

AP United States History
Unit 7: A Colossus Emerges
Topic- Imperialism: Reading Selections

Imperialism

Explain the similarities and differences in attitudes about the nation's proper role in the world.

By 1890, America no longer had a frontier line. Every part of the American expanse had now been populated. The Native Americans had been subjugated, the wilderness tamed by the growth of commercial mining, and the Great Plains were now dotted with towns and cities, plus commercial farms and ranches. Major American cities on both coasts were now growing rapidly thanks to both the growth of industries, migration from rural America, and an influx of immigrants. American industries now produced more products than any nation on Earth and America's farms now had the productive capacity to feed much of the world. America was rapidly becoming one of the most powerful countries in the world, but in some respects it was isolated from global affairs and since Washington's Farewell Address, this was the case by design. But, by 1890, some American businesses and politicians were beginning to have an interest in America expanding beyond its borders. Other American politicians and business leaders opposed the idea of an American empire. This debate would intensify after the close of the American frontier in 1893, as both sides envisioned a prosperous America, but differed on what its place in the world should be.

Imperialists cited economic opportunities, racial theories, competition with European empires, and the perception in the 1890s that the western frontier was "closed" to argue that Americans were destined to expand their culture and institutions to peoples around the globe.

From 1865-1910, the powers of Europe— Britain, France, Germany and Italy, conquered territories in both Asia and Africa. The reason for these conquests was to secure natural resources for their growing industrial societies. It led to a competition. As you can see on the map below, by 1910, very few African countries remained independent of European rule. The need for new markets for trade was another reason for the conquests of these areas. The following raw materials were sought out from the African and Asian countries: cocoa, sugar, cotton, tea, rubber, tin, and diamonds. In fact, just as an example, Great Britain controlled India, Burma, Malaysia, Egypt, South Africa, the valuable port of Hong Kong, plus had territories in the Caribbean such as Jamaica and Barbados. France controlled Algeria, Madagascar, Tunisia, Morocco, in Africa and what is today, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in Southeast Asia. During this period, Great Britain had just allowed for Australia and Canada, two of its largest possessions to enjoy the benefits of home rule. Social Darwinism played a factor in the process. It was thought that native peoples could not govern their own affairs. This line of reasoning made it easier for the European powers to justify their conquest of them. While the Europeans did build some infrastructure, such as railroads, hospitals, and schools, these institutions largely benefitted the Europeans and their families who exercised military control over their subjects. The native people worked in conditions that were akin to slavery, though not in name. The work was exhausting and brutal and left a permanent mark on the African and Asian continents which have lasted into the present, as workers and their families were often forced, for example, to grow cash crops, rather than food, which led to malnourishment and disease. The brutality of this second wave of imperialism took a toll on both the people and the land— exhausting the very soil which produced the resources and leaving it, in many cases, barren for the people whose lives depended upon it.

Against this backdrop, there were those in the United States who favored the creation of an American overseas suite of territories. Their arguments were for opening new markets, developing and protecting new American business interests (trade), (particularly in Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean) and for making certain that the nation would be able to compete with the powers of Europe on equal footing. By 1890, Americans had conquered the

Native Americans, segregated the African-American population in the South, and was in the process of welcoming millions of immigrants, most of whom came from European countries who were not a part of the process of the second-wave of European colonization in Africa and Asia. With no frontier left to conquer, an abundance of natural resources having been acquired from the West, and with the dynamic growth of American industries throughout the period, there were Americans— mostly business leaders and politicians, who sought to expand the ideal of Manifest Destiny beyond the continent. Alfred Thayer Mahan, a former Naval officer and military historian, posited the ideas of what shape American imperialism might take in his book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*. (His book traced the rise and development of the British Empire.) He advocated for the following: coaling stations throughout the Pacific Rim for ships to be able to refuel (remember steam ships required coal and so therefore would need coaling stations to operate on a global basis), a canal that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, (so that ships would not have to sail around South America to defend our coasts) and buffer territories, or strategic island territories where we could guard our shipping lanes in the Caribbean and the Pacific. His ideas gained traction with such figures as Theodore Roosevelt, William McKinley, and even among Christians who sought to bring American values to other parts of the globe.

As Native Americans and immigrants were being assimilated in the dominant American culture of the time, many Americans also felt that our nation should export its culture and values to others who we often saw as less fortunate. (Much like the Europeans of the period, there were a number of Americans who had seen Reconstruction as a failure, and applied this very same line of reasoning to the native peoples of other lands— that these people were incapable of governing themselves or handling their own affairs. It is this line of reasoning that will convince Americans time and time again, for example, to interject themselves into the affairs of the nations of Latin American and the Caribbean— a process that still occurs from time to time, even in the modern era.) However, there was another reason for Americans to embark on this process. The fear of the European powers being able to challenge the Monroe Doctrine, which, when issued in 1823, had stated that the United States would use its military power to make certain that the powers of Europe never colonized the Western Hemisphere, also made Americans uneasy. As the European powers were in the process of subjugating the nations of Africa and Asia, many Americans felt that the parts of North and South America— despite having thrown-off European rule with the exception of a few small territories in the Caribbean, could be subject to European interference and influence once again. While those who favored American imperialism saw economic opportunities, strategic advantages, and the opportunity to export American culture, the Anti-Imperialists possessed a very different point of view of America's place in the world.

Anti-imperialists cited principles of self-determination and invoked both racial theories and the U.S. foreign policy tradition of isolationism to argue that the United States should not extend its territory overseas.

Antiimperialists thought that the idea of imperialism was contradictory to American values. In their arguments, America was once a colony of an imperial power, Great Britain, and after having broken away from its control, why should we want to control other countries in the same manner. In their point of view, America had been established as a beacon of freedom, based on individual freedom, and popular sovereignty. To them, imperialism went against each of these ideals. The anti imperialists also wished to stay isolated from foreign affairs and did not wish for America to be involved in what they viewed as a world that was being carved up in a competition by the powers of Europe— America, was the greatest nation in the world, but it did have its own problems. The anti imperialists also believed that Americans did not have a duty to uplift other peoples around the world, as the imperialists did. They did not wish to incorporate new groups of people into the American system. In their point of view, America could become the strongest nation on Earth by focusing on continuing to build-up its industries, to develop its own military strength, and to continue to be friend to all nations (in other words, as Washington stated in his famed "Farewell Address," to steer clear of foreign entanglements). The anti imperialists also feared the United States would be bogged down in foreign wars. Their movement grew after the Spanish-American War. When the conflict began, it started as a war to liberate the peoples of Cuba and the Philippines, but once it ended, America remained in control of both places, annexed the Kingdom of Hawaii, and came to control both Guam and Puerto Rico. To the anti imperialists, the Spanish-American War was not a war for liberation, but an excuse for America to create its own colonial empire. The anti imperialists included such prominent American voices at the time as William Jennings Bryan, Andrew Carnegie (who was so incensed at the Spanish-American War that he even considered switching his political allegiance), and the

noted author, Mark Twain. Though the Spanish-American War may have launched the anti imperialist movement, it also set the United States on the pathway to becoming a global power at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Explain the effects of the Spanish–American War.

The American victory in the Spanish–American War led to the U.S. acquisition of island territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific, an increase in involvement in Asia, and the suppression of a nationalist movement in the Philippines.

The Spanish-American War

The Spanish-American War set the United States on the pathway to becoming a global power at the dawn of the twentieth century. The war was an outgrowth of the decline of the aging Spanish Empire that had once covered much of both North and South America. It also coincided with an outgrowth of American interest in sugar from places like Cuba, the Philippines and the Hawaiian Islands. Prior to the Civil War, Southerners had been interested in acquiring Cuba to make it an additional slave state. This plan, which was known as the Ostend Manifesto, was one of the causes for the Civil War, letting Northerners know that Southerners would do anything to extend the reach of the institution of slavery. By 1886, Spain had long last abolished the slave trade to Cuba (making it the next to last place in the Americas, as Brazil abolished it in 1891), but this did not diminish the interest that Americans would continue to have in Cuba. In fact, Americans were more interested in Cuban sugar and coffee than ever before by the 1890s. In 1895, the Cubans began to revolt against the rule of the Spanish. It became a bloody and brutal struggle, which resulted in the development of concentration camps in Cuba (among the first known uses for the term) and as the war dragged on, American investors became increasingly worried about their investments in the island. In the Philippines, unrest against Spanish rule had also led to tensions, but not armed revolt as it had in Cuba. Meanwhile, with sugar and fruit investments made by the Dole Family in the Kingdom of Hawaii, Americans had become much more of a presence on the Hawaiian Islands. When the ruler of the Kingdom of Hawaii, Queen Liliuokalani, tried to assert more native Hawaiian control over the affairs of the island, a revolt, led by the Dole Family (Sanford B. Dole), the planters seized control of the island and deposed the queen from power in 1893. In 1894, the Dole Family first requested that the new Republic of Hawaii be annexed to the United States, but, at the time, President Grover Cleveland refused to annex the islands. The Spanish-American War would be a watershed moment in American history, in that Americans would now become much more active in global affairs for the very first time and would acquire its first territories outside of the United States (with the exception of the acquisition of Alaska in 1867 and the Midway Island atoll– which would become consequential in the Second World War).

By 1898, Americans had become worried about the violence on the island of Cuba, as the Spanish were trying to put down a bloody revolt. Many Americans did not want to become involved in the conflict that had been brewing on the island for three long years, but others wanted to intervene. In particular, American investors who had put their money into Cuban sugar plantations were becoming increasingly worried about their investments. Newspapers carried stories of the atrocities that were occurring on the island of Cuba at the hands of the Spanish. These yellow journalists often exaggerated what was happening on the island, but nevertheless, it angered many Americans and led to tensions between the United States and Spain. To make matters worse, when the Spanish Ambassador, Dupuy de Lome, wrote a letter which criticized President William McKinley and referred to him as weak, it only added fuel to the fire. Responding to mounting public pressure, McKinley reluctantly (he was the last President to serve in the Civil War) sent the battleship, the USS Maine to Havana, Cuba, to monitor the situation in Cuba. On February 15, 1898, the battleship USS Maine blew up in Havana Harbor. At the time, the explosion of the ship was thought to be the result of a Spanish mine. (A later investigation determined that the explosion was an accident that was the result of a design flaw within the ship itself.) On April 11, 1898, McKinley urged Congress to declare war on Spain, which it did. The war would last less than three months. During the fighting in Cuba, Theodore Roosevelt became a national hero after his

troops helped win a major victory in the Battle of San Juan Hill. In the Philippines, Admiral George Dewey subdued the Spanish fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay and occupied the islands. During the fighting, with the former Spanish possessions of the islands of Guam, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines now being occupied, McKinley's administration pushed the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands through Congress. A cease-fire was signed in August, and on December 10, 1898, with the Treaty of Paris signed the splendid little war (as Secretary of State John Hay quipped) was over.

The consequences of the war were enormous. The Treaty of Paris of 1898 was ratified by Congress in 1899, and with it, the United States acquired both Cuba and the Philippines as protectorates, and islands of Guam, Puerto Rico, and through annexation, the Hawaiian Islands, as well. The acquisition of the Philippines led the United States to also issue the Open Door Notes with China in 1899. The Open Door Notes declared that China (which had been carved into spheres of influence by the powers of Europe) should be open to trade with all of the nations of the world— an act that has had implications for the relationship between America and China, still to this day. (When the Chinese rebelled against their western overlords in the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, America sent troops to help quell the uprising.) But, for the next four years fighting and tensions continued in both the Philippines and Cuba. Both of these former Spanish possessions had fought alongside the Americans— thinking of them as liberators, but as protectorates, the United States now virtually controlled their affairs. Led by Emilio Aguinaldo, the Filipino people resisted the Americans and from 1899-1902, a bloody conflict was fought in which the United States finally subdued the islands, but after the high cost of over 4,000 American soldiers and sailors and more than 20,000 Filipino resistance fighters— (some estimates say as many as 200,000 Filipino civilians may have died as a result of the bloody fighting and the destruction that the conflict brought to the islands). On the other hand, Cuba became a protectorate under heightened tensions. The Cuban people had also expected their independence, but as a protectorate (just like the Philippines) the United States under the Platt Amendment, reserved the right to intervene in Cuban affairs at any time.

By 1903, under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt, the United States would embark upon a new direction in foreign policy, one which would define the actions of America throughout the twentieth century, as it stepped onto the stage as an emerging global power. In 1902, after the Columbian senate refused to ratify a treaty allowing the United States to acquire the province of Panama, the Roosevelt administration backed Panamanian rebels who were seeking their freedom from the republic of Columbia. In 1903, after the Panamians won their independence, a treaty was signed between the new republic of Panama and the United States which would allow America to build what would become the Panama Canal— which would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and became one of the true marvels of the modern world. The Panama Canal opened for business to the rest of the world on the eve of World War I in 1914. In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt issued an extension to the Monroe Doctrine. Known as the Roosevelt Corollary, this policy stated that America had the right to intervene in the affairs of the Americas at any time. It would lead to America intervening throughout Latin America until ironically, the FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) administration would issue the Good Neighbor Policy in 1933. Cuba and the Philippines remained under American influence until the end of the Second World War. Puerto Rico and Guam, as well as Midway Island and the Samoan Islands (also, acquired in 1899) remain U.S. territories to this day. Hawaii became a state in 1959. In 1999, the U.S. gave the Panama Canal back to the Republic of Panama. But, even to this day, relations between the former territories that were acquired during this period and the United States have ranged from amicable to tense. But, it was the first step that Americans took onto the global stage and as the twentieth century opened, our nation was becoming poised to take its place as a world power.