

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909 Chapter Contents
Book Title: The American Pageant
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Chapter 27

Empire and Expansion 1890–1909

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Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909 Chapter Introduction
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Chapter Introduction

We assert that no nation can long endure half republic and half empire, and we warn the American people that imperialism abroad will lead quickly and inevitably to despotism at home.

Democratic National Platform, 1900

In the years immediately following the Civil War, Americans remained astonishingly indifferent to the outside world. Enmeshed in struggles over Reconstruction and absorbed in efforts to heal the wounds of civil war, build an industrial economy, make their cities habitable, and settle the sprawling West, most citizens took little interest in international affairs. But the sunset decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a momentous shift in U.S. foreign policy. America's new diplomacy reflected the far-reaching changes that were reshaping agriculture, industry, and the social structure. American statesmen also responded to the intensifying scramble of several other nations for international advantage in the dawning "age of empire." By the beginning of the twentieth century, America had acquired its own empire, an astonishing departure from its venerable anticolonial traditions. The world now had to reckon with a new great power, potentially powerful but with diplomatic ambitions and principles that remained to be defined.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-1 America Turns Outward
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27-1 America Turns Outward

Many developments fed the nation's ambition for overseas expansion. Both farmers and factory owners began to look for markets beyond American shores as agricultural and industrial production boomed. Many Americans believed that the United States had to expand or explode. Their country was bursting with a new sense of power generated by the robust growth in population, wealth, and productive capacity—and it was trembling from the hammer blows of labor violence and agrarian unrest. Overseas markets might provide a safety valve to relieve those pressures.

In 1896 the Washington Post editorialized,

"A new consciousness seems to have come upon us—the consciousness of strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength.... Ambition, interest, land hunger, pride, the mere joy of fighting, whatever it

may be, we are animated by a new sensation. We are face to face with a strange destiny. The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood is in the jungle. It means an Imperial policy, the Republic, renascent, taking her place with the armed nations."

Other forces also whetted the popular appetite for overseas involvement. The lurid "yellow press" of **Joseph Pulitzer** and **William Randolph Hearst** described foreign exploits as manly adventures, the kind of dashing derring-do that was the stuff of young boys' dreams. Pious missionaries, inspired by books like the Reverend Josiah Strong's *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, looked overseas for new souls to harvest. Strong trumpeted the superiority of Anglo-Saxon civilization and summoned Americans to spread their religion and their values to the "backward" peoples. He cast his seed on fertile ground. At the same time, aggressive Americans like **Theodore Roosevelt** and Congressman (later Senator) **Henry Cabot Lodge** were interpreting Darwinism to mean that the earth belonged to the strong and the fit—that is, to Uncle Sam. This view was strengthened as latecomers to the colonial scramble scooped up leavings from the banquet table of earlier diners. Africa, previously unexplored and mysterious, was partitioned by the Europeans in the 1880s in a pell-mell rush of colonial conquest. In the 1890s Japan, Germany, and Russia all extorted concessions from the anemic Chinese Empire. If America was to survive in the competition of modern nation-states, perhaps it, too, would have to become an imperial power.

The Imperial Menu

A pleased Uncle Sam gets ready to place his order with headwaiter **William McKinley**. Swallowing some of these possessions eventually produced political indigestion.



WELL, I HARDLY KNOW WHICH TO TAKE FIRST!

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The development of a new steel navy also focused attention overseas. Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan's book of 1890, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, argued that control of the sea was the key to world dominance. Mahan helped stimulate the naval race among the great powers that gained momentum around the turn of the century. Red-blooded Americans joined in the demands for a mightier navy and for an American-built isthmian canal between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

America's new international interest manifested itself in several ways. Two-time secretary of state **James G. Blaine** pushed his **Big Sister policy** (A foreign policy of Secretary of State **James G. Blaine** aimed at rallying Latin American nations behind American leadership and opening Latin American markets to Yankee traders. The policy bore fruit in 1889, when Blaine presided over the First International Conference of American States.), aimed at rallying the Latin American nations behind Uncle Sam's leadership and opening Latin American markets to Yankee traders. Blaine's efforts bore some fruit in 1889, when he presided over the first Pan-American Conference, held in Washington, D.C., the modest beginnings of an increasingly important series of inter-American assemblages.

A number of diplomatic crises or near-wars also marked the path of American diplomacy in the late 1880s and early 1890s. The American and German navies nearly came to blows in 1889 over the faraway Samoan Islands in the South Pacific, which were formally divided between the two nations in 1899. (German Samoa eventually became an independent republic; American Samoa remains an American possession.) The lynching of eleven Italians in New Orleans in 1891 brought America and Italy to the brink of war, until the United States agreed to pay compensation. In the ugliest affair, American demands on Chile after the deaths of two American sailors in the port of Valparaiso in 1892 made hostilities between the two countries seem inevitable. The threat of attack by Chile's modern navy spread alarm on the Pacific Coast, until the Chileans finally agreed to pay an indemnity. A simmering argument between the United States and Canada over seal hunting near the Pribilof Islands off the coast of Alaska was resolved by arbitration in 1893. The willingness of Americans to risk war over such distant and minor disputes demonstrated the aggressive new national mood.

America's new belligerence combined with old-time anti-British feeling to generate a serious crisis between the United States and Britain in 1895–1896. The jungle boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela had long been in dispute, but the discovery of gold in the contested area brought the conflict between Britain and Venezuela to a head.

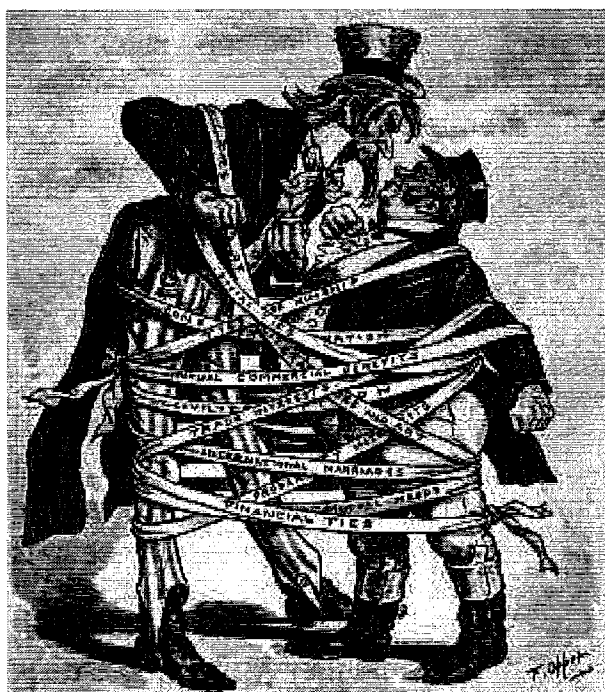
*The undiplomatic note to Britain by Secretary of State **Richard Olney** (1835–1917) read,*

“To-day the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition.... Its infinite resources combined with its isolated position render it master of the situation and practically invulnerable as against any or all other powers.”

President Cleveland and his pugnacious secretary of state, **Richard Olney**, waded into the affair with a combative note to Britain invoking the Monroe Doctrine. Not content to stop there, Olney haughtily informed the world's number one naval power that the United States was now calling the tune in the Western Hemisphere.

They Can't Fight

Britain and America waged a war of words during the Venezuelan boundary dispute, but cooler heads prevailed. A new era of diplomatic cooperation between the two former foes dawned, as they saw themselves bound together by ties of language, culture, and mutual economic interest. As the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck reportedly remarked, "The supreme geopolitical fact of the modern era is that the Americans speak English."



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Unimpressed British officials shrugged off Olney's salvo as just another twist of the lion's tail and replied that the affair was none of Uncle Sam's business. President Cleveland—"mad clear through," as he put it—sent a bristling special message to Congress. He urged an appropriation for a commission of experts, who would run the line where it ought to go. If the British would not accept this rightful boundary, he implied, the United States would fight for it.

The entire country, irrespective of political party, was swept off its feet in an outburst of hysteria. War seemed inevitable. Fortunately, sober second thoughts prevailed on both sides of the Atlantic. A rising challenge from Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany, as well as a looming war with the Dutch-descended Boers in South Africa, left Britain in no mood for war with America. London backed off and consented to arbitration.

The chastened British, their eyes fully opened to the European peril, were now determined to cultivate Yankee friendship. The British inaugurated an era of “patting the eagle's head,” which replaced a century or so of America's “twisting the lion's tail.” Sometimes called the **Great Rapprochement** (After decades of occasionally “twisting the lion's tail,” American diplomats began to cultivate close, cordial relations with Great Britain at the end of the nineteenth century—a relationship that would intensify further during World War I.)—or reconciliation—between the United States and Britain, the new Anglo-American cordiality became a cornerstone of both nations' foreign policies as the twentieth century opened.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-2 Spurning the Hawaiian Pear

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27-2 Spurning the Hawaiian Pear

Enchanted Hawaii had early attracted the attention of Americans. In the morning years of the nineteenth century, the breeze-brushed islands were a way station and provisioning point for Yankee shippers, sailors, and whalers. In 1820 the first New England missionaries arrived, preaching the twin blessings of Protestant Christianity and protective calico. They came to do good—and did well, as Hawaii became an increasingly important center for sugar production.

Americans gradually came to regard the Hawaiian Islands as a virtual extension of their own coastline. The State Department, beginning in the 1840s, sternly warned other powers to keep their grasping hands off. America's grip was further tightened in 1887 by a treaty with the native government guaranteeing priceless naval-base rights at spacious Pearl Harbor.

But trouble was brewing in the insular paradise. Old World pathogens had scythed the indigenous Hawaiian population down to one-sixth of its size at the time of the first contact with Europeans, leading the American sugar lords to import large numbers of Asian laborers to work the canefields and sugar mills. By century's end, Chinese and Japanese immigrants outnumbered both whites and native Hawaiians, amid mounting worries that Tokyo might be tempted to intervene on behalf of its often-abused nationals. Then sugar markets went sour in 1890 when the **McKinley Tariff** (Shepherded through Congress by President **William McKinley**, this tariff raised duties on Hawaiian sugar and set off renewed efforts to secure the annexation of Hawaii to the United States.) raised barriers against the Hawaiian product. White American planters thereupon renewed their efforts to secure the annexation of Hawaii to the United States. They were blocked by the strong-willed Queen Liliuokalani, who insisted that native Hawaiians should control the islands. Desperate whites, though only a tiny minority, organized a successful revolt early in 1893, openly assisted by American troops, who landed under the unauthorized orders of the expansionist American minister in Honolulu. “The Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe,” he wrote exultantly to his superiors in Washington, “and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it.”

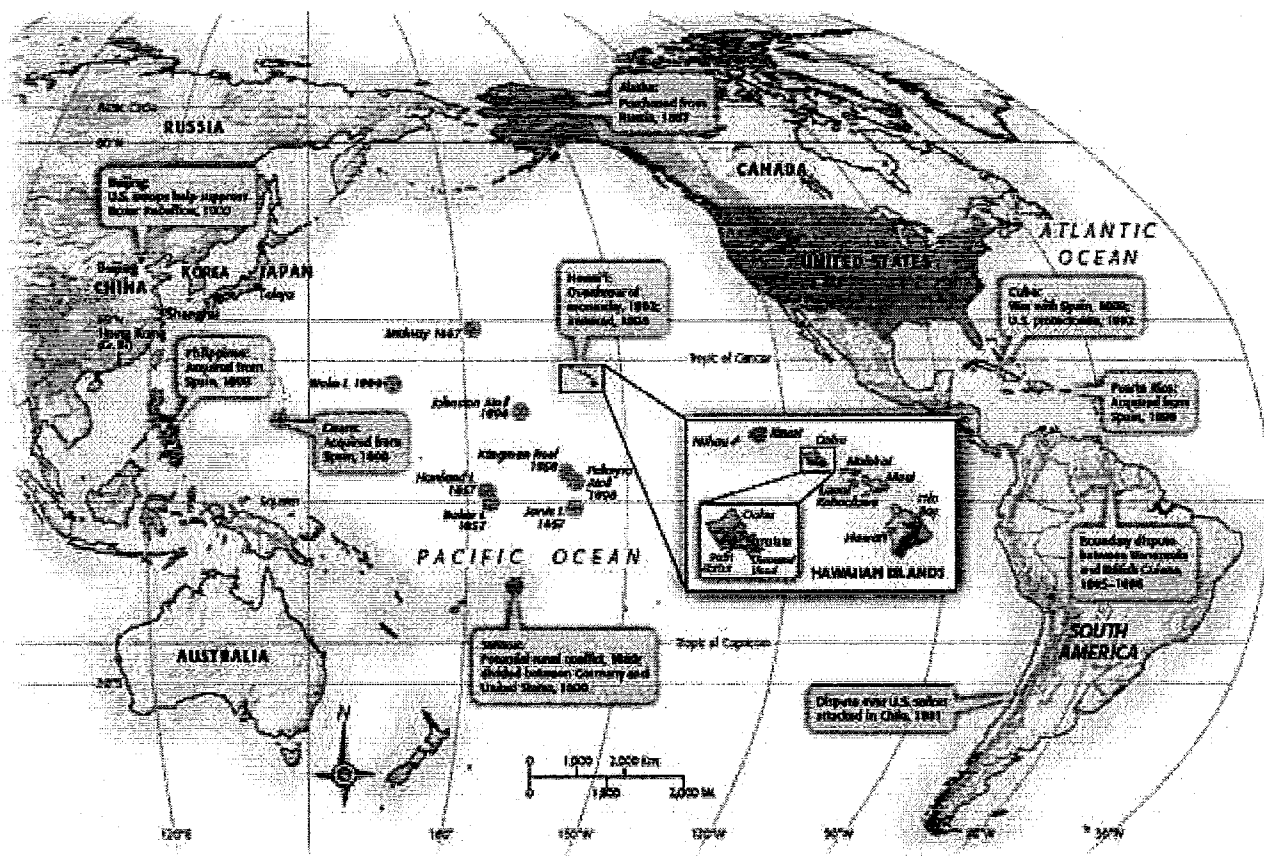
A treaty of annexation was rushed to Washington, but before it could be railroaded

through the Senate, Republican president Harrison's term expired and Democratic president Cleveland came in. Suspecting that his powerful nation had gravely wronged the deposed Queen Liliuokalani and her people, "Old Grover" abruptly withdrew the treaty. A subsequent investigation determined that a majority of the Hawaiian natives opposed annexation. Although Queen Liliuokalani could not be reinstated, the sugarcoated move for annexation had to be temporarily abandoned. The Hawaiian pear continued to ripen until the fateful year of 1898, when the United States acquired its overseas empire (see Map 27.1).

Map 27.1

United States Expansion, 1857–1917

With the annexation of the Philippines, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico in 1898, the United States became an imperial power.



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Queen Liliuokalani (1838–1917)

Liliuokalani was the last reigning queen of Hawaii, whose defense of native Hawaiian self-rule led to a revolt by white settlers and to her dethronement. She wrote many songs, the most famous of which was "Aloha Oe," or "Farewell to Thee," played countless times by Hawaiian bands for departing tourists.



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Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-3 Cubans Rise in Revolt

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27-3 Cubans Rise in Revolt

Cuba's masses, frightfully misgoverned, again rose against their Spanish oppressors in 1895. The roots of their revolt were partly economic. Sugar production—the backbone of the island's prosperity—was crippled when the American tariff of 1894 restored high duties on the toothsome product. The desperate insurgents now sought to drive out their Spanish overlords by adopting a scorched-earth policy. The insurrectos (Cuban insurgents who sought freedom from colonial Spanish rule. Their destructive tactics threatened American economic interests in Cuban plantations and railroads.) torched canefields and sugar mills and dynamited passenger trains. Their destructive tactics also menaced American interests on the island.

American sympathies went out to the Cuban underdogs. Sentiment aside, American business had an investment stake of about \$50 million in Cuba and an annual trade stake of about \$100 million, all of it put at risk by revolutionary upheaval. Moreover, as the calculating Senator Lodge put it, Cuba lay “right athwart the line” that led to the much-anticipated Panama Canal. Whoever controlled Cuba, said Lodge, “controls the Gulf [of Mexico].” Much was riding on the outcome of events in troubled Cuba.

Fuel was added to the Cuban conflagration in 1896 with the arrival of the Spanish general “Butcher” Weyler. He undertook to crush the rebellion by herding many civilians into

barbed-wire reconcentration camps, where they could not give assistance to the armed *insurrectos*. Lacking proper sanitation, these enclosures turned into deadly pestholes; the victims died like dogs.

Atrocities in Cuba were red meat for the sensational new “yellow journalism” of **William Randolph Hearst** and **Joseph Pulitzer**. Engaged in a titanic duel for circulation, each attempted to outdo the other with screeching headlines and hair-raising “scoops.” Where atrocity stories did not exist, they were invented. Hearst sent the gifted artist Frederic Remington to Cuba to draw sketches, allegedly with the pointed admonition “You furnish the pictures and I’ll furnish the war.” Among other outrages, Remington depicted Spanish customs officials brutally disrobing and searching an American woman. Most readers of Hearst’s *Journal*, their indignation soaring, had no way of knowing that such tasks were performed by female attendants. Hearst also sensationally publicized a private letter from the Spanish minister in Washington, Dupuy de Lôme. The indiscreet epistle, stolen from the mails, described President **McKinley** in decidedly unflattering terms. The resulting uproar forced Dupuy de Lôme’s resignation and further infuriated the American public.

Then early in 1898, Washington sent the battleship *Maine* to Cuba, ostensibly for a “friendly visit” but actually to protect and evacuate Americans if a dangerous flare-up should occur and to demonstrate Washington’s concern for the island’s stability. Tragedy struck on February 15, 1898, when the Maine (American battleship dispatched to keep a “friendly” watch over Cuba in early 1898. It mysteriously blew up in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, with a loss of 260 sailors. Later evidence confirmed that the explosion was accidental, resulting from combustion in one of the ship’s internal coal bunkers. But many Americans, eager for war, insisted that it was the fault of a Spanish submarine mine.) mysteriously blew up in Havana harbor, with a loss of 260 sailors.

Many Spaniards felt that accusations about their blowing up the Maine reflected on Spanish honor. One Madrid newspaper spoke up:

“The American jingoes ... imagine us capable of the most foul villainies and cowardly actions. Scoundrels by nature, the American jingoes believe that all men are made like themselves. What do they know about noble and generous feelings? ... We should not in any way heed the jingoes: they are not even worth our contempt, or the saliva with which we might honor them in spitting at their faces.”

The Explosion of the Maine, February 15, 1898

Encouraged and amplified by the “yellow press,” the outcry over the tragedy of the *Maine* helped drive the country into an impulsive war against Spain.



Chicago History Museum

Two investigations of the iron coffin ensued, one by U.S. naval officers and the other by Spanish officials. The Spaniards concluded that the explosion had been internal and presumably accidental; the Americans argued that the blast had been caused by a submarine mine. Not until 1976 did U.S. Navy admiral **H. G. Rickover** confirm the original Spanish finding with overwhelming evidence that the initial explosion had resulted from spontaneous combustion in one of the coal bunkers adjacent to a powder magazine.

But Americans in 1898, now mad for war, blindly embraced the less likely explanation. Lashed to fury by the yellow press, they leapt to the inaccurate conclusion that the Spanish government had been guilty of intolerable treachery. The battle cry of the hour became

Remember the Maine!

To hell with Spain!

Nothing would do but to hurl the “dirty” Spanish flag from the hemisphere.

The national war fever burned ever higher, even though American diplomats had already gained Madrid's agreement to Washington's two basic demands: an end to the reconcentration camps and an armistice with Cuban rebels. The cautious McKinley found himself in a jam. He did not want hostilities, but neither did he want Spain to remain in possession of Cuba. Nor, for that matter, did he want a fully independent Cuba, over which the United States could exercise no control. More impetuous souls denounced the circumspect president as “Wobbly Willie” McKinley. Fight-hungry **Theodore Roosevelt** reportedly snarled that the “white-livered” occupant of the White House did not have “the backbone of a chocolate éclair.” The president, whose shaken nerves required sleeping pills, was even being hanged in effigy.

McKinley, recognizing the inevitable, eventually yielded and gave the people what they wanted. But public pressure did not fully explain McKinley's course. He had little faith in Spain's oft-broken promises. He worried about Democratic reprisals in the upcoming presidential election of 1900 if he continued to appear indecisive in a time of crisis. He also acknowledged America's commercial and strategic interests in Cuba.

On April 11, 1898, McKinley sent his war message to Congress, urging armed intervention to free the oppressed Cubans. The legislators responded uproariously with what was essentially a declaration of war. In a burst of self-righteousness, they likewise adopted the hand-tying **Teller Amendment** (A proviso to President William McKinley's war plans that proclaimed to the world that when the United States had overthrown Spanish misrule, it would give Cuba its freedom. The amendment testified to the ostensibly "anti-imperialist" designs of the initial war plans.) . This proviso proclaimed to the world that when the United States had overthrown Spanish misrule, it would give the Cubans their freedom—a declaration that caused imperialistic Europeans to smile skeptically.

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27-4 Dewey's May Day Victory at Manila

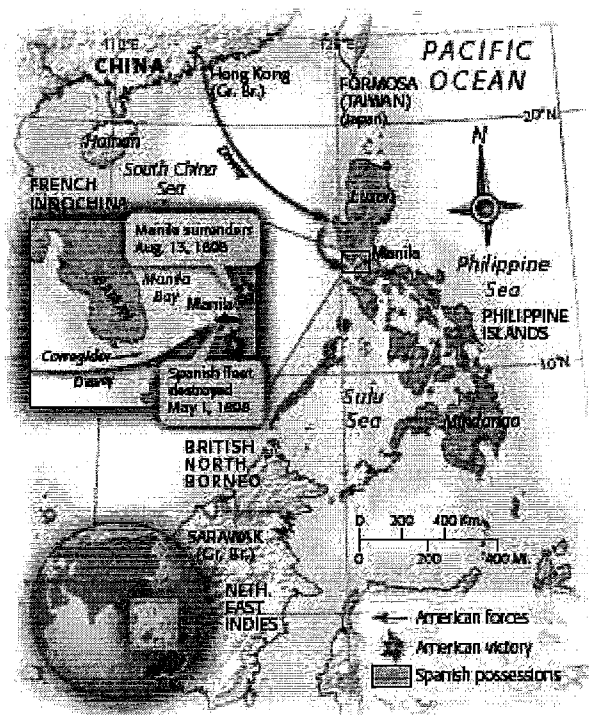
The American people plunged into the war lightheartedly, like schoolchildren off to a picnic. Bands blared incessantly "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" and "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here," leading some foreigners to believe that those were national anthems.

The war got off to a giddy start for American forces. Even before the declaration of war, on February 25, 1898, while Navy Secretary **John D. Long** was away from the office, his hot-blooded assistant secretary **Theodore Roosevelt** took matters into his own hands. Roosevelt cabled Commodore George Dewey, commanding the American Asiatic Squadron at Hong Kong, to descend upon Spain's Philippines in the event of war. "The very devil seemed to possess him," Long later wrote of Roosevelt's actions. But President **McKinley** subsequently confirmed Roosevelt's instructions, even though an attack in the distant Far East seemed like a strange way to free nearby Cuba.

Dewey carried out his orders magnificently on May 1, 1898 (see Map 27.2). Sailing boldly with his six warships at night into the fortified harbor of Manila, he trained his guns the next morning on the moldy ten-ship Spanish fleet. The entire collection of antiquated and overmatched vessels was quickly destroyed, with a loss of nearly four hundred Spaniards killed and wounded, and without the loss of a single American life.

Map 27.2

Dewey's Route in the Philippines, 1898



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Taciturn George Dewey became a national hero overnight. An amateur poet blossomed forth with this:

*Oh, dewey was the morning
 Upon the first of May,
 And Dewey was the Admiral,
 Down in Manila Bay.
 And dewey were the Spaniards' eyes,
 Them orbs of black and blue;
 And dew we feel discouraged?
 I dew not think we dew!*

Yet Dewey was in a perilous position. He had destroyed the enemy fleet, but he could not storm the forts of Manila with his sailors. His nerves frayed, he was forced to wait in the sweltering bay while troop reinforcements were slowly assembled in America. The appearance of German warships in Manila harbor deepened the tension.

Long-awaited American troops, finally arriving in force, captured Manila on August 13, 1898, in collaboration with Filipino insurgents commanded by their well-educated, part-Chinese leader, **Emilio Aguinaldo**. Dewey, to his later regret, had brought this shrewd and magnetic revolutionary from exile in Asia so that he might weaken Spanish resistance.

These thrilling events in the Philippines had meanwhile focused attention on Hawaii. An impression spread that America needed the archipelago as a coaling and provisioning way station, in order to send supplies and reinforcements to Dewey. **McKinley** also worried that Japan might grab the Hawaiian Islands while America was distracted elsewhere. A joint

resolution of annexation was rushed through Congress and approved by McKinley on July 7, 1898. It granted Hawaiian residents U.S. citizenship; Hawaii received full territorial status in 1900.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-5 The Confused Invasion of Cuba

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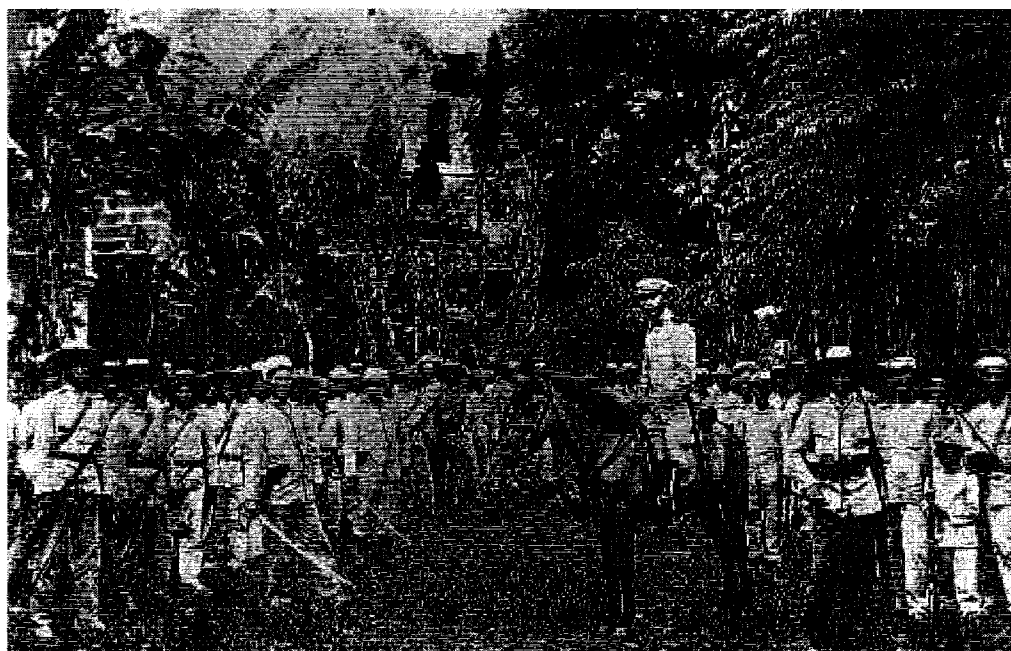
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27-5 The Confused Invasion of Cuba

Shortly after the outbreak of war, the Spanish government ordered a fleet of decrepit warships to Cuba. Panic seized the eastern seaboard of the United States. American vacationers abandoned their seashore cottages, while nervous investors moved their securities to inland depositories. The Spanish “armada” eventually wheezed into bottle-shaped Santiago harbor, Cuba, where it was easily blockaded by the much more powerful American fleet.

Emilio Aguinaldo (ca. 1869–1964) and Followers, 1900

Aguinaldo had a colorfully checkered career. Exiled from the Philippines by the Spanish in 1897, he was brought back in 1898 to assist the American invasion. A year later he led the Filipino insurrection against the new American rulers. Captured in 1901, he declared his loyalty to the United States. During World War II, he collaborated with the Japanese when they occupied the Philippines. After a lifetime of political intrigue and armed struggle, Aguinaldo died peacefully in Manila in 1964 in his ninety-fifth year.



© Bettmann/Corbis

Sound strategy seemed to dictate that an American army be sent in from the rear to drive

out the Spanish ships. Leading the invading force was the grossly over-weight General **William R. Shafter**, a would-be warrior so blubbery and gout-stricken that he had to be carried about on a door. His troops were woefully unequipped for war in the tropics; they had been amply provided with heavy woolen underwear and uniforms designed for subzero operations against the Indians.

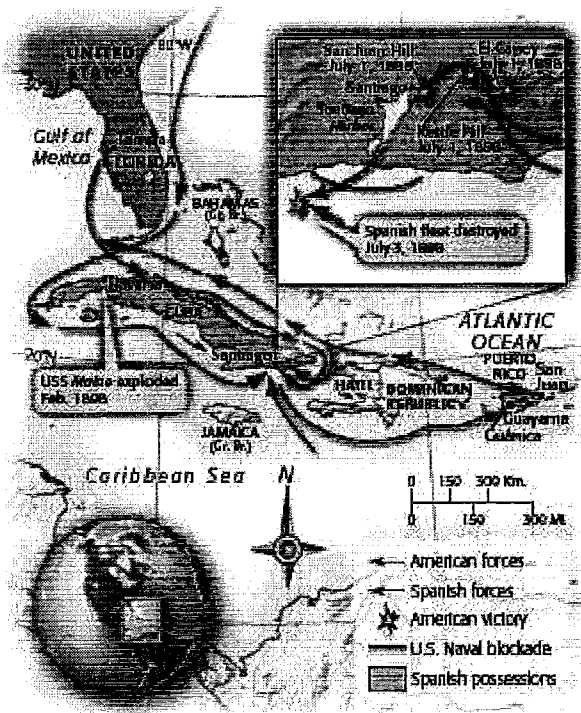
The **Rough Riders** (Organized by **Theodore Roosevelt**, this was a colorful, motley regiment of Cuban war volunteers consisting of western cowboys, ex-convicts, and effete Ivy Leaguers. Roosevelt emphasized his experience with the regiment in subsequent campaigns for Governor of New York and Vice-President under **William McKinley**.), a part of the invading army, now charged onto the stage of history. This colorful regiment of volunteers, short on discipline but long on dash, consisted largely of western cowboys and other hardy characters, with a sprinkling of ex-polo players and ex-convicts. Commanded by **Colonel Leonard Wood**, the group was organized principally by the glory-chasing **Theodore Roosevelt**, who had resigned from the Navy Department to serve as lieutenant colonel. He was so nearsighted that as a safeguard he took along a dozen pairs of spectacles, cached in handy spots on his person or nearby.

About the middle of June, a bewildered American army of seventeen thousand men finally embarked at congested Tampa, Florida, amid scenes of indescribable confusion. Shafter's landing near Santiago, thanks to the diversionary tactics of Cuban *insurrectos*, met little opposition. Brisk fighting broke out on July 1 at El Caney and Kettle Hill, up which **Colonel Roosevelt** and his horseless Rough Riders charged, with strong support from two crack black regiments. They suffered heavy casualties, but the colorful colonel, having the time of his life, shot a Spaniard with his revolver and rejoiced to see his victim double up like a jackrabbit. He later wrote a book on his exploits, which the famed satirist Finley Peter Dunne's character "Mr. Dooley" remarked ought to have been entitled *Alone in Cuba* [sic].

The American army, fast closing in on Santiago, spelled doom for the badly outgunned Spanish fleet. On July 3 the Spaniards dutifully steamed out of the harbor and into the teeth of the waiting American warships. "Don't cheer, men," Captain Philip of the *Texas* admonished his seamen. "The poor devils are dying." Shortly thereafter Santiago surrendered (see Map 27.3).

Map 27.3

The Cuban Campaign, 1898



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With a mixture of modesty and immodesty, Colonel Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) wrote privately in 1903 of his “Rough Riders,”

“In my regiment nine-tenths of the men were better horsemen than I was, and probably two-thirds of them better shots than I was, while on the average they were certainly hardier and more enduring. Yet after I had had them a very short while they all knew, and I knew too, that nobody else could command them as I could.”

Colonel Theodore Roosevelt with Some of the “Rough Riders”

Roosevelt later described his first encounter with the Spanish enemy: “Soon we came to the brink of a deep valley. There was a good deal of cracking of rifles way off in front of us, but as they used smokeless powder we had no idea as to exactly where they were, or who they were shooting at. Then it dawned on us that we were the target. The bullets began to come overhead, making a sound like the ripping of a silk dress, with sometimes a kind of pop.... We advanced, firing at them, and drove them off.”



Granger Collection

Hasty preparations were now made for a descent upon Puerto Rico before the war should end. There the American army met even less resistance than in Cuba. By this time Spain had satisfied its honor. On August 12, 1898, it signed an armistice.

If the Spaniards had held out a few months longer in Cuba, the American army might have melted away. The inroads of malaria, typhoid fever, dysentery, and yellow fever became so severe that hundreds were incapacitated—"an army of convalescents." Others suffered from malodorous canned meat known as "embalmed beef." All told, nearly four hundred men lost their lives to bullets; over five thousand succumbed to bacteria and other causes.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-6 America's Course (Curse?) of Empire

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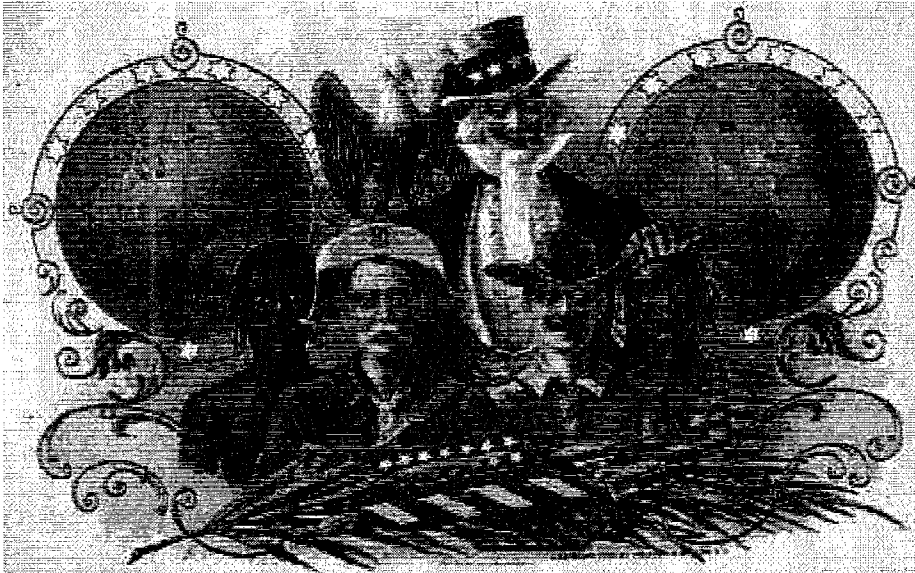
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27-6 America's Course (Curse?) of Empire

Late in 1898 Spanish and American negotiators met in Paris. War-racked Cuba, as expected, was freed from its Spanish overlords. The Americans had little difficulty in securing the remote Pacific island of Guam, which they had captured early in the conflict from the astonished Spaniards, who, lacking a cable, had not known that a war was on. Spain also ceded Puerto Rico to the United States as payment for war costs. Ironically, the last remnant of Spain's vast New World empire thus became the first territory ever annexed to the United States without the express promise of eventual state-hood. In the decades to come, American investment in the island and Puerto Rican immigration to the United States would make this acquisition one of the weightier consequences of this somewhat carefree war (see "Makers of America: The Puerto Ricans,").

Uncle Sam and People from His Colonies, Postcard, ca. 1900

The acquisition of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Hawaii, and other Pacific islands brought millions of people of color under the American flag and, as depicted here, the paternal watch of "Uncle Sam." Whether they would eventually become citizens or remain colonial subjects was hotly debated in the United States. Many anti-imperialists opposed colonial expansion precisely because they regarded the exotic new peoples as "unassimilable."



© Bettmann/Corbis

Knottiest of all was the problem of the Philippines, a veritable apple of discord. These lush islands not only embraced an area larger than the British Isles but also contained an ethnically diverse population of some 7 million souls. McKinley was confronted with a devil's dilemma. He did not feel that America could honorably give the islands back to Spanish misrule, especially after it had fought a war to free Cuba. And America would be turning its back upon its responsibilities in a cowardly fashion, he believed, if it simply pulled up anchor and sailed away.

McKinley viewed virtually all the choices open to him as trouble-fraught. The Filipinos, if left to govern themselves, might fall into anarchy. One of the major powers, possibly aggressive Germany or Japan, might then try to seize them. The result could be a major war into which the United States would be sucked. Seemingly the least of the evils consistent with national honor and safety was to acquire all the Philippines and then perhaps give the Filipinos their freedom later.

President McKinley, ever sensitive to public opinion, kept a carefully attuned ear to the ground. The rumble that he heard seemed to call for the entire group of islands. Zealous Protestant missionaries were eager for new converts from Spanish Catholicism, * and the invalid Mrs. McKinley, to whom her husband was devoted, expressed deep concern about the welfare of the Filipinos. Wall Street had generally opposed the war, but awakened by the booming of Dewey's guns, it was clamoring for profits in the Philippines.

A tormented McKinley later claimed that he went down on his knees seeking divine guidance and heard an inner voice telling him to take all the Philippines and Christianize

and civilize them. Accordingly, he decided for outright annexation of the islands. Manila remained a sticking point with the Spaniards because it had been captured the day *after* the armistice was signed, and the city could not therefore properly be claimed among the spoils of war. But the Americans broke the deadlock by agreeing to pay Spain \$20 million for the Philippine Islands—the last great Spanish haul from the New World.

President William McKinley (1843–1901) later described his decision to annex the Philippines:

“When next I realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps, I confess I did not know what to do with them.... I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance.... And one night late it came to me this way.... That there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men, for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed and went to sleep, and slept soundly.”

The signing of the pact of Paris touched off one of the most impassioned foreign-policy debates in American history. The issue of what to do with the Philippines confronted Americans with fundamental questions about their national identity. Except for glacial Alaska, coral-reefed Hawaii, and a handful of Pacific atolls acquired mostly for whaling stations and guano fertilizer needed to replenish southern soil exhausted by overcultivation, the Republic had hitherto absorbed only contiguous territory on the continent. All previous accessions had been thinly peopled and eligible for ultimate statehood. But in the Philippines, the nation had on its hands a distant tropical area, thickly populated by Asians of a different culture, tongue, and government institutions.

Makers of America

The Puerto Ricans

At dawn on July 26, 1898, the U.S. warship *Gloucester* steamed into Puerto Rico's Guánica harbor, fired at the Spanish blockhouse, and landed some thirty-three hundred troops. Within days the Americans had taken possession of the militarily strategic Caribbean island a thousand miles southeast of Florida. In so doing they set in motion changes on the island that ultimately brought a new wave of immigrants to U.S. shores.

Puerto Rico had been a Spanish possession since Christopher Columbus claimed it for Castile in 1493. The Spaniards enslaved many of the island's forty thousand Taino Indians and set them to work on farms and in mines. Many Tainos died of exhaustion and disease, and in 1511 the Indians rebelled. The Spaniards crushed the uprising, killed thousands of Indians, and began importing African slaves—thus

establishing the basis for Puerto Rico's multiracial society.

The first Puerto Rican immigrants to the United States arrived as political exiles in the nineteenth century. From their haven in America, they agitated for the island's independence from Spain. In 1897 Spain finally granted the island local autonomy; ironically, however, the Spanish-American War the following year placed it in American hands. Puerto Rican political émigrés in the United States returned home, but they were soon replaced by poor islanders looking for work.

Changing conditions in Puerto Rico after the U.S. takeover had driven these new immigrants north. Although slow to grant Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, the Americans quickly improved health and sanitation on the island, triggering a population surge in the early twentieth century. At the same time, growing monopoly control of Puerto Rico's sugar cane plantations undermined the island's subsistence economy, and a series of hurricanes devastated the coffee plantations that had employed large numbers of people. With almost no industry to provide wage labor, Puerto Rico's unemployment rate soared.

The First Puerto Ricans

The Spanish *conquistadores* treated the native Taino people in Puerto Rico with extreme cruelty, and the Indians were virtually extinct by the mid-1500s.



Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY

Thus when Congress finally granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship in 1917, thereby eliminating immigration hurdles, many islanders hurried north to find jobs. Over the ensuing decades, Puerto Ricans went to work in Arizona cotton fields, New Jersey soup factories, and Utah mines. The majority, however, clustered in New

York City and found work in the city's cigar factories, shipyards, and garment industry. Migration slowed somewhat after the 1920s as the Great Depression shrank the job market on the mainland and as World War II made travel hazardous.

When World War II ended in 1945, the sudden advent of cheap air travel sparked an immigration explosion (and set the stage for Leonard Bernstein's great musical production, *West Side Story*, which adapted the story of Romeo and Juliet to the clash of white and Puerto Rican gangs in New York City). As late as the 1930s, the tab for a boat trip to the mainland exceeded the average Puerto Rican's yearly earnings. But with an airplane surplus after World War II, the six-hour flight from Puerto Rico to New York cost under fifty dollars. The Puerto Rican population on the mainland quadrupled between 1940 and 1950 and tripled again by 1960. In 1970, 1.5 million Puerto Ricans lived in the United States, one-third of the island's total population.

U.S. citizenship and affordable air travel made it easy for Puerto Ricans to return home. Thus to a far greater degree than most immigrant groups, Puerto Ricans kept one foot in the United States and the other on their native island. By some estimates 2 million people a year journeyed to and from the island during the postwar period. Puerto Rico's gubernatorial candidates sometimes campaigned in New York for the thousands of voters who were expected to return to the island in time for the election.

Protesting in New York

Puerto Ricans demonstrate in April 2001 against U.S. Navy bombing exercises on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques.

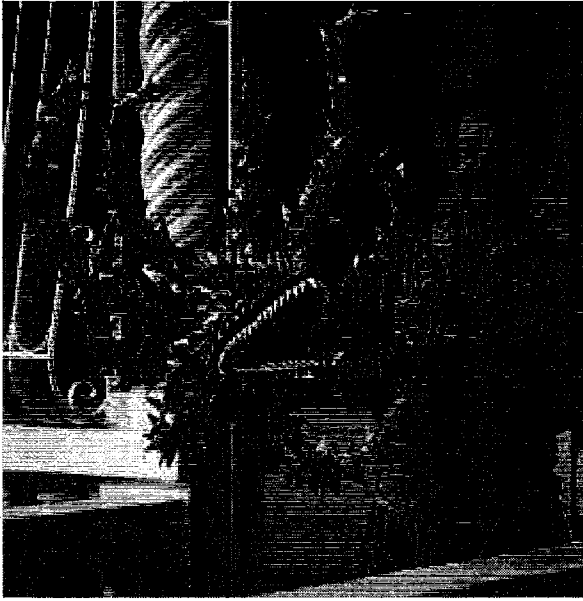


AP Photo/Tina Fineberg

Preparing for Carnaval (Carnival)

This mask-maker displays an elaborate *máscara de carton* (paper maché mask) made for the annual Puerto Rican festival. Masked figures at

Carnaval have been part of Puerto Rican culture for more than two hundred years.



© David G. Houser/Corbis

This transience worked to keep Puerto Ricans' educational attainment and English proficiency far below the national average. At the same time, the immigrants encountered a deep-seated racism in America unlike anything on their multiracial island. Throughout the postwar years, Puerto Ricans remained one of the poorest groups in the United States, with a median family income below that of African Americans and Mexican Americans.

Still, Puerto Ricans have fared better economically in the United States than on the island, where, in 1970, 60 percent of all inhabitants lived below the poverty line. In recent years Puerto Ricans have attained more schooling, and many have attended college. Invigorated by the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Puerto Ricans also became more politically active, electing growing numbers of congressmen and state and city officials.

Opponents of annexation argued that such a step would dishonor and ultimately destroy America's venerable commitments to self-determination and anticolonialism. "God damn the United States for its vile conduct in the Philippine Isles!" burst out the usually mild-mannered Professor **William James**. The Harvard philosopher could not believe that the United States could "puke up its ancient soul in five minutes without a wink of squeamishness." Speaker of the House Thomas "Czar" Reed resigned in protest against America's new imperial adventure. Proponents countered that Philippine annexation would simply continue a glorious history of expansion that had pushed American civilization to the Pacific and now beyond. If Americans were "morally bound to abandon the Philippines," thundered **Theodore Roosevelt**, "we were also morally bound to abandon Arizona to the Apaches." The **Anti-Imperialist League** (A diverse group formed in order to protest American colonial oversight in the Philippines. It included university presidents, industrialists, clergymen, and labor leaders. Strongest in the Northeast, the Anti-imperialist

League was the largest lobbying organization on a U.S. foreign-policy issue until the end of the nineteenth century. It declined in strength after the United States signed the Treaty of Paris (which approved the annexation of the Philippines), and especially after hostilities broke out between Filipino nationalists and American forces.) sprang into being to fight the McKinley administration's expansionist moves. The organization counted among its members some of the most prominent people in the United States, including the presidents of Stanford and Harvard Universities and the novelist **Mark Twain**. The anti-imperialist blanket even stretched over such strange bedfellows as the labor leader **Samuel Gompers** and the steel titan **Andrew Carnegie**.

*The contest over American imperialism took place on the Senate floor as well as around the globe. In 1900 **Senator Albert J. Beveridge** (1862–1927), Republican from Indiana, returned from an investigative trip to the Philippines to defend its annexation:*

“The Philippines are ours forever.... And just beyond the Philippines are China's illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race: trustee, under God, of the civilization of the world.”

*Two years later **Senator George F. Hoar** (1826–1904), Republican from Massachusetts, broke with his party to denounce American annexation of the Philippines and other territories:*

“You cannot maintain despotism in Asia and a republic in America. If you try to deprive even a savage or a barbarian of his just rights you can never do it without becoming a savage or a barbarian yourself.”

Anti-imperialists raised many objections. The Filipinos thirsted for freedom; to annex them would violate the “consent of the governed” philosophy in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Despotism abroad might well beget despotism at home. Imperialism was costly and unlikely ever to turn a profit. Finally, annexation would propel the United States into the political and military cauldron of East Asia.

Yet the expansionists or imperialists could sing a seductive song. They appealed to patriotism, invoked America's “civilizing mission,” and played up possible trade profits. Manila, they claimed, might become another Hong Kong. **Rudyard Kipling**, the British poet laureate of imperialism, urged America down the slippery path with a quotable poem that he had circulated before publication to **Theodore Roosevelt** and **Henry Cabot Lodge** (Roosevelt found it “good sense” but “poor poetry”):

Take up the White Man's burden—

*Ye dare not stoop to less—
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloak your weariness.*

In short, the wealthy Americans must help to uplift (and exploit) the underprivileged, underfed, and under-clad of the world.

Over heated protests, the Senate approved the treaty with Spain with just one vote to spare on February 6, 1899. America was now officially an empire.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-7 Perplexities in Puerto Rico and Cuba

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27-7 Perplexities in Puerto Rico and Cuba

From the outset, the status of Puerto Rico was anomalous—neither a state nor a territory, and with little prospect of eventual independence. The **Foraker Act** (Sponsored by **Senator Joseph B. Foraker**, a Republican from Ohio, this accorded Puerto Ricans a limited degree of popular government. It was the first comprehensive congressional effort to provide for governance of territories acquired after the Spanish American War, and served as a model for a similar act adopted for the Philippines in 1902.) of 1900 accorded the Puerto Ricans a limited degree of popular government (and outlawed cockfighting, a favorite island pastime). Congress granted U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans in 1917 but withheld full self-rule. Although the American regime worked wondrous improvements in education, sanitation, and transportation, many of the inhabitants still aspired to independence. Great numbers of Puerto Ricans ultimately moved to New York City, where they added to the complexity of the melting pot.

The annexation of Puerto Rico (and the Philippines) posed a thorny legal problem: Did the Constitution follow the flag? Did American laws, including tariff laws and the Bill of Rights, apply with full force to the newly acquired possessions? “Who are we?” a group of Puerto Rican petitioners asked Congress in 1900. “Are we citizens or are we subjects?” Beginning in 1901 with the **Insular Cases** (Beginning in 1901, a badly divided Supreme Court decreed in these cases that the Constitution did not follow the flag. In other words, Puerto Ricans and Filipinos would not necessarily enjoy all American rights.), a badly divided Supreme Court decreed, in effect, that the flag did outrun the Constitution, and that the outdistanced document did not necessarily extend with full force to the new windfall. Puerto Ricans (and Filipinos) might be subject to American rule, but they did not enjoy all American rights.

Cuba, scorched and chaotic, presented another headache. An American military government, set up under the administrative genius of General Leonard Wood of Rough Rider fame, wrought miracles in government, finance, education, agriculture, and public health. Under his leadership and that of Colonel **William C. Gorgas**, a frontal attack was launched on yellow fever. Spectacular experiments were performed by **Dr. Walter Reed** and others upon American soldiers, who volunteered as human guinea pigs, and the stegomyia mosquito was proved to be the lethal carrier. Cleaning up breeding places for

mosquitoes wiped out yellow fever in Havana, while dampening the fear of recurrent epidemics in cities of the South and Atlantic seaboard.

The United States, honoring its self-denying Teller Amendment of 1898, withdrew from Cuba in 1902. Old World imperialists could scarcely believe their eyes. But the Washington government could not turn this rich and strategic island completely loose on the international sea; a grasping power like Germany might secure dangerous lodgment near America's soft underbelly. The Cubans were therefore forced to write into their own constitution of 1901 the so-called **Platt Amendment** (Following its military occupation, the United States successfully pressured the Cuban government to write this amendment into its constitution. It limited Cuba's treaty-making abilities, controlled its debt, and stipulated that the United States could intervene militarily to restore order when it saw fit.) .

The Cubans loathed the amendment, which served McKinley's ultimate purpose of bringing Cuba under American control. ("Plattism" survives as a colloquial term of derision even in modern-day Cuba.) The newly "liberated" Cubans were forced to agree not to conclude treaties that might compromise their independence (as Uncle Sam saw it) and not to take on debt beyond their resources (as Uncle Sam measured them). They further agreed that the United States might intervene with troops to restore order when it saw fit. Finally, the Cubans promised to sell or lease needed coaling or naval stations, ultimately two and then only one (Guantánamo), to their powerful "benefactor." The United States finally abrogated the amendment in 1934, although Uncle Sam still occupies a twenty-eight-thousand-acre Cuban beachhead at Guantánamo under an agreement that can be revoked only by the consent of both parties.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-8 New Horizons in Two Hemispheres

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27-8 New Horizons in Two Hemispheres

In essence, the Spanish-American War was a kind of colossal coming-out party. Dewey's thundering guns merely advertised the fact that the nation was already a world power. The war itself was short (113 days), low in casualties, and theatrically successful—despite the bungling. Secretary of State **John Hay** called it a "splendid little war." American prestige rose sharply, and the Europeans grudgingly accorded the Republic more respect. Britain, France, Russia, and other great powers pointedly upgraded their legations in Washington, D.C., which had previously been regarded as a diplomatic backwater.

Three years after the Spanish-American War ended, a foreign diplomat in Washington remarked,

"I have seen two Americas, the America before the Spanish American War and the America since."

An exhilarating new martial spirit thrilled America, buoyed along by the newly popular military marching-band music of **John Philip Sousa**. Most Americans did not start the war with consciously imperialistic motives, but after falling through the cellar door of imperialism in a drunken fit of idealism, they wound up with imperialistic and colonial fruits in their grasp. Captain Mahan's big-navyism seemed vindicated, energizing popular support for more and better battleships. A masterly organizer, Secretary of War Elihu Root established a general staff for the army and founded the War College in Washington.

One of the most beneficial results of the conflict was the further closing of the “bloody chasm” between North and South. Thousands of patriotic southerners had flocked to the Stars and Stripes, and the gray-bearded General Joseph (“Fighting Joe”) Wheeler—a Confederate cavalry hero of about a thousand Civil War skirmishes and battles—was given a command in Cuba. He allegedly cried, in the heat of battle, “To hell with the Yankees! Dammit, I mean the Spaniards.”

Even so, the newly imperial nation was not yet prepared to pay the full bill for its new status. By taking on the Philippine Islands, the United States became a full-fledged Far Eastern power. But the distant islands eventually became a “heel of Achilles”—a kind of indefensible hostage given to Japan, as events proved in World War II. Here and elsewhere, the Americans had shortsightedly assumed burdensome commitments that they proved unwilling to defend with appropriate naval and military outlays.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-9 “Little Brown Brothers” in the Philippines
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27-9 “Little Brown Brothers” in the Philippines

The liberty-loving Filipinos assumed that they, like the Cubans, would be granted their freedom after the Spanish-American War. They were tragically deceived. Washington excluded them from the peace negotiations with Spain and made clear its intention to stay in the Philippines indefinitely. Bitterness toward the occupying American troops erupted into open insurrection on February 4, 1899, under **Emilio Aguinaldo**. Having plunged into war with Spain to free Cuba, the United States was now forced to deploy some 126,000 troops ten thousand miles away to rivet shackles onto a people who asked for nothing but freedom—in the American tradition.

The poorly equipped Filipino rebels soon melted into the jungle to wage vicious guerrilla warfare. Months earlier, American soldiers thought they were rescuing innocent victims of Spanish tyranny. Now they viewed the Filipinos as dangerous enemies of the United States. This shift contributed to a mounting “race war” in which both sides perpetrated sordid atrocities. Uncle Sam's soldiers adopted the “water cure”—forcing water down victims' throats until they yielded information or died. American-built reconcentration camps rivaled those of “Butcher” Weyler in Cuba. Having begun the Spanish war with noble ideals, America now dirtied its hands. One New York newspaper published a reply to Rudyard Kipling's famous poem:

*We've taken up the white man's burden
Of ebony and brown;
Now will you kindly tell us, Rudyard,
How we may put it down?*

American Soldier Interrogates Filipino Civilians

For three years after its annexation of the Philippine Islands in 1898, the United States fought a savage war to suppress a Filipino rebellion against American rule. More than 200,000 Filipinos perished. There was bitter irony in this clash, as the Americans had claimed to be “liberating” the Filipinos from their oppressive Spanish masters; but the Yankee liberators were sometimes no less oppressive than the Spaniards they had ousted.



Keystone-Mast Collection, UCR/California Museum of Photograph, University of California, Riverside

The Americans broke the back of the Filipino insurrection in 1901, when they cleverly infiltrated a guerrilla camp and captured Aguinaldo. But sporadic fighting dragged on for many dreary months, eventually claiming the lives of 4,234 Americans and as many as 600,000 Filipinos.

Future president **William H. Taft**, an able and amiable Ohioan who weighed some 350 pounds, became civil governor of the Philippines in 1901. Forming a strong attachment to the Filipinos, he called them his “little brown brothers” and danced light-footedly with the Filipino women. But McKinley’s “benevolent assimilation” of the Philippines proceeded with painful slowness. Washington poured millions of dollars into the islands to improve roads, sanitation, and public health. Important economic ties, including trade in sugar, developed between the two peoples. American teachers set up an unusually good school

system and helped make English a second language. But all this vast expenditure, which profited America little, was ill-received. The Filipinos hated compulsory Americanization and pined for liberty. They finally got their freedom on the Fourth of July, 1946. In the meantime, thousands of Filipinos emigrated to the United States (see “Makers of America: The Filipinos,”).

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-10 Hinging the Open Door in China

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27-10 Hinging the Open Door in China

Ominous events had meanwhile been brewing in faraway and enfeebled China. After its defeat by Japan in 1894–1895, the imperialistic European powers, notably Russia and Germany, moved in. Like vultures descending upon a wounded animal, they began to tear away valuable leaseholds and economic spheres of influence from the Manchu government.

A growing group of Americans viewed the vivisection of China with alarm. Churches worried about their missionary strongholds. Merchants feared that Europeans would monopolize Chinese markets. An alarmed American public, openly prodded by the press and slyly nudged by certain free-trade Britons, demanded that Washington do something. Secretary of State **John Hay**, a quiet but witty poet-novelist-diplomat with a flair for capturing the popular imagination, finally decided upon a dramatic move.

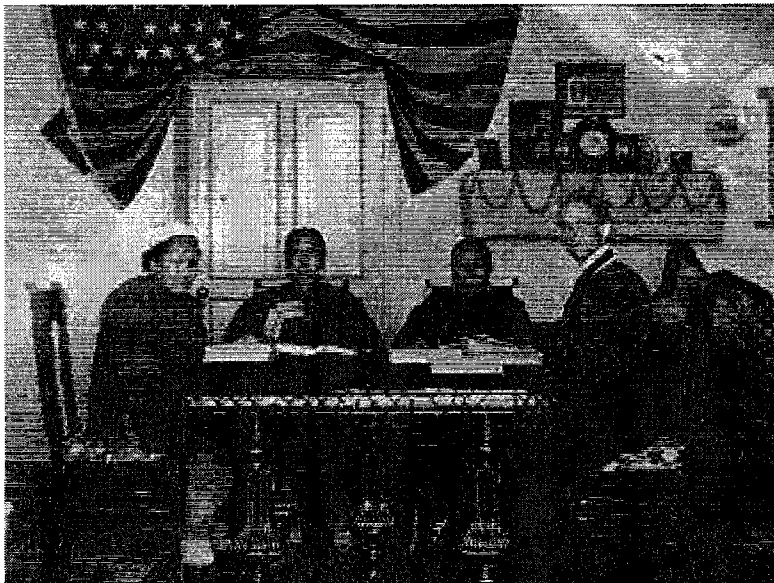
In the summer of 1899, Hay dispatched to all the great powers a communication soon known as the **Open Door note** (A set of diplomatic letters in which Secretary of State **John Hay** urged the great powers to respect Chinese rights and free and open competition within their spheres of influence. The notes established the “Open Door Policy,” which sought to ensure access to the Chinese market for the United States, despite the fact that the U.S. Did not have a formal sphere of influence in China.) . He urged them to announce that in their leaseholds or spheres of influence they would respect certain Chinese rights and the ideal of fair competition. Tellingly, Hay had not bothered to consult the Chinese themselves.

The phrase *Open Door* quickly caught the American public's fancy. But Hay's proposal caused much squirming in the leading capitals of the world, though all the great powers save Russia, with covetous designs on Manchuria, eventually agreed to it.

Open Door or not, patriotic Chinese did not care to be used as a doormat by the Western powers. In 1900 a superpatriotic group, known as the “Boxers” for their training in the martial arts, broke loose with the cry “Kill Foreign Devils.” In what became known as the **Boxer Rebellion** (An uprising in China directed against foreign influence. It was suppressed by an international force of some eighteen thousand soldiers, including several thousand Americans. The Boxer Rebellion paved the way for the revolution of 1911, which led to the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912.) , they murdered more than two hundred foreigners and thousands of Chinese Christians and besieged the foreign diplomatic community in the capital, Beijing (Peking).

American Missionary Grace Roberts Teaching in China, 1903

By the turn of the twentieth century, thousands of American men and women had established Christian missions in faraway places such as Hawaii, China, Africa, and Turkey. Missionaries' educational and religious work helped build sentimental, political, and economic ties between Americans and distant nations. At times, however, these close connections led to violent confrontations, such as when the nationalist Boxer rebels attacked missionaries in China in 1900 as symbols of foreign encroachment. Protestant women justified their missionary activities as a logical extension of their traditional female duty to nurture and uplift, but in reality these foreign assignments often propelled them to undertake responsibilities that their stateside mothers and sisters rarely encountered.



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Makers of America

The Filipinos

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States, its imperial muscles just flexed in the war with Spain, found itself in possession of the Philippines. Uncertain of how to manage this empire, which seethed resentfully against its new masters, the United States promised to build democracy in the Philippines and to ready the islanders for home rule. Almost immediately after annexation, the American governor of the archipelago sent a corps of Filipino students to the United States, hoping to forge future leaders steeped in American ways who would someday govern an independent Philippines. Yet this small student group found little favor in their adopted country, although in their native land many went on to become respected citizens and leaders.

Most Filipino immigrants to the United States in these years, however, came not to

study but to toil. With Chinese immigration banned, Hawaii and the Pacific Coast states turned to the Philippines for cheap agricultural labor. Beginning in 1906 the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association aggressively recruited Filipino workers. Enlistments grew slowly at first, but by the 1920s thousands of young Filipino men had reached the Hawaiian Islands and been assigned to sugar plantations or pineapple fields.

Typically a young Filipino wishing to emigrate first made his way to Manila, where he signed a contract with the growers that promised three years' labor in return for transportation to Hawaii, wages, free housing and fuel, and return passage at the end of the contract. Not all of the emigrants returned; there remain in Hawaii today some former field workers still theoretically eligible for free transport back to their native land.

Those Filipinos venturing as far as the American mainland found work less arduous but also less certain than did their countrymen on Hawaiian plantations. Many mainlanders worked seasonally—in winter as domestic servants, busboys, or bellhops; in summer journeying to the fields to harvest lettuce, strawberries, sugar beets, and potatoes. Eventually Filipinos, along with Mexican immigrants, shared the dubious honor of making up California's agricultural work force.

Filipino Laborers at Work on a Hawaiian pineapple plantation, 1930s



Hawaii State Archives

A mobile society, Filipino Americans also were overwhelmingly male; there was only one Filipino woman for every fourteen Filipino men in California in 1930. Thus the issue of intermarriage became acutely sensitive. California and many other states prohibited the marriage of Asians and Caucasians in demeaning laws that remained on the books until 1948. And if a Filipino so much as approached a

Caucasian woman, he could expect reprisals—sometimes violent. For example, white vigilante groups roamed the Yakima Valley in Washington and the San Joaquin and Salinas Valleys in California, intimidating and even attacking Filipinos whom they accused of improperly accosting white women. In 1930 one Filipino was murdered and others wounded after they invited some Caucasian women to a dance. Undeterred, the Filipinos challenged the restrictive state laws and the hooligans who found in them an excuse for mayhem. But Filipinos, who did not become eligible for American citizenship until 1946, long lacked political leverage.

Filipino Workers Arriving in Honolulu, 1940s

Tags around their necks indicated the plantations to which they had been assigned.



Hawaii State Archives

After World War II, Filipino immigration accelerated. Between 1950 and 1970, the number of Filipinos in the United States nearly doubled, with women and men stepping aboard the new transpacific airliners in roughly equal numbers. Many of these recent arrivals sprang from sturdy middle-class stock and sought in America a better life for their children than the Philippines seemed able to offer. Today the war-torn and perpetually depressed archipelago sends more immigrants to American shores than does any other Asian nation.

Filipino Nurses

The nursing shortage in the United States has created many job opportunities for Filipino nurses, who are trained to high medical standards

and speak English. A nurse in the United States today can earn more than a physician in the Philippines.



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Columbia's Easter Bonnet

Many Americans felt a surge of pride as the United States became an imperial power at the dawn of the twentieth century. But then and later, America's world role proved hotly controversial, at home as well as abroad.



Library of Congress

A multinational rescue force of some eighteen thousand soldiers arrived in the nick of time and quelled the rebellion. They included several thousand American troops dispatched

from the Philippines to protect U.S. Rights under the 1844 Treaty of Wanghia and to keep the Open Door propped open.

The victorious allied invaders acted angrily and vindictively. They assessed prostrate China an excessive indemnity of \$333 million, of which America's share was to be \$24.5 million. When Washington discovered that this sum was much more than enough to pay damages and expenses, it remitted about \$18 million, to be used for the education of a selected group of Chinese students in the United States—a not-so-subtle initiative to further the westernization of Asia.

*The commercial interests of Britain and America were imperiled by the power grabs in China, and a close concert between the two powers would have helped both. Yet as Secretary of State **John Hay** (1838–1905) wrote privately in June 1900,*

“Every Senator I see says, ‘For God's sake, don't let it appear we have any understanding with England.’ How can I make bricks without straw? That we should be compelled to refuse the assistance of the greatest power in the world [Britain], in carrying out our own policy, because all Irishmen are Democrats and some [American] Germans are fools—is enough to drive a man mad.”

Secretary Hay let fly another paper broadside in 1900, announcing that henceforth the Open Door would embrace the territorial integrity of China, in addition to its commercial integrity. Those principles helped spare China from possible partition in those troubled years and were formally incorporated into the Nine-Power Treaty of 1922, only to be callously violated by Japan's takeover of Manchuria a decade later.

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27-11 Imperialism or Bryanism in 1900?

President McKinley's renomination by the Republicans in 1900 was a foregone conclusion. He had won a war and acquired rich, though burdensome, real estate; he had safeguarded the gold standard; and he had brought the promised prosperity of the full dinner pail. An irresistible vice-presidential boom developed for Theodore (“Teddy”) Roosevelt (TR), the cowboy-hero of the Cuban campaign. Capitalizing on his war-born popularity, he had been elected governor of New York, where the local political bosses had found him head-strong and difficult to manage. They therefore devised a scheme to kick the colorful colonel upstairs into the vice presidency.

This plot to railroad Roosevelt worked beautifully. Gesticulating wildly, he sported a

western-style cowboy hat that made him stand out like a white crow at the Republican convention. To cries of “We want Teddy!” he was handily nominated. A wary Mark Hanna reportedly moaned that there would now be only one heartbeat between “that damned cowboy” and the presidency of the United States.

William Jennings Bryan was the odds-on choice of the Democrats, meeting at Kansas City. Their platform proclaimed that the paramount issue was Republican overseas imperialism.

McKinley, the soul of dignity, once again campaigned safely from his front porch. Bryan again took to the stump in a cyclonic campaign. Lincoln, he charged, had abolished slavery for 3.5 million Africans; McKinley had reestablished it for 7 million Filipinos. Roosevelt out-Bryaned Bryan, touring the country with revolver-shooting cowboys. Flashing his monumental teeth and pounding his fist into his palm, Roosevelt denounced all dastards who would haul down Old Glory.

McKinley handily triumphed by a much wider margin than in 1896: 7,218,491 to 6,356,734 popular votes, and 292 to 155 electoral votes. But victory for the Republicans was not a mandate for or against imperialism. If there was any mandate at all it was for the two *Ps*: prosperity and protectionism. Meanwhile, the New York bosses gleefully looked forward to watching the nettlesome Roosevelt “take the veil” as vice president.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-12 TR: Brandisher of the Big Stick
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27-12 TR: Brandisher of the Big Stick

Kindly **William McKinley** had scarcely served another six months when, in September 1901, he was murdered by a deranged anarchist in Buffalo, New York. Roosevelt rode a buckboard out of his campsite in the Adirondacks to take the oath of office, becoming, at age forty-two, the youngest president thus far in American history.

Born into a wealthy and distinguished New York family, Roosevelt, a red-blooded blue blood, had fiercely built up his spindly, asthmatic body by a stern and self-imposed routine of exercise. Educated partly in Europe, he graduated from Harvard with Phi Beta Kappa honors and published, at the age of twenty-four, the first of some thirty volumes of muscular prose. He worked as a ranch owner and cowboy in the Dakotas before pursuing his political career full-time. Barrel-chested, bespectacled, and five feet ten inches tall, with mulelike molars, squinty eyes, droopy mustache, and piercing voice, he was ever the delight of cartoonists.

Theodore Roosevelt

Roosevelt gives a speech with both voice and body language in North Carolina in 1902.



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The Rough Rider's high-voltage energy was electrifying. Believing that it was better to wear out than to rust out, he would shake the hands of some six thousand people at one stretch or ride horseback many miles in a day as an example for portly cavalry officers. Incurably boyish and bellicose, Roosevelt ceaselessly preached the virile virtues and denounced pacifistic "flubdubs" and "mollycoddles." An ardent champion of military and naval preparedness, he adopted as his pet proverb, "Speak softly and carry a big stick, [and] you will go far."

His outsized ego caused it to be said of him that he wanted to be the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral. He loved people and mingled with those of all ranks, from Catholic cardinals to professional prizefighters, one of whom blinded a Rooseveltian eye in a White House bout. "TR" commanded an idolatrous personal following. After visiting him, a journalist wrote, "You go home and wring the personality out of your clothes."

Above all, TR believed that the president should lead, boldly. He had no real respect for the delicate checks and balances among the three branches of the government. The president, he felt, may take any action in the general interest that is not specifically forbidden by the laws of the Constitution.

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27-13 Building the Panama Canal

Roosevelt soon applied his bullish energy to foreign affairs. The Spanish-American War had reinvigorated interest in the long-talked-about canal across the Central American isthmus,

through which only printer's ink had ever flowed. Americans had learned a sobering lesson when the battleship *Oregon*, stationed on the Pacific Coast at the outbreak of war in 1898, took weeks to steam all the way around South America to join the U.S. fleet in Cuban waters. An isthmian canal would plainly augment the strength of the navy by increasing its mobility. Such a waterway would also make easier the defense of such recent acquisitions as Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines, while facilitating the operations of the U.S. merchant marine.

Initial obstacles in the path of the canal builders were legal rather than geographical. By the terms of the ancient Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, concluded with Britain in 1850, the United States could not secure exclusive control over an isthmian route. But by 1901 America's British cousins were willing to yield ground. Confronted with an unfriendly Europe and bogged down in the South African Boer War, they consented to the **Hay-Pauncefote Treaty** (A treaty signed between the United States and Great Britain, giving Americans a free hand to build a canal in Central America. The treaty nullified the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850, which prohibited the British or U.S. from acquiring territory in Central America.) in 1901. It not only gave the United States a free hand to build the canal but conceded the right to fortify it as well.

Cutting Through the Continental Divide in Panama

The Culebra Cut, the southeastern section of the Panama Canal that extends through the Continental Divide, was later renamed the Gaillard Cut in honor of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officer who oversaw this excavation but died shortly before the canal opened in 1914. The cut was one of the greatest engineering feats of its time. Hundreds of drills prepared holes for tons of dynamite, which twice daily blasted the rock so that it could be excavated by steam shovels. Dirt trains, shown in the foreground, then hauled loads of debris to dumps twelve miles away. The summit of Culebra Mountain, through which the cut was made, was lowered from 193 feet to 40 feet above sea level and widened considerably.



Library of Congress

But where exactly should the canal be dug? Many American experts favored a route across Nicaragua, but agents of the old French Canal Company were eager to salvage something from their costly failure at S-shaped Panama. Represented by a young, energetic, and unscrupulous engineer, Philippe Bunau-Varilla, the New Panama Canal Company suddenly dropped the price of its holdings from \$109 million to the fire-sale price of \$40 million.

Congress in June 1902 finally decided on the Panama route. The scene now shifted to Colombia, of which Panama was a restive part. The Colombian senate rejected an American offer of \$10 million and annual payment of \$250,000 for a six-mile-wide zone across

Panama. Roosevelt railed against “those dagoes” who were frustrating his ambitions. Meanwhile, impatient Panamanians, who had rebelled numerous times, were ripe for another revolt. They had counted on a wave of prosperity to follow construction of the canal, and they feared that the United States would now turn to the Nicaraguan route. Scheming Bunau-Varilla was no less disturbed by the prospect of losing the company's \$40 million. Working hand in glove with the revolutionists, he helped incite a rebellion on November 3, 1903. U.S. naval forces prevented Colombian troops from crossing the isthmus to quell the uprising.

Roosevelt moved rapidly to make steamy Panama a virtual outpost of the United States. Just three days after the insurrection, he hastily extended the right hand of recognition. Fifteen days later, Bunau-Varilla, who was now the Panamanian minister despite his French citizenship, signed the Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty in Washington. The price of the canal strip was left the same, but the zone was widened from six to ten miles. The French company gladly pocketed its \$40 million from the U.S. Treasury.

Theodore Roosevelt wrote to a correspondent in February 1904,

“I have been hoping and praying for three months that the Santo Domingans would behave so that I would not have to act in any way. I want to do nothing but what a policeman has to do.... As for annexing the island, I have about the same desire to annex it as a gorged boa-constrictor might have to swallow a porcupine wrong-end-to.”

Roosevelt, it seems clear, did not actively plot to tear Panama from the side of Colombia. But the conspirators knew of his angrily expressed views, and they counted on his using the big stick to hold Colombia at bay. The Rough Rider became so indiscreetly involved in the Panama affair as to create the impression that he had been a secret party to the intrigue, and the so-called rape of Panama marked an ugly downward lurch in U.S. relations with Latin America.

Canal construction began in 1904, in the face of daunting difficulties ranging from labor troubles to landslides and lethal tropical diseases. **Colonel William C. Gorgas**, the quiet and determined exterminator of yellow fever in Havana, ultimately made the Canal Zone “as safe as a health resort.” At a cost of some \$400 million, an autocratic West Point engineer, Colonel George Washington Goethals, ultimately brought the project to completion in 1914, just as World War I was breaking out.

Chapter 27: Empire and Expansion 1890–1909: 27-14 TR's Perversion of Monroe's Doctrine

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27-14 TR's Perversion of Monroe's Doctrine

Latin American debt defaults prompted further Rooseveltian involvement in affairs south of the border. Nations such as Venezuela and the Dominican Republic were chronically in arrears in their payments to European creditors. Germany actually bombarded a town in delinquent Venezuela in 1903.

Theodore Roosevelt and His Big Stick in the Caribbean, 1904

Roosevelt's policies seemed to be turning the Caribbean into a Yankee pond.



Granger Collection

Roosevelt feared that if the Germans or British got their foot in the door as bill collectors, they might remain in Latin America, in flagrant violation of the Monroe Doctrine. He therefore declared a brazen policy of “preventive intervention,” better known as the **Roosevelt Corollary** (A brazen policy of “preventive intervention” advocated by Theodore Roosevelt in his Annual Message to Congress in 1904. Adding ballast to the Monroe Doctrine, his corollary stipulated that the United States would retain a right to intervene in the domestic affairs of Latin American nations in order to restore military and financial order.) to the Monroe Doctrine. He announced that in the event of future financial malfeasance by the Latin American nations, the United States itself would intervene, take over the customshouses, pay off the debts, and keep the troublesome Europeans on the other side of the Atlantic. In short, no outsiders could push around the Latin nations except Uncle Sam, Policeman of the Caribbean. This new brandishing of the big stick in the Caribbean became effective in 1905, when the United States took over the management of tariff collections in the Dominican Republic, an arrangement formalized in a treaty with the Dominicans two years later.

TR's rewriting of the Monroe Doctrine probably did more than any other single step to promote the “Bad Neighbor” policy begun in these years. As time wore on, the new corollary was used to justify wholesale interventions and repeated landings of the marines, all of which helped turn the Caribbean into a “Yankee lake.” To Latin Americans it seemed

as though the revised Monroe Doctrine, far from providing a shield, was a cloak behind which the United States sought to strangle them.

The shadow of the big stick likewise fell again on Cuba in 1906. Revolutionary disorders brought an appeal from the Cuban president, and “necessity being the mother of intervention,” U.S. Marines landed. These police forces were withdrawn temporarily in 1909, but in Latin American eyes the episode was but another example of the creeping power of the Colossus of the North.

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27-15 Roosevelt on the World Stage

Booted and spurred, Roosevelt charged into international affairs far beyond Latin America. The outbreak of war between Russia and Japan in 1904 gave him a chance to perform as a global statesman. The Russian bear, having lumbered across Asia, was seeking to bathe its frostbitten paws in the ice-free ports of China's Manchuria, particularly Port Arthur. In Japanese eyes, Manchuria and Korea in tsarist hands were pistols pointed at Japan's strategic heart. The Japanese responded in 1904 with a devastating surprise pounce on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. They proceeded to administer a humiliating series of beatings to the inept Russians—the first serious military setback to a major European power by a non-European force since the Turkish invasions of the sixteenth century. But as the war dragged on, Japan began to run short of men and yen—a weakness it did not want to betray to the enemy. Tokyo officials therefore approached Roosevelt in the deepest secrecy and asked him to help sponsor peace negotiations.

Roosevelt was happy to oblige, as he wanted to avoid a complete Russian collapse so that the tsar's empire could remain a counterweight to Japan's growing power. At Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1905, TR guided the warring parties to a settlement that satisfied neither side and left the Japanese, who felt they had won the war, especially resentful. Japan was forced to drop its demands for a cash indemnity and Russian evacuation of Sakhalin Island, though it received some compensation in the form of effective control over Korea, which it formally annexed in 1910.

For achieving this agreement, as well as for helping arrange an international conference at Algeciras, Spain, in 1906 to mediate North African disputes, TR received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906. But the price of his diplomatic glory was high for U.S. foreign relations. Two historic friendships withered on the windswept plains of Manchuria. U.S. relations with Russia, once friendly, soured as the Russians implausibly accused Roosevelt of robbing them of military victory. Revelations about savage massacres of Russian Jews further poisoned American feeling against Russia. Japan, once America's protégé, felt cheated out of its due compensation. Both newly powerful, Japan and America now became rivals in Asia, as fear and jealousy between them grew. “A subjick race is on'y funny whin it's raaly subjek,” said Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley (see “Thinking Globally: The Age of Empire,”). “About three years ago I stopped laughin' at Japanese jokes.”

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27-16 Japanese Laborers in California

America's Pacific Coast soon felt the effects of the Russo-Japanese War. A new restlessness swept over the rice paddies of Japan, occasioned by the recent conflict's dislocations and tax burdens. A new wave of Japanese immigrants began pouring into the spacious valleys of California. Although Japanese residents never amounted to more than 3 percent of the state's population, white Californians ranted about a new “yellow peril” and feared being drowned in an Asian sea.

A showdown on the influx came in 1906, when San Francisco's school board, coping with the aftermath of a frightful earthquake and fire, ordered the segregation of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students in a special school to free more space for whites. Instantly the incident boiled into an international crisis. The people of Japan, understandably sensitive on questions of race, regarded this discrimination as an insult to them and their beloved children. On both sides of the Pacific, irresponsible war talk sizzled in the yellow press—the real “yellow peril.” Roosevelt, who as a Rough Rider had relished shooting, was less happy over the prospect that California might stir up a war that all the other states would have to wage. He therefore invited the entire San Francisco Board of Education, headed by a bassoon-playing mayor under indictment for graft, to come to the White House.

Japanese Workers Building a Road in California, ca. 1910



U.S. Army Signal Corps/National Archives

TR finally broke the deadlock, but not until he had brandished his big stick and bared his big teeth. The Californians were induced to repeal the offensive school order and to accept what came to be known as the “Gentlemen’s Agreement.” By this secret understanding, worked out during 1907–1908, Tokyo agreed to stop the flow of laborers to the American mainland by withholding passports.

Worried that his intercession might be interpreted in Tokyo as prompted by fear, Roosevelt hit upon a dramatic scheme to impress the Japanese with the heft of his big stick. He daringly decided to send the entire battleship fleet on a highly visible voyage around the world. Late in 1907 sixteen sparkling-white, smoke-belching battleships started from Virginia waters. Their commander pointedly declared that he was ready for “a feast, a frolic, or a fight.” The Great White Fleet—saluted by cannonading champagne corks—received tumultuous welcomes in Latin America, Hawaii, New Zealand, and Australia (though it ended up having to borrow coal from the British to complete the voyage).

As events turned out, an overwhelming reception in Japan was the high point of the trip. Tens of thousands of kimonoed schoolchildren, trained to wave tiny American flags, movingly sang “The Star-Spangled Banner.” In the warm diplomatic atmosphere created by the visit of the fleet, the U.S. signed the **Root-Takahira agreement** (Signed on November 30, 1908, the United States and Japan agreed to respect each other’s territorial possessions in the Pacific and to uphold the Open Door in China. The Agreement was credited with easing tensions between the two nations, but it also resulted in a weakened American influence over further Japanese hegemony in China.) with Japan in 1908. It pledged both powers to respect each other’s territorial possessions in the Pacific and to uphold the Open Door in China. For the moment, at least, the two rising rival powers had found a means to maintain the peace.

Thinking Globally

The Age of Empire

The closing years of the nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented explosion of imperialism, roughly defined as the forcible imposition of one country’s rule on the unwilling inhabitants of another. Between 1870 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914, a handful of European states extended their sway over nearly one-quarter of the earth’s surface. Other countries followed suit, notably Japan and eventually the United States.

All the imperial powers had in common a heritage of nationalism and a high degree of industrialization. They commanded the elaborate administrative apparatus of large unified states, along with quantities of wealth, technology, and murderous firepower utterly beyond the capacity of the so-called backward peoples they sought to dominate. As a result, imperialism was, from the start, a lopsided game. As one English wit mordantly noted in 1898,

Whatever happens, we have got

The Maxim gun, and they have not.

Yet ultimately, even with their enormously disproportionate advantages, the imperial states were unable to sustain the age of imperialism for much more than a century.

In many ways, modern imperialism resembled eighteenth-century mercantilism, as economically advanced states backed away from the free-trade doctrines that had energized the early stages of the Industrial Revolution and sought instead to create what one British imperialist called “a great self-sustaining and self-protecting empire.” The new imperialism also differed from older colonialism in that the imperial powers sought not merely to exploit but also to transform, modernize, and “westernize” the “backward” societies under their control.

Imperialists often justified their dominion over less developed societies with high-toned slogans. The British professed to be nobly shouldering “the white man's burden.” The French piously invoked their *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission). The Germans touted the benefits of spreading their vaunted *Kultur* (culture). The Americans prated about the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons, as the Japanese did about their own “Yamato” race.

These protestations may have been sincere, but other motives more powerfully propelled the imperial enterprise. Prominent among them was the quest for new markets, as maturing industrial economies appeared to be exhausting the possibilities for economic growth at home. The need for reliable sources of products such as cotton, sugar, copper, coffee, and tea also figured conspicuously. An even more compelling incentive was the need to protect the huge investments of capital that built the railroads, highways, bridges, ports, mills, foundries, mines, smelters, and telegraphs of the developing world. By the eve of the First World War, fully one-quarter of Britain's accumulated wealth was invested overseas.

A Young Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh (1890–1969) attended the Congress of the Socialist Party in Tours, France, where the French Communist party was created in late December 1920.



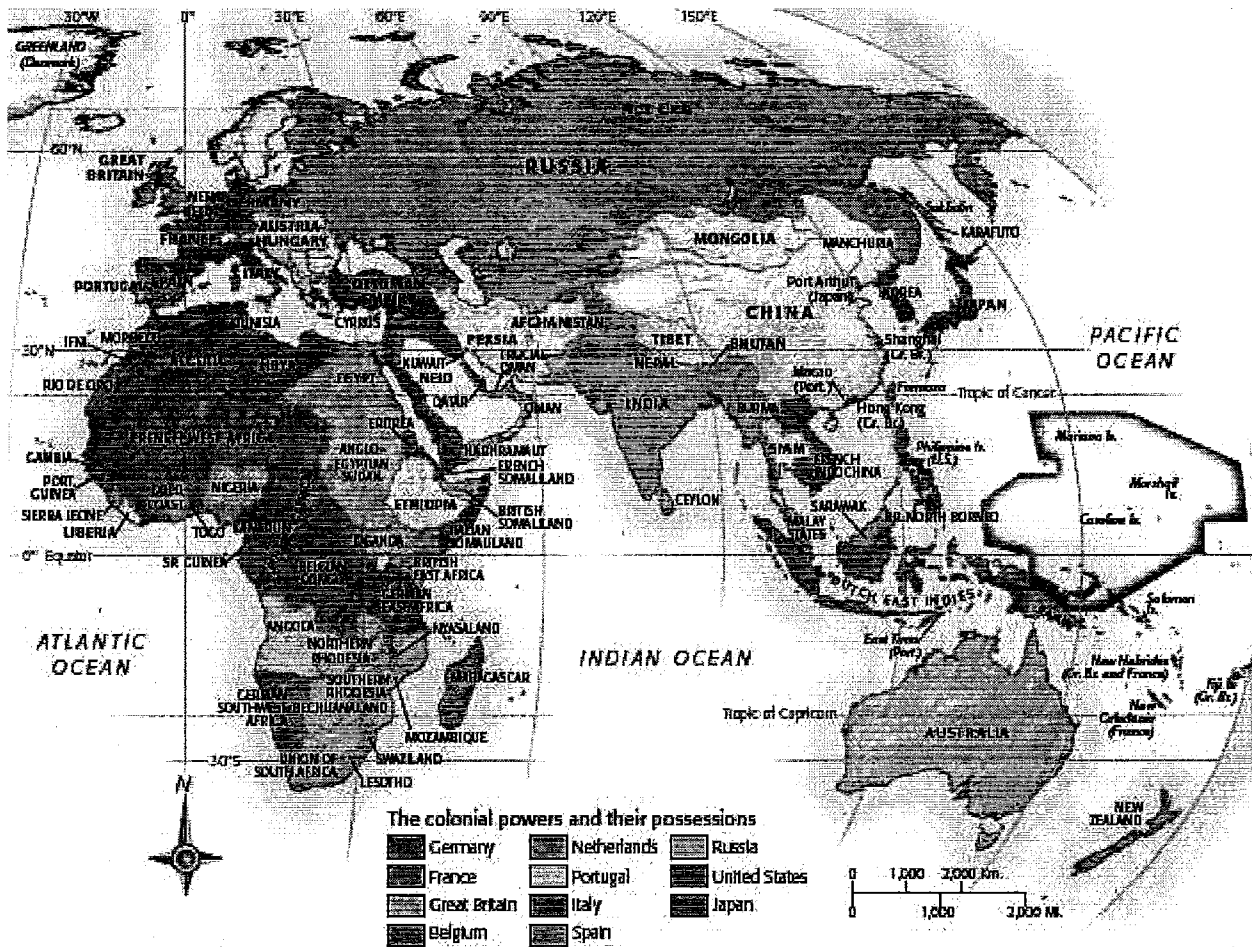
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But perhaps the most important factor driving the imperialist venture was simply the competitive nature of the international system itself. In an unstable, unpredictable world inhabited by ambitious and wary powers, no state thought it could afford to cede an advantage, however ill-defined, to any real or imagined rival. Indeed, quite independently of their hard economic value, colonies came to be considered the necessary symbols of great-power status. This perverse logic proved to be a powerful dynamic: once the imperial race began, it was difficult to stop. As Cecil Rhodes, the fabled British colonizer in southern Africa, once said, "I would annex the planets, if I could. I often think of that."

So when Belgium's King Leopold took an interest in Africa's Congo basin in the 1870s, he touched off a mad imperial scramble that eventually involved Belgium, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Portugal. Less than two decades later, with the exceptions of Ethiopia and Liberia, the entire continent, much of it unexplored and of dubious economic value, lay under European domination (see Map 27.4).

Map 27.4

The Great Powers and Their Colonial Possessions, 1913



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In Asia, Germany annexed part of New Guinea in 1884. France completed its annexation of Indochina (present-day Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) that same year. Britain acquired Burma (now Myanmar) in 1885 and parts of Borneo and the Malay Peninsula soon after. Japan closed its grip on Okinawa in 1872, Formosa (Taiwan) in 1895, Port Arthur in 1905, and Korea in 1910. All those powers, in addition to Russia, also had designs on China, which despite its venerable history seemed a poor match for the energetic “nations on the make.” In the Open Door notes of 1899 and 1900, the United States tried to temper the imperialists' appetites for Chinese territory and concessions, while at the same time America was becoming an imperial power itself with the takeover of the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

The imperialists brought not only their might and their majesty, their capital and their Maxim guns. They also brought their ideas, including concepts of nationalism, self-determination, and democracy. In 1919 a young Vietnamese nationalist named Nguyen Sinh Cung unsuccessfully petitioned the post-World War I peacemakers at Versailles for his country's right to self-determination. A little more than half a century later, under the name Ho Chi Minh, he secured Vietnam's independence by prevailing in a war first against the French and then against the Americans. By that time the United States had long since voluntarily relinquished the Philippines (in 1946, though Puerto Rico remains an American possession), and virtually all of Africa and Asia had been decolonized. With the handover of Hong Kong (1997) and Macao (1999) to the People's Republic of China, the age of empire effectively ended.

Varying Viewpoints

Why Did America Become a World Power?

American imperialism has long been an embarrassing topic for students of American history, who remember the Republic's own revolutionary origins and anticolonial tradition. Perhaps for that reason, many historians have tried to explain the dramatic overseas expansionism of the 1890s as some kind of aberration—a sudden, singular, and short-lived departure from time-honored American principles and practices. Various explanations have been offered to account for this spasmodic lapse. Scholars such as Julius Pratt pointed to the irresponsible behavior of the yellow press. Richard Hofstadter ascribed America's imperial fling as the “psychic crisis of the 1890s,” a crisis brought on, he argued, by the strains of the decade's economic depression and the Populist upheaval. **Howard K. Beale** emphasized the contagious scramble for imperial possessions by the European powers, as well as Japan, in these years.

In Beale's argument, the United States—and Theodore Roosevelt in particular—succumbed to a kind of international peer pressure: if other countries were expanding their international roles and even establishing colonies around the globe, could the United States safely refrain from doing the same? In Beale's view, Theodore Roosevelt was no simpleminded imperial swashbuckler, but a coolly calculating diplomatic realist who perceived that if the United States did not hold its own against other powers, it would soon risk being pushed around, even in its own hemisphere, despite the Monroe Doctrine.

More recent scholarship by Paul Kramer and others has stressed the degree to which American imperialists turned to European precedents for guidance and inspiration. U.S. colonial officials in the Philippines and Puerto Rico circulated widely in the British colonial world, selectively adapting elements of British imperial policy.

Perhaps the most controversial interpretation of American imperialism has come from a so-called New Left school of writers, inspired by **William Appleman Williams** (and before him by V. I. Lenin's 1916 book *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*). Historians such as **Williams** and **Walter LaFeber** argue that the explanation for political and military expansion abroad is to be found in economic expansion at home. Increasing industrial output, so the argument goes, required ever more raw materials and, especially, overseas markets. To meet those needs, the nation adopted a strategy of “informal empire,” shunning formal territorial possessions (with the conspicuous exceptions of Puerto Rico and the Philippines), but seeking economic dominance over foreign markets, materials, and investment outlets. That “revisionist” interpretation, in turn, has been sharply criticized by scholars who point out that foreign trade accounted for only a tiny share of American output and that the diplomacy of this period was far too complex to be reduced to “economic need.”

Most recently, historians have highlighted the importance of race and gender in the march toward empire. Roosevelt and other imperialists perceived their world in gendered terms. American society, many feared, was losing touch with the manly virtues. It had grown soft and “feminine” since the closing of the frontier. Imperialists also saw the nations of the world in a strict racial hierarchy, with “primitive” blacks and Indians at the bottom and “civilized” Anglo-Saxons at the top. In this world-view the conquest of “inferior” peoples seemed natural—a tropical tonic to restore the nation's masculine virility. Scholars who emphasize these explanations of imperialism are less likely to see the expansionism of the 1890s as an aberration in American history. Instead, they argue, these overseas adventures were part of a long tradition of race-fueled militarism, from the nation's earliest Indian wars to Cold War engagements in Korea and Vietnam.

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27-17a Key Terms

- **Big Sister policy** (A foreign policy of Secretary of State **James G. Blaine** aimed at rallying Latin American nations behind American leadership and opening Latin American markets to Yankee traders. The policy bore fruit in 1889, when Blaine presided over the First International Conference of American States.)
- **Great Rapprochement** (After decades of occasionally “twisting the lion's tail,” American diplomats began to cultivate close, cordial relations with Great Britain at the end of the nineteenth century—a relationship that would intensify further during World War I.)
- **McKinley Tariff** (Shepherded through Congress by President **William McKinley**, this tariff raised duties on Hawaiian sugar and set off renewed efforts to secure the annexation of Hawaii to the United States.)
- **insurrectos** (Cuban insurgents who sought freedom from colonial Spanish rule. Their destructive tactics threatened American economic interests in Cuban plantations and railroads.)
- **Maine** (American battleship dispatched to keep a “friendly” watch over Cuba in early 1898. It mysteriously blew up in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, with a loss of 260 sailors. Later evidence confirmed that the explosion was accidental, resulting from combustion in one of the ship's internal coal bunkers. But many Americans, eager for war, insisted that it was the fault of a Spanish submarine mine.)

- **Teller Amendment** (A proviso to President William McKinley's war plans that proclaimed to the world that when the United States had overthrown Spanish misrule, it would give Cuba its freedom. The amendment testified to the ostensibly "anti-imperialist" designs of the initial war plans.)
- **Rough Riders** (Organized by **Theodore Roosevelt**, this was a colorful, motley regiment of Cuban war volunteers consisting of western cowboys, ex-convicts, and effete Ivy Leaguers. Roosevelt emphasized his experience with the regiment in subsequent campaigns for Governor of New York and Vice-President under **William McKinley**.)
- **Anti-Imperialist League** (A diverse group formed in order to protest American colonial oversight in the Philippines. It included university presidents, industrialists, clergymen, and labor leaders. Strongest in the Northeast, the Anti-imperialist League was the largest lobbying organization on a U.S. foreign-policy issue until the end of the nineteenth century. It declined in strength after the United States signed the Treaty of Paris (which approved the annexation of the Philippines), and especially after hostilities broke out between Filipino nationalists and American forces.)
- **Foraker Act** (Sponsored by **Senator Joseph B. Foraker**, a Republican from Ohio, this accorded Puerto Ricans a limited degree of popular government. It was the first comprehensive congressional effort to provide for governance of territories acquired after the Spanish American War, and served as a model for a similar act adopted for the Philippines in 1902.)
- **Insular Cases** (Beginning in 1901, a badly divided Supreme Court decreed in these cases that the Constitution did not follow the flag. In other words, Puerto Ricans and Filipinos would not necessarily enjoy all American rights.)
- **Platt Amendment** (Following its military occupation, the United States successfully pressured the Cuban government to write this amendment into its constitution. It limited Cuba's treaty-making abilities, controlled its debt, and stipulated that the United States could intervene militarily to restore order when it saw fit.)
- **Open Door note** (A set of diplomatic letters in which Secretary of State **John Hay** urged the great powers to respect Chinese rights and free and open competition within their spheres of influence. The notes established the "Open Door Policy," which sought to ensure access to the Chinese market for the United States, despite the fact that the U.S. Did not have a formal sphere of influence in China.)
- **Boxer Rebellion** (An uprising in China directed against foreign influence. It was suppressed by an international force of some eighteen thousand soldiers, including several thousand Americans. The Boxer Rebellion paved the way for the revolution of 1911, which led to the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912.)
- **Hay-Pauncefote Treaty** (A treated signed between the United States and Great

Britain, giving Americans a free hand to build a canal in Central America. The treaty nullified the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850, which prohibited the British or U.S. from acquiring territory in Central America.)

- **Roosevelt Corollary** (A brazen policy of “preventive intervention” advocated by Theodore Roosevelt in his Annual Message to Congress in 1904. Adding ballast to the Monroe Doctrine, his corollary stipulated that the United States would retain a right to intervene in the domestic affairs of Latin American nations in order to restore military and financial order.)
- **Root-Takahira agreement** (Signed on November 30, 1908, the United States and Japan agreed to respect each other's territorial possessions in the Pacific and to uphold the Open Door in China. The Agreement was credited with easing tensions between the two nations, but it also resulted in a weakened American influence over further Japanese hegemony in China.)

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27-17b People to Know

**Josiah Strong Alfred Thayer Mahan James G. Blaine Richard Olney Liliuokalani
 “Butcher” Weyler Dupuy de Lôme George Dewey Emilio Aguinaldo William H. Taft
 John Hay Theodore (“Teddy”) Roosevelt**

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27-17c To Learn More

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27-17d Chronology

1820 New England missionaries arrive in Hawaii

1889 Samoa crisis with Germany Pan-American Conference

1890 Mahan publishes *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*

1891 New Orleans crisis with Italy

1892 Valparaiso crisis with Chile

- 1893** Pribilof Islands dispute with Canada
White planter revolt in Hawaii
Cleveland refuses Hawaii annexation
-
- 1895** Cubans revolt against Spain
-
- 1895–1896** Venezuelan boundary crisis with Britain
-
- 1898** *Maine* explosion in Havana harbor
Spanish-American War
Teller Amendment
Dewey's victory at Manila Bay
Hawaii annexed
-
- 1899** Senate ratifies treaty acquiring Philippines
Aguinaldo launches rebellion against United States in Philippines
First American Open Door note
-
- 1900** Hawaii receives full territorial status
Foraker Act for Puerto Rico
Boxer Rebellion and U.S. military expedition to China
Second Open Door note
McKinley defeats Bryan for presidency
-
- 1901** Supreme Court *Insular Cases*
Platt Amendment
McKinley assassinated; Roosevelt becomes president
Filipino rebellion suppressed
Hay-Pauncefote Treaty with Britain gives United States exclusive right to build Panama Canal
-
- 1902** U.S. troops leave Cuba
Colombian senate rejects U.S. proposal for canal across Panama
-
- 1903** Panamanian revolution against Colombia
Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty gives United States control of Canal Zone in newly independent Panama
-

- 1904** Roosevelt Corollary to Monroe Doctrine
-
- 1904–1914** Construction of Panama Canal
-
- 1905** United States takes over Dominican Republic customs service
Roosevelt mediates Russo-Japanese peace treaty
-
- 1906** San Francisco Japanese education crisis
Roosevelt arranges Algeciras Conference
-
- 1906–1909** U.S. Marines occupy Cuba
-
- 1907** Great White Fleet makes world voyage
-
- 1907–1908** “Gentlemen's Agreement” with Japan
-
- 1908** Root-Takahira agreement
-
- 1917** Puerto Ricans granted U.S. citizenship
-

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