

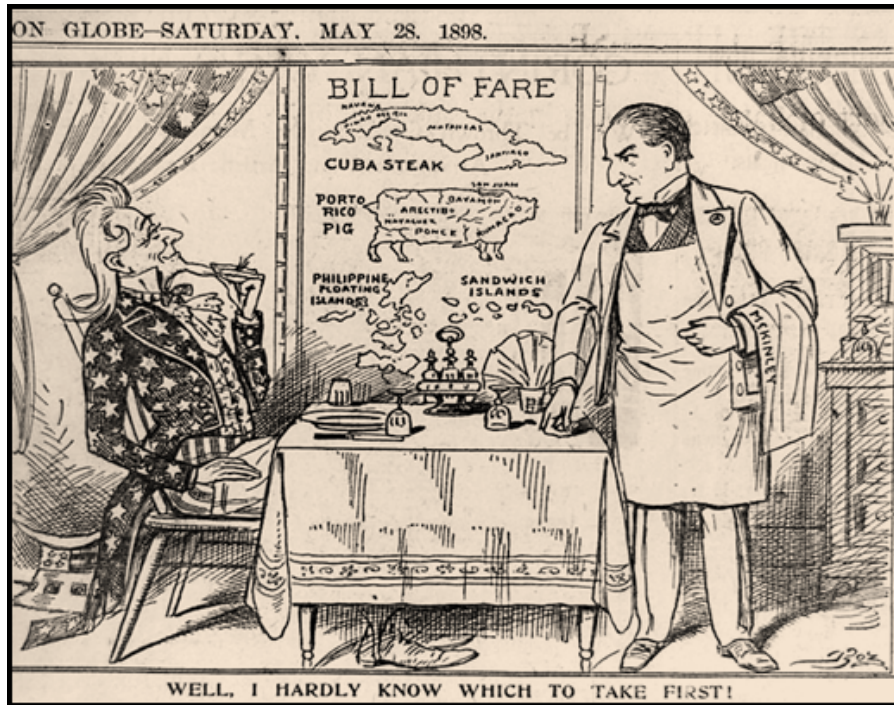
FOREIGN EXPANSION AND THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR



McKinley-Roosevelt Campaign Poster: 1900

Unit Overview

American industrial growth in the late 1800s encouraged an interest in overseas expansion and the quest for new markets. The successful outcome of the Spanish-American War elevated the United States to a position of global leadership and encouraged a sense of cultural superiority. The acquisition of Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico along with the construction of the Panama Canal reinforced this new image. Even though there was widespread support for these policies, some Americans saw these imperialistic ventures as a betrayal of the nation's democratic principles. Let's see how it all happened.

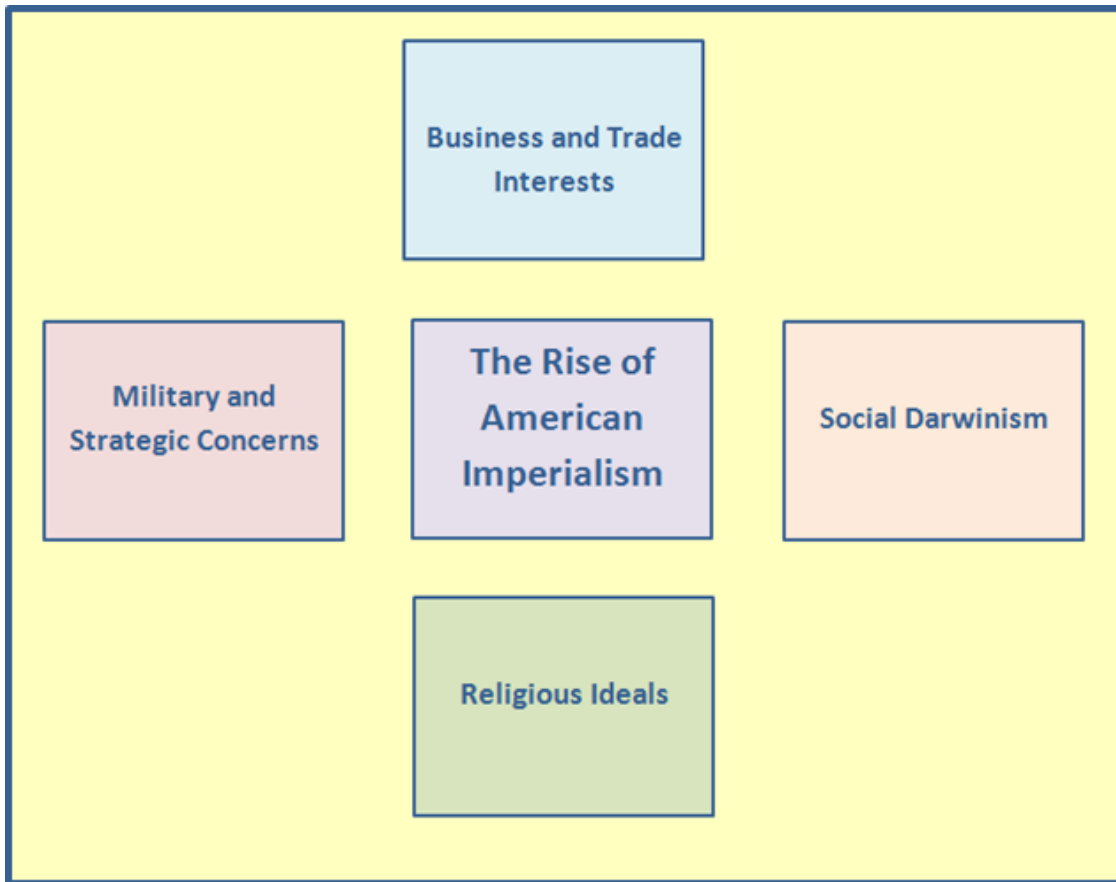


Political Cartoon from the Boston Globe: 1898

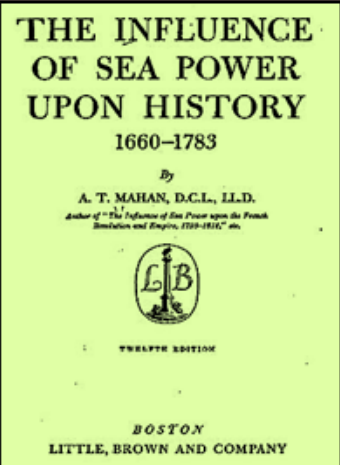
The Path to American Imperialism

During the decades after the Civil War, the United States became the most productive industrialized nation in the world, but it was not regarded as a military or diplomatic leader on the world stage. Even though American manufacturing firms had surpassed British companies with their output, Great Britain maintained an army that was five times larger and a navy with ten times more sailors than its American counterparts. The United States enjoyed the luxury of being surrounded by two oceans and countries that were usually considered non-threatening. While European nations extended their economic, political and military control over weaker territories through a practice known as **imperialism**, most Americans viewed this policy as inconsistent with their democratic principles and had little interest in overseas expansion.

By 1890, the attitude toward dominating regions outside of U.S. borders had changed. Since over one-fourth of the country's farm products and one-half of its oil were shipped abroad, American industrialists recognized the importance of gaining new markets for their goods and access to raw materials. A popular theory of the era, **social Darwinism**, suggested that the world's nations were engaged in a struggle for survival and that those who failed to compete were destined to decline. This led some American citizens to conclude that, if the United States did not become more aggressive in the realm of foreign affairs, the country would be left out and left behind. This anxiety was compounded by the nation's population growth and the decrease in available land for more settlers in the western part of the continental United States.




The turn-of-the-century American public was also convinced that a powerful military presence was an essential component of economic prosperity. *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, a popular book written by naval strategist **Alfred Thayer Mahan**, stressed the importance of controlling the world's sea routes. His theories led the United States, Germany and Japan to replace their wooden sailing vessels with steel ships fired by coal or oil. If the industrialized countries of the West were to tap into lucrative Asian markets, naval bases and refueling stations had to be established on the islands in the Pacific Ocean. U.S. political leaders believed that this required a new and improved navy. To back up claims that America had become a major sea power, **President Theodore Roosevelt** ordered sixteen battleships, nicknamed the **Great White Fleet**, to circumnavigate the globe in 1907. A strong naval presence in the Pacific also encouraged Americans, especially Christian missionaries, to travel to the Far East. By 1890, over five hundred mission centers had been established in China alone.



Whether they will or not, Americans must now begin to look outward. The growing production of the country demands it.

Alfred Thayer Mahan



Go to Questions 1 through 6.

The Annexation of Hawaii

Americans and Europeans first became aware of the Hawaiian Islands through first-hand accounts from British explorer and cartographer Captain **James Cook** in 1778. Missionaries from the United States arrived on the islands in 1820 followed by planters, who established sugar and pineapple plantations. In a short time, the islands' sugar producers were selling over \$20 million worth of sugar to the United States annually, but action taken by the U.S. Congress on behalf of domestic growers threatened this prosperous business. In 1890, the passage of the McKinley tariff changed the American policy on the importation of sugar. This tax made it cheaper for American households to buy sugar produced within the country. U.S. companies growing sugar cane in Hawaii quickly realized that their profits would decline unless the islands became part of the United States.



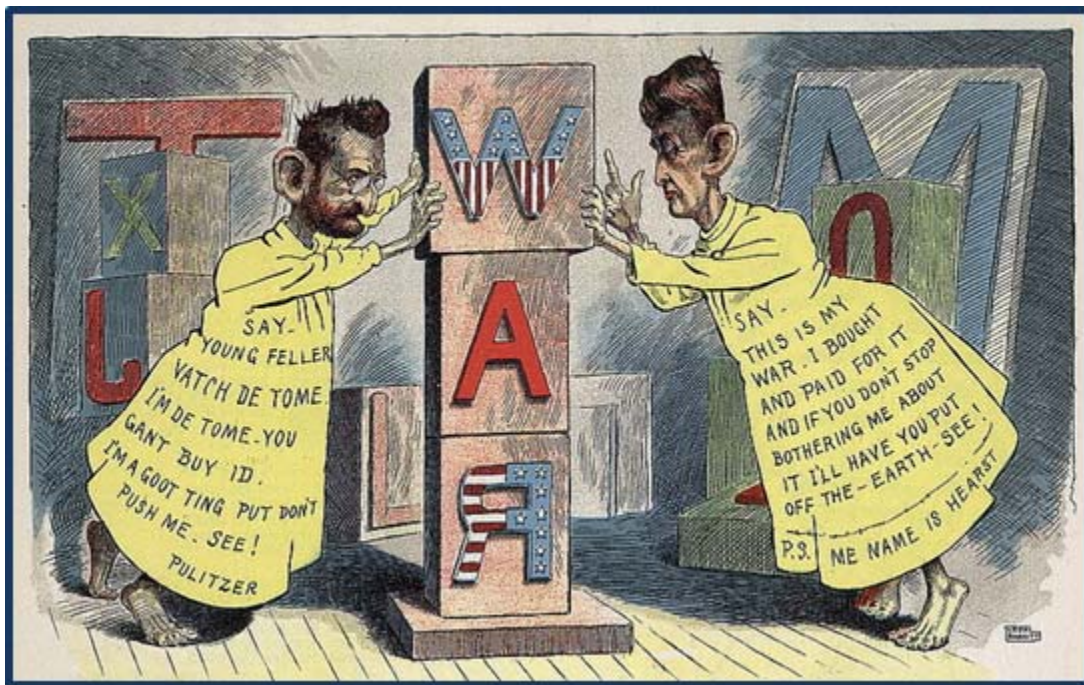
Queen
Liliuokalani
and her royal
monogram

Meanwhile, Hawaii's ruling monarch, **Queen Liliuokalani**, believed that American business interests had grown too powerful and too influential; the Queen was determined to return control of the economy to native Hawaiians. In response, Americans who owned pineapple and sugar farms organized to overthrow the government with the help of **John L. Stevens**, the official U.S. representative to the Hawaiian Islands. Backed by American soldiers, they imprisoned the Queen and seized 1.75 million acres of royal land. Liliuokalani relinquished her throne to prevent bloodshed and called upon the United States government to restore her authority. When they lobbied Congress to annex Hawaii, the rebels insisted that they had brought down a corrupt regime and advanced the principles of democracy. In agreement, the American military pointed out the value of Hawaii as a naval base. Although the issue was the subject of a heated congressional debate, a joint resolution of Congress ensured the annexation of Hawaii, and the islands became a United States territory in 1898.

Go to Questions 7 and 8.

The Spanish-American War

The nineteenth century saw the decline of Spain's vast empire that had once spanned both North and South America. As the period drew to a close, the most important colony still under Spanish control was **Cuba**, and the island's major cash crop was raw sugar. Ninety percent of that harvest was shipped to the United States to be refined and marketed. This put Cuba at the mercy of the U.S. economy. The cancellation of a major trade agreement between the United States and Cuba's colonial government set off a violent revolution against Spanish rule in 1895. Spain responded with a series of harsh countermeasures to put down the rebellion. American newspapers sent journalists to cover the story, but, since the fighting took place in the remote regions of the island, the correspondents relied on second-hand information and undocumented reports of Spanish atrocities. *The New York American* published by **William Randolph Hearst** and *The New York World*, under the direction of **Joseph Pulitzer**, engaged in a battle for circulation; both men printed stories to sell papers rather than to provide accurate information to the public. This style of reporting, which emphasized sensationalism and often ignored facts, became known as **yellow journalism**.



Political cartoon showing the competition between Hearst and Pulitzer

Public opinion demanded support for the Cuban rebels, and businessmen pushed the federal government to prevent the destruction of American-owned sugar plantations. In response to these demands, President McKinley ordered the *U.S.S. Maine* into the region to protect U.S. lives and property. The *Maine* steamed into the harbor at Havana, dropped anchor and maintained an American presence. On February 15, 1898, an explosion destroyed the battleship

and killed over 250 sailors. A U.S. naval court of inquiry attributed the blast to a submarine mine. Although research later indicated that an accidental fire was the root cause of the disaster, the majority of Americans blamed Spain. President McKinley wanted to avoid a war, but he also knew that his opposition could lead to the loss of a second term. Spain also preferred a peaceful settlement with the United States but would not give in on the demand for Cuban independence. McKinley asked Congress for a declaration of war on April 11, 1898, and Congress complied eight days later. At the same time, Congress also passed the **Teller Amendment** which specified that the United States had no desire to take over Cuba and was not interested in adding it to the United States as a territory.

\$50,000 REWARD.—WHO DESTROYED THE MAINE?—\$50,000 REWARD

EDITION FOR GREATER NEW YORK
NEW YORK JOURNAL
 AND ADVERTISER.

NO. 10,111. PUBLISHED WEEKLY. NEW YORK, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1898.—10 PAGES. PRICE ONE CENT.

DESTRUCTION OF THE WAR SHIP MAINE WAS THE WORK OF AN ENEMY

\$50,000!
\$50,000 REWARD!
 For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!

\$50,000!
 Assistant Secretary Roosevelt Convinced the Explosion of the War Ship Was Not an Accident.

\$50,000!
\$50,000 REWARD!
 For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!

The Journal Offers \$50,000 Reward for the Conviction of the Criminals Who Sent 258 American Sailors to Their Death. Naval Officers Unanimous That the Ship Was Destroyed on Purpose.



NAVAL OFFICERS THINK THE MAINE WAS DESTROYED BY A SPANISH MINE.

Hidden Mine or a Sunken Torpedo Believed to Have Been the Weapon Used Against the American Man-of-War—Officers and Men Tell Thrilling Stories of Being Blown Into the Air Amid a Mass of Shattered Steel and Exploding Shells—Survivors Brought to Key West Scout the Idea of Accident—Spanish Officials Protest Too Much—Our Cabinet Orders a Searching Inquiry—Journal Sends Divers to Havana to Report Upon the Condition of the Wreck.

American troops began to arrive in **Santiago** in June of 1898 and fought the Spanish forces in the hills overlooking this Cuban city. The key battle took place on July 1 when the **Rough Riders**, led by Theodore Roosevelt, took San Juan Hill. Four African-American regiments led the frontal assault and, in spite of heavy casualties, drove back the Spaniards. On July 3, American naval forces destroyed the Spanish fleet anchored in Santiago's harbor, and this victory was followed by Spain's surrender two weeks later. U.S. troops also landed in **Puerto Rico**, the last Caribbean island held by Spain. Spanish officials there yielded to the Americans

without a fight. An armistice was arranged to end the conflict on August 12, 1898. Spain agreed to liberate Cuba and to cede to the United States Puerto Rico. The United States also gained possession of Wake and Guam, small islands located in the Pacific. The final peace treaty would have to wait until the two sides settled the issues on the Spanish-American War's other front, the Philippines.



The Story of the U.S.S. Maine

Go to Questions 9 through 13.

The Philippines

Clashes between Spain and the United States were just not confined to the Caribbean during the Spanish-American War. The Philippines consisted of an archipelago of over 7000 islands and was part of Spain's colonial empire. The U.S. Navy knew that part of the Spanish fleet was anchored in Manila Bay and instructed **Admiral George Dewey**, commander of the Pacific fleet, to set sail for that harbor if war broke out. The Americans also arranged for **Emilio Aguinaldo**, who had led the fight for Philippine liberation from Spain before his exile, to return to his home country. Believing that the United States supported independence for the island nation, Aguinaldo agreed to help defeat the Spanish. On May 1, Dewey's squadron destroyed the Spanish ships and went on to capture the capital city of **Manila** by mid-August.



Colored print picturing Dewey at the Battle of Manila Bay

The victory touched off an intense debate in the United States concerning the future of the Philippines. That America should become a colonial power in the European tradition was out of the question. Several senators only wanted to keep Luzon, the island on which Manila was located, and to divide the remaining islands among the European powers. President McKinley argued that this plan handed over valuable seaports to other industrialized countries competing with the Americans for foreign markets. There was also some discussion of granting independence to the Filipinos, but this idea had little support since most Americans believed that they were not prepared to govern themselves. This was a major disappointment to Emilio Aguinaldo and others who had expected self-government. They retaliated against American occupation by the tactics of guerrilla warfare, and the U.S. Army responded by raiding villages and carrying out indiscriminate attacks. The insurrection ended in 1902, but the United States did not grant independence to the Philippines until 1946.

Go to Questions 14 through 16.

The Open Door Policy

With the acquisition of Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines, the United States had established the stepping stones across the Pacific to the Chinese markets. By the late 1890s, China had been weakened by internal conflicts and was unable to resist the foreign powers that wanted to exploit her natural resources and commercial prospects. Japan, Russia, Great Britain, France and Germany had already claimed **spheres of influence** or areas in China where each nation had special privileges and exclusive trading rights. Fearing that American products would be shut out, Secretary of State John Hay proposed the **Open Door Policy**, which called for all nations to respect the territorial integrity of China and to permit equal trade access. He explained the idea in a series of diplomatic notes and received only vague or evasive replies.



Political cartoon symbolizing the policies of Great Britain, Germany, Russia, France and Japan

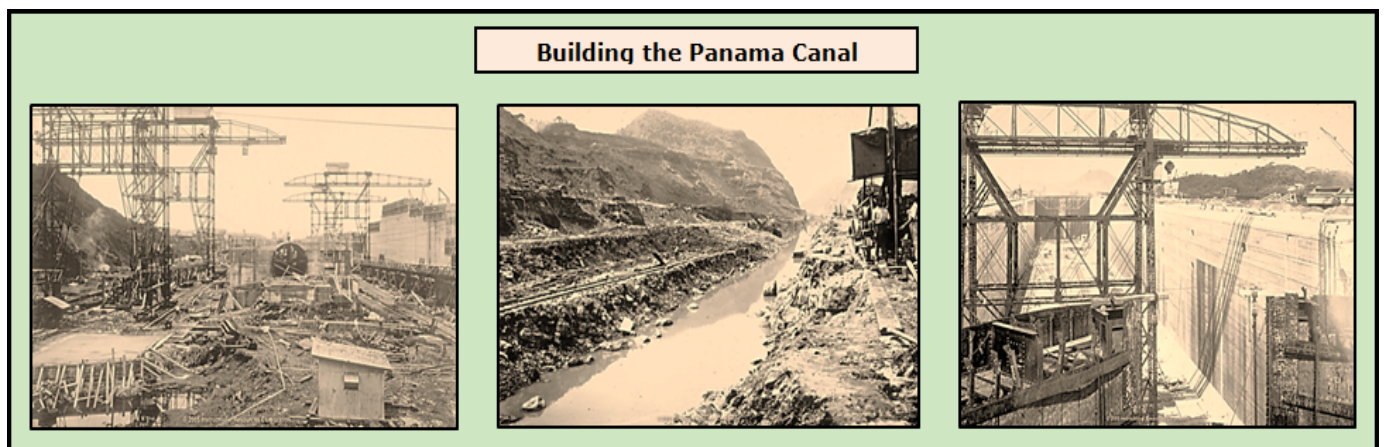
Some Chinese were frustrated by the arrogance of those foreigners who came to China only to further their own commercial interests. A secret club, called the **Boxers**, expressed their anti-foreign sentiments by committing random acts of violence. This eventually led to a full-scale revolt known as the **Boxer Rebellion**. The rebels succeeded in trapping hundreds of foreigners in the capital city of Beijing and holding them hostage. They were rescued by a combined military force from several nations, including the United States. The Boxer Rebellion caused Americans to fear that Europeans might seek revenge and make their spheres of influence even more exclusive. This would make it more difficult to sell U.S. products in China. With this in mind, Secretary Hay sent out a new set of notes that stressed the importance of preserving China's independence. Although the Open Door Policy did not turn out to be an economic victory for the United States, it did emphasize the American determination to increase its foreign trade and the desire to play a larger role in world affairs.

Go to Questions 17 and 18.

The Panama Canal

Because the Spanish-American War had been fought in both the Caribbean and the Pacific, pressure to build a canal through Central America increased. The idea also appealed to U.S. industrialists who wanted to eliminate the transportation costs generated by the long route around South America. In 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt opened negotiations with

Columbia to lease the province of **Panama** for this venture. When the Columbian legislature turned down the proposed treaty, Roosevelt gave covert assistance to the growing independence movement in Panama. Following a bloodless revolution, the United States recognized the new country on November 13, 1903. Two weeks later, the United States had a new lease on a canal zone and eventually paid Columbia \$25 million to cover its losses. The construction of the **Panama Canal** is considered one of the greatest engineering accomplishments of the twentieth century. The project involved clearing acres of swamp land, moving 240 cubic yards of dirt and building a series of huge locks. It took the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and thousands of laborers eight years to complete. When the canal officially opened in 1914, the United States had secured a dominating strategic and commercial position in the Western Hemisphere.



The Panama Canal

Go to Questions 19 and 20.

What's Next?

Even though the United States had tried to avoid an involvement in European affairs in the past, its emergence as a world leader now made this impossible. In 1917, American soldiers found themselves fighting on foreign battlefields to win an Allied victory in the Great War. Although World War I would prove to be a brutal conflict, establishing a long-term peace was another formidable challenge. Before moving on to examine these events, review the information in this unit; then, complete Questions 21 through 30.

Go to Questions 21 through 30.

