*MEASURING UNCLE SAM FOR A NEW SUIT,* BY J. S. PUGHE, IN PUCK MAGAZINE, 1900  President William McKinley is favorably depicted here as a tailor, measuring his client for a suit large enough to accommodate the new possessions the United States obtained in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. The cartoon tries to link this expansion with earlier, less controversial ones such as the Louisiana Purchase.  

*Calais Pictures, Inc.*

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**TIME LINE**

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CHAPTER TWENTY

THE IMPERIAL REPUBLIC

Stirrings of Imperialism
War with Spain
The Republic as Empire

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, as the population of the United States pressed westward, the government, through purchase or conquest, had continually acquired new lands: the trans-Appalachian West, the Louisiana Territory, Florida, Texas, Oregon, California, New Mexico, Alaska. It was the nation’s "Manifest Destiny," many Americans believed, to expand into new realms.

In the last years of the nineteenth century, with little room left for territorial growth on the North American continent, those who favored expansion set their eyes beyond the nation’s shore. The United States began to consider joining England, France, Germany, and others in the great imperial drive that was bringing much of the nonindustrial world under the control of the industrial powers of the West.
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STIRRINGS OF IMPERIALISM

For over two decades after the Civil War, the United States expanded geographically hardly at all. By the 1890s, however, some Americans were ready—indeed, eager—to resume the course of Manifest Destiny that had inspired their ancestors to wrest an empire from Mexico.

The New Manifest Destiny

Several developments helped shift American attention to lands across the seas. The experience of subjugating the Indian tribes had established a precedent for exerting colonial control over dependent peoples. The supposed “closing of the frontier” produced fears that natural resources would soon dwindle. The depression that began in 1893 encouraged some businessmen to look for new markets abroad. Americans were, moreover, well aware of the imperialist fever raging through Europe, leading the major powers to partition most of Africa among themselves and to turn covetous eyes on the Far East and the feeble Chinese Empire. Some Americans feared that their nation would soon be left out of all these potential markets.

Scholars and others found a philosophic justification for expansionism in Charles Darwin's theories. They contended that nations or “races,” like biological species, struggled constantly for existence and that only the fittest could survive. For strong nations to dominate weak ones was, therefore, in accordance with the laws of nature.

Alfred Thayer Mahan

The ablest and most effective advocate of imperialism was Alfred Thayer Mahan, a captain and later admiral in the navy. Mahan’s thesis—presented in The Influence of Sea Power upon History (1890) and other works—was simple: Countries with sea power were the great nations of history. Effective sea power required, among other things, colonies. Mahan believed America should, at the least, acquire defensive bases in the Caribbean and the Pacific and take possession of Hawaii and other Pacific islands. Mahan feared that the United States did not have a large enough navy to play the great role he envisioned. But during the 1870s and 1880s, the government launched a shipbuilding program that by 1898 had moved the United States to fifth place among the world’s naval powers, and by 1900 to third.

Hemispheric Hegemony

James G. Blaine, secretary of state in the Republican administrations of the 1880s, led the early efforts to expand American influence into Latin America. In October 1889, he helped organize the first Pan-American Congress, which attracted delegates from nineteen nations. The delegates agreed to create the Pan-American Union, a weak international organization located in Washington that served as a clearinghouse for distributing information to the member nations. But they rejected Blaine’s more
create a tripartite protectorate over Samoa, with the native chiefs exercising only nominal authority. The three-way arrangement failed to halt the intrigues and rivalries of its members, and in 1899, the United States and Germany divided the islands between them, compensating Britain with territories elsewhere in the Pacific. The United States retained the harbor at Pago Pago.

WAR WITH SPAIN

Imperial ambitions had thus begun to stir within the United States well before the late 1890s. But a war with Spain in 1898 turned those stirrings into overt expansionism.

Controversy over Cuba

The Spanish-American War emerged out of events in Cuba. Cubans had been resisting Spanish rule intermittently since at least 1868, when they began a long but ultimately unsuccessful fight for independence. Many Americans had sympathized with the Cubans during that first ten-year struggle, but the United States did not intervene.

In 1895, the Cubans rose up again. This rebellion produced a ferocity on both sides that horrified Americans. The Cubans deliberately devastated the island to force the Spaniards to leave. The Spanish, commanded by General Valeriano Weyler (known in the American press as "Burcher" Weyler), confined many civilians to hastily prepared concentration camps, where they died by the thousands, victims of disease and malnutrition. The Spanish had used equally savage methods during the earlier struggle in Cuba without shocking American sensibilities. But the revolt of 1895 attracted unprecedented attention in the United States. That was partly because a growing population of Cuban émigrés in the United States—centered in Florida, New York, Philadelphia, and Trenton, New Jersey—gave extensive support to the Cuban Revolutionary Party (whose headquarters was in New York). They helped publicize its leader, José Martí, who was killed in Cuba in 1895. Later, Cuban Americans formed other clubs and associations to support the cause of Cuba Libre (Free Cuba).

But it was also because the events in Cuba were reported more fully and flamboyantly by American newspapers, and particularly by the new "yellow press" of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. Pulitzer's World, which began publishing in New York in 1883, launched the age of yellow journalism—a term probably derived originally from the lavish use of color in the World, and the color yellow (an especially difficult one to print) in particular. But before long, the term came to be used to describe a sensationalist style of reporting and a self-conscious effort to reach a mass market. The
THE YELLOW PRESS AND THE WRECK OF THE MAINE. No evidence was ever found tying the Spanish to the explosion in Havana harbor that destroyed the American battleship Maine in February 1898. Indeed, most evidence indicated that the blast came from inside the ship, a fact that suggests an accident rather than sabotage. Nevertheless, the newspapers of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst ran sensational stories about the incident that were designed to arouse public sentiment in support of war. This front-page from Pulitzer's New York World is an example of the lurid coverage the event received. Circulation figures at the top of the page indicate, too, how successful the coverage was in selling newspapers. (The Granger Collection, New York)

success of the World, whose circulation reached 250,000 by 1886, spawned imitators in New York and elsewhere. Most prominent among them was Hearst's New York Journal, which cut its price to one cent after Hearst bought it in 1895 (Pulitzer quickly followed suit), copied many of the World's techniques, and within a year raised its circulation to 400,000. The competition between these two great "yellow" journals soon drove both to new levels of sensationalism.
Despite the mounting storm of indignation against Spain, President Cleveland refused to intervene in the conflict. But when McKinley became president in 1897, he formally protested Spain’s “uncivilized and inhuman” conduct, causing the Spanish government (fearful of American intervention) to recall Weyler, modify the concentration policy, and grant the island a qualified autonomy.

But whatever chances there were for a peaceful settlement vanished as a result of two dramatic incidents in February 1898. The first occurred when a Cuban agent stole a private letter written by Dupuy de Lôme, the Spanish minister in Washington, and turned it over to the American press. It described McKinley as a weak man and “a bidder for the admiration of the crowd.” This was no more than what many Americans, including some Republicans, were saying about their president. But coming from a foreigner, it created intense popular anger. Dupuy de Lôme promptly resigned.

While excitement over the de Lôme letter was still high, the American battleship Maine blew up in Havana harbor with a loss of more than 260 people. Many Americans assumed that the Spanish had sunk the ship, particularly when a naval court of inquiry reported that an external explosion by a submarine mine had caused the disaster. (Later evidence suggested that the disaster was actually the result of an accidental explosion inside one of the engine rooms.) War hysteria swept the country, and Congress unanimously appropriated $50 million for military preparations.

The Maine explosion gave the yellow press their best opportunities yet for combining sensational reporting with shameless appeals to patriotism and moral outrage. The papers immediately blamed Spanish authorities (without any evidence). The Journal offered a $50,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of those responsible for the explosion, and it crowded all other stories off its front page. In the three days following the Maine explosion, the Journal sold over 3 million copies, a new world’s record for newspaper circulation. Hearst boasted at times that the conflict in Cuba was “the Journal’s war” and even sent a cable to one of his reporters in Cuba saying: “You furnish the pictures, and I’ll furnish the war.”

McKinley still hoped to avoid a conflict. But others in his administration (including Theodore Roosevelt) were clamoring for war. In March 1898, at McKinley’s request, Spain agreed to stop the fighting and eliminate its concentration camps; but it refused to negotiate with the rebels and reserved the right to resume hostilities at its discretion. That satisfied neither public opinion nor Congress. A few days later, McKinley asked for and, on April 25, received a congressional declaration of war.

“A Splendid Little War”

Secretary of State John Hay called the Spanish-American conflict “a splendid little war,” an opinion that most Americans seemed to share. Declared
in April, it was over in August, in part because Cuban rebels had already greatly weakened the Spanish resistance, making the American intervention in many respects little more than a "mopping up" exercise. Only 460 Americans were killed as a result of battle, although some 5,200 perished of disease: malaria, dysentery, and typhoid, among others. Casualties among Cuban insurgents, who continued to bear the brunt of the struggle, were much higher.

Yet the American war effort was not without difficulties. United States soldiers faced serious supply problems: a shortage of modern rifles and ammunition, uniforms too heavy for the warm Caribbean weather, inadequate medical services, and skimpy, almost indigestible food. The regular army numbered only 28,000 troops and officers, most of whom had experience in quelling Indian outbreaks but none in larger-scale warfare. That meant that, as in the Civil War, the United States had to rely heavily on National Guard units, organized by local communities and commanded for the most part by local leaders without military experience.

A significant proportion of the American invasion force consisted of black soldiers. Some were volunteer troops put together by black communities. Others were members of the four black regiments in the regular army, the so-called Buffalo soldiers, who had been stationed on the frontier to defend white settlements against Indians. As black soldiers traveled through the South toward the training camps, some resisted the rigid segregation to which they were subjected. Black soldiers in Georgia deliberately made use of a "whites only" park; in Florida, they beat a soda-fountain operator for refusing to serve them; in Tampa, white provocations and black retaliation led to a night-long riot that left thirty wounded.

Racial tensions continued in Cuba itself, where African Americans played crucial roles in some of the important battles of the war (including the famous charge at San Juan Hill) and won many medals. Nearly half the Cuban insurgents fighting with the Americans were black including one of the leading insurgent generals, Antonio Maceo, but unlike their American counterparts they were fully integrated into the rebel army. The sight of black Cuban soldiers fighting alongside whites as equals gave African Americans a stronger sense of the injustice of their own position.

**Seizing the Philippines**

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt was an ardent imperialist and an active proponent of war. As the tension with Spain rose, he unilaterally strengthened the navy's Pacific squadron and instructed its commander, Commodore George Dewey, to attack Spanish naval forces in the Philippines, a colony of Spain, in the event of war.

Immediately after war was declared, Dewey sailed for the Philippines. On May 1, 1898, he steamed into Manila Bay and completely destroyed
THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR IN CUBA, 1898 The military conflict between the United States and Spain in Cuba was brief. Cuban rebels and an American naval blockade had already brought the Spanish to the brink of defeat. In the space of about a week, U.S. troops won four decisive battles in the area around Santiago in southeast Cuba—one of them (the Battle of Kettle Hill) the scene of Theodore Roosevelt’s famous charge. This map shows the extent of the American naval blockade, the path of American troops from Florida to Cuba, and the location of the actual fighting. What were the implications of the war in Cuba for Puerto Rico?

For an interactive version of this map go to www.mhhe.com/unfinishednation5/ch20/maps

The aging Spanish fleet there. Dewey, immediately promoted to admiral, became the first hero of the war. Several months later, after the arrival of an American expeditionary force, the Spanish surrendered the city of Manila itself.

The Battle for Cuba

Cuba, however, remained the principal focus of American military efforts. At first, the American commanders planned a long period of training before sending troops into combat. But when a Spanish fleet under Admiral Pascual Cervera slipped past the American navy into Santiago harbor, on the southern coast of Cuba, plans changed quickly. The American Atlantic fleet quickly bottled Cervera up in the harbor. And the army’s commanding general, Nelson A. Miles, hastily altered his strategy and ordered a force of 17,000 to leave Tampa in June to attack Santiago.
CHAPTER TWENTY

General William R. Shafter, the American commander in Cuba, moved toward Santiago, which he planned to surround and capture. On the way he met and defeated Spanish forces at Las Guasimas and, a week later, in two simultaneous battles, El Caney and San Juan Hill. At the center of the fighting (and on the front pages of the newspapers) during all these engagements was a cavalry unit known as the Rough Riders. Nominally commanded by General Leonard Wood, its real leader was Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, who had resigned from the Navy Department to get into the war and who rapidly emerged as a hero of the conflict. His fame rested in large part on his role in leading a bold, if perhaps reckless, charge up Kettle Hill (a minor part of the larger battle for the adjacent San Juan Hill) directly into the face of Spanish guns. Roosevelt himself emerged unscathed, but nearly a hundred of his soldiers were killed or wounded. He remembered the battle as “the great day of my life.”

Although Shafter was now in position to assault Santiago, his army was weakened by sickness. Disaster seemed imminent. But unknown to the Americans, the Spanish government had by now decided that Santiago was lost and had ordered Cervera to evacuate. On July 3, Cervera tried to escape the harbor. The waiting American squadron destroyed his entire fleet. On July 16, the commander of the Spanish ground forces in Santiago surrendered. At about the same time, an American army landed in Puerto Rico and occupied it against virtually no opposition. Six days later, the United States accepted an end to the war when Spain signed an armistice recognizing

AFRICAN-AMERICAN CAVALRY Substantial numbers of African Americans fought in the United States Army during the Spanish-American War. Although confined to all-black units, they engaged in combat alongside white units and fought bravely and effectively. This photograph shows a troop of African-American cavalry in formation in Cuba. (Corbis)
Cuban independence, ceding Puerto Rico to the United States, and accepting American occupation of Manila until the two nations reached a final agreement on the Philippines.

Puerto Rico and the United States

The island of Puerto Rico had been a part of the Spanish Empire since Ponce de León arrived there in 1508. The native people, the Arawaks, disappeared almost entirely as a result of infectious diseases, Spanish brutality, and poverty. Puerto Rican society developed, therefore, with a Spanish ruling class and a large African work force for the coffee and sugar plantations that came to dominate its economy.

Puerto Rican resistance to Spanish rule began to emerge in the nineteenth century. Uprisings occurred intermittently beginning in the 1820s; the most important of them—the so-called Lares Rebellion—was, like the others, effectively crushed by the Spanish in 1868. But the growing resistance did prompt some reforms: the abolition of slavery in 1873, representation in the Spanish parliament, and other changes. In 1898 Spain granted the island a degree of independence. But before the changes had any chance to take effect, control of Puerto Rico shifted to the United States.

American military forces occupied the island during the war. They remained in control until 1900, when the Foraker Act ended military rule and established a formal colonial government. In 1917, Congress passed the Jones Act, which declared Puerto Rico to be United States territory and made all Puerto Ricans American citizens.

The Puerto Rican sugar industry flourished as it took advantage of the American market that was now open to it without tariffs. As in Hawaii, Americans from the mainland soon established large sugar plantations on the island and hired natives to work them. The growing emphasis on sugar as a cash crop and the transformation of many Puerto Rican farmers into paid laborers led to a reduction in the growing of food for the island and a higher reliance on imported goods. When international sugar prices were high, Puerto Rico did well. When they dropped, the island’s economy sagged, pushing the many plantation workers—already desperately poor—into destitution.

The Debate over the Philippines

If the annexation of Puerto Rico produced relatively little controversy, the annexation of the Philippines occasioned a long and impassioned debate. Controlling a nearby Caribbean island fit reasonably comfortably into America’s sense of itself as the dominant power in the Western Hemisphere. Controlling a large and densely populated territory thousands of miles away seemed to many Americans more ominous.

McKinley claimed to be reluctant to support annexation. But, according to his own accounts, he emerged from an “agonizing night of prayer”
convinced that there were no acceptable alternatives. Returning the Philippines to Spain would be “cowardly and dishonorable,” he claimed. Turning the islands over to another imperialist power (France, Germany, or Britain) would be “bad business and discreditable.” Granting them independence would be irresponsible; the Filipinos were “unfit for self government.” The only solution was “to take them all and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and Christianize them.” Growing popular support for annexation and the pressure of the imperialist leaders of his party undoubtedly helped him reach this decision of conscience.

The Treaty of Paris, signed in December 1898, confirmed the terms of the armistice and brought a formal end to the Spanish-American War. American negotiators had startled the Spanish by demanding that they also cede the Philippines, but an offer of $20 million for the islands softened Spain’s resistance. The Spanish negotiators accepted all the American terms.

In the United States Senate, however, resistance was fierce. During debate over ratification of the treaty, a powerful anti-imperialist movement arose to oppose acquisition of the Philippines. Among the anti-imperialists were some of the nation’s wealthiest and most influential figures. An example was the Anti-Imperialist League, established by upper-class Bostonians, New Yorkers, and others late in 1898 to fight against annexation, attracted a widespread following in the Northeast and waged a vigorous campaign against ratification of the Paris treaty. Some anti-imperialists believed simply that imperialism was immoral, a repudiation of America’s commitment to human freedom. Others feared “polluting” the American population by introducing “inferior” Asian races into it. Industrial workers feared being undercut by a flood of cheap laborers from the new colonies. Conservatives feared that the large standing army and entangling foreign alliances that imperialism would require would threaten American liberties. Sugar growers and others feared unwelcome competition from the new territories.

Favoring ratification was an equally varied group. There were the exuberant imperialists such as Theodore Roosevelt. Some businessmen believed annexation would position the United States to dominate the Asian trade. And most Republicans saw partisan advantages in acquiring valuable new territories through a war fought and won by a Republican administration. Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of annexation, however, was the apparent ease with which it could be accomplished. The United States, after all, already possessed the islands.

When anti-imperialists warned of the danger of acquiring heavily populated territories whose people might have to become citizens, the imperialists had a ready answer: The nation’s longstanding policies toward Indians—treating them as dependents rather than as citizens—had created a precedent for annexing land without absorbing people.

The fate of the treaty remained in doubt for weeks, until it received the unexpected support of William Jennings Bryan. Bryan was a fervent
anti-imperialist who hoped to move the issue out of the Senate and make annexation the subject of a national referendum in 1900, when he expected to be the Democratic presidential candidate again. Bryan persuaded a number of anti-imperialist Democrats to support the treaty so as to set up the 1900 debate. The Senate ratified it finally on February 6, 1899.

But Bryan miscalculated. If the campaign of 1900 was in fact a debate on the Philippines, as Bryan tried to make it ("A republic can have no subjects," he famously declared), the election proved beyond doubt that the nation had decided in favor of imperialism. Once again, Bryan ran against McKinley, and once again, McKinley won—even more decisively than in 1896. It was not only the issue of the colonies, however, that ensured McKinley’s victory. The Republicans were the beneficiaries of growing national prosperity—and also of the colorful personality of their vice presidential candidate, Theodore Roosevelt.

THE REPUBLIC AS EMPIRE

The new American empire was a small one by the standards of the great imperial powers of Europe. But it created large problems. It embroiled the United States in the politics of both Europe and the Far East in ways the nation had always tried to avoid in the past, and it drew Americans into a brutal war in the Philippines.

Governing the Colonies

Three of the recent American dependencies—Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico—presented relatively few problems. They received territorial status (and their residents American citizenship) relatively quickly: Hawaii in 1900, Alaska in 1912, and Puerto Rico (in stages) by 1917. The navy took control of Guam and Tutuila. The United States had also acquired some of the smallest, least populated Pacific islands; it simply left them alone.

Cuba was a thornier problem. American military forces, commanded by General Leonard Wood, remained there until 1902 to prepare the island for independence. They built roads, schools, and hospitals; reorganized the legal, financial, and administrative systems; and introduced medical and sanitation reforms. But when Cuba drew up a constitution that made no reference to the United States, Congress responded by passing the Platt Amendment in 1901 and pressuring Cubans into incorporating its terms into their constitution. The Platt Amendment barred Cuba from making treaties with other nations; it gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuba to preserve independence, life, and property; and it required Cuba to permit American naval stations on its territory. The
amendment left Cuba with only nominal political independence. And as American capital made the new nation an American economic appendage as well, American investors poured into Cuba, buying up plantations, factories, railroads, and refineries. Resistance to “Yankee imperialism” produced intermittent revolts against the Cuban government—revolts that at times prompted United States military intervention. American troops occupied the island from 1906 to 1909 after one such rebellion; they returned again in 1912, to suppress a revolt by black plantation workers. As in Puerto Rico and Hawaii, sugar production—spurred by access to the American market—increasingly dominated the island’s economic life and subjected it to the same cycle of booms and busts that so plagued other sugar-producing appendages of the United States economy.

The Philippine War

Americans did not like to think of themselves as imperial rulers in the European mold. Yet like other imperial powers, the United States soon discovered that subjugating another people required strength and at times brutality. That, at least, was the lesson of the American experience in the Philippines, where American forces soon became engaged in a long and bloody war.

The conflict in the Philippines is the least remembered of all American wars. It was also one of the longest (it lasted from 1898 to 1902) and one of the most vicious. It involved 200,000 American troops and resulted in 4,300 American deaths. The number of Filipinos killed in the conflict is still in dispute, but it seems likely that at least 50,000 natives (and perhaps many more) died. The American occupiers faced guerrilla tactics in the Philippines very similar to those the Spanish occupiers had faced prior to 1898 in Cuba. And they soon found themselves drawn into the same patterns of brutality that had outraged so many Americans when Weyler had used them in the Caribbean.

The Filipinos had rebelled against Spanish rule even before 1898. As soon as they realized the Americans had come to stay, they rebelled against them as well. Ably led by Emilio Aguinaldo, Filipinos harried the American army of occupation from island to island for more than three years. At first, American commanders believed the rebels had only a small popular following. But by early 1900, General Arthur MacArthur, an American commander in the islands, wrote: “I have been reluctantly compelled to believe that the Filipino masses are loyal to Aguinaldo and the government which he heads.”

To MacArthur and others, that was not a reason to moderate American tactics or conciliate the rebels, but rather to adopt more severe measures. Gradually, the American military effort became more systematically vicious and brutal. Captured Filipino guerrillas were summarily executed. On some islands, entire communities were evacuated—the residents forced
FILIPINO PRISONERS. American troops guard captured Filipino guerrillas in Manila. The suppression of the Filipino insurrection was a much longer and costlier military undertaking than the Spanish-American War, by which the United States first gained possession of the islands. By mid-1900 there were 70,000 American troops in the Philippines, under the command of General Arthur MacArthur (whose son, Douglas, won fame in the Philippines during World War II).

(Library of Congress)

into concentration camps while American troops destroyed their villages. A spirit of savagery grew among American soldiers, who came to view the Filipinos as almost subhuman and at times seemed to take pleasure in killing almost arbitrarily.

By 1902, reports of the brutality and of the American casualties had soured the American public on the war. But by then, the occupiers had established control over most of the islands largely because of the March 1901 capture of Aguinaldo, who later signed a document urging his followers to stop fighting and declaring his own allegiance to the United States. Fighting continued intermittently until as late as 1906; but American possession of the Philippines was now secure.

In the summer of 1901, the military transferred authority over the islands to William Howard Taft, who became the first civilian governor and who gave the Filipinos broad local autonomy. The Americans also built roads, schools, bridges, and sewers; instituted major administrative and
Gradual Shift to Self-rule financial reforms; and established a public health system. Filipino self-rule slowly increased, but not until July 4, 1946, did the islands finally gain their independence.

The Open Door

The acquisition of the Philippines greatly increased the already strong American interest in Asia. Americans were particularly concerned about the future of China, which was now so enfeebled that it provided a tempting target for exploitation by stronger countries. By 1900, England, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan were beginning to carve up China among themselves, pressuring the Chinese government for "concessions" that gave them effective economic control over various regions. In some cases, they simply seized Chinese territories and claimed them as their own "spheres of influence." Many Americans feared the process would soon cut them out of the China trade altogether.

Eager for a way to protect American interests in China without risking war, McKinley issued a statement in September 1898 saying the United States wanted access to China but no special advantages there: "Asking only the open door for ourselves, we are ready to accord the open door to others." Later, Secretary of State John Hay translated the president's words into policy when he addressed identical messages—which became known as the "Open Door notes"—to England, Germany, Russia, France, Japan, and Italy. He asked that each nation with a "sphere of influence" in China allow other nations to trade freely and equally in its sphere. The principles he outlined would allow the United States to trade with the Chinese without fear of interference.

But the Open Door proposals were coolly received in Europe and Japan. Russia openly rejected them; the other powers claimed to accept them in principle but to be unable to act unless all the powers agreed. Hay, unperturbed, simply announced that all the powers had accepted the principles of the Open Door and that the United States expected them to be observed. But unless the United States was willing to resort to war, it could not prevent any nation that wanted to violate the Open Door from doing so.

No sooner had the diplomatic maneuvering over the Open Door ended than the Boxers, a secret Chinese martial-arts society, launched a revolt against foreigners in China. The climax of the Boxer Rebellion was a siege of the entire foreign diplomatic corps in the British embassy in Beijing (Peking). The imperial powers (including the United States) sent an international expeditionary force into China to rescue the diplomats. In August 1900, it fought its way into Beijing and broke the siege.

McKinley and Hay had agreed to American participation so as to secure a voice in the settlement of the uprising and to prevent the partition of
The American South Pacific Empire, 1900

Except for Puerto Rico, all of the colonial acquisitions of the United States in the wake of the Spanish-American War occurred in the Pacific. The new attraction of imperialism persuaded the United States to annex Hawaii in 1898. The war itself gave America control of the Philippines, Guam, and other, smaller Spanish possessions in the Pacific. When added to the small, scattered islands that the United States had acquired as naval bases earlier in the nineteenth century, these new possessions gave the nation a highly far-flung Pacific empire, even if one whose total territory and population remained small by the standards of the other great empires of the age. *What was the reaction in the United States to the acquisition of this new empire?*

China. Hay now won support for his Open Door approach from England and Germany and then induced the other participating powers to accept compensation from the Chinese for the damages the Boxer Rebellion had caused. Chinese territorial integrity survived at least in name, and the United States retained access to its lucrative trade.

**A Modern Military System**

The war with Spain had revealed glaring deficiencies in the American military system. Had the United States been fighting a more powerful nation, disaster might have resulted. After the war, McKinley appointed Elihu Root, an able New York corporate lawyer, as secretary of war to supervise a major overhaul of the armed forces.

Root's reforms enlarged the maximum size of the regular army from 25,000 to 100,000. They established federal army standards for the National Guard, ensuring that never again would the nation fight a war with volunteer regiments trained and equipped differently from the regular
army. They sparked the creation of a system of officer training schools, including the Army Staff College (later the Command and General Staff School) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and the Army War College in Washington, D.C. And in 1903, they established a general staff (named the Joint Chiefs of Staff) to act as military advisers to the secretary of war. As a result of the new reforms, the United States entered the twentieth century with something resembling a modern military system.

CONCLUSION

After more than a century of continual national expansion on the North American continent, the United States joined the community of colonial nations in the 1890s and acquired a substantial empire far from its own shores. But the rise of American imperialism was a halting and contested process, whose purposes were never wholly clear.

In the beginning, America's new internationalism took the form of a supposedly humanitarian intervention in a civil war in Spanish Cuba. The American public, inflamed by lurid journalistic accounts of Spanish atrocities inflicted on innocent Cubans, helped push the United States into a short war with Spain, fought in theory to secure Cuban independence. But through the efforts of some committed internationalists in the McKinley administration, among them Theodore Roosevelt, the Spanish-American War soon transformed itself from a fight to free Cuba into a fight to wrest important colonies from Spain. At its end, the United States found itself in possession of substantial new territories in the Caribbean (including Puerto Rico) and an important territory in the Pacific—the Philippines. A vigorous domestic anti-imperialist movement failed to stop the annexationist drive, and by 1899 the United States found itself in possession of colonies.

Taking the colonies proved easier than holding them. In the Philippines, American forces became bogged down in a four-year war with Filipino rebels. The new colonial rulers soon pacified the Philippines, but not before souring much of the American public on the effort. In part as a result, the territories the United States acquired in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War marked the end of American territorial expansion.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (1963), and Ernest May, *Imperial Democracy* (1961), are important introductions to the