

AMERICAN IMPERIALISM: 1890-1899

I. Causes of U.S. imperialism

- A. End of the frontier: 1890 report from the Superintendent of the Census
 - 1. Many Americans believed U.S. had to expand or explode.
 - a. Increase in population, wealth, and industrial production demanded more resources.
 - b. Labor violence and agrarian unrest (Populism) rampant due to industrialism.
 - c. Overseas markets a possible safety valve for U.S. internal pressures.
 - 2. The experience of subjugating the Plains Indian tribes after the Civil War had established a precedent for exerting colonial control over dependent peoples.
- B. Foreign trade becoming increasingly important to American economy in late 19th c.
- C. Desire to compete with Europe for overseas empires.
 - 1. Influential minority sought international status for U.S. like Great European Powers.
 - 2. Between 1870 and 1900, Europeans had taken over 1/5 of land and 1/10 of population of the world.
 - 3. Germany became America's biggest imperialist foe and largely spurred U.S. into imperialism; Germany sought colonies in Africa, Asia, Latin America & Caribbean.
- D. Proponents of U.S. expansion
 - 1. Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan: *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890)
 - a. Thesis: Control of the sea was the key to world dominance and empire.
 - i. U.S. should build large navy and build defensive bases and refueling stations strategically placed on world's oceans.
 - ii. Advocated U.S. build a canal across the isthmus of Central America to link Atlantic & Pacific Oceans.
 - b. Helped stimulate naval race among the great powers.
 - c. Persuaded "yellow journalists" to push for modern navy of steel ships.
 - d. By 1898, the U.S. had fifth most powerful navy; third by 1900.
 - 2. Josiah Strong: *Our Country*(1885)
 - a. Advocated superiority of Anglo-Saxon civilization
 - b. Urged Americans spread religion & democratic values to "backward" peoples.
 - 3. Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge
 - a. Social Darwinism meant earth belonged to the strong & fit
 - b. If U.S. was to survive in competition of modern states, it too would have to become an imperial power
 - 4. Senator Albert Beveridge: The American Republic is part of the movement of a superior race, ordained by God
 - 5. "Yellow journalism" of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst stimulated Americans' interest abroad.
- E. Pan-Americanism, James G. Blaine
 - 1. Secretary of State under Presidents Garfield and B. Harrison.
 - 2. "Big Sister" policy aimed to gain Latin American support of U.S. leadership and to open Latin American markets to U.S. products.
- F. Samoan crisis @ Pago Pago
 - 1. U.S. and German navies nearly engaged each other in 1889 over Samoan Islands.
 - 2. Issue resolved in 1900 treaty with Germany and Britain
 - a. U.S. gained 76 square miles -- American Samoa including Pago Pago.
 - b. Germany received the two largest islands.
 - c. Britain was compensated with other territories in the Pacific.

II. Venezuela Boundary Dispute, 1895-1896

- A. Boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela in dispute for over half a century.
- B. President Cleveland warned Britain not to take Venezuelan territory
 - 1. Violated Monroe Doctrine; U.S. stated it now called shots in Western Hemisphere.
 - 2. London should submit the dispute to arbitration.
- C. Britain denied legality of Monroe doctrine and refused arbitration.

- D. Cleveland urged appropriation from Congress for commission of experts who would create an equitable border between Venezuela and Br. Guiana.
- E. Britain had no real urge to fight (despite naval superiority of 32-5 in battleship class warships)
- F. London consented to arbitration.
- G. Results
 - 1. Prestige of Monroe Doctrine enhanced
 - 2. Latin American republics pleased by U.S. determination to protect them.
 - 3. Britain courted U.S. for friendship in the face of the continental threat.

III. Hawaii

- A. Since early 19th century, America gradually came to regard Hawaiian Islands as an extension of the Pacific Coast.
- B. 1890, McKinley Tariff raised barriers against Hawaiian sugar.
- C. Queen Liliuokalani, a nationalist, insisted Hawaiians should control Hawaii
- D. Tiny minority of white planters led by Sanford B. Dole organized successful revolt in 1893.
 - 1. Openly assisted by American troops who landed under unauthorized orders of U.S. minister in Honolulu, John C. Stevens.
 - 2. Stevens: "The Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe and this is the golden hour for the U.S. to pluck it."
 - 3. Treaty for annexation rushed to Washington
- E. Before treaty could be passed through Senate, Cleveland assumed office and refused to sign any annexation bill and sent special investigator to Hawaii.
 - 1. Findings indicated majority of Hawaiians did not favor annexation:
 - 2. Provisional gov't had been established by force
 - 3. Cleveland ordered troops to be removed
- F. Results
 - 1. Cleveland unsuccessful in reinstating the queen.
 - a. U.S. public opinion would not have tolerated force to unseat white planters.
 - b. Revolutionaries proclaimed a Hawaiian Republic on July 4, 1894 with Dole as president.
 - 2. Annexation abandoned until 1898; Dole served as territorial governor from 1900-03
 - 3. First full-fledged imperialistic debate in U.S. history.

IV. Cuba

- A. Atrocities in Cuba sensationalized by "yellow press"
 - 1. Spanish misrule as well as the devastating Wilson-Gorman Tariff of 1894 damaged Cuba's sugar-based economy
 - 2. Reconcentration -- Spanish military concentrated masses of Cuban civilians in areas under their control. -- About 100,000 died between 1896 and 1898.
 - 3. President Cleveland refused to intervene and issued neutrality proclamation.
 - 4. Pulitzer and Hearst attempted to outdo each other
 - a. Hearst sent artist Frederic Remington to Cuba to draw sketches.
 - b. When Remington reported conditions not bad enough to warrant hostilities, Randolph allegedly replied, "You furnish the pictures & I'll furnish the war."
 - c. Remington depicted Spanish customs officials as brutally disrobing and searching an American woman.
 - 5. McKinley's ascension to presidency began stronger rhetoric toward Spain.
 - a. In autumn of 1897, McKinley came close to delivering an ultimatum to Spain that would have resulted in war.
 - b. Spain ended reconcentration in 1897, removed Weyler, & gave some autonomy to Cubans
 - c. It appeared war might be avoided.
- B. Cuban Revolt
 - 1. Spanish in Cuba rioted to protest Spain's talk of granting Cuba type of self-gov't.
 - 2. U.S. sent Battleship Maine to Cuba in 1898
 - a. Aimed to protect and evacuate Americans if danger occurred while also

- giving voice to popular distaste for Spain's reconcentration policies.
- b. Sent ostensibly as a "friendly visit"
- 3. de Lome letter
 - a. Feb. 9, 1898, Hearst sensationalized a stolen private letter written by Spanish minister in Washington, Dupuy de Lome that portrayed McKinley as corrupt and indicated Spain lacked good faith in instituting reforms in Cuba.
 - b. U.S. uproar forced Dupuy de Lome to resign before U.S. called for his recall.
- C. Explosion of Maine, Feb. 15, 1898 - immediate cause of Spanish American War
 - a. 266 officers and men dead.
 - b. Spanish investigation announced explosion as internal, presumably accidental.
 - c. American version reported blast caused by a mine.
 - d. Americans accepted the submarine mine view and leapt to conclusion that Spanish gov't was responsible. Yellow press helped to fuel the public fire.
 - e. Americans now cried for war: "Remember the Maine! To hell with Spain!"

V. Spanish-American War -- 1898

- A. Spain agreed to US demands: revocation of reconcentration & armistice with Cuban rebels.
- B. McKinley and Wall Street not eager for war but yellow press forced the issue
 - 1. McKinley did not want war but was savagely criticized by jingoes e.g. TR.
 - 2. Mark Hanna and Wall Street did not want war: might interfere with trade in Cuba.
 - 3. Public, prodded by yellow press, demanded war to free the abused Cubans.
 - 4. Demands of preserving Republican party biggest factor in decision for war.
- C. McKinley sent war message to Congress on April 11, 1898.
 - 1. Urged armed intervention to free oppressed Cubans; Congress agreed
 - 2. Teller Amendment -- Proclaimed to the world that when the U.S. had overthrown Spanish misrule, it would give the Cubans their freedom.
- D. U.S. army small and weak compared to Spain; U.S. Navy slightly less powerful than Spain's
- E. Admiral Dewey victorious at Manila Bay
 - 1. While Secretary of War was away, Undersecretary of War Roosevelt cabled Commodore George Dewey to attack Spain's Philippines in the event of war.
 - 2. May, 1898, Dewey's 6 warships sailed into Manila Harbor and destroyed all 10 of Spain's warships; 400 Spaniards killed & wounded; 1 American death (heat stroke)
 - 3. Germans arrived with 5 warships; more powerful than Dewey.
 - a. Dewey threatened German commander with war "as soon as you like"
 - b. False story emerged that British prevented Germans from destroying U.S. fleet.
 - 4. Three months later, American troops finally arrived and captured Manila in August.
 - 5. After U.S. annexation of Philippines, Aguinaldo led an insurrection against the U.S.
- F. Annexation of Hawaii (July 1898)
 - 1. U.S. used the pretense of needing Hawaii as a coaling and provisioning way station, in order to send supplies and reinforcements to Dewey in Manila Harbor.
 - 2. White-dominated gov't in Hawaii eager to be annexed
 - 3. Joint resolution of annexation rushed through Congress and approved by McKinley
- G. U.S. invasion of Cuba and Puerto Rico
 - 1. Spanish fleet eventually landed at bottle-shaped Santiago Harbor where they were promptly blockaded by the more powerful American fleet.
 - 2. Invading American army took high ground near Santiago without serious opposition.
 - a. Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders part of the invading army.
 - b. Heavy fighting on at El Caney and San Juan Hill where "Rough Riders" charged up after the hill had been largely won.
 - i. Two black regiments provided heavy support (about 1/4 of invasion force)
 - ii. In actuality, the "Rough Riders" first took Kettle Hill; heavy casualties.
 - 3. July 1, Spanish fleet completely destroyed
 - a. U.S.S. Oregon used more firepower than Spain's 4 armored cruisers combined.
 - b. Santiago surrendered by Spain shortly thereafter.

- 4. U.S. casualties: about 379 dead in battle; over 5,000 dead due to disease
- H. U.S. Army invaded Puerto Rico
 - 1. U.S. sought to take the island before the war with Spain ended.
 - 2. Most of population regarded U.S. soldiers as liberating heroes.
 - 3. Spain signed Armistice on August 12, 1898.
- I. Treaty of Paris, 1898
 - 1. Cuba freed from Spain
 - 2. U.S. received Pacific island of Guam which they had captured early in the war.
 - 3. U.S. gained Puerto Rico, the last vestige of Spain's American empire.
 - 4. Philippine issue a major dilemma in the negotiations.
 - a. U.S. took Manila the day after Spain sued for peace
 - i. Philippines thus not one of the spoils of war.
 - ii. U.S. agreed to pay Spain \$20 million.
 - b. McKinley's dilemma
 - i. Valuable Philippines larger than British Isles; population of 7 million.
 - ii. Did not feel U.S. should give islands back to Spain esp. after fighting a war to free Cuba.
 - iii. If left alone, Philippines might fall into anarchy
 - iv. Least of evils was to take Philippines and leave independence for later.

VI. Imperialism debate touched off by spoils of Spanish American War

- A. Philippines issue created a huge imperialism debate
 - 1. Expansionist pressure from various groups also forced McKinley's hand
 - a. Philippines (& Hawaii) seen as necessary stepping-stones to Asia (esp. China).
 - b. Protestant missionaries eager to convert Catholic Filipinos.
 - c. Businessmen clamored for new Philippine market.
 - d. Raw materials desirable
 - 2. McKinley later reported as saying an inner voice told him to take all the Philippines and Christianize and civilize them after he had knelt seeking divine guidance.
- B. Democrats tended to be anti-imperialist especially William Jennings Bryan.
 - 1. Feared foreign issues would overshadow much needed reform at home.
 - 2. Some feared foreign workers would lower wages at home.
 - 3. Others feared American factories would be relocated overseas.
 - 4. Colonies would require standing army; farmers' sons would be in harm's way.
 - 5. Others feared mongrelization of America.
 - 6. Exploited racial minorities in America opposed to doing the same overseas.
- C. Anti-Imperialist League
 - 1. Formed to oppose McKinley's expansionism.
 - 2. Group inc. presidents of Stanford & Harvard Universities, philosopher William James, and Mark Twain; Samuel Gompers and Andrew Carnegie.
 - 3. Filipinos wanted freedom and annexation violated "consent of the governed" philosophy in the Declaration of Independence.
 - 4. Annexation would entangle the U.S. politically and military in Asia.
- D. Expansionists and imperialists
 - 1.Appealed to patriotism and to the glory of annexation.
 - 2. Played up possible trade profits; Manila might become another Hong Kong.
 - 3. Philippines had abundance of natural resources.
 - 4. U.S. should help uplift the world's poor.
- E. Senate passed treaty on Feb. 6, 1899 with the unexpected support of Bryan.
 - 1. He claimed the sooner U.S. passed treaty, the sooner Filipinos would get their independence.
 - 2. Responsibility for the Philippines thus rested with the Republicans.
- F. Insular cases
 - 1. Cases appeared before the Supreme Court concerning extent to which constitutional rights applied to peoples of newly acquired territories.
 - 2. 1901 Supreme Court rulings

- a. Some rights are fundamental and applied to all American territory.
 - b. Other rights are procedural and should not be imposed upon those unfamiliar with American law.
 - c. Congress must determine which procedural rights applied in unincorporated territories.
 - d. The Constitution did not follow the flag.
- G. The question of Cuban independence
- 1. U.S. military gov't set up under General Leonard Wood (Rough Riders)
 - a. Major advances achieved in gov't, finance, education, agriculture, and public health.
 - b. Gains made on yellow fever epidemic by Dr. Walter Reed.
 - 2. U.S. withdrew from Cuba in 1902 in honor of the Teller Amendment.
 - 3. Platt Amendment
 - a. Mechanism to ensure that Cuba would not be vulnerable to foreign powers and to maintain U.S. influence in Cuban affairs.
 - b. Cubans forced to write Platt Amendment into their own Constitution of 1901
 - c. Provisions:
 - i. Cuba bound itself not to impair their independence by treaty or by contracting a debt beyond their resources.
 - ii. U.S. might intervene with troops to restore order and to provide mutual protection.
 - iii. Cubans promised to sell or lease needed coaling or naval stations.

VII. Post-war nationalism after the Spanish American War

- A. Established America's first overseas empire, albeit modest compared to contemporary European standards.
- B. European powers accorded U.S. more respect; Monroe Doctrine given a significant boost.
- C. Britain became an ally while Germany grew more frustrated.
- D. Philippines drew U.S. into Asian affairs; later proved a liability to defend
- E. Mahan's view of necessity for larger navy prevailed; U.S. undertook a large naval buildup.
- F. Elihu Root improved War Department; later important when U.S. involved in World War I.
- G. War served to further heal the rift between North and South; soldiers fought side by side.