade through the boom-and-bust cycles of the 1870s and 1880s and an actual dip during the depression of 1893–1895, American foreign trade saw spectacular increases during the Republican era of Presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft. What is the relationship between foreign trade and imperial expansion?



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.



coffee plantations. At the turn of the century came the formation and growth of America's largest multinational corporations: the United Fruit Company, Alcoa Aluminum, Du Pont, American Tobacco, and others. Initially slow to respond to investment and market opportunities abroad, these companies soon supported an aggressive foreign policy.

### Patriotism: Asserting National Power

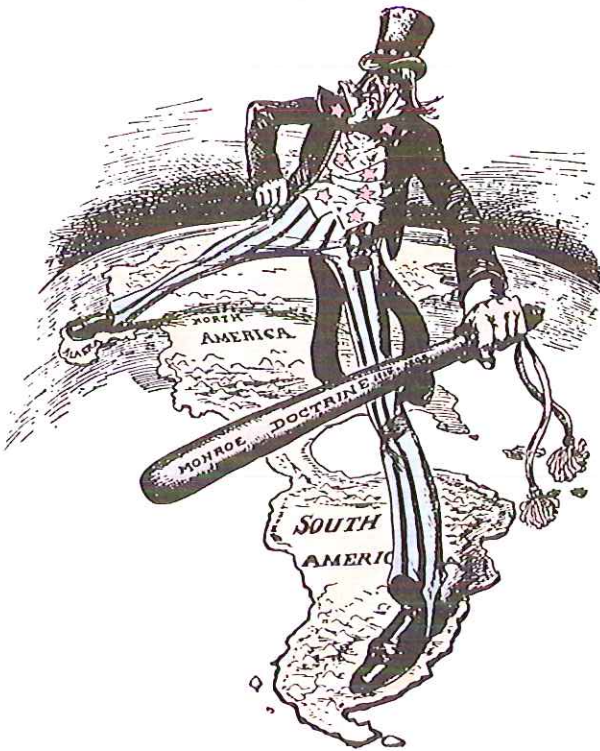
In 1898, a State Department memorandum stated that “we can no longer afford to disregard international rivalries now that we ourselves have become a competitor in the worldwide struggle for trade.” The national state, then, should support commercial interests.



Henry Cabot Lodge, “The Business World vs. The Politicians” (1895)

Americans, therefore, also saw expansion in terms of national glory and greatness. In the late 1890s, a group formed around assistant secretary of the navy Theodore Roosevelt and Massachusetts

senator Henry Cabot Lodge emerged as highly influential leaders of a changing American foreign policy.



**Uncle Sam's Imperial Stretch** Citing the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt–Lodge “large policy” as justification, U.S. imperial interests at the turn of the century spread American economic, political, and military influence from Alaska across the Caribbean to South America. Uncle Sam is looking westward. Why?

(Bettmann/Corbis)

These intensely nationalistic young men shifted to what Lodge called the “large policy” by which economic interests would take second place to questions of what he and Roosevelt called “national honor.” By 1899, a State Department official wrote that the United States had become “a world power. . . . Where formerly we had only commercial interests, now we have territorial and political interests as well.”

Naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan greatly influenced the new foreign policy elite. Mahan's books argued that in a world of Darwinian struggle for survival, national power depended on naval supremacy, control of sea lanes, and vigorous development of domestic resources and foreign markets. He advocated colonies in both the Caribbean and the Pacific, linked by a canal built and controlled by the United States. In a world of constant “strife” where “everywhere nation is arrayed against nation,” he said, it was imperative that Americans develop sea power and “look outward.”



Albert Thayer Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power* (1897)

### Piety: The Missionary Impulse

As Mahan's statements suggest, a strong sense of duty and the missionary ideal of doing good for others also motivated expansionism—and sometimes rationalized the exploitation and oppression of weaker peoples. Roosevelt, Lodge, Mahan, and other Americans (such as George W. Bush in a later age) all would have agreed with the following summary of expansionist arguments:

Certain nations are more civilized than others, especially those peopled by English-speaking, white, Protestant Anglo-Saxons. They enjoy free enterprise and democratic political institutions, which means representative government, distributive power, and the rule of law. Further evidence of the civilized nature of such nations includes their advanced technological and industrial development, large middle classes, and a high degree of education and literacy. The prime examples in the world are England and the United States.

In the natural struggle for existence, those races and nations that survive and prosper prove their fitness and superiority. The United States, as a matter of history, geographic location, and political genius, is so favored and fit that God has chosen it to uplift less favored peoples. This responsibility cannot be avoided. It is a national duty, or burden—the “white man's burden”—that civilized nations undertake to bring peace, progressive values, and ordered liberty to the world.

The argument begins with principles of modernization and ends in statements of America's pious sense



of itself as morally exceptional. A missionary put it more crudely in 1885: “The Christian nations are subduing the world in order to make mankind free.”

Josiah Strong, a Congregationalist minister, was perhaps the most ardent advocate of American missionary expansionism. In a book titled *Our Country* (1885), he argued that in the struggle for survival among nations, the United States had emerged as the center of Anglo-Saxonism and was “divinely commissioned” to spread political liberty, Protestant Christianity, and civilized values over the earth. “This powerful race,” he wrote, “will move down upon Mexico, down upon Central and South America, out upon the islands of the sea, over upon Africa and beyond.” Indiana senator Albert Beveridge agreed, saying in 1899 that God had prepared English-speaking Anglo-Saxons to become “the master organizers of the world to establish and administer governments among savages and senile peoples.”



Josiah Strong,  
*Our Country*  
(1885)

Missionaries carried Western values to non-Christian lands around the world, especially China. The number of American Protestant missionaries in China increased from 436 in 1874 to 5,462 in 1914, and the estimated number of Christian converts in China jumped from 5,000 in 1870 to nearly 100,000 in 1900. Although the number of converts was much less than missionaries hoped, this tiny fraction of the Chinese population included young reformist intellectuals who, steeped in Western ideas, helped overthrow the Manchu dynasty in 1912. Economic relations between China and the United States increased roughly at the same rate as missionary activity.



Albert  
Beveridge, “The  
March of the  
Flag” (1898)

### Politics: Manipulating Public Opinion

Although less significant than the other factors, politics also played a role. As in the past, public opinion on international issues shaped presidential politics. The psychological tensions and economic hardships of the 1890s depression jarred national self-confidence. Foreign adventures then, as now, provided a distraction from domestic turmoil and promised to restore patriotic pride and win votes.

This process was helped by the growth of a highly competitive popular press, the penny daily newspapers, which brought international issues before a mass readership. When New York City newspapers, notably William Randolph Hearst’s *Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer’s *World*, competed in stirring up public support for the Cuban rebels against Spain, politicians dared not ignore the outcry. Daily reports of

Spanish atrocities in 1896 and 1897 kept public moral outrage constantly before President McKinley. His Democratic opponent, William Jennings Bryan, entered the fray, advocating American intervention in Cuba on moral grounds of a holy war to help the oppressed. Bryan even raised a regiment of Nebraska volunteers for war, but the Republican administration kept him far from battle and therefore far from the headlines.

Politics, then, joined profits, patriotism, and piety in motivating the expansionism of the 1890s. These four impulses interacted to produce the Spanish-American War, the annexation of the Philippine Islands and subsequent war, and the energetic foreign policy of President Theodore Roosevelt.

## WAR IN CUBA AND THE PHILIPPINES

Lying 90 miles off Florida, Cuba had been the object of intense American interest for a half century. Spain could not halt the continuing struggle of the Cuban people for a measure of autonomy and relief from exploitive labor in the sugar plantations, even after slavery itself ended. Cuban uprisings and pressure for complete independence raised tensions between Spain and the United States.

### The Road to War

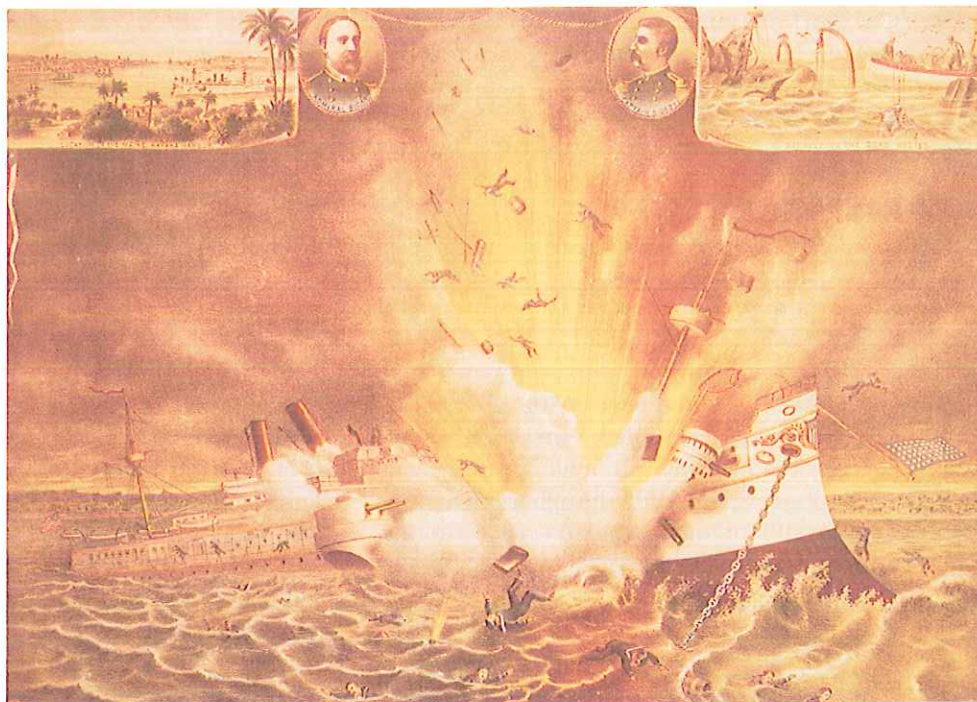
When the Cuban revolt flared up anew in 1895, the Madrid government again failed to implement reforms. Instead, it sent General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau, dubbed “the butcher” by the American press, with 50,000 troops to quell the disturbance. When Weyler began herding rural Cubans into “reconcentration” camps, Americans were outraged. An outpouring of sympathy swept the nation, especially as sensationalist reports of horrible suffering and the deaths of thousands in the camps filled American newspapers. “The old, the young, the weak, the crippled,” wrote the *New York World*, “all are butchered without mercy.”

The Cuban struggle appealed to a country convinced of its role as protector of the weak and defender of the right of self-determination. One editorial deplored Spanish “injustice, oppression, extortion, and demoralization,” while describing the Cubans as heroic freedom fighters “inspired by our glorious example of beneficent free institutions and successful self-government.” Motivated in part by genuine humanitarian concern and a sense of duty, many Americans held rallies to raise money and food for famine relief, called for land reform



### The *Maine* Blows Up in Havana Harbor

The artist has captured here the horror of the sinking of the *Maine*, with scenes before and after the explosion. What actions did Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt take after the sinking of the *Maine* that caused Secretary John Long to write in his diary, "I find that Roosevelt has come very near causing more of an explosion than happened to the *Maine*." (Chicago Historical Society [ICHi-08428])



and, for some, armed intervention. But neither Cleveland nor McKinley wanted war.

Self-interest also played a role. For many years, Americans had noted the profitable resources and strategic location of the island. American companies had invested extensively in Cuban sugar plantations. Appeals for reform had much to do with ensuring a stable environment for further investments and trade (\$27 million in 1897), as well as for protecting the sugar fields against the ravages of civil war.

The election of 1896 only temporarily diverted attention from Cuba. A new government in Madrid recalled Weyler and made halfhearted concessions. But conditions worsened in the reconcentration camps, and the American press kept harping on the plight of the Cuban people. McKinley, eager not to upset recovery from the depression, skillfully resisted war pressures. But he could not control Spanish misrule or Cuban aspirations for freedom.

Events early in 1898 sparked the outbreak of hostilities. Rioting in Havana intensified both Spanish repression and American outrage. A letter from the Spanish minister to the United States, Dupuy de Lôme, calling McKinley a "weak," hypocritical politician, was intercepted and made public. Americans fumed. Hearst's *New York Journal* called de Lôme's letter "the worst insult to the United States in its history."

A second event was more serious. When the rioting broke out, the U.S. battleship *Maine* was sent to Havana harbor to protect American citizens. On

February 15, a tremendous explosion blew up the *Maine*, killing 262 men. Advocates of American intervention blamed the Spanish. Newspapers trumpeted slogans like "Remember the *Maine*! To hell with Spain!"

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt had been preparing for war for many years. He said that he believed the *Maine* had been sunk "by an act of dirty treachery on the part of the Spaniards" and would "give anything if President McKinley would order the fleet to Havana tomorrow." When the president did not, Roosevelt privately declared that McKinley had "no more backbone than a chocolate éclair" and continued readying the navy for action. A board of inquiry at the time concluded that an external submarine mine caused the disaster, but later studies showed that a faulty boiler or some other internal defect set off the explosion, a possibility even Roosevelt later conceded.

After the sinking of the *Maine*, Roosevelt took advantage of the secretary of the navy's absence from the office one day to cable Commodore George Dewey, commander of the U.S. Pacific fleet at Hong Kong. Roosevelt ordered Dewey to fill his ships with coal and, "in the event" of a declaration of war with Spain, to sail to the Philippines and make sure "the Spanish squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast." "The Secretary is away and I am having immense fun running the Navy," Roosevelt wrote in his diary that night.



Roosevelt’s act was consistent with policies he had been urging on his more cautious superior for more than a year. As early as 1895, the navy had contingency plans for attacking the Philippines. Influenced by Mahan, Roosevelt wanted to enlarge the navy. He also believed that the United States should construct an interoceanic canal, acquire the Danish West Indies (the Virgin Islands), annex Hawaii, and oust Spain from Cuba. As Roosevelt told McKinley late in 1897, he was putting the navy in “the best possible shape” for the day “when war began.”

The public outcry over the *Maine* drowned out McKinley’s efforts to avoid war. With the issues politicized, McKinley pressured the Madrid government to make further concessions. Spain did, though refusing to grant full independence to Cuba, and the president finally acted. On April 11, 1898, he sent an ambiguous message to Congress that seemed to call for war. Two weeks later, Congress authorized using troops against Spain and recognized Cuban independence, actions amounting to a declaration of war. In a significant additional resolution, the Teller Amendment, Congress stated that the United States had no intention of annexing Cuba. Massachusetts senator George Hoar, who later assailed the United States for its war against the Filipinos, declared that intervention in Cuba

would be “the most honorable single war in all history,” undertaken without “the slightest thought or desire of foreign conquest or of national gain.” A Cuban revolutionary general was more realistic, saying, “I expect nothing from the Americans. We should trust everything to our efforts. It is better to rise or fall without help than to contract debts of gratitude with such a powerful neighbor.”

### “A Splendid Little War”: Various Views

The outbreak of war between Spain and the United States did not go unnoticed in Europe. Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany sarcastically offered to join with other European monarchs to help Spain resist the efforts of “the American-British Society for International Theft and Warmongering . . . to snatch Cuba from Spain.” But Spain was left to face the United States alone, fully expecting a defeat. When war broke out, a Spanish rear admiral said that the ruptured relations with the United States “would surely be fatal.”

Indeed, the war was short and relatively easy for the Americans, and “fatal” for the Spanish, who at the war’s conclusion were left with “only two major combat vessels.” The Americans won naval battles almost without return fire. At both major engagements, Manila Bay and Santiago Bay in Cuba,



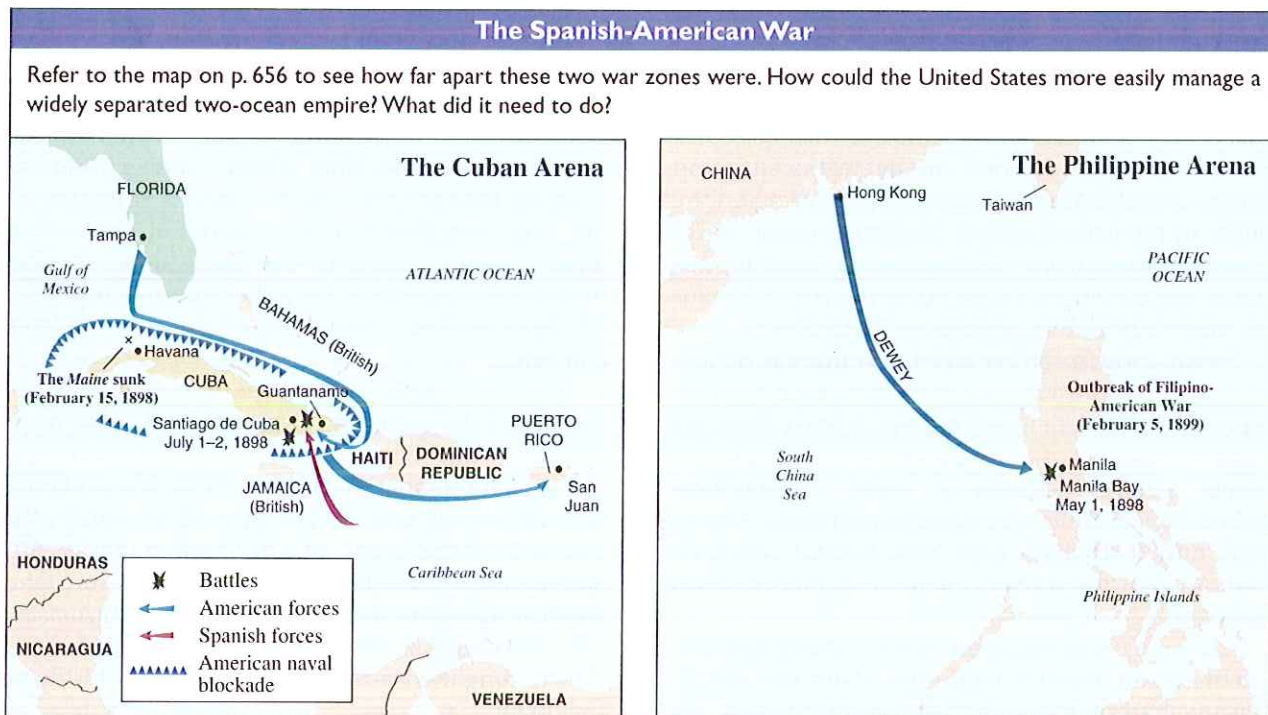
**IMAGE**  
Maine  
Explosion,  
1898



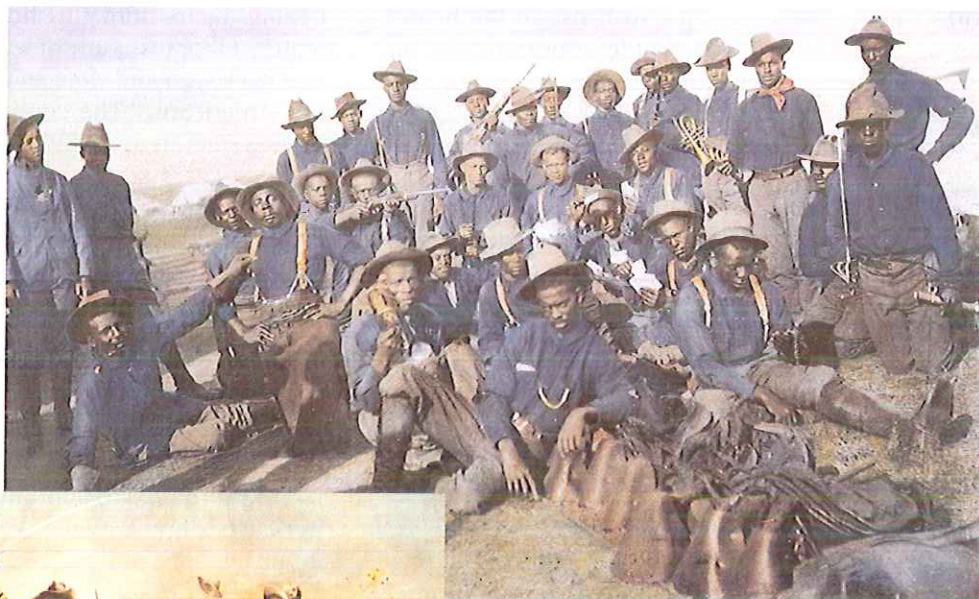
**VIDEO**  
Burial of the  
Maine Victims



**IMAGE**  
Our Victorious  
Fleet in Cuban  
Waters







**Teddy's Charge and African American Troops in Cuba** The celebrated charge of "Teddy's Rough Riders" up Kettle Hill, shown in the painting (left), was made possible (and safe) because Spanish resistance was neutralized by African American troops like these from the Ninth U.S. Cavalry (above). What is your comment on these two visual images? (*The Granger Collection, New York*)

only two Americans died, one of them from heat prostration while stoking coal. Guam and Puerto Rico were taken virtually without a shot. Only 385 men died from Spanish bullets, but more than 5,000 succumbed to tropical diseases. As the four-month war neared its end in August, Secretary of State John Hay wrote Roosevelt that "it has been a splendid little war; begun with the highest motives, carried on with magnificent intelligence and spirit."

The Spanish-American War seemed splendid in other ways, as letters from American soldiers suggest. One young man wrote that his comrades were all "in good spirits" because oranges and coconuts were plentiful and "every trooper has his canteen full of lemonade all the time." Another wrote his brother that he was having "a lot of fun chasing Spaniards."

But the war was not much fun for other soldiers. One said, "Words are inadequate to express the feeling of pain and sickness when one has the fever. For about a week every bone in my body ached and I did not care much whether I lived or not." Another described "a man shot while loading his gun," noting

that "the Spanish Mauser bullet struck the magazine of his carbine and split, a part of it going through his scalp and a part through his neck. . . . He was a mass of blood."

Nor was the war splendid for African American soldiers, who fought in segregated units and noted stark differences between their rude treatment in the American South and warm, grateful greetings in Cuba and Puerto Rico. African Americans were especially sympathetic to the Cuban people's struggle against unjust treatment. One wrote in his journal, "At last we have taken up the sword to enforce the divine rights of a people who have been unjustly treated," an understandable sentiment during a decade marked by the restricting of rights for African Americans by southern state legislatures.

For Colonel Roosevelt, who resigned from the navy to lead a cavalry unit as soon as war was declared, the war was excitement and political opportunity. After a close brush with death in Cuba, Roosevelt declared



Roosevelt's Rough Riders



with delight that he felt “the wolf rise in the heart” during “the power of joy in battle.” But ironically, he needed help from African American soldiers to achieve his goals. His celebrated charge up Kettle Hill near Santiago was made possible by black troops first clearing the hill and then protecting his flank. The “charge” made three-inch headlines and propelled him toward the New York governor’s mansion. “I would rather have led that charge,” he said later, “than served three terms in the U.S. Senate.” More than anyone, Roosevelt used the war to advance not only his political career but also the glory of national expansionism.



IMAGE  
Teddy  
Roosevelt—  
Rough Rider

## The Philippines Debates and War

Roosevelt’s ordering Admiral Dewey to Manila initiated a chain of events that led to the annexation of the Philippines. The most crucial battle of the Spanish-American War occurred on May 1, 1898, when Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay and cabled McKinley for additional troops. Although the president admitted later that he was uncertain “within two thousand miles” where “those darned islands were,” he sent twice as many troops as Dewey had asked for and immediately began shaping American public opinion to accept the “political, commercial [and] humanitarian” reasons for annexing the Philippines, a policy he called “Benevolent Assimilation.” The Treaty of Paris gave the United States all 7,000 islands in the archipelago in exchange for a \$20 million payment to Spain.

The treaty went to the Senate for ratification during the winter of 1898–1899. Senators hurled arguments across the floor of the Senate as American soldiers hurled oaths and taunts across the neutral zone at Aguinaldo’s insurgents near Manila. Private Grayson’s encounter, described at the beginning of this chapter, led to the passage of the treaty in a close Senate vote—and began the Filipino-American War and the debates over what to do with the Philippines.

The entire nation joined the argument. At stake were two very different views of foreign policy and of America’s vision of itself. After several months seeking advice and listening to public opinion, McKinley finally recommended annexation on the grounds of international politics, commercial advantage, Filipino incapacity for self-rule, and the American responsibility to create Christian, civilized order. Many Democrats supported the president out of fear of being labeled disloyal. At a time when

openly racist thought flourished in the United States, Filipinos were described as childlike, dirty, and backward and were compared to blacks and Native Americans. “The country won’t be pacified,” a Kansas veteran of the Sioux wars told a reporter, “until the niggers are killed off like the Indians.” Roosevelt called Aguinaldo a “renegade Pawnee” and said that the Filipinos had no right “to administer the country which they happen to be occupying.”

A small but prominent and vocal Anti-Imperialist League vigorously opposed war and annexation. These dignitaries included former presidents Harrison and Cleveland, Samuel Gompers, Andrew Carnegie, Jane Addams, and Mark Twain. In arguments heard more recently about Iraq, anti-imperialists argued that taking over other countries contradicted American ideals. First, the annexation of territory without postwar planning or steps toward statehood was unwise, unprecedented, and unconstitutional. Second, to occupy and govern a foreign people without their consent violated the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. Third, social reforms needed at home demanded American energies and money. “Before we attempt to teach house-keeping to the world,” one writer put it, we needed “to set our own house in order.”

Not all anti-imperialist arguments were so noble. A racist position alleged that Filipinos were non-white, Catholic, inferior in size and intelligence, and therefore unassimilable. Annexation would lead to miscegenation and contamination of Anglo-Saxon blood, said South Carolina senator Ben Tillman, who opposed “incorporating any more colored men into the body politic.” A practical argument suggested that once in possession of the Philippines, the United States would have to defend them, necessitating acquiring more territories—in turn leading to higher taxes and bigger government, and perhaps calling for American troops to fight distant Asian wars.

The last argument became fact when Private Grayson’s encounter started the Filipino-American War. Before it ended in 1902, some 126,500 American troops served in the Philippines, 4,234 died there, and 2,800 more were wounded. The cost was \$400 million. Filipino casualties were much higher. In addition to 18,000 killed in combat, an estimated 200,000—and perhaps many more—Filipinos died of famine and disease as American soldiers burned villages and destroyed crops and livestock to deny the rebels their food



DOCUMENT  
Carl Schurz,  
*Platform of the  
Anti-Imperialist  
League* (1899)



DOCUMENT  
William  
McKinley,  
“Decision on  
the Philippines”  
(1901)



DOCUMENT  
Congressional  
Speeches on  
Imperialism  
(1900)



# AMERICAN VOICES

## Jane Addams Speaks Out Against Imperialism, War, and Violence

*Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago, gave this address on "Democracy or Militarism" at a Chicago Liberty meeting on April 30, 1899. An opponent of the Spanish-American War, Addams served as vice president of the national Anti-Imperialist League and was a co-founder and first president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1919.*

Let us not make the mistake of confusing moral issues sometimes involved in warfare with warfare itself. Let us not glorify the brutality. The same strenuous endeavor, the same heroic self-sacrifice, the same fine courage and readiness to meet death, may be displayed without the accompaniment of killing our fellow men. With all [British poet] Kipling's insight he has, over and over, failed to distinguish between war and imperialism on the one hand and the advance of civilization on the other.

... Some of us were beginning to hope that we were getting away from the ideals set by the civil war; that we had made all the presidents we could from men who had distinguished themselves in that war; and were coming to seek another type of man. That we were ready to accept the peace ideal, to be proud of our title as a peace nation; to recognize that the man who cleans a city is greater than he who bombards it, and the man who irrigates a plain greater than he who lays it waste. Then came the Spanish war, with its gilt and lace and tinsel, and again the moral issues are confused with exhibitions of brutality.

For ten years I have lived in a neighborhood which is by no means criminal, and yet during last October and November we were startled by seven

murders within a radius of ten blocks. A little investigation of details and motives, the accident of a personal acquaintance with two of the criminals, made it not in the least difficult to trace the murders back to the influence of war.

... Psychologists intimate that action is determined by the selection of the subject upon which the attention is habitually fixed. The newspapers, the theatrical posters, the street conversations for weeks had to do with war and bloodshed. The little children on the street played at war, day after day, killing Spaniards. The humane instinct, which keeps in abeyance the tendency to cruelty, the growing belief that the life of each human being—however hopeless or degraded, is still sacred—gives way, and the barbaric instinct asserts itself.

It is doubtless only during a time of war that the men and women of Chicago could tolerate whipping for children in our city prison, and it is only during such a time that the introduction in the legislature of a bill for the re-establishment of the whipping post could be possible. National events determine our ideals, as much as our ideals determine national events.

- What is the basis of Addams's arguments against violence and war?
- To what extent do they apply in our world today?
- Do you agree that wars abroad lead to violence at home?
- Do you agree that national events influence our ideals?

supply. General Jacob H. Smith told his troops that "the more you kill and burn, the better you will please me." Insurgent ineptness, Aguinaldo's inability to extend the fight across ethnic boundaries, and atrocities on both sides increased the frustrations of a lengthening war. The American "water cure" and other tortures were especially brutal.

As U.S. treatment of the Filipinos became more and more like Spanish treatment of the Cubans, the hypocrisy of American behavior became even more evident. This was especially true for African American

soldiers. They identified with the dark-skinned insurgents, whom they saw as tied to the land, burdened by debt, and pressed by poverty like themselves. "I feel sorry for these people," a sergeant in the Twenty-Fourth Infantry wrote. "You have no idea the way these people are treated by the Americans here."

The war starkly exposed the hypocrisies of shouldering the white man's burden. After the war, Aguinaldo wrote that Americans made "vague verbal



Mark Twain,  
"Incident in the  
Philippines"  
(1924)



# RECOVERING THE PAST

## Political Cartoons

One of the most enjoyable ways of recovering the values and attitudes of the past is through political cartoons. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Caricatures are often the truest history of the times.” A deft drawing of a popular or unpopular politician can freeze ideas and events in time, conveying more effectively than columns of print the central issues—and especially the hypocrisies and misbehaviors of an era. Cartoonists are often at their best when they are critical, exaggerating a physical feature of a political figure or capturing public sentiment against the government.

The history of political cartoons in the United States goes back to Benjamin Franklin’s “Join or Die” cartoon calling for colonial cooperation against the French in 1754. But political cartoons were rare until Andrew Jackson’s presidency. Even after such cartoons as “King Andrew the First” in the 1830s, they did not gain notoriety until the advent of Thomas Nast’s cartoons in *Harper’s Weekly* in the 1870s. Nast drew scathing cartoons exposing the corruption of William “Boss” Tweed’s Tammany Hall, depicting Tweed and his men as vultures and smiling deceivers. “Stop them damn pictures,” Tweed ordered. “I don’t care so much what the papers write about me. My constituents can’t read. But, damn it, they can see pictures.” Tweed sent some of his men to Nast with an offer of \$100,000 to “study art” in Europe. The \$5,000-a-year artist negotiated up to a half million dollars before refusing Tweed’s offer. “I made up my mind not long ago to put some of those fellows behind bars,” Nast said, “and I’m going to put them there.” His cartoons helped drive Tweed out of office.

The emergence of the United States as a world power and the rise of Theodore Roosevelt gave cartoonists plenty to draw about. At the same time, the rise of cheap newspapers such as William Randolph Hearst’s *Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer’s *World* provided a rich opportunity for cartoonists, whose clever images attracted more readers. When the Spanish-American War broke out, newspapers whipped up public sentiment by having artists draw fake pictures of fierce Spaniards stripping American women at sea and killing helpless Cubans. Hearst used these tactics to increase his paper’s daily circulation to 1 million copies.

By the time of the debates over Philippine annexation, many cartoonists took an anti-imperialist stance, pointing out American hypocrisy. Within a year, cartoonists shifted from depicting “The Spanish Brute Adds Mutilation to Murder” (1898) to “Liberty Halts



“The Spanish Brute Adds Mutilation to Murder,” by Grant Hamilton in *Judge*, July 9, 1898. (Culver Pictures)

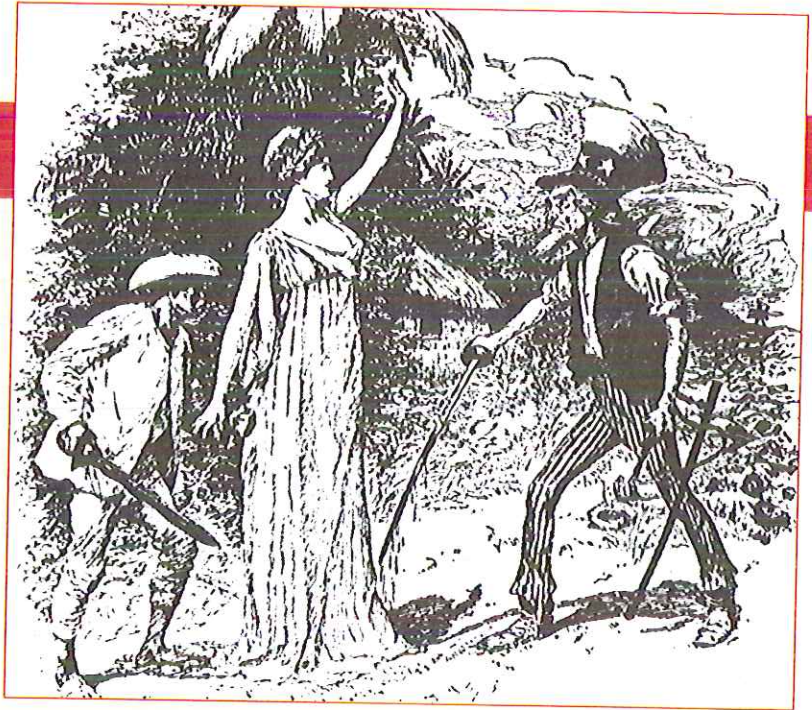
American Butchery in the Philippines” (1899), both included here. Note the similarities in that both cartoons condemn the “butchery” of native peoples. But the villain has changed. Although Uncle Sam as a killer is not nearly as menacing as the figure of Spain as an ugly gorilla, both cartoons share a similarity of stance, blood-covered swords, and a trail of bodies behind.

Theodore Roosevelt’s rise to the presidency and his broad grin, eyeglasses, and walrus mustache gave cartoonists a perfect target for caricature, as did his energetic style and such distinctive aspects as the “big stick” symbol and the “rough rider” image. To understand and appreciate the meaning of any cartoon, certain facts must be ascertained, such as the date, artist, and source of the cartoon; the particular historical characters, events, and context depicted in it; the significance of the caption; and the master symbols employed by the cartoonist. The Roosevelt cartoons “Panama or Bust” (1903) and “For President!” (1904), filled with symbols and images, were both printed in American daily newspapers.

**REFLECTING ON THE PAST** What symbols and images do you see in these cartoons? How many can you identify, and how are they used? Who is the female figure, and what does she represent? How would you

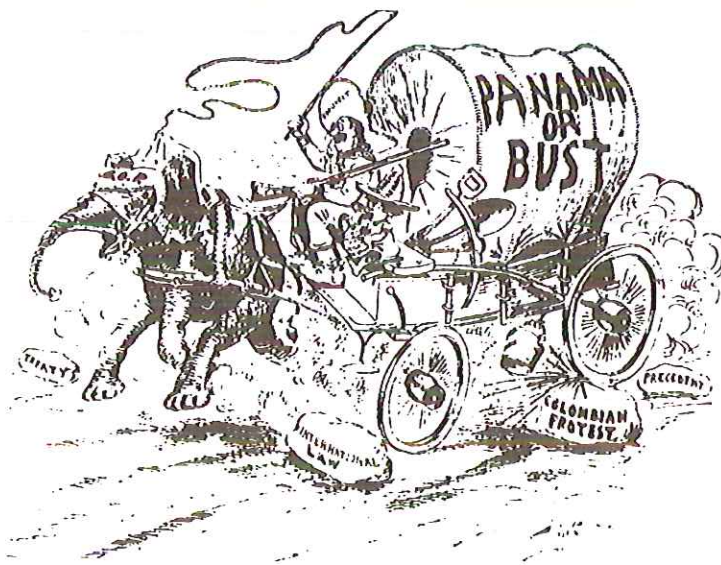


Liberty Halts American Butchery in the Philippines," from *Life*, 1899.

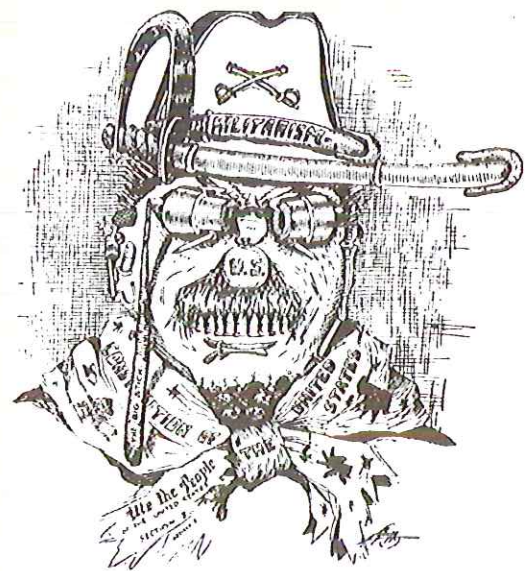


explain the change of bloodied sword bearer? What is the attitude of the Roosevelt cartoonists toward the president? In addition to these cartoons, look at the others in this chapter reflecting the widening reach of American expansionism. How do the images and symbols used in these reflect the cartoonist's point of

view? How are various nationalities depicted in the cartoons? Check some recent newspapers: Who is criticized and stereotyped today, and how do cartoonists reveal their attitudes and political positions? What do contemporary cartoons reveal about American attitudes?



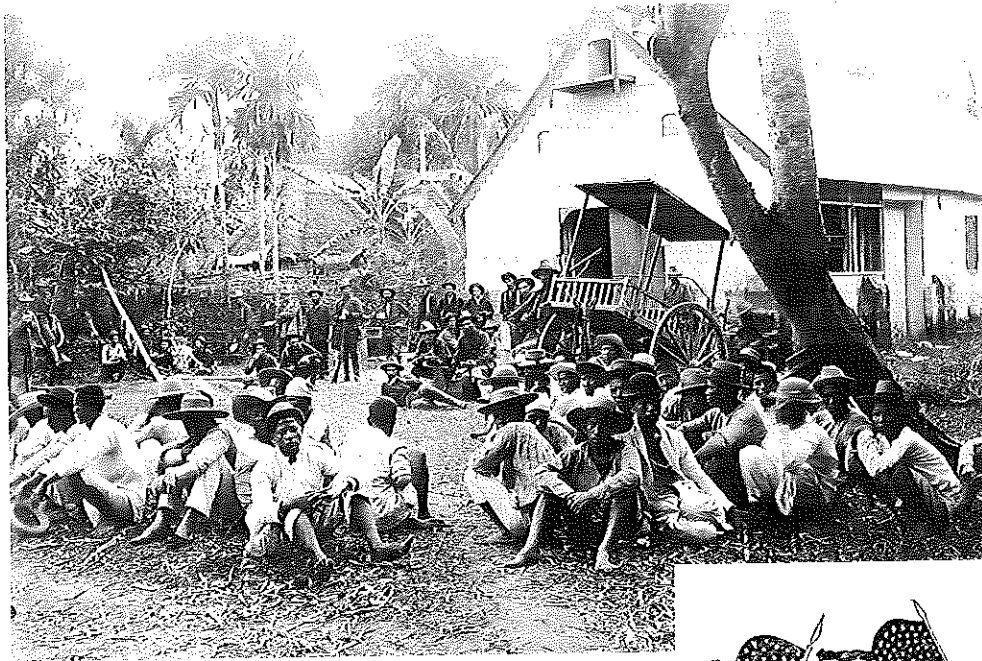
"Panama or Bust," from the *New York Times*, 1903 (above); "For President!" by L. C. Gregg, in the *Atlanta Constitution*, 1904 (right).



L. C. Gregg in the *Atlanta Constitution*.

FOR PRESIDENT!





**Two Views of War's Results** Compare the photograph with the cartoon from 1898–1899. The photo shows American soldiers standing guard over captured Filipino guerrillas in 1899. The cartoon, by Charles L. (Bart) Batholomew of the *Minneapolis Journal* (July 2, 1898), presents a happier, if stereotyped, view of three new Americans, including one labeled “Philippines” on the skirt to the right. Or are they happier? What is the cartoonist’s message? What similarities and differences do you see in these two visual images? (Photo: Library of Congress)



offers of friendship and aid and then fairly drowned them out with the boom of cannons and the rattle of Gatling guns.” On reading a report that 8,000 Filipinos had been killed in the first year of the war, Carnegie wrote a letter, dripping with sarcasm, congratulating McKinley for “civilizing the Filipinos. . . . About 8,000 of them have been completely civilized and sent to Heaven. I hope you like it.” An ardent anti-imperialist poet, Ernest Howard Crosby, wrote a parody of Rudyard Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden,” which he titled “The Real ‘White Man’s Burden’”:



Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” (1899)

*Take up the White Man’s burden.  
Send forth your sturdy kin,*

*And load them down with Bibles  
And cannon-balls and gin.  
Throw in a few diseases  
To spread the tropic climes,  
For there the healthy niggers  
Are quite behind the times.  
They need our labor question too.  
And politics and fraud—  
We’ve made a pretty mess at home,  
Let’s make a mess abroad.*



Ernest Howard Crosby, “The Real ‘White Man’s Burden’” (1899)



William Graham Sumner, “O: Empire and the Philippines” (1898)

Another writer penned a devastating one-liner: “Dewey took Manila with the loss of one man—and all our institutions.”

The anti-imperialists failed either to prevent annexation or to interfere with



the war effort. However prestigious and principled, they had little or no political power. An older elite, they were out of tune with the period of exuberant expansionist national pride, prosperity, and promise.

### Expansionism Triumphant

By 1900, Americans had ample reason to be patriotic. Within a year, the United States had acquired several island territories in the Pacific and Caribbean. But several questions arose over what to do with the new territories. What was their status? Were they colonies? Would they be granted statehood, or would they develop gradually from colonies to constitutional parts of the United States? Did Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos have the same rights as American citizens on the mainland? Were they protected by the U.S. Constitution?



Bill of Fare, 1901

Although slightly different governing systems were worked out for each new territory, the solution in

each case was to define its status as somewhere between a colony and a candidate for statehood. The indigenous people were usually allowed to elect their own legislature, but had governors and other judicial and administrative officials appointed by the American president. The first full governor of the Philippines, McKinley appointee William Howard Taft, effectively moved the Filipinos toward self-government, which came finally in 1946.

The question of constitutional rights was resolved by deciding that Hawaiians and Puerto Ricans, for example, would be treated differently from Texans and Oregonians. In the “insular cases” of 1901, the Supreme Court ruled that these people would achieve citizenship and constitutional rights only when Congress said they were ready. To the question, “Does the Constitution follow the flag?” the answer, as Secretary of State Elihu Root put it, was that “Ye-es . . . the Constitution follows the flag—but doesn’t quite catch up with it.”

In the election of 1900, Bryan was again the Democratic nominee and tried to make imperialism



Uncle Sam Teaching the World



**Republican Campaign Poster** What is the persuasive political point of this 1900 campaign poster to reelect William McKinley? What was life like under the Democrats in 1896 and what has changed? Why would voters want to vote again for McKinley? (David J. and Janice L. Frent Collection/CORBIS)



the “paramount issue” of the campaign. He failed, in part because the country strongly favored annexing the Philippines. In the closing weeks of the campaign, Bryan shied away from imperialism and focused on domestic issues—trusts, the labor question, and free silver.

Changing strategies did Bryan no good either. Prosperity returned with the discovery of gold in Alaska, and cries for reform fell on deaf ears. The McKinley forces rightly claimed that four years of Republican rule had brought more money, jobs, thriving factories, and manufactured goods, as well as tremendous growth in American prestige abroad. Spain had been ejected from Cuba, and the American flag flew in many places around the globe. As Tom Watson put it, noting the end of the Populist revolt with the war fervor over Cuba, “The blare of the bugle drowned out the voice of the reformer.”

He was more right than he knew. Within a year, Theodore Roosevelt rose from assistant secretary of the navy to colonel of the Rough Riders to governor of New York. For some Republican politicians, who thought he was too vigorous and independent, this quick rise as McKinley’s potential rival came too fast. One way to eliminate Roosevelt politically, or at least slow him down, was to make him vice president, which they did in 1900. But six months into McKinley’s second term, an anarchist killed him, the third presidential assassination in less than 40 years. “Now look,” exclaimed party boss Mark Hanna, who had opposed putting Roosevelt on the ticket, “that damned cowboy is President of the United States!”

## THEODORE ROOSEVELT’S ENERGETIC DIPLOMACY

At a White House dinner party in 1905, a guest told a story about visiting the Roosevelt home when “Teedie” was a baby. “You were in your bassinet, making a good deal of fuss and noise,” the guest reported, “and your father lifted you out and asked me to hold you.” Secretary of State Elihu Root looked up and asked, “Was he hard to hold?” Whether true or not, the story reveals much about President Roosevelt’s principles and policies on foreign affairs. As president from 1901 to 1909, and as the most dominating American personality for the 15 years between 1897 and 1912, Roosevelt made much fuss and noise about the activist role he thought the United States should play in the world. As he implemented his policies, he often seemed “hard to hold.” Yet Roosevelt’s energetic foreign policy in Latin America, eastern Asia, and Europe paved the way

for the vital role as a world power that the United States would play for the next century.

## Foreign Policy as Darwinian Struggle

Roosevelt advocated both individual physical fitness and collective national strength. An undersized boy, he had pursued a rigorous bodybuilding program, and as a young man on his North Dakota ranch, he learned to value the “strenuous life.” Reading Darwin taught him that life was a constant struggle for survival. When he became president, his ideal was a “nation of men, not weaklings.” “All the great masterful races,” he said, “have been fighting races.” Although he believed in Anglo-Saxon superiority, he admired—and feared—Japanese military prowess. Powerful nations, like individuals, Roosevelt believed, had a duty to cultivate vigor, strength, courage, and moral commitment to civilized values. In practical terms, this meant developing natural resources, building large navies, and being ever-prepared to fight.

Although famous for saying “speak softly and carry a big stick,” Roosevelt often not only wielded a large stick but spoke loudly as well. In a speech in 1897, he used the word *war* 62 times, saying, “no triumph of peace is quite so great as the supreme triumphs of war.” But despite his bluster, Roosevelt was usually restrained in exercising force. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for helping end the Russo-Japanese War. The big stick and the loud talk were meant to preserve order and peace.

Roosevelt divided the world into civilized and uncivilized nations, the former usually defined as Anglo-Saxon and English-speaking. Civilized nations had a responsibility to “police” the uncivilized, not only maintaining order but also spreading superior values and institutions. Taking on the “white man’s burden,” civilized nations sometimes had to wage war on the uncivilized—justly so, he argued, because the victors bestowed the blessings of culture and racial superiority on the vanquished. But a war between two civilized nations (for example, Germany and Great Britain) would be foolish. Above all, Roosevelt believed in the balance of power. Strong, advanced nations had a duty to use their power to preserve order and peace. The United States had “no choice,” Roosevelt said, “but to ‘play a great part in the world.’” With a 1900 population of 75 million, more than that of Great Britain, Germany, or France, the United States could no longer “avoid responsibilities” to exercise a greater role in world affairs.

Roosevelt developed a highly personal style of diplomacy. Bypassing the State Department, he preferred face-to-face contact and personal exchanges



of letters with foreign diplomats and heads of state. He made foreign policy while horseback riding with the German ambassador and while discussing history with a French minister. A British emissary observed that Roosevelt had a “powerful personality” and a commanding knowledge of the world. Ministries from London to Tokyo respected him.

When threats failed to accomplish his goals, Roosevelt used direct personal intervention. “In a crisis the duty of a leader is to lead,” he said, noting that Congress was too slow. When he wanted Panama, Roosevelt bragged later, “I took the Canal Zone” rather than submitting a long “dignified State Paper” for congressional debate. And while Congress debated, he gloated, the building of the canal began. Roosevelt’s energetic executive activism in foreign affairs, for better or worse, influenced presidents from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush.

### Taking the Panama Canal

To justify the intervention of 2,600 American troops in Honduras and Nicaragua in 1906, Philander Knox, later a secretary of state, said that “because of the Monroe Doctrine” the United States is “held responsible for the order of Central America.” The closeness of the canal, he said, “makes the preservation of peace in that neighborhood particularly necessary.” The Panama Canal was not yet finished when Knox spoke, but it had already become a cornerstone of U.S. policy.

Three problems had to be surmounted in order to dig an interoceanic connection. First, an 1850

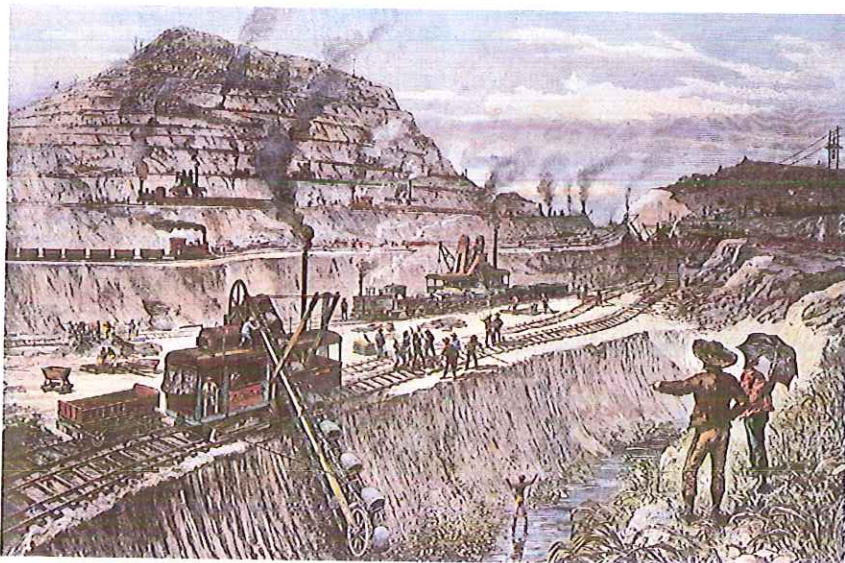
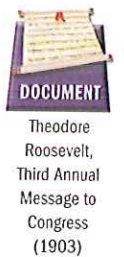
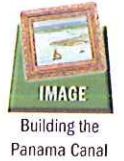
treaty bound the United States to build a canal jointly with Great Britain, a problem resolved in 1901 when the British canceled the treaty in exchange for an American guarantee that the canal would be open to all nations. A second problem was where to dig it. American engineers rejected a long route through Nicaragua in favor of a shorter, more rugged path across Panama, where a French firm had already begun work. This raised the third problem: Panama was a province of Colombia, which rejected the terms the United States offered. The refusal angered Roosevelt, who called the Colombians “Dagoes” who tried to “hold us up” like highway robbers.

Aware of Roosevelt’s fury, encouraged by hints of American support, and eager for the economic benefits that a canal would bring, Panamanian nationalists in 1903 staged a revolution led by several rich families and Philippe Bunau-Varilla of the French canal company. An American warship deterred Colombian intervention, and local troops were separated from their officers, who were bought off. A bloodless revolution occurred on November 3; on November 4, Panama declared its independence; and on November 6, the United States recognized it. Two weeks later, a treaty established the American right to build and operate a canal through Panama and to exercise “titular sovereignty” over the 10-mile-wide Canal Zone. The Panamanian government protested, and a later government called it

the “treaty that no Panamanian signed.” Roosevelt later claimed that the diplomatic and engineering achievement, completed in 1914, would “rank . . . with the Louisiana Purchase and the acquisition of Texas.”

### Policing the Caribbean

As late as 1901, the Monroe Doctrine was still regarded, according to Roosevelt, as the “equivalent to an open door in South America.” To the United States, this meant that although no nation had a right “to get territorial possessions,” all nations had equal commercial rights in the Western Hemisphere south of the Rio



**Building the Panama Canal** In 1903, despite protests from the Panamanian government, the United States acquired the right to begin the enormous engineering feat of building the Panama Canal. (*The Granger Collection, New York*)



Grande. But as American investments poured into Central America and the Caribbean, the policy changed to one of asserting U.S. dominance in the Caribbean basin.

This change was demonstrated in 1902 when Germany and Great Britain blockaded Venezuela's ports to force the government to pay defaulted debts. Roosevelt was especially worried that German influence would replace the British. He insisted that the European powers accept arbitration and threatened to "move Dewey's ships" to the Venezuelan coast. The crisis passed, largely for other reasons, but Roosevelt's threat of force made very clear the paramount presence and self-interest of the United States in the Caribbean.

The United States kept liberated Cuba under a military governor, Leonard Wood, until 1902, when the Cubans elected a congress and president. The United States honored Cuban independence, as it had promised to do, but in the Platt Amendment, which Cubans reluctantly added to their constitution in 1901, the United States obtained many economic rights in Cuba, a naval base at Guantanamo Bay, and the right to intervene if Cuban sovereignty were ever threatened. Newspapers in Havana assailed this violation of their newfound independence. A cartoon titled "The Cuban Calvary" showed a figure

representing "the Cuban people" crucified between two thieves, Wood and McKinley.

American policy intended to make Cuba a model of how a newly independent nation could achieve orderly self-government with only minimal guidance. Cuban self-government, however, was shaky. When in 1906 a political crisis threatened to spiral into civil war, Roosevelt expressed his fury with "that infernal little Cuban republic." He sent warships to patrol the coastline and special commissioners and troops "to restore order and peace and public confidence." As he left office in 1909, Roosevelt proudly proclaimed, "we have done our best to put Cuba on the road to stable and orderly government." The road was paved with sugar, as U.S. trade with Cuba increased from \$27 million to \$43 million in the decade following 1898. Along with economic development, which mostly benefited American companies, American political and military involvement in Cuban affairs would continue throughout the century.

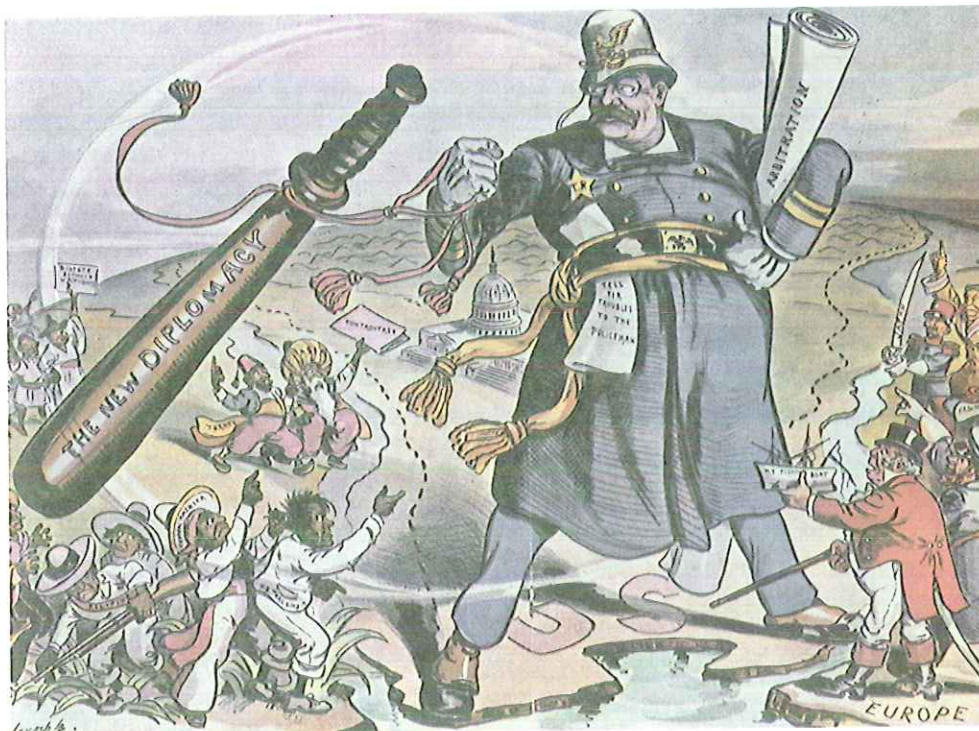
The pattern was repeated throughout the Caribbean. The Dominican Republic, for example, suffered from unstable governments and great poverty. In 1904, as a revolt erupted, European creditors pressured the Dominican government for payment of \$40 million in defaulted bonds. Sending its warships to discourage European intervention, the United States took over the collection of customs in the republic. Two years later, the United



His Foresight,  
1901



Platt  
Amendment  
(1901)



**TR as Caribbean Policeman** The "big stick" became a memorable image in American diplomacy as Teddy Roosevelt sought to make the United States a "policeman" not only of the Caribbean basin but also of the whole world. What image does Roosevelt convey, and how are the people of the world responding to him? (*Puck*, 1901)



States intervened in Guatemala and Nicaragua, where American bankers controlled nearly 50 percent of all trade, the first of several twentieth-century interventions in those countries.

In a policy known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, the president announced in his annual message to Congress in 1904 that civilized nations should “insist on the proper policing of the world.” The goal of the United States, he said, was to have “stable, orderly and prosperous neighbors.” A country that paid its debts and kept order “need fear no interference.” But “chronic wrong-doing” would require the United States to intervene as an “international police power.” Whereas the Monroe Doctrine had warned European nations not to intervene in the Western Hemisphere, the Roosevelt Corollary justified American intervention. Starting with a desire to protect property, loans, and investments, the United States wound up supporting the tyrannical regimes of elites who owned most of the land, suppressed the poor, blocked reforms, and acted as American surrogates.

After 1904, the Roosevelt Corollary was invoked in several Caribbean countries. Intervention usually required the landing of U.S. Marines to counter a threat to American property. Occupying capital cities and major seaports, Marines, bankers, and customs officials usually remained for several years, until they were satisfied that stability had been re-established. Roosevelt’s successors, William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson, pursued the same interventionist policy. So would late-twentieth-century presidents: Ronald Reagan (Grenada and Nicaragua), George H. W. Bush (Panama), and Bill Clinton (Haiti).



Activities of the United States in the Caribbean, 1898–1930s

### Opening Doors to China and Closing Doors to America

Throughout the nineteenth century, American relations with China were restricted to a small but profitable trade. Britain, in competition with France, Germany, and Russia, took advantage of the crumbling Manchu dynasty to force treaties on China, creating “treaty ports” and granting exclusive trading privileges in various parts of the country. After 1898, the United States, with dreams of exploiting the seemingly unlimited markets of China, wanted to join the competition and enlarge its share. Those with moral interests, however, including many missionaries, reminded Americans of their revolutionary tradition against European imperialism. They opposed U.S. commercial exploitation of a weak nation and supported the preservation of China’s political integrity

as the other imperial powers moved toward partitioning the country.

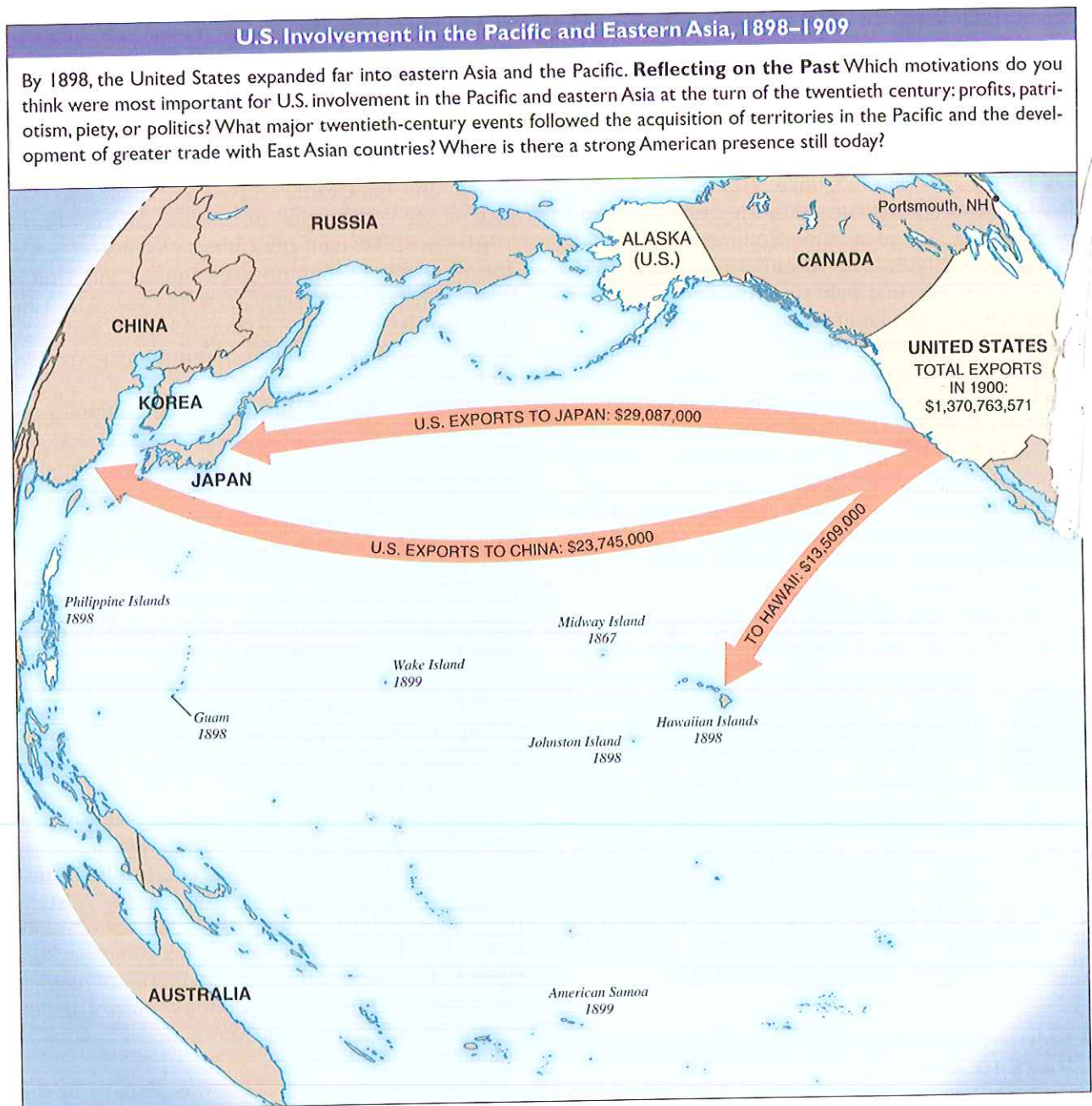
American attitudes toward the Chinese people reflected this confusion of motives. Although some admired China’s ancient culture, the dominant American attitude viewed the Chinese as heathen, exotic, and backward. Nativist workingmen’s riots against the competition of Chinese workers in the 1870s and 1880s and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barring further immigration to the United States reflected this negative stereotype. The Chinese, in turn, regarded the United States with a mixture of admiration, curiosity, resentment, suspicion, and disdain.

The annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines in 1898 convinced Secretary of State Hay that the United States should announce a China policy. He did so in the Open Door notes of 1899–1900, which became the cornerstone of U.S. policy in eastern Asia for more than half a century. The first note demanded an open door for American trade by declaring the principle of equal access to commercial rights in China by all nations. The second note, addressing Russian movement into Manchuria, called on all countries to respect the “territorial and administrative integrity” of China. This second principle announced a larger American role in Asia, offering China protection and preserving an East Asian balance of power.

An early test of this new role came during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. The Boxers were a society of young traditionalist Chinese in revolt against both the Manchu dynasty and the growing Western presence in China. During the summer of 1900, Boxers killed some 242 missionaries and other foreigners and besieged the western quarter of Beijing. Eventually an international military force of 19,000 troops, including some 3,000 Americans, marched on Beijing to end the siege.

The relationship with China was plagued by the exclusionist immigration policy of the United States and by laws inhibiting Chinese in America from becoming naturalized citizens. Educated at Yale, Yung Wing had been living in the United States since the 1850s and headed an educational mission to bring Chinese students to the United States. But while he was visiting China in 1898, his American citizenship was revoked and he was allowed to re-enter the country only as an alien. Wing denounced American discriminatory laws, pointing out “how far this Republic has departed from its high ideal.” But despite unjust laws, barriers, and riots, Chinese students and workers kept coming to the United States, entering illegally through Mexico and British Columbia. In 1905, Chinese nationalists at home boycotted





American goods and called for a change in immigration policy. Roosevelt, contemptuous of what he called “backward” Chinese, bristled and sent troops to the Philippines as a threat. Halfheartedly, he also asked Congress for a modified immigration bill, but nothing came of it.

Despite exclusion and insults, the idea that the United States had a unique guardian relationship with China persisted into the twentieth century. Japan had ambitions in China, which created a rivalry between Japan and the United States, testing the American commitment to the Open Door in China and the balance of power in eastern Asia.

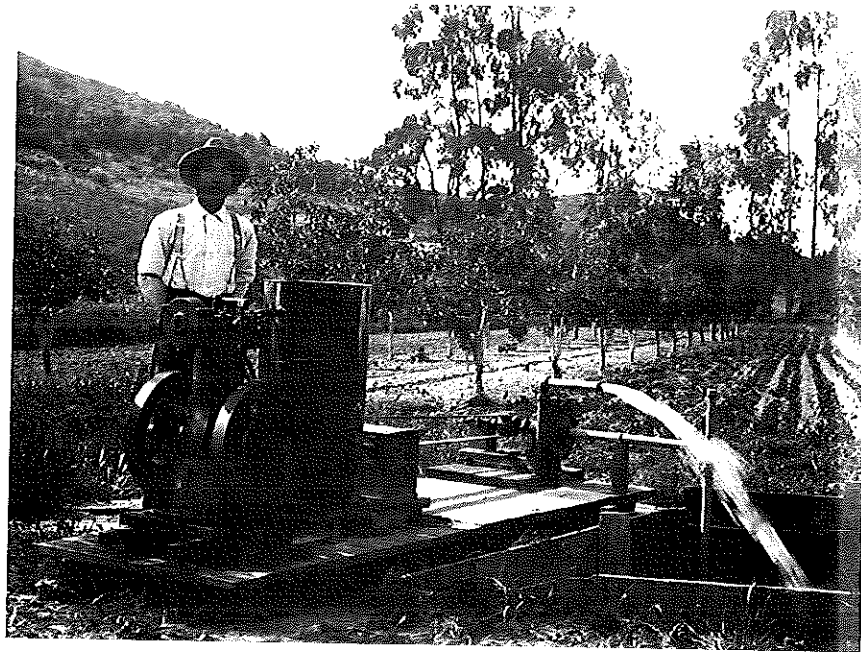
Tensions were reduced because investments developed very slowly, and the dream of the “great China market” for American grains and textiles always remained larger in imagination than in reality.

### Balancing Japan in the Pacific from California to Manchuria

Population pressures, war, and a quest for economic opportunities dramatically increased Japanese immigration to the United States around the turn of the century. Some immigrants came from Hawaii, where they had “worked like machines” in the sugarcane



**West Coast Japanese Immigrants** Japanese immigrants to the West Coast of the United States around the turn of the century worked hard, irrigated the valleys of California, Oregon, and Washington, and became independent and highly productive farmers. What obstacles did they face? (Pat Hathaway Collection of California Views)



fields, many dying from overwork and white diseases. "Hawaii, Hawaii," a sorrowful poet wrote: "Like a dream / So I came / But my tears / Are flowing now / In the canefields." Pursuing "huge dreams of fortune . . . across the ocean," some 200,000 Japanese went directly to the West Coast of the United States, coming first to work on railroads and in West Coast canneries, mines, and logging camps.

Others worked on farms in the valleys of California, Oregon, and Washington, many successfully rising to own their own lands and turning marginal farmlands into productive agricultural businesses. Japanese-owned farms increased from 4,698 acres in 1900 to 194,742 by 1910, when Japanese-owned farms produced 70 percent of the California strawberry crop. Kinji Ushijima, for example, developed 10,000 acres of potato lands worth \$500,000 in the fertile deltas between Stockton and Sacramento. By 1912, known then as George Shima, the "Potato King," he was praised by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. But when Shima moved to a well-to-do neighborhood in Berkeley, local newspapers and protesting professors complained of the "Yellow Peril in College Town." Shima refused to move.

Another success story was Abiko Kyutaro, who built several successful service businesses and in 1906 founded a model Japanese farming community in the San Joaquin Valley, with 42 families turning desert and into bountiful orchards, grape vineyards, and alfalfa fields. In discussing the Yamato (or "new Japan") Colony, Kyutaro proclaimed, "The Japanese must settle permanently with their countrymen on large pieces of land if they are to succeed in America."

Threatened by this competitive success, native white Californians sought ways to exclude Japanese immigrants, discriminate against them, and limit their ability to own or lease land. Japanese workers were barred from factory jobs and shunted off to agricultural labor in California fields and orchards. In 1906, the San Francisco school board, claiming that Japanese children were "crowding the whites out of the schools," segregated them into separate schools. Californians passed an anti-Japanese resolution and asked Roosevelt to persuade Japan to stop the emigration. Calling the California legislators "idiots" for their actions and denouncing anti-Japanese rioting in San Francisco, Roosevelt favored restriction rather than exclusion. In the "Gentlemen's Agreement" notes of 1907–1908, the Japanese, while insulted, agreed to limit the migration of unskilled workers to the United States. In return, Californians repealed some of their anti-Japanese laws. Tensions continued.

It was one thing to check Japanese power in California but quite another to stop it in eastern Asia, where Roosevelt was determined to maintain the balance of power. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 left Russia with 50,000 troops in Manchuria, making it the strongest regional power. Roosevelt's admiration for the Japanese as a "fighting" people and valuable factor in the "civilization of the future" contrasted with his low regard for the Russians, whom he described as "corrupt," "treacherous," and "incompetent." As Japan moved into Korea and Russia into Manchuria, Roosevelt hoped that each would check the growing power of the other.



Roosevelt welcomed news in 1904 that Japan had successfully mounted a surprise attack on Port Arthur in Manchuria, beginning the Russo-Japanese War. He was “well pleased with the Japanese victory,” he told his son, “for Japan is playing our game,” but as Japanese victories continued, he worried that Japan might play the game too well, shutting the United States out of Asian markets. Roosevelt tilted toward Russia. When the Japanese expressed an interest in ending the war, the American president was pleased to exert his influence.

Roosevelt’s goal was to achieve peace and leave a balanced situation. “It is best,” he wrote, that Russia be left “face to face with Japan so that each may have a moderative action on the other.” Nothing better symbolized the new American presence in the world than the 1905 negotiation and signing of a peace treaty in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, ending a war between Russia and Japan halfway around the globe in Manchuria. The Treaty of Portsmouth left Japan dominant in Manchuria (and Korea) with the United States as the major balance to Japan’s power. In the Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908, in return for recognizing the Japanese entrenched presence in Manchuria, Roosevelt got Japan’s promise to honor U.S. control in the Philippines and to make no further encroachments into China.

The agreement barely papered over Japanese-American tensions. Some Japanese blamed Roosevelt for the fact that the Treaty of Portsmouth had not given them indemnities from Russia. American insensitivity on the immigration issue left bad feelings. In Manchuria, the U.S. consul general aggressively pushed an anti-Japanese program of financing capital investment projects in banking and railroads. This policy, known as “dollar diplomacy” under Roosevelt’s successor, William Howard Taft, like the pursuit of markets, was larger in prospect than results. Nevertheless, the United States was in Japan’s way, and rumors of war circulated.

It was clearly a moment for Roosevelt’s “big stick.” In 1907, he told Secretary of State Root that he was “more concerned over the Japanese situation than almost any other. Thank Heaven we have the navy in good shape.” Although the naval buildup had begun over a decade earlier, under Roosevelt the U.S. Navy developed into a formidable force. From 1900 to 1905, outlays to the navy rose from \$56 to \$117 million, a naval binge unprecedented in peacetime. In 1907, to make it clear that “the Pacific was as much our home waters as the Atlantic,” Roosevelt sent his new, modernized “Great White Fleet” on a goodwill world tour. Pointedly, the first stop was Yokohama, Japan. Although American sailors were greeted warmly, the act may have stimulated a naval buildup

in Japan, which came back to haunt the United States at Pearl Harbor in 1941. But for the time being, the balance of power in eastern Asia was preserved.

## Preventing War in Europe

The United States had stretched the Monroe Doctrine to justify sending Marines and engineers to Latin America and the navy and dollars to East Asia. Treaties, agreements, and the protection of territories and interests entangled the United States with foreign nations from Panama and Nicaragua to the Philippines and Japan. Toward European nations, however, traditional neutrality continued.

Roosevelt believed that the most serious threats to world peace and civilized order lay in the relationships among Germany, Great Britain, and France, especially as these nations collided with one another over colonies in Asia and Africa and engaged in a naval arms race. Roosevelt established two fundamental policies toward Europe that would define the U.S. role throughout the century. The first was to make friendship with Great Britain the cornerstone of U.S. policy. The second was to prevent a general war in Europe. Toward this end, Roosevelt depended on his personal negotiating skills and began the twentieth-century practice of a kind of summit diplomacy with leaders of major European nations.

The Venezuelan crisis of 1895 shocked the United States and Britain into an awareness of their mutual interests. Both nations appreciated the neutrality of the other in their respective colonial wars in the Philippines and South Africa. Roosevelt supported British imperialism because he favored the dominance of the “English-speaking race” and believed that Britain was “fighting the battle of civilization.” Both nations, moreover, were worried about Germany. Roosevelt wrote to Lodge in 1901 that the United States had “not the least particle of danger to fear” from Britain but that German ambitions and militarism represented the major threat to peace in Europe. As German naval power increased, Britain had to bring its fleet closer to home. Friendly allies were needed to police parts of the world formerly patrolled by the British navy. Great Britain therefore concluded a mutual-protection treaty with Japan in 1902 and willingly let the United States police Central America and the Caribbean Sea.

Language, cultural traditions, and strategic self-interest drew the two countries together. Roosevelt was unashamedly pro-British, and his most intimate circle of friends included many English. In 1905, he told King Edward VII that “the English people are more apt to be friendly to us than any other.” As Roosevelt left the presidency in 1909, one of his



## Global Imperial Activities, 1893–1904

**Reflecting on the Past** Note the growing role of the United States and the global nature of imperialism. Can you locate on a map or globe the many places mentioned in this chart? What conclusions can you draw about the racial composition of the “where” and the “who”? What larger conclusions might you make about this era of history? Who benefited? Who did not?

Year	Where	Who	What
1893	Hawaii	United States	U.S.-backed annexationists overthrow Hawaiian queen.
1893	Laos	France	Laos becomes a French protectorate.
1893	French Guyana; Ivory Coast	France	France establishes two colonies on two continents.
1894–1895	China	Japan	Japan starts and wins war with China. Japan acquires Taiwan and gets an indemnity for war costs.
1895	South Africa	Britain	British annex Tongaland.
1895	Venezuela	United States; Britain	Tensions over boundary dispute with British Guyana.
1896	Ethiopia	Italy	Italy invades Ethiopia and is defeated by the Ethiopian army.
1896	Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)	Britain	A revolt begins in Rhodesia and is suppressed.
1896–1897	Madagascar	France	French claim Madagascar and depose the queen.
1896–1898	Sudan	Britain	British reconquer Sudan.
1897–1898	Hawaii	United States	United States annexes Hawaii.
1897	China	Germany	Germans occupy Shandong Province.
1898–1899	Philippines	Spain; United States	Annexed by United States after Spanish-American War.
1898–1902	Guam; Puerto Rico; Cuba	Spain; United States	Islands become U.S. territories or protectorates after Spanish-American War.
1899	China	United States	United States establishes Open Door policy.
1899–1902	South Africa; Philippines	Britain; Boers; United States; Philippines	Wars pass control of indigenous peoples to British and Americans.
1899	Ghana	Britain	Ashanti rebellion suppressed.
1900–1901	China	United States; Japan; Britain; Germany and others	Boxer Rebellion suppressed.
1902	Venezuela	United States; Britain; Germany	Blockade ports and compete with one another over Venezuelan debt crisis.
1903	Colombia/Panama	United States	United States backs Panamanian revolutionaries for independence from Colombia.
1904	Manchuria	Japan; Russia	Japan attacks Port Arthur, starting the Russo-Japanese War.

final acts was to proclaim the special friendship between the United States and Great Britain.

Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany underestimated the Anglo-American friendship and thought that Roosevelt was really pro-German, an illusion Roosevelt cultivated when the kaiser sought his support on several diplomatic issues between 1905 and 1909. In each case, Roosevelt flattered Wilhelm while cleverly rejecting his overtures. The relationship gave Roosevelt a unique advantage in trying to prevent war in Europe, most notably during the Moroccan crisis in 1905 and 1906. When Germany and France threatened to go to war over the control of Morocco, Roosevelt intervened at the kaiser's bidding and arranged a conference in Algeciras, Spain, to head off conflict. The treaty signed in 1906 peacefully settled the Moroccan issue, though favorably for the French.

Roosevelt continued to counter meddlesome German policies. When the kaiser sought to promote a German-Chinese-American agreement to balance

the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in Asia, Roosevelt rebuffed him. Touring Europe in 1910, the former president was warmly entertained by Wilhelm, who continued to misunderstand him. Roosevelt, meanwhile, kept urging his British friends to counter the German naval buildup in order to maintain peace in Europe.

In 1911, Roosevelt wrote that nothing would be worse than if “Germany should ever overthrow England and establish the supremacy in Europe she aims at.” Roosevelt’s European policy included cementing friendship with Britain and, while maintaining official neutrality, using diplomacy to prevent European hostilities. The relationship between Great Britain and Germany continued to deteriorate, however, and by 1914, a new American president, Woodrow Wilson, faced the terrible reality that Roosevelt had sought to prevent. When World War I finally broke out, no American was more eager to fight on the British side against the Germans than Colonel Roosevelt of the Rough Riders.



## TIMELINE

1823	Monroe Doctrine	1899–1900	Open Door notes
1853	Trade opens with Japan	1900	Boxer Rebellion in China William McKinley re-elected president
1867	Alaska purchased from Russia	1901	Supreme Court insular cases McKinley assassinated; Theodore Roosevelt becomes president
1870	Failure to annex Santo Domingo (Hispaniola)	1902	Filipino-American War ends U.S. military occupation of Cuba ends Platt Amendment Venezuela debt crisis
1875	Sugar reciprocity treaty with Hawaii	1903	Panamanian revolt and independence Hay–Bunau–Varilla Treaty establishes American canal zone
1878	United States acquires naval station in Samoa	1904	Roosevelt Corollary
1882	Chinese Exclusion Act	1904–1905	Russo-Japanese War ended by treaty signed at Portsmouth, New Hampshire
1887	United States acquires naval base at Pearl Harbor	1904–1906	United States intervenes in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Cuba
1889	First Pan-American Conference	1905–1906	Moroccan crisis
1890	Alfred Mahan publishes <i>Influence of Sea Power upon History</i>	1906	Roosevelt receives Nobel Peace Prize
1893	Hawaiian coup by American sugar growers	1907	Gentleman's Agreement with Japan
1895	Cuban revolt against Spanish Venezuelan boundary dispute	1908	Root-Takahira Agreement
1896	Weyler's reconcentration policy in Cuba	1909	U.S. Navy ("Great White Fleet") sails around the world
1897	Roosevelt's speech at Naval War College	1914	Opening of the Panama Canal World War I begins
1898	Sinking of the <i>Maine</i> Spanish-American War Teller Amendment Dewey takes Manila Bay Annexation of Hawaiian Islands Americans liberate Manila; war ends Treaty of Paris; annexation of the Philippines		
1899	Senate ratifies Treaty of Paris Filipino-American War begins		

## Conclusion

## The Responsibilities of Power

The realities of power in the 1890s brought increasing international responsibilities. Roosevelt said in 1910 that because of “strength and geographical situation,” the United States had itself become “more and more, the balance of power of the whole world.” This ominous responsibility was also an opportunity to extend American economic, political, and moral influence (and some would say muscle) around the globe even while insulting new and would-be immigrants at home.

As president in the first decade of the twentieth century, Roosevelt established aggressive American policies toward the rest of the world. The United States dominated and policed Central America and the Caribbean Sea to maintain order and protect its investments and other economic interests. In eastern

Asia, Americans marched through Hay's Open Door with treaties, troops, navies, missionaries, and dollars to protect the newly annexed Philippine Islands, to develop markets and investments, and to preserve the balance of power in Asia. In Europe, the United States sought to remain neutral and uninvolved in European affairs and at the same time to cement Anglo-American friendship and prevent “civilized” nations from going to war.

How well these policies worked would be seen over the next 100 years. Torn between being an isolationist model and an interventionist savior, the fundamental ambivalence of America's sense of itself as an example to others has persisted. As questionable actions around the world—Private Grayson's and others' in the Filipino-American War, for example—



painfully demonstrated, it was increasingly difficult for the United States to be both responsible and good, both powerful and loved. The American people

experienced, therefore, both the satisfactions and burdens, both the profits and costs, of their increasing international role, as they have to this day.

## Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What is the fundamental dilemma of American foreign policy inherited from the Puritans, and to what extent do you think it fits historical events?
2. What are the four P's (or the three G's) that explain the motivations for American expansionism in the 1890s?
3. Compare and contrast the causes and consequences of the Spanish-American and Filipino-American wars. What are the major differences between these two conflicts?
4. Give three to four justifications for annexing the Philippine Islands and three to four reasons opposing annexation. Which set of arguments do you think is most compelling?
5. Outline the major principles, with examples, of President Roosevelt's foreign policy in the Caribbean, eastern Asia, and Europe. How well have these policies worked in the 100 years since Roosevelt's time?
6. Do you think that U.S. foreign policy has been primarily as an interventionist savior of other nations or as an interfering expansionist into the affairs of other nations? Or some of both? Give examples.

## Recommended Reading

Recommended Readings are posted on the Web site for this textbook. Visit [www.ablongman.com/nash](http://www.ablongman.com/nash)

## Fiction and Film

William Schroeder's *Cousins of Color* (2004), a historical novel about an African American soldier in the Philippines in 1899 who defects to the insurgent Filipino side, has obvious parallels to the American war against Iraq. Ernest Howard Crosby's *Captain Jinks, Hero* (1902), a delight if you can find it, is an earlier anti-imperialist novel set in the Philippines. James Michener's *Hawaii* (1959) is an immense saga of the multicultural history of the islands annexed by the United States in 1898. *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston (1975) faithfully reflects Chinese culture in the coming-of-age story of a young Chinese American woman in California. Frank Chin's *Donald Duk* (1911) is a fanciful story of San Francisco's Chinatown, with flashbacks to the history of Chinese railroad workers

in the late nineteenth century. The PBS video *Crucible of Empire: The Spanish-American War* (1999) uses rare archival materials, photos, motion pictures, newspapers, and popular songs to recreate the war. Two PBS videos from *The American Experience* series depict the history of the era: *Hawaii's Last Queen* (1997) describes the clash between native Hawaiians and U.S. business interests and Marines, and *America, 1900* (1998) focuses on the year 1900, including the second presidential race between McKinley and Bryan. *In Our Image*, a history of America in the Philippines from 1898 to 1946, is a video produced to accompany Stanley Karnow's *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (1989). The first tape covers the Filipino-American War.

## Discovering U.S. History Online

### Imperialism in the Making of America

[www.boondocksnet.com/moa/](http://www.boondocksnet.com/moa/)

This site by Jim Zwick is a rich source of nineteenth-century articles and visual materials about imperialism from archival sites at the University of Michigan and Cornell University.

### Anti-Imperialism in the United States, 1898–1935

[www.boondocksnet.com/ai](http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai)

This site presents an extensive collection of primary written and visual documents about anti-imperialism in America, put together by Jim Zwick.