

CHAPTER 22

Age of Empire: American Foreign Policy, 1890-1914



Figure 22.1 This poster advertises a minstrel show wherein an actor playing Theodore Roosevelt reenacts his leadership of the Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War and illustrates the American public's zeal for tales of American expansionist glory.

Chapter Outline

- 22.1 Turner, Mahan, and the Roots of Empire
- 22.2 The Spanish-American War and Overseas Empire
- 22.3 Economic Imperialism in East Asia
- 22.4 Roosevelt's "Big Stick" Foreign Policy
- 22.5 Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy"

Introduction

As he approached the rostrum to speak before historians gathered in Chicago in 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner appeared nervous. He was presenting a conclusion that would alarm all who believed that westward expansion had fostered the nation's principles of democracy. His conclusion: The frontier—the encounter between European traditions and the native wilderness—had played a fundamental role in shaping American character, but the American frontier no longer existed. Turner's statement raised questions. How would Americans maintain their unique political culture and innovative spirit in the absence of the frontier? How would the nation expand its economy if it could no longer expand its territory?

Later historians would see Turner's Frontier Thesis as deeply flawed, a gross mischaracterization of the West. But the young historian's work greatly influenced politicians and thinkers of the day. Like a muckraker, Turner exposed the problem; others found a solution by seeking out new frontiers in the creation of an American empire. The above advertisement for a theater reenactment of the Spanish-American War (**Figure 22.1**) shows the American appetite for expansion. Many Americans felt that it was time for their nation to offer its own brand of international leadership and dominance as an alternative to the land-grabbing empires of Europe.

22.1 Turner, Mahan, and the Roots of Empire

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the evolution of American interest in foreign affairs from the end of the Civil War through the early 1890s
- Identify the contributions of Frederick Jackson Turner and Alfred Thayer Mahan to the conscious creation of an American empire

During the time of Reconstruction, the U.S. government showed no significant initiative in foreign affairs. Western expansion and the goal of Manifest Destiny still held the country's attention, and American missionaries proselytized as far abroad as China, India, the Korean Peninsula, and Africa, but reconstruction efforts took up most of the nation's resources. As the century came to a close, however, a variety of factors, from the closing of the American frontier to the country's increased industrial production, led the United States to look beyond its borders. Countries in Europe were building their empires through global power and trade, and the United States did not want to be left behind.

AMERICA'S LIMITED BUT AGGRESSIVE PUSH OUTWARD

On the eve of the Civil War, the country lacked the means to establish a strong position in international diplomacy. As of 1865, the U.S. State Department had barely sixty employees and no ambassadors representing American interests abroad. Instead, only two dozen American foreign ministers were located in key countries, and those often gained their positions not through diplomatic skills or expertise in foreign affairs but through bribes. Further limiting American potential for foreign impact was the fact that a strong international presence required a strong military—specifically a navy—which the United States, after the Civil War, was in no position to maintain. Additionally, as late as 1890, with the U.S. Navy significantly reduced in size, a majority of vessels were classified as “Old Navy,” meaning a mixture of iron hulled and wholly wooden ships. While the navy had introduced the first all-steel, triple-hulled steam engine vessels seven years earlier, they had only thirteen of them in operation by 1890.

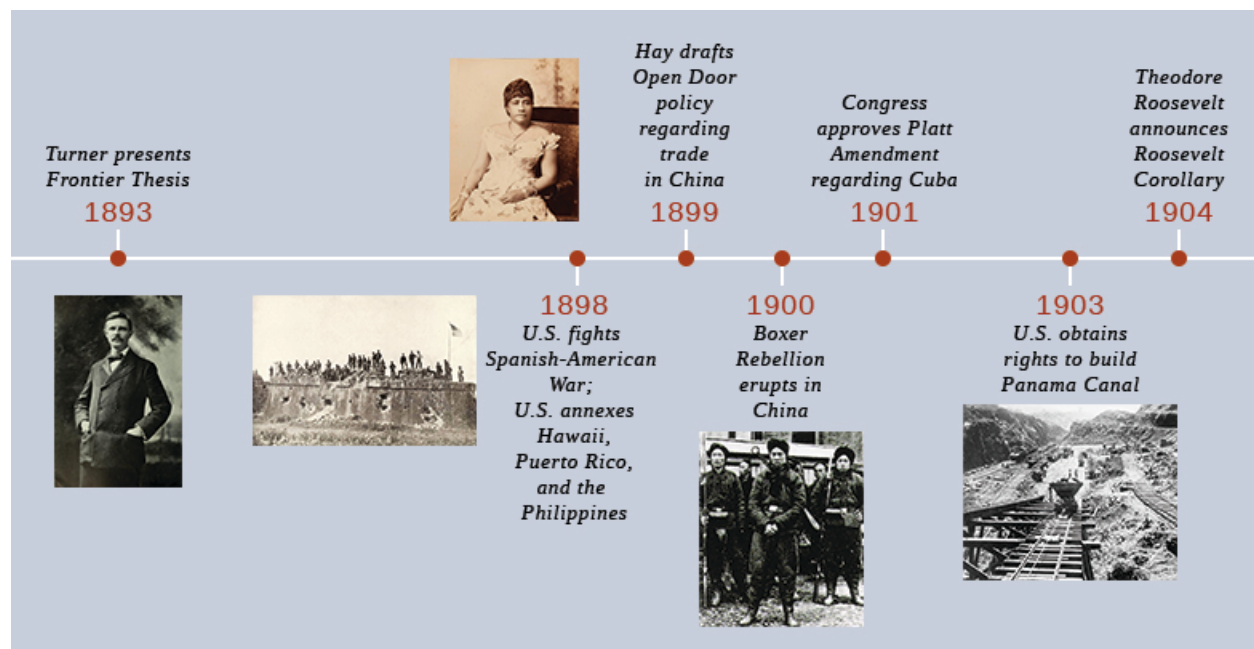


Figure 22.2

Despite such widespread isolationist impulses and the sheer inability to maintain a strong international position, the United States moved ahead sporadically with a modest foreign policy agenda in the three decades following the Civil War. Secretary of State William Seward, who held that position from 1861 through 1869, sought to extend American political and commercial influence in both Asia and Latin America. He pursued these goals through a variety of actions. A treaty with Nicaragua set the early course for the future construction of a canal across Central America. He also pushed through the annexation of the Midway Islands in the Pacific Ocean, which subsequently opened a more stable route to Asian markets. In frequent conversations with President Lincoln, among others, Seward openly spoke of his desire to obtain British Columbia, the Hawaiian Islands, portions of the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and other territories. He explained his motives to a Boston audience in 1867, when he professed his intention to give the United States “control of the world.”

Most notably, in 1867, Seward obtained the Alaskan Territory from Russia for a purchase price of \$7.2 million. Fearing future loss of the territory through military conflict, as well as desiring to create challenges for Great Britain (which they had fought in the Crimean War), Russia had happily accepted the American purchase offer. In the United States, several newspaper editors openly questioned the purchase and labeled it “**Seward’s Folly**” (**Figure 22.3**). They highlighted the lack of Americans to populate the vast region and lamented the challenges in attempting to govern the native peoples in that territory. Only if gold were to be found, the editors decried, would the secretive purchase be justified. That is exactly what happened. Seward’s purchase added an enormous territory to the country—nearly 600,000 square miles—and also gave the United States access to the rich mineral resources of the region, including the gold that triggered the Klondike Gold Rush at the close of the century. As was the case elsewhere in the American borderlands, Alaska’s industrial development wreaked havoc on the region’s indigenous and Russian cultures.



Figure 22.3 Although mocked in the press at the time as “Seward’s Folly,” Secretary of State William Seward’s acquisition of Alaska from Russia was a strategic boon to the United States.

Seward’s successor as Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, held the position from 1869 through 1877. Fish spent much of his time settling international disputes involving American interests, including claims that British assistance to the Confederates prolonged the Civil War for about two years. In these so-called Alabama claims, a U.S. senator charged that the Confederacy won a number of crucial battles with the help of one British cruiser and demanded \$2 billion in British reparations. Alternatively, the United States would settle for the rights to Canada. A joint commission representing both countries eventually settled on a British payment of \$15 million to the United States. In the negotiations, Fish also suggested adding the Dominican Republic as a territorial possession with a path towards statehood, as well as discussing the construction of a transoceanic canal with Columbia. Although neither negotiation ended in the desired result, they both expressed Fish’s intent to cautiously build an American empire without creating any unnecessary military entanglements in the wake of the Civil War.

BUSINESS, RELIGIOUS, AND SOCIAL INTERESTS SET THE STAGE FOR EMPIRE

While the United States slowly pushed outward and sought to absorb the borderlands (and the indigenous cultures that lived there), the country was also changing how it functioned. As a new industrial United States began to emerge in the 1870s, economic interests began to lead the country toward a more expansionist foreign policy. By forging new and stronger ties overseas, the United States would gain access to international markets for export, as well as better deals on the raw materials needed domestically. The concerns raised by the economic depression of the early 1890s further convinced business owners that they needed to tap into new markets, even at the risk of foreign entanglements.

As a result of these growing economic pressures, American exports to other nations skyrocketed in the years following the Civil War, from \$234 million in 1865 to \$605 million in 1875. By 1898, on the eve of the Spanish-American War, American exports had reached a height of \$1.3 billion annually. Imports over the same period also increased substantially, from \$238 million in 1865 to \$616 million in 1898. Such an increased investment in overseas markets in turn strengthened Americans' interest in foreign affairs.

Businesses were not the only ones seeking to expand. Religious leaders and Progressive reformers joined businesses in their growing interest in American expansion, as both sought to increase the democratic and Christian influences of the United States abroad. Imperialism and Progressivism were compatible in the minds of many reformers who thought the Progressive impulses for democracy at home translated overseas as well. Editors of such magazines as *Century*, *Outlook*, and *Harper's* supported an imperialistic stance as the democratic responsibility of the United States. Several Protestant faiths formed missionary societies in the years after the Civil War, seeking to expand their reach, particularly in Asia. Influenced by such works as Reverend Josiah Strong's *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (1885), missionaries sought to spread the gospel throughout the country and abroad. Led by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, among several other organizations, missionaries conflated Christian ethics with American virtues, and began to spread both gospels with zeal. This was particularly true among women missionaries, who composed over 60 percent of the overall missionary force. By 1870, missionaries abroad spent as much time advocating for the American version of a modern civilization as they did teaching the Bible.

Social reformers of the early Progressive Era also performed work abroad that mirrored the missionaries. Many were influenced by recent scholarship on race-based intelligence and embraced the implications of social Darwinist theory that alleged inferior races were destined to poverty on account of their lower evolutionary status. While certainly not all reformers espoused a racist view of intelligence and civilization, many of these reformers believed that the Anglo-Saxon race was mentally superior to others and owed the presumed less evolved populations their stewardship and social uplift—a service the British writer Rudyard Kipling termed “the white man's burden.”

By trying to help people in less industrialized countries achieve a higher standard of living and a better understanding of the principles of democracy, reformers hoped to contribute to a noble cause, but their approach suffered from the same paternalism that hampered Progressive reforms at home. Whether reformers and missionaries worked with native communities in the borderlands such as New Mexico; in the inner cities, like the Salvation Army; or overseas, their approaches had much in common. Their good intentions and willingness to work in difficult conditions shone through in the letters and articles they wrote from the field. Often in their writing, it was clear that they felt divinely empowered to change the lives of other, less fortunate, and presumably, less enlightened, people. Whether oversees or in the urban slums, they benefitted from the same passions but expressed the same paternalism.

MY STORY

Lottie Moon, Missionary

Lottie Moon was a Southern Baptist missionary who spent more than forty years living and working in China. She began in 1873 when she joined her sister in China as a missionary, teaching in a school for Chinese women. Her true passion, however, was to evangelize and minister, and she undertook a campaign to urge the Southern Baptist missionaries to allow women to work beyond the classroom. Her letter campaign back to the head of the Mission Board provided a vivid picture of life in China and exhorted the Southern Baptist women to give more generously of their money and their time. Her letters appeared frequently in religious publications, and it was her suggestion—that the week before Christmas be established as a time to donate to foreign missions—that led to the annual Christmas giving tradition. Lottie's rhetoric caught on, and still today, the annual Christmas offering is done in her name.

We had the best possible voyage over the water—good weather, no headwinds, scarcely any rolling or pitching—in short, all that reasonable people could ask. . . . I spent a week here last fall and of course feel very natural to be here again. I do so love the East and eastern life! Japan fascinated my heart and fancy four years ago, but now I honestly believe I love China the best, and actually, which is stranger still, like the Chinese best.

—Charlotte “Lottie” Moon, 1877

Lottie remained in China through famines, the Boxer Rebellion, and other hardships. She fought against foot binding, a cultural tradition where girls' feet were tightly bound to keep them from growing, and shared her personal food and money when those around her were suffering. But her primary goal was to evangelize her Christian beliefs to the people in China. She won the right to minister and personally converted hundreds of Chinese to Christianity. Lottie's combination of moral certainty and selfless service was emblematic of the missionary zeal of the early American empire.

TURNER, MAHAN, AND THE PLAN FOR EMPIRE

The initial work of businesses, missionaries, and reformers set the stage by the early 1890s for advocates of an expanded foreign policy and a vision of an American empire. Following decades of an official stance of isolationism combined with relatively weak presidents who lacked the popular mandate or congressional support to undertake substantial overseas commitments, a new cadre of American leaders—many of whom were too young to fully comprehend the damage inflicted by the Civil War—assumed leadership roles. Eager to be tested in international conflict, these new leaders hoped to prove America's might on a global stage. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, was one of these leaders who sought to expand American influence globally, and he advocated for the expansion of the U.S. Navy, which at the turn of the century was the only weapons system suitable for securing overseas expansion.

Turner (**Figure 22.4**) and naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan were instrumental in the country's move toward foreign expansion, and writer Brooks Adams further dramatized the consequences of the nation's loss of its frontier in his *The Law of Civilization and Decay* in 1895. As mentioned in the chapter opening, Turner announced his **Frontier Thesis**—that American democracy was largely formed by the American frontier—at the Chicago World's Colombian Exposition. He noted that “for nearly three centuries the dominant fact in American life has been expansion.” He continued: “American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise.”

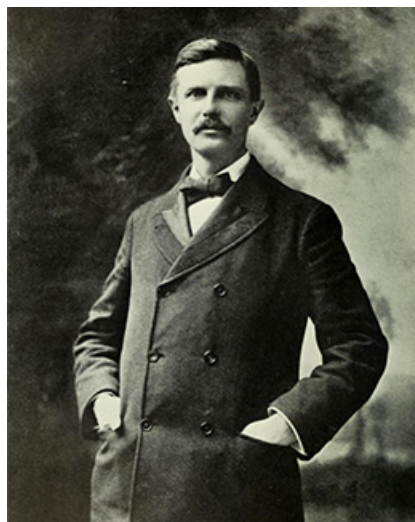


Figure 22.4 Historian Fredrick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis stated explicitly that the existence of the western frontier forged the very basis of the American identity.

Although there was no more room for these forces to proceed domestically, they would continue to find an outlet on the international stage. Turner concluded that “the demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon our seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries are indications that the forces [of expansion] will continue.” Such policies would permit Americans to find new markets. Also mindful of the mitigating influence of a frontier—in terms of easing pressure from increased immigration and population expansion in the eastern and midwestern United States—he encouraged new outlets for further population growth, whether as lands for further American settlement or to accommodate more immigrants. Turner’s thesis was enormously influential at the time but has subsequently been widely criticized by historians. Specifically, the thesis underscores the pervasive racism and disregard for the indigenous communities, cultures, and individuals in the American borderlands and beyond.

Click and Explore



Explore the **controversy associated with Turner's Frontier Thesis** (<http://ushistoryscene.com/article/legacy-of-conquest/>) at U.S. History Scene.

While Turner provided the idea for an empire, Mahan provided the more practical guide. In his 1890 work, *The Influence of Seapower upon History*, he suggested three strategies that would assist the United States in both constructing and maintaining an empire. First, noting the sad state of the U.S. Navy, he called for the government to build a stronger, more powerful version. Second, he suggested establishing a network of naval bases to fuel this expanding fleet. Seward’s previous acquisition of the Midway Islands served this purpose by providing an essential naval coaling station, which was vital, as the limited reach of steamships and their dependence on coal made naval coaling stations imperative for increasing the navy’s geographic reach. Future acquisitions in the Pacific and Caribbean increased this naval supply network (**Figure 22.5**). Finally, Mahan urged the future construction of a canal across the isthmus of Central America, which

would decrease by two-thirds the time and power required to move the new navy from the Pacific to the Atlantic oceans. Heeding Mahan's advice, the government moved quickly, passing the Naval Act of 1890, which set production levels for a new, modern fleet. By 1898, the government had succeeded in increasing the size of the U.S. Navy to an active fleet of 160 vessels, of which 114 were newly built of steel. In addition, the fleet now included six battleships, compared to zero in the previous decade. As a naval power, the country catapulted to the third strongest in world rankings by military experts, trailing only Spain and Great Britain.



Figure 22.5 American imperial acquisitions as of the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Note how the spread of island acquisitions across the Pacific Ocean fulfills Alfred Mahan's call for more naval bases in order to support a larger and more effective U.S. Navy rather than mere territorial expansion.

The United States also began to expand its influence to other Pacific Islands, most notably Samoa and Hawaii. With regard to the latter, American businessmen were most interested in the lucrative sugar industry that lay at the heart of the Hawaiian Islands' economy. By 1890, through a series of reciprocal trade agreements, Hawaiians exported nearly all of their sugar production to the United States, tariff-free. When Queen Liliuokalani tapped into a strong anti-American resentment among native Hawaiians over the economic and political power of exploitative American sugar companies between 1891 and 1893, worried businessmen worked with the American minister to Hawaii, John Stevens, to stage a quick, armed revolt to counter her efforts and seize the islands as an American protectorate (Figure 22.6). Following five more years of political wrangling, the United States annexed Hawaii in 1898, during the Spanish-American War.

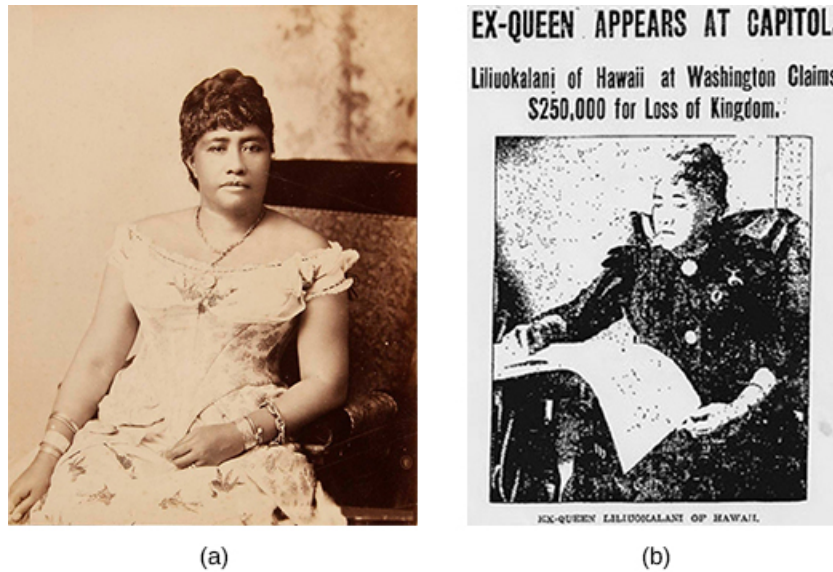


Figure 22.6 Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii (a) was unhappy with the one-sided trade agreement Hawaii held with the United States (b), but protests were squashed by an American-armed revolt.

The United States had similar strategic interests in the Samoan Islands of the South Pacific, most notably, access to the naval refueling station at Pago Pago where American merchant vessels as well as naval ships could take on food, fuel, and supplies. In 1899, in an effort to mitigate other foreign interests and still protect their own, the United States joined Great Britain and Germany in a three-party protectorate over the islands, which assured American access to the strategic ports located there.

22.2 The Spanish-American War and Overseas Empire

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the origins and events of the Spanish-American War
- Analyze the different American opinions on empire at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War
- Describe how the Spanish-American War intersected with other American expansions to solidify the nation's new position as an empire

The Spanish-American War was the first significant international military conflict for the United States since its war against Mexico in 1846; it came to represent a critical milestone in the country's development as an empire. Ostensibly about the rights of Cuban rebels to fight for freedom from Spain, the war had, for the United States at least, a far greater importance in the country's desire to expand its global reach.

The Spanish-American War was notable not only because the United States succeeded in seizing territory from another empire, but also because it caused the global community to recognize that the United States was a formidable military power. In what Secretary of State John Hay called "a splendid little war," the United States significantly altered the balance of world power, just as the twentieth century began to unfold (**Figure 22.7**).



Figure 22.7 Whereas Americans thought of the Spanish colonial regime in Cuba as a typical example of European imperialism, this 1896 Spanish cartoon depicts the United States as a land-grabbing empire. The caption, written in Catalan, states “Keep the island so it won’t get lost.”

THE CHALLENGE OF DECLARING WAR

Despite its name, the Spanish-American War had less to do with the foreign affairs between the United States and Spain than Spanish control over Cuba. Spain had dominated Central and South America since the late fifteenth century. But, by 1890, the only Spanish colonies that had not yet acquired their independence were Cuba and Puerto Rico. On several occasions prior to the war, Cuban independence fighters in the “Cuba Libre” movement had attempted unsuccessfully to end Spanish control of their lands. In 1895, a similar revolt for independence erupted in Cuba; again, Spanish forces under the command of General Valeriano Weyler repressed the insurrection. Particularly notorious was their policy of re-concentration in which Spanish troops forced rebels from the countryside into military-controlled camps in the cities, where many died from harsh conditions.

As with previous uprisings, Americans were largely sympathetic to the Cuban rebels’ cause, especially as the Spanish response was notably brutal. Evoking the same rhetoric of independence with which they fought the British during the American Revolution, several people quickly rallied to the Cuban fight for freedom. Shippers and other businessmen, particularly in the sugar industry, supported American intervention to safeguard their own interests in the region. Likewise, the “Cuba Libre” movement founded by José Martí, who quickly established offices in New York and Florida, further stirred American interest in the liberation cause. The difference in this uprising, however, was that supporters saw in the renewed U.S. Navy a force that could be a strong ally for Cuba. Additionally, the late 1890s saw the height of **yellow journalism**, in which newspapers such as the *New York Journal*, led by William Randolph Hearst, and the *New York World*, published by Joseph Pulitzer, competed for readership with sensationalistic stories. These publishers, and many others who printed news stories for maximum drama and effect, knew that war would provide sensational copy.

However, even as sensationalist news stories fanned the public’s desire to try out their new navy while supporting freedom, one key figure remained unmoved. President William McKinley, despite commanding a new, powerful navy, also recognized that the new fleet—and soldiers—were untested. Preparing for a reelection bid in 1900, McKinley did not see a potential war with Spain, acknowledged to be the most powerful naval force in the world, as a good bet. McKinley did publicly admonish Spain for its actions against the rebels, and urged Spain to find a peaceful solution in Cuba, but he remained resistant to public pressure for American military intervention.

McKinley’s reticence to involve the United States changed in February 1898. He had ordered one of

the newest navy battleships, the USS *Maine*, to drop anchor off the coast of Cuba in order to observe the situation, and to prepare to evacuate American citizens from Cuba if necessary. Just days after it arrived, on February 15, an explosion destroyed the *Maine*, killing over 250 American sailors (Figure 22.8). Immediately, yellow journalists jumped on the headline that the explosion was the result of a Spanish attack, and that all Americans should rally to war. The newspaper battle cry quickly emerged, “Remember the Maine!” Recent examinations of the evidence of that time have led many historians to conclude that the explosion was likely an accident due to the storage of gun powder close to the very hot boilers. But in 1898, without ready evidence, the newspapers called for a war that would sell papers, and the American public rallied behind the cry.



Figure 22.8 Although later reports would suggest the explosion was due to loose gunpowder onboard the ship, the press treated the explosion of the USS *Maine* as high drama. Note the lower headline citing that the ship was destroyed by a mine, despite the lack of evidence.

Click and Explore



Visit Office of the Historian to understand different perspectives on the **role of yellow journalism** (<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/yellow-journalism>) in the Spanish-American War.

McKinley made one final effort to avoid war, when late in March, he called on Spain to end its policy of concentrating the native population in military camps in Cuba, and to formally declare Cuba’s independence. Spain refused, leaving McKinley little choice but to request a declaration of war from Congress. Congress received McKinley’s war message, and on April 19, 1898, they officially recognized

Cuba's independence and authorized McKinley to use military force to remove Spain from the island. Equally important, Congress passed the Teller Amendment to the resolution, which stated that the United States would not annex Cuba following the war, appeasing those who opposed expansionism.

WAR: BRIEF AND DECISIVE

The Spanish-American War lasted approximately ten weeks, and the outcome was clear: The United States triumphed in its goal of helping liberate Cuba from Spanish control. Despite the positive result, the conflict did present significant challenges to the United States military. Although the new navy was powerful, the ships were, as McKinley feared, largely untested. Similarly untested were the American soldiers. The country had fewer than thirty thousand soldiers and sailors, many of whom were unprepared to do battle with a formidable opponent. But volunteers sought to make up the difference. Over one million American men—many lacking a uniform and coming equipped with their own guns—quickly answered McKinley's call for able-bodied men. Nearly ten thousand African American men also volunteered for service, despite the segregated conditions and additional hardships they faced, including violent uprisings at a few American bases before they departed for Cuba. The government, although grateful for the volunteer effort, was still unprepared to feed and supply such a force, and many suffered malnutrition and malaria for their sacrifice.

To the surprise of the Spanish forces who saw the conflict as a clear war over Cuba, American military strategists prepared for it as a war for empire. More so than simply the liberation of Cuba and the protection of American interests in the Caribbean, military strategists sought to further Mahan's vision of additional naval bases in the Pacific Ocean, reaching as far as mainland Asia. Such a strategy would also benefit American industrialists who sought to expand their markets into China. Just before leaving his post for volunteer service as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. cavalry, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt ordered navy ships to attack the Spanish fleet in the Philippines, another island chain under Spanish control. As a result, the first significant military confrontation took place not in Cuba but halfway around the world in the Philippines. Commodore George Dewey led the U.S. Navy in a decisive victory, sinking all of the Spanish ships while taking almost no American losses. Within a month, the U.S. Army landed a force to take the islands from Spain, which it succeeded in doing by mid-August 1899.

The victory in Cuba took a little longer. In June, seventeen thousand American troops landed in Cuba. Although they initially met with little Spanish resistance, by early July, fierce battles ensued near the Spanish stronghold in Santiago. Most famously, Theodore Roosevelt led his **Rough Riders**, an all-volunteer cavalry unit made up of adventure-seeking college graduates, and veterans and cowboys from the Southwest, in a charge up Kettle Hill, next to San Juan Hill, which resulted in American forces surrounding Santiago. The victories of the Rough Riders are the best known part of the battles, but in fact, several African American regiments, made up of veteran soldiers, were instrumental to their success. The Spanish fleet made a last-ditch effort to escape to the sea but ran into an American naval blockade that resulted in total destruction, with every Spanish vessel sunk. Lacking any naval support, Spain quickly lost control of Puerto Rico as well, offering virtually no resistance to advancing American forces. By the end of July, the fighting had ended and the war was over. Despite its short duration and limited number of casualties—fewer than 350 soldiers died in combat, about 1,600 were wounded, while almost 3,000 men died from disease—the war carried enormous significance for Americans who celebrated the victory as a reconciliation between North and South.

DEFINING "AMERICAN"

☀️ *"Smoked Yankees": Black Soldiers in the Spanish-American War*

The most popular image of the Spanish-American War is of Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders, charging up San Juan Hill. But less well known is that the Rough Riders struggled mightily in several battles and would have sustained far more serious casualties, if not for the experienced black veterans—over twenty-five hundred of them—who joined them in battle (Figure 22.9). These soldiers, who had been fighting the Indian wars on the American frontier for many years, were instrumental in the U.S. victory in Cuba.



Figure 22.9 The decision to fight or not was debated in the black community, as some felt they owed little to a country that still granted them citizenship in name only, while others believed that proving their patriotism would enhance their opportunities. (credit: Library of Congress)

The choice to serve in the Spanish-American War was not a simple one. Within the black community, many spoke out both for and against involvement in the war. Many black Americans felt that because they were not offered the true rights of citizenship it was not their burden to volunteer for war. Others, in contrast, argued that participation in the war offered an opportunity for black Americans to prove themselves to the rest of the country. While their presence was welcomed by the military which desperately needed experienced soldiers, the black regiments suffered racism and harsh treatment while training in the southern states before shipping off to battle.

Once in Cuba, however, the "Smoked Yankees," as the Cubans called the black American soldiers, fought side-by-side with Roosevelt's Rough Riders, providing crucial tactical support to some of the most important battles of the war. After the Battle of San Juan, five black soldiers received the Medal of Honor and twenty-five others were awarded a certificate of merit. One reporter wrote that "if it had not been for the Negro cavalry, the Rough Riders would have been exterminated." He went on to state that, having grown up in the South, he had never been fond of black people before witnessing the battle. For some of the soldiers, their recognition made the sacrifice worthwhile. Others, however, struggled with American oppression of Cubans and Puerto Ricans, feeling kinship with the black residents of these countries now under American rule.

ESTABLISHING PEACE AND CREATING AN EMPIRE

As the war closed, Spanish and American diplomats made arrangements for a peace conference in Paris. They met in October 1898, with the Spanish government committed to regaining control of the Philippines, which they felt were unjustly taken in a war that was solely about Cuban independence. While the Teller Amendment ensured freedom for Cuba, President McKinley was reluctant to relinquish the strategically useful prize of the Philippines. He certainly did not want to give the islands back to Spain, nor did he want another European power to step in to seize them. Neither the Spanish nor the Americans considered giving the islands their independence, since, with the pervasive racism and cultural stereotyping of the day, they believed the Filipino people were not capable of governing themselves. William Howard Taft, the first American governor-general to oversee the administration of the new U.S. possession, accurately captured American sentiments with his frequent reference to Filipinos as “our little brown brothers.”

As the peace negotiations unfolded, Spain agreed to recognize Cuba’s independence, as well as recognize American control of Puerto Rico and Guam. McKinley insisted that the United States maintain control over the Philippines as an annexation, in return for a \$20 million payment to Spain. Although Spain was reluctant, they were in no position militarily to deny the American demand. The two sides finalized the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898. With it came the international recognition that there was a new American empire that included the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The American press quickly glorified the nation’s new reach, as expressed in the cartoon below, depicting the glory of the American eagle reaching from the Philippines to the Caribbean (**Figure 22.10**).

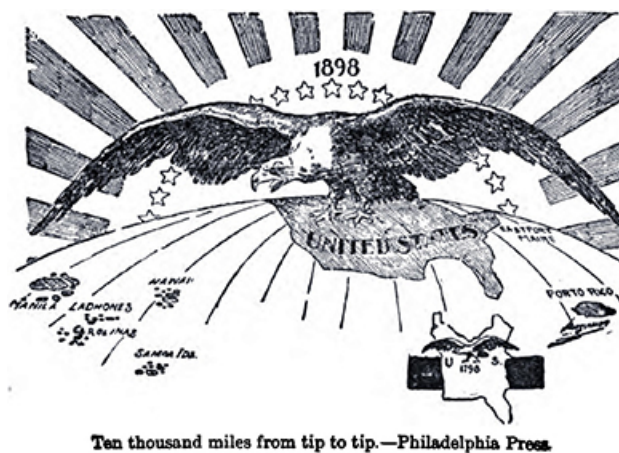


Figure 22.10 This cartoon from the *Philadelphia Press*, showed the reach of the new American empire, from Puerto Rico to the Philippines.

Domestically, the country was neither unified in their support of the treaty nor in the idea of the United States building an empire at all. Many prominent Americans, including Jane Addams, former President Grover Cleveland, Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain, and Samuel Gompers, felt strongly that the country should not be pursuing an empire, and, in 1898, they formed the **Anti-Imperialist League** to oppose this expansionism. The reasons for their opposition were varied: Some felt that empire building went against the principles of democracy and freedom upon which the country was founded, some worried about competition from foreign workers, and some held the xenophobic viewpoint that the assimilation of other races would hurt the country. Regardless of their reasons, the group, taken together, presented a formidable challenge. As foreign treaties require a two-thirds majority in the U.S. Senate to pass, the Anti-Imperialist League’s pressure led them to a clear split, with the possibility of defeat of the treaty seeming imminent. Less than a week before the scheduled vote, however, news of a Filipino uprising against American forces reached the United States. Undecided senators were convinced of the need to maintain an American presence in the region and preempt the intervention of another European power, and the Senate formally ratified the treaty on February 6, 1899.

The newly formed American empire was not immediately secure, as Filipino rebels, led by Emilio Aguinaldo (**Figure 22.11**), fought back against American forces stationed there. The Filipinos' war for independence lasted three years, with over four thousand American and twenty thousand Filipino combatant deaths; the civilian death toll is estimated as high as 250,000. Finally, in 1901, President McKinley appointed William Howard Taft as the civil governor of the Philippines in an effort to disengage the American military from direct confrontations with the Filipino people. Under Taft's leadership, Americans built a new transportation infrastructure, hospitals, and schools, hoping to win over the local population. The rebels quickly lost influence, and Aguinaldo was captured by American forces and forced to swear allegiance to the United States. The Taft Commission, as it became known, continued to introduce reforms to modernize and improve daily life for the country despite pockets of resistance that continued to fight through the spring of 1902. Much of the commission's rule centered on legislative reforms to local government structure and national agencies, with the commission offering appointments to resistance leaders in exchange for their support. The Philippines continued under American rule until they became self-governing in 1946.



Figure 22.11 Philippine president Emilio Aguinaldo was captured after three years of fighting with U.S. troops. He is seen here boarding the USS *Vicksburg* after taking an oath of loyalty to the United States in 1901.

After the conclusion of the Spanish-American War and the successful passage of the peace treaty with Spain, the United States continued to acquire other territories. Seeking an expanded international presence, as well as control of maritime routes and naval stations, the United States grew to include Hawaii, which was granted territorial status in 1900, and Alaska, which, although purchased from Russia decades earlier, only became a recognized territory in 1912. In both cases, their status as territories granted U.S. citizenship to their residents. The Foraker Act of 1900 established Puerto Rico as an American territory with its own civil government. It was not until 1917 that Puerto Ricans were granted American citizenship. Guam and Samoa, which had been taken as part of the war, remained under the control of the U.S. Navy. Cuba, which after the war was technically a free country, adopted a constitution based on the U.S. Constitution. While the Teller Amendment had prohibited the United States from annexing the country, a subsequent amendment, the Platt Amendment, secured the right of the United States to interfere in Cuban affairs if threats to a stable government emerged. The Platt Amendment also guaranteed the United States its own naval and coaling station on the island's southern Guantanamo Bay and prohibited Cuba from making treaties with other countries that might eventually threaten their independence. While Cuba remained an independent nation on paper, in all practicality the United States governed Cuba's foreign policy and economic agreements.

Click and Explore



Explore the resources at U.S. History Scene to better understand the long and involved **history of Hawaii** (<http://ushistoryscene.com/article/aloha-hawaii/>) with respect to its intersection with the United States.

22.3 Economic Imperialism in East Asia

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how economic power helped to expand America's empire in China
- Describe how the foreign partitioning of China in the last decade of the nineteenth century influenced American policy

While American forays into empire building began with military action, the country concurrently grew its scope and influence through other methods as well. In particular, the United States used its economic and industrial capacity to add to its empire, as can be seen in a study of the China market and the “Open Door notes” discussed below.

WHY CHINA?

Since the days of Christopher Columbus's westward journey to seek a new route to the East Indies (essentially India and China, but loosely defined as all of Southeast Asia), many westerners have dreamt of the elusive “China Market.” With the defeat of the Spanish navy in the Atlantic and Pacific, and specifically with the addition of the Philippines as a base for American ports and coaling stations, the United States was ready to try and make the myth a reality. Although China originally accounted for only a small percentage of American foreign trade, captains of American industry dreamed of a vast market of Asian customers desperate for manufactured goods they could not yet produce in large quantities for themselves.

American businesses were not alone in seeing the opportunities. Other countries—including Japan, Russia, Great Britain, France, and Germany—also hoped to make inroads in China. Previous treaties between Great Britain and China in 1842 and 1844 during the Opium Wars, when the British Empire militarily coerced the Chinese empire to accept the import of Indian opium in exchange for its tea, had forced an “open door” policy on China, in which all foreign nations had free and equal access to Chinese ports. This was at a time when Great Britain maintained the strongest economic relationship with China; however, other western nations used the new arrangement to send Christian missionaries, who began to work across inland China. Following the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 over China's claims to Korea, western countries hoped to exercise even greater influence in the region. By 1897, Germany had obtained exclusive mining rights in northern coastal China as reparations for the murder of two German missionaries. In 1898, Russia obtained permission to build a railroad across northeastern Manchuria. One by one, each country carved out their own **sphere of influence**, where they could control markets through tariffs and transportation, and thus ensure their share of the Chinese market.

Alarmed by the pace at which foreign powers further divided China into pseudo-territories, and worried that they had no significant piece for themselves, the United States government intervened. In contrast to

European nations, however, American businesses wanted the whole market, not just a share of it. They wanted to do business in China with no artificially constructed spheres or boundaries to limit the extent of their trade, but without the territorial entanglements or legislative responsibilities that anti-imperialists opposed. With the blessing and assistance of Secretary of State John Hay, several American businessmen created the American Asiatic Association in 1896 to pursue greater trade opportunities in China.

THE OPEN DOOR NOTES

In 1899, Secretary of State Hay made a bold move to acquire China's vast markets for American access by introducing **Open Door notes**, a series of circular notes that Hay himself drafted as an expression of U.S. interests in the region and sent to the other competing powers (**Figure 22.12**). These notes, if agreed to by the other five nations maintaining spheres of influences in China, would erase all spheres and essentially open all doors to free trade, with no special tariffs or transportation controls that would give unfair advantages to one country over another. Specifically, the notes required that all countries agree to maintain free access to all treaty ports in China, to pay railroad charges and harbor fees (with no special access), and that only China would be permitted to collect any taxes on trade within its borders. While on paper, the Open Door notes would offer equal access to all, the reality was that it greatly favored the United States. Free trade in China would give American businesses the ultimate advantage, as American companies were producing higher-quality goods than other countries, and were doing so more efficiently and less expensively. The “open doors” would flood the Chinese market with American goods, virtually squeezing other countries out of the market.



Figure 22.12 This political cartoon shows Uncle Sam standing on a map of China, while Europe's imperialist nations (from left to right: Germany, Spain, Great Britain, Russia, and France) try to cut out their “sphere of influence.”

Although the foreign ministers of the other five nations sent half-hearted replies on behalf of their respective governments, with some outright denying the viability of the notes, Hay proclaimed them the new official policy on China, and American goods were unleashed throughout the nation. China was quite welcoming of the notes, as they also stressed the U.S. commitment to preserving the Chinese government and territorial integrity.

The notes were invoked barely a year later, when a group of Chinese insurgents, the Righteous and Harmonious Fists—also known as the Boxer Rebellion (1899)—fought to expel all western nations and their influences from China (**Figure 22.13**). The United States, along with Great Britain and Germany, sent over two thousand troops to withstand the rebellion. The troops signified American commitment to the

territorial integrity of China, albeit one flooded with American products. Despite subsequent efforts, by Japan in particular, to undermine Chinese authority in 1915 and again during the Manchurian crisis of 1931, the United States remained resolute in defense of the open door principles through World War II. Only when China turned to communism in 1949 following an intense civil war did the principle become relatively meaningless. However, for nearly half a century, U.S. military involvement and a continued relationship with the Chinese government cemented their roles as preferred trading partners, illustrating how the country used economic power, as well as military might, to grow its empire.



Figure 22.13 The Boxer Rebellion in China sought to expel all western influences, including Christian missionaries and trade partners. The Chinese government appreciated the American, British, and German troops that helped suppress the rebellion.

Click and Explore



Browse the U.S. State Department's **Milestones: 1899—1913** (<http://openstaxcollege.org//haychina>) to learn more about Secretary of State John Hay and the strategy and thinking behind the Open Door notes.

22.4 Roosevelt's "Big Stick" Foreign Policy

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of "big stick" foreign policy
- Describe Theodore Roosevelt's use of the "big stick" to construct the Panama Canal
- Explain the role of the United States in ending the Russo-Japanese War

While President McKinley ushered in the era of the American empire through military strength and economic coercion, his successor, Theodore Roosevelt, established a new foreign policy approach, allegedly based on a favorite African proverb, "speak softly, and carry a big stick, and you will go far" (**Figure 22.14**). At the crux of his foreign policy was a thinly veiled threat. Roosevelt believed that in light of the country's recent military successes, it was unnecessary to *use* force to achieve foreign policy goals, so long as the military could *threaten* force. This rationale also rested on the young president's philosophy, which he termed the "strenuous life," and that prized challenges overseas as opportunities to instill American men with the resolve and vigor they allegedly had once acquired in the Trans-Mississippi West.



Figure 22.14 Roosevelt was often depicted in cartoons wielding his "big stick" and pushing the U.S. foreign agenda, often through the power of the U.S. Navy.

Roosevelt believed that while the coercive power wielded by the United States could be harmful in the wrong hands, the Western Hemisphere's best interests were also the best interests of the United States. He felt, in short, that the United States had the right and the obligation to be the policeman of the hemisphere. This belief, and his strategy of "speaking softly and carrying a big stick," shaped much of Roosevelt's foreign policy.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PANAMA CANAL

As early as the mid-sixteenth century, interest in a canal across the Central American isthmus began to take root, primarily out of trade interests. The subsequent discovery of gold in California in 1848 further spurred interest in connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and led to the construction of the Panama Railway, which began operations in 1855. Several attempts by France to construct a canal between 1881 and 1894 failed due to a combination of financial crises and health hazards, including malaria and yellow fever, which led to the deaths of thousands of French workers.

Upon becoming president in 1901, Roosevelt was determined to succeed where others had failed.

Following the advice that Mahan set forth in his book *The Influence of Seapower upon History*, he sought to achieve the construction of a canal across Central America, primarily for military reasons associated with empire, but also for international trade considerations. The most strategic point for the construction was across the fifty-mile isthmus of Panama, which, at the turn of the century, was part of the nation of Colombia. Roosevelt negotiated with the government of Colombia, sometimes threatening to take the project away and build through Nicaragua, until Colombia agreed to a treaty that would grant the United States a lease on the land across Panama in exchange for a payment of \$10 million and an additional \$250,000 annual rental fee. The matter was far from settled, however. The Colombian people were outraged over the loss of their land to the United States, and saw the payment as far too low. Influenced by the public outcry, the Colombian Senate rejected the treaty and informed Roosevelt there would be no canal.

Undaunted, Roosevelt chose to now wield the “big stick.” In comments to journalists, he made it clear that the United States would strongly support the Panamanian people should they choose to revolt against Colombia and form their own nation. In November 1903, he even sent American battleships to the coast of Colombia, ostensibly for practice maneuvers, as the Panamanian revolution unfolded. The warships effectively blocked Colombia from moving additional troops into the region to quell the growing Panamanian uprising. Within a week, Roosevelt immediately recognized the new country of Panama, welcoming them to the world community and offering them the same terms—\$10 million plus the annual \$250,000 rental fee—he had previously offered Colombia. Following the successful revolution, Panama became an American protectorate, and remained so until 1939.

Once the Panamanian victory was secured, with American support, construction on the canal began in May 1904. For the first year of operations, the United States worked primarily to build adequate housing, cafeterias, warehouses, machine shops, and other elements of infrastructure that previous French efforts had failed to consider. Most importantly, the introduction of fumigation systems and mosquito nets following Dr. Walter Reed’s discovery of the role of mosquitoes in the spread of malaria and yellow fever reduced the death rate and restored the fledgling morale among workers and American-born supervisors. At the same time, a new wave of American engineers planned for the construction of the canal. Even though they decided to build a lock-system rather than a sea-level canal, workers still had to excavate over 170 million cubic yards of earth with the use of over one hundred new rail-mounted steam shovels (**Figure 22.15**). Excited by the work, Roosevelt became the first sitting U.S. president to conduct an official international trip. He traveled to Panama where he visited the construction site, taking a turn at the steam shovel and removing dirt. The canal opened in 1914, permanently changing world trade and military defense patterns.



Figure 22.15 Recurring landslides made the excavation of the Culebra Cut one of the most technically challenging elements in the construction of the Panama Canal.

Click and Explore



This [timeline of the Panama Canal](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/panama-canal-creating-canal/) (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/panama-canal-creating-canal/>) illustrates the efforts involved in both the French and U.S. canal projects.

THE ROOSEVELT COROLLARY

With the construction of the canal now underway, Roosevelt next wanted to send a clear message to the rest of the world—and in particular to his European counterparts—that the colonization of the Western Hemisphere had now ended, and their interference in the countries there would no longer be tolerated. At the same time, he sent a message to his counterparts in Central and South America, should the United States see problems erupt in the region, that it would intervene in order to maintain peace and stability throughout the hemisphere.

Roosevelt articulated this seeming double standard in a 1904 address before Congress, in a speech that became known as the **Roosevelt Corollary**. The Roosevelt Corollary was based on the original Monroe Doctrine of the early nineteenth century, which warned European nations of the consequences of their interference in the Caribbean. In this addition, Roosevelt states that the United States would use military force “as an international police power” to correct any “chronic wrongdoing” by any Latin American nation that might threaten stability in the region. Unlike the Monroe Doctrine, which proclaimed an American policy of noninterference with its neighbors’ affairs, the Roosevelt Corollary loudly proclaimed the right and obligation of the United States to involve itself whenever necessary.

Roosevelt immediately began to put the new corollary to work. He used it to establish protectorates over Cuba and Panama, as well as to direct the United States to manage the Dominican Republic’s custom service revenues. Despite growing resentment from neighboring countries over American intervention in their internal affairs, as well as European concerns from afar, knowledge of Roosevelt’s previous

actions in Colombia concerning acquisition of land upon which to build the Panama Canal left many fearful of American reprisals should they resist. Eventually, Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt softened American rhetoric regarding U.S. domination of the Western Hemisphere, with the latter proclaiming a new “Good Neighbor Policy” that renounced American intervention in other nations’ affairs. However, subsequent presidents would continue to reference aspects of the Roosevelt Corollary to justify American involvement in Haiti, Nicaragua, and other nations throughout the twentieth century. The map below (**Figure 22.16**) shows the widespread effects of Roosevelt’s policies throughout Latin America.

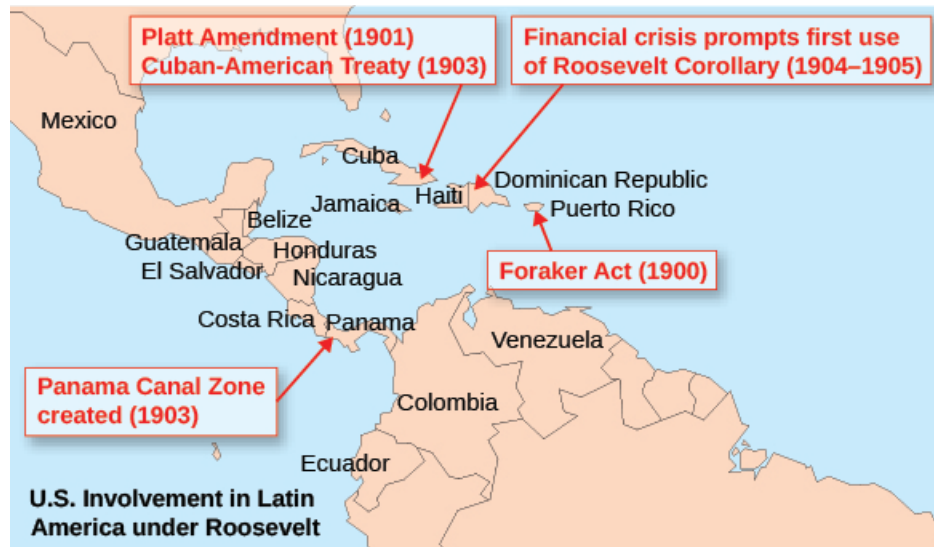


Figure 22.16 From underwriting a revolution in Panama with the goal of building a canal to putting troops in Cuba, Roosevelt vastly increased the U.S. impact in Latin America.

DEFINING "AMERICAN"

The Roosevelt Corollary and Its Impact

In 1904, Roosevelt put the United States in the role of the “police power” of the Western Hemisphere and set a course for the U.S. relationship with Central and Latin America that played out over the next several decades. He did so with the Roosevelt Corollary, in which he stated:

It is not true that the United States feels any land hunger or entertains any projects as regards the other nations of the Western Hemisphere save as such are for their welfare. All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship. . . . Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however, reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.”

In the twenty years after he made this statement, the United States would use military force in Latin America over a dozen times. The Roosevelt Corollary was used as a rationale for American involvement in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Haiti, and other Latin American countries, straining relations between Central America and its dominant neighbor to the north throughout the twentieth century.

AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Although he supported the Open Door notes as an excellent economic policy in China, Roosevelt lamented the fact that the United States had no strong military presence in the region to enforce it. Clearly, without a military presence there, he could not as easily use his “big stick” threat credibly to achieve his foreign policy goals. As a result, when conflicts did arise on the other side of the Pacific, Roosevelt adopted a policy of maintaining a balance of power among the nations there. This was particularly evident when the Russo-Japanese War erupted in 1904.

In 1904, angered by the massing of Russian troops along the Manchurian border, and the threat it represented to the region, Japan launched a surprise naval attack upon the Russian fleet. Initially, Roosevelt supported the Japanese position. However, when the Japanese fleet quickly achieved victory after victory, Roosevelt grew concerned over the growth of Japanese influence in the region and the continued threat that it represented to China and American access to those markets (**Figure 22.17**). Wishing to maintain the aforementioned balance of power, in 1905, Roosevelt arranged for diplomats from both nations to attend a secret peace conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The resultant negotiations secured peace in the region, with Japan gaining control over Korea, several former Russian bases in Manchuria, and the southern half of Sakhalin Island. These negotiations also garnered the Nobel Peace Prize for Roosevelt, the first American to receive the award.



Figure 22.17 Japan's defense against Russia was supported by President Roosevelt, but when Japan's ongoing victories put the United States' own Asian interests at risk, he stepped in.

When Japan later exercised its authority over its gains by forcing American business interests out of Manchuria in 1906–1907, Roosevelt felt he needed to invoke his “big stick” foreign policy, even though the distance was great. He did so by sending the U.S. Great White Fleet on maneuvers in the western Pacific Ocean as a show of force from December 1907 through February 1909. Publicly described as a goodwill tour, the message to the Japanese government regarding American interests was equally clear. Subsequent negotiations reinforced the Open Door policy throughout China and the rest of Asia. Roosevelt had, by both the judicious use of the “big stick” and his strategy of maintaining a balance of power, kept U.S. interests in Asia well protected.

Click and Explore



Browse the **Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery** (<http://openstaxcollege.org//RooseveltIcon>) to follow Theodore Roosevelt from Rough Rider to president and beyond.

22.5 Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy"

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how William Howard Taft used American economic power to protect the nation's interests in its new empire

When William Howard Taft became president in 1909, he chose to adapt Roosevelt's foreign policy philosophy to one that reflected American economic power at the time. In what became known as "**dollar diplomacy**," Taft announced his decision to "substitute dollars for bullets" in an effort to use foreign policy to secure markets and opportunities for American businessmen (**Figure 22.18**). Not unlike Roosevelt's threat of force, Taft used the threat of American economic clout to coerce countries into agreements to benefit the United States.



Figure 22.18 Although William Howard Taft was Theodore Roosevelt's hand-picked successor to the presidency, he was less inclined to use Roosevelt's "big stick," choosing instead to use the economic might of the United States to influence foreign affairs.

Of key interest to Taft was the debt that several Central American nations still owed to various countries in Europe. Fearing that the debt holders might use the monies owed as leverage to use military intervention in the Western Hemisphere, Taft moved quickly to pay off these debts with U.S. dollars. Of course, this move made the Central American countries indebted to the United States, a situation that not all

nations wanted. When a Central American nation resisted this arrangement, however, Taft responded with military force to achieve the objective. This occurred in Nicaragua when the country refused to accept American loans to pay off its debt to Great Britain. Taft sent a warship with marines to the region to pressure the government to agree. Similarly, when Mexico considered the idea of allowing a Japanese corporation to gain significant land and economic advantages in its country, Taft urged Congress to pass the Lodge Corollary, an addendum to the Roosevelt Corollary, stating that no foreign corporation—other than American ones—could obtain strategic lands in the Western Hemisphere.

In Asia, Taft's policies also followed those of Theodore Roosevelt. He attempted to bolster China's ability to withstand Japanese interference and thereby maintain a balance of power in the region. Initially, he experienced tremendous success in working with the Chinese government to further develop the railroad industry in that country through arranging international financing. However, efforts to expand the Open Door policy deeper into Manchuria met with resistance from Russia and Japan, exposing the limits of the American government's influence and knowledge about the intricacies of diplomacy. As a result, he reorganized the U.S. State Department to create geographical divisions (such as the Far East Division, the Latin American Division, etc.) in order to develop greater foreign policy expertise in each area.

Taft's policies, although not as based on military aggression as his predecessors, did create difficulties for the United States, both at the time and in the future. Central America's indebtedness would create economic concerns for decades to come, as well as foster nationalist movements in countries resentful of American's interference. In Asia, Taft's efforts to mediate between China and Japan served only to heighten tensions between Japan and the United States. Furthermore, it did not succeed in creating a balance of power, as Japan's reaction was to further consolidate its power and reach throughout the region.

As Taft's presidency came to a close in early 1913, the United States was firmly entrenched on its path towards empire. The world perceived the United States as the predominant power of the Western Hemisphere—a perception that few nations would challenge until the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. Likewise, the United States had clearly marked its interests in Asia, although it was still searching for an adequate approach to guard and foster them. The development of an American empire had introduced with it several new approaches to American foreign policy, from military intervention to economic coercion to the mere threat of force.

The playing field would change one year later in 1914 when the United States witnessed the unfolding of World War I, or "the Great War." A new president would attempt to adopt a new approach to diplomacy—one that was well-intentioned but at times impractical. Despite Woodrow Wilson's best efforts to the contrary, the United States would be drawn into the conflict and subsequently attempt to reshape the world order as a result.

Click and Explore



Read this **brief biography of President Taft** (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/williamhowardtaft>) to understand his foreign policy in the context of his presidency.

Key Terms

Anti-Imperialist League a group of diverse and prominent Americans who banded together in 1898 to protest the idea of American empire building

dollar diplomacy Taft's foreign policy, which involved using American economic power to push for favorable foreign policies

Frontier Thesis an idea proposed by Fredrick Jackson Turner, which stated that the encounter of European traditions and a native wilderness was integral to the development of American democracy, individualism, and innovative character

Open Door notes the circular notes sent by Secretary of State Hay claiming that there should be "open doors" in China, allowing all countries equal and total access to all markets, ports, and railroads without any special considerations from the Chinese authorities; while ostensibly leveling the playing field, this strategy greatly benefited the United States

Roosevelt Corollary a statement by Theodore Roosevelt that the United States would use military force to act as an international police power and correct any chronic wrongdoing by any Latin American nation threatening the stability of the region

Rough Riders Theodore Roosevelt's cavalry unit, which fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American War

Seward's Folly the pejorative name given by the press to Secretary of State Seward's acquisition of Alaska in 1867

sphere of influence the goal of foreign countries such as Japan, Russia, France, and Germany to carve out an area of the Chinese market that they could exploit through tariff and transportation agreements

yellow journalism sensationalist newspapers who sought to manufacture news stories in order to sell more papers

Summary

22.1 Turner, Mahan, and the Roots of Empire

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, after the Civil War, the United States pivoted from a profoundly isolationist approach to a distinct zeal for American expansion. The nation's earlier isolationism originated from the deep scars left by the Civil War and its need to recover both economically and mentally from that event. But as the industrial revolution changed the way the country worked and the American West reached its farthest point, American attitudes toward foreign expansion shifted. Businesses sought new markets to export their factory-built goods, oil, and tobacco products, as well as generous trade agreements to secure access to raw materials. Early social reformers saw opportunities to spread Christian gospel and the benefits of American life to those in less developed nations. With the rhetoric of Fredrick J. Turner and the strategies of Alfred Mahan underpinning the desire for expansion abroad, the country moved quickly to ready itself for the creation of an American empire.

22.2 The Spanish-American War and Overseas Empire

In the wake of the Civil War, American economic growth combined with the efforts of Evangelist missionaries to push for greater international influence and overseas presence. By confronting Spain over its imperial rule in Cuba, the United States took control of valuable territories in Central America and the

Pacific. For the United States, the first step toward becoming an empire was a decisive military one. By engaging with Spain, the United States was able to gain valuable territories in Latin America and Asia, as well as send a message to other global powers. The untested U.S. Navy proved superior to the Spanish fleet, and the military strategists who planned the war in the broader context of empire caught the Spanish by surprise. The annexation of the former Spanish colonies of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, combined with the acquisition of Hawaii, Samoa, and Wake Island, positioned the United States as the predominant world power in the South Pacific and the Caribbean. While some prominent figures in the United States vehemently disagreed with the idea of American empire building, their concerns were overruled by an American public—and a government—that understood American power overseas as a form of prestige, prosperity, and progress.

22.3 Economic Imperialism in East Asia

The United States shifted from isolationism to empire building with its involvement—and victory—in the Spanish-American War. But at the same time, the country sought to expand its reach through another powerful tool: its economic clout. The Industrial Revolution gave American businesses an edge in delivering high-quality products at lowered costs, and the pursuit of an “open door” policy with China opened new markets to American goods. This trade agreement allowed the United States to continue to build power through economic advantage.

22.4 Roosevelt’s “Big Stick” Foreign Policy

When Roosevelt succeeded McKinley as president, he implemented a key strategy for building an American empire: the threat, rather than the outright use, of military force. McKinley had engaged the U.S. military in several successful skirmishes and then used the country’s superior industrial power to negotiate beneficial foreign trade agreements. Roosevelt, with his “big stick” policy, was able to keep the United States out of military conflicts by employing the legitimate threat of force. Nonetheless, as negotiations with Japan illustrated, the maintenance of an empire was fraught with complexity. Changing alliances, shifting economic needs, and power politics all meant that the United States would need to tread carefully to maintain its status as a world power.

22.5 Taft’s “Dollar Diplomacy”

All around the globe, Taft sought to use U.S. economic might as a lever in foreign policy. He relied less on military action, or the threat of such action, than McKinley or Roosevelt before him; however, he both threatened and used military force when economic coercion proved unsuccessful, as it did in his bid to pay off Central America’s debts with U.S. dollars. In Asia, Taft tried to continue to support the balance of power, but his efforts backfired and alienated Japan. Increasing tensions between the United States and Japan would finally explode nearly thirty years later, with the outbreak of World War II.

Review Questions

1. Why did the United States express limited interest in overseas expansion in the 1860s and 1870s?
 - A. fear of attacks on their borders
 - B. post-Civil War reconstruction
 - C. the Anti-Imperialist League
 - D. Manifest Destiny
2. Which of the following did Mahan *not* believe was needed to build an American empire?
 - A. a navy
 - B. military bases around the world
 - C. the reopening of the American frontier
 - D. a canal through Central America
3. Why were the Midway Islands important to American expansion?

4. Which is *not* one of the reasons the Anti-Imperial League gave for opposing the creation of an American empire?
 - A. fear of competition from foreign workers
 - B. fear that the United States would suffer a foreign invasion
 - C. concerns about the integration of other races
 - D. concerns that empire building ran counter to American democratic principles
5. What was the role of the Taft Commission?
6. What challenges did the U.S. military have to overcome in the Spanish-American War? What accounted for the nation's eventual victory?
7. How did Hay's suggestion of an open door policy in China benefit the United States over other nations?
 - A. The United States produced goods of better quality and lower cost than other countries.
 - B. The United States enjoyed a historically stronger relationship with the Chinese government.
 - C. The United States was the only nation granted permission to collect taxes on the goods it traded within China's borders.
 - D. The United States controlled more foreign ports than other countries.
8. How did the Boxer Rebellion strengthen American ties with China?
 - A. The United States supported the rebels and gained their support.
 - B. The United States provided troops to fight the rebels.
 - C. The United States sent arms and financial support to the Chinese government.
 - D. The United States thwarted attempts by Great Britain and Germany to fortify the rebels.
9. How does the "Open Door notes" episode represent a new, nonmilitary tactic in the expansion of the American empire?
10. How did Colombia react to the United States' proposal to construct a canal through Central America?
 - A. They preferred to build such a canal themselves.
 - B. They preferred that no canal be built at all.
 - C. They agreed to sell land to the United States to build the canal, but in a less advantageous location than the Panamanians.
 - D. They felt that Roosevelt's deal offered too little money.
11. With the Roosevelt Corollary, Roosevelt sought to establish _____.
 - A. the consequences for any European nation that involved itself in Latin American affairs
 - B. the right of the United States to involve itself in Latin American affairs whenever necessary
 - C. the idea that Latin America was free and independent from foreign intervention
 - D. the need for further colonization efforts in the Western Hemisphere
12. Compare Roosevelt's foreign policy in Latin America and Asia. Why did he employ these different methods?
13. Why did some Central American nations object to Taft's paying off their debt to Europe with U.S. dollars?
 - A. because American currency wasn't worth as much as local currencies
 - B. because they felt it gave the United States too much leverage
 - C. because they were forced to give land grants to the United States in return
 - D. because they wanted Asian countries to pay off their debts instead
14. What two countries were engaged in a negotiation that the Lodge Corollary disallowed?
 - A. Mexico and Japan
 - B. Nicaragua and France
 - C. Colombia and Japan
 - D. Mexico and Spain
15. What problems did Taft's foreign policy create for the United States?

Critical Thinking Questions

16. Describe the United States' movement from isolationism to expansion-mindedness in the final decades of the nineteenth century. What ideas and philosophies underpinned this transformation?
17. What specific forces or interests transformed the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world between 1865 and 1890?
18. How did Taft's "dollar diplomacy" differ from Roosevelt's "big stick" policy? Was one approach more or less successful than the other? How so?
19. What economic and political conditions had to exist for Taft's "dollar diplomacy" to be effective?
20. What factors conspired to propel the United States to emerge as a military and economic powerhouse prior to World War II?