Becoming a World Power  
1890-1915

- By the dawn of the 20th Century, industrialization had forever changed the national landscape and the daily lives of all Americans. The rise of cities, the beginnings of mass culture, westward expansion, and new coast-to-coast networks of travel and communication all strengthened the country’s national identity.

US Railroads, 1860

- The development of the United States into an industrial powerhouse also forced them to strengthen their ties to other nations as never before. Most Americans began to believe that the country had to protect its economic, political, and social interests internationally. A surge in European conquests reinforced this new way of thinking about America’s role in the world.

US Railroads, 1890

- Economic Factors
  - The demand for natural resources in industrial countries could only be met by importing materials from undeveloped areas of the world. Important imports included rubber and petroleum.
  - Industrial countries needed access to markets in which to sell their manufactured goods.
Nationalistic Factors
• People believed that their population’s ideas and goals were superior to other people’s
• People supported expansive programs to demonstrate their superiority to foreigners

Military Factors
• Advances in technology gave European militaries incredible advantages over the native populations of conquered territories
• Foreign bases became desirable for refueling and prepositioning military units overseas

Humanitarian Factors
• Many doctors, missionaries, and others believed that technologically advanced countries had a moral duty to spread the advantages of western civilization (especially law, medicine, and religion)

“The White Man’s Burden”
“Rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansion point of view” - TR

“Take up the White Man’s burden—Send forth the best ye breed—Go bind your sons to exile To serve your captives’ need; To wait in heavy harness, On fluttered folk and wild—Your new-cught, sullen peoples, Half-devil and half-child.”

Rudyard Kipling, British Poet and Imperialist

Discussion Point: Afghanistan
• Any parallels between now and then? Any differences?

“The Brown Man’s Burden”
A response to Kipling by Henry Labouchere

“Pile on the brown man’s burden, Pile on the brown man’s burden, compel him to be free; Nor do not deem it hard Let all your manifestoes If you should earn the rancor Reek with philanthropy. Of those ye yearn to guard. And if with heathen folly The screaming of your Eagle He dares your will dispute, Will drown the victim’s sob—Then, in the name of freedom, Go on through fire and slaughter. Don’t hesitate to shoot. There’s dollars in the job. Pile on the brown man’s burden, And through the world proclaim That ye are Freedom’s agent—There’s no more paying game! And, should your own past history Straight in your teeth be thrown, Retort that independence Is good for whites alone.”

• Great Britain, France, and Russia, all with long imperialistic traditions, led the way for expansion. Germany, united in 1871, began to seize colonies.

Experience of the Monroe Doctrine
• When Spain’s colonies in the Americas began to win their independence they formed republics. The Monroe Doctrine expressed our support for those republics. In truth, the US would have been in no position to enforce it. However, the British Navy, having ruled the Atlantic, and as the new countries opened their markets to British trade as Spain never had, the British were happy to support them. Except for disrupting French designs on Mexico after the Civil War, the US never did much to enforce the Monroe Doctrine until the 20th Century.

For the first century or so of American national existence, rapid economic growth and the settlement of the West left the US with little interest in foreign lands.The Monroe Doctrine had been the main principle of foreign policy. The US had declared itself neutral in European wars and warned other nations not to interfere in the Western Hemisphere.
• There were instances, however, when Americans “looked outward.” From the 1830s to 1850s, belief in the idea of **Manifest Destiny** helped to justify its policies toward **Mexico**. The annexation of Texas, California, and other southwestern lands were early steps toward empire. In 1853 Commodore Matthew **Perry** led a task force into Tokyo Bay and forced Japan to start **trading** with the US.

**Manifest Destiny**
- From the 1830s to 1850s, belief in the idea of **Manifest Destiny** helped to justify its policies toward **Mexico**. The annexation of Texas, California, and other southwestern lands were early steps toward empire.

**Westward Expansion**
- After the Civil War, the US sent 50,000 soldiers to the border with **Mexico** to convince the **French** to abandon their colonial venture there. In 1867, Secretary of State **William Seward** secured a treaty to purchase **Alaska** from **Russia** in part to force the **British** out of the region. That same year, the US also annexed the uninhabited **Midway** Islands.

**Perry to Japan**
- Japan had been closed to all foreign trade (with limited exceptions for China and the Netherlands) for two centuries.
- Perry’s ships outgunned the entire Japanese fleet.
- The Japanese reluctantly agreed to trade with the US.
- This visit forced the Japanese to confront their weakness and rapidly modernize.

**Promoting Economic Growth**
- The overproduction of food and goods led to financial panics and frequent economic depressions.
- Workers and farmers helped to convince business and political leaders that the US needed to secure new markets abroad.

**Protecting American Security**
- The US Navy and businesses supported the building of modern steam-powered, steel-hulled ships to protect overseas trade.
- By 1900 the US had one of the most powerful navies in the world.
Preserving American Spirit

• Many Americans worried that the closing of the western frontier would deprive the US of its energy, vitality, pioneer spirit, and opportunity for renewal.

Frederick Jackson Turner’s “Frontier Thesis”

• In 1890 the US Census Bureau declared that it could no longer draw a contiguous line to mark a frontier.
• In 1893, Turner reflected on the impact that “closing of the frontier” would have on American history.
• He argued that the frontier had offered every generation a chance for civic renewal and established our cultural traits.
• “that coarseness and strength combined with accuracy and acquisitiveness; that practical inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things... that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism”
• This may have been the single most influential piece of historical writing in American history.
• People began to worry that the loss of the frontier would mean the decline of America.

Although most Americans accepted the conquest of the Native Americans as right, they did not see themselves as rulers of oppressed foreign peoples. They soon discovered, however, that foreign trade tends to invite political and military entanglements.

In the 1890s, newspapers began to print sensational stories in a successful effort to boost circulation and profits. These stories helped to reinforce a new set of assumptions about America’s role in the world.

America’s Growing Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>American Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chile, 1894</td>
<td>After two Americans sailors were killed and 37 wounded in Valparaíso, the US forced Chile to pay restitution of $75,000 to each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil, 1893</td>
<td>When a rebellion threatened Brazil’s government, President Cleveland sent naval units to Rio de Janeiro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela, 1895</td>
<td>The US failed to convince Britain to acknowledge the Monroe Doctrine, but did get Britain and Venezuela to agree to arbitration of a boundary dispute.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1895, following an economic collapse, Cuba rebelled against Spain. The government sent 150,000 troops under the command of General Valeriano Weyler, who instituted a policy of “reconcentration.” Due to poor living conditions in the guarded camps, over 200,000 died. Exiles living in the US urged intervention, but the government was not interested.
• When rebels began to attack American sugar plantations and mills, however, business owners began to pressure the government to act. Two New York newspapers (owned by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst) whipped up American public opinion in favor of the rebels.

• Power of Yellow Journalism?
  - Hearst sent illustrator Frederic Remington to Havana to cover the Cuban Revolution.
  - Remington telegrammed Hearst to tell him all was quiet in Cuba and "There will be no war."
  - Hearst responded, "Please remain. You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war."

• Early in 1898, riots erupted in Havana and President McKinley moved the battleship USS Maine to its harbor to protect Americans there. A few weeks later, newspapers published a letter stolen from the Spanish ambassador to the United States. This letter incited the president and helped to intensify anti-Spanish sentiments.

• Days after that an explosion sunk the Maine, killing more than 250 American sailors. Though later understood to have resulted from an accident, Americans immediately blamed Spain.

• What really sank the USS Maine?
  - Two leading hypotheses:
    - Spontaneous combustion in a coal bunker spread to the forward ammunition magazines
    - A mine in the harbor detonated under the ship and set off the forward ammunition magazines
  - Since an investigation in 1976, most have accepted the first hypothesis, but a 1999 investigation could not rule out either possibility.

• On the other side of the world the people of the Philippine Islands were also rebelling. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Teddy Roosevelt believed they could become a key US base and he cabled his commanders to prepare for war.

• Late in March, the president issued a list of demands to avoid war, and Spain agreed to all but one condition: independence for Cuba. On April 11, the president sent a war message to Congress and war was declared a few days later.
Date | Event
--- | ---
May 1, 1898 | Admiral Dewey launched a surprise attack on the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, Philippines, destroying it in seven hours. Only 9 Americans wounded, nearly 400 Spanish dead.
July 1, 1898 | Teddy Roosevelt led the Rough Riders in a charge up San Juan Hill near Santiago, Cuba.
July 3, 1898 | The US Navy sank every Spanish ship attempting to break out of Santiago Harbor.

Admiral Dewey and the Philippines

The most famous unit in the war was known as the Rough Riders and was led by Teddy Roosevelt, who had resigned his government position to volunteer.

The Charge at San Juan Hill

Although 2,500 Americans had died in the war, fewer than 400 died in battle. The majority died from food poisoning, diseases, and poor medical care.
The US signed the Treaty of ____________ with Spain in December 1898. Spain agreed to recognize the independence of ____________ and transferred the ____________ and ____________ to the US for a payment of _____________. The treaty was approved by the Senate in February 1899 by a margin of just one vote.

The president argued that the US had an obligation to rule over the new possessions because their inhabitants were unfit for self-rule. He also warned that European powers might try to seize them, leading to more conflict.

Filipino rebels had declared independence in January 1899, but the US ignored them. A three-year insurrection followed, killing ____________ American soldiers and wounding ____________ more. American forces killed some ____________ rebels and an estimated ____________ Filipino civilians.

US occupation required massive changes in the administration of the islands. Allegations of atrocities were made against both sides in the conflict, and many were documented. The US Army willingly employed scorched earth policies to suppress the rebellion.

The Infamous ‘Water Cure’

A detachment, marching through Leyte, found an American who had disappeared a short time before crucified, head down. His abdominal wall had been carefully opened so that his intestines might hang down in his face.

Another American prisoner, found on the same trip, had been buried in the ground with only his head projecting. His mouth had been propped open with a stick, a trail of sugar laid to it through the forest, and a handful thrown into it. Millions of ants had done the rest.

A detachment, marching through Leyte, found an American who had disappeared a short time before crucified, head down. His abdominal wall had been carefully opened so that his intestines might hang down in his face.

Another American prisoner, found on the same trip, had been buried in the ground with only his head projecting. His mouth had been propped open with a stick, a trail of sugar laid to it through the forest, and a handful thrown into it. Millions of ants had done the rest.

- Dean Conant Worcester, 1914

- Lieutenant Grover Blair, 1902
Cubans were also disappointed. Although the US did not annex their island, the president did install a military government to rule for three years. This government, led by General Leonard Wood, organized a school system, restored economic stability, and discovered a cure for yellow fever. Yet when the Cubans drafted a new constitution, the US insisted on several conditions to extend its control.

General Leonard Wood

- Veteran of the Apache War
- Personal physician to Presidents Cleveland and McKinley
- Volunteered to serve with the Rough Riders in Cuba
- Later served in the Philippines and as Army Chief of Staff
- Helped train troops in WWI

The US still has not given independence to Puerto Rico. Instead, the US granted citizenship to its inhabitants in 1917.

Annexing Hawaii

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Trade treaty renewed, Pearl Harbor leased to US Navy, white planters take control of government. A new queen, Liliuokalani, came to power and sought to reduce the power of foreigners. Pineapple planter Sanford Dole removed the queen from power, proclaimed a republic, and requested annexation by the US. Congress approved the annexation of Hawaii.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Sanford B. Dole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Queen Liliuokalani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexing Samoa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>US exchanged promise of protection for lease on the harbor at Pago Pago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Germany, Britain, and the US agree to a three-way protectorate of the islands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Britain withdrew from the arrangement, leaving Samoa to Germany and the US.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- China’s huge population became increasingly important to American trade by the late 1800s. In 1899, the Secretary of State promoted the idea that all interested powers should have equal access to China. A year later, the Boxer Rebellion erupted against foreigners and Christian Chinese. Although the rebellion failed, the US reissued its proposal for equal access.

- By 1900, the US had emerged as a genuine world power. This contributed to McKinley’s reelection that year, but a year later he was assassinated. Vice President Teddy Roosevelt assumed the office.

- The recent war had highlighted the need for a shorter route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. A canal across the Isthmus of Panama would be an ideal solution. A French company had tried and failed to accomplish the feat but offered to sell its rights to the US for $40 million.

- Congress agreed but required the president to negotiate a treaty with Colombia, which controlled the land. The negotiations went nowhere, and the president quietly encouraged a Panamanian revolution.

- The revolt took place in November 1903 with US warships present for support. The US immediately recognized an independent Panama and concluded a treaty for permanent control of a 10-mile wide strip of territory in exchange for $10 million. Construction began the next year and concluded in 1914 ahead of schedule and under budget.

- Although most Americans supported the president’s actions in the matter, it left a legacy of ill will among Latin Americans. Congress voted to pay an additional $25 million to Columbia in 1921.

- Congress agreed but required the president to negotiate a treaty with Colombia, which controlled the land. The negotiations went nowhere, and the president quietly encouraged a Panamanian revolution.

- Although most Americans supported the president’s actions in the matter, it left a legacy of ill will among Latin Americans. Congress voted to pay an additional $25 million to Columbia in 1921.

- The recent war had highlighted the need for a shorter route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. A canal across the Isthmus of Panama would be an ideal solution. A French company had tried and failed to accomplish the feat but offered to sell its rights to the US for $40 million.
Roosevelt Corollary
• The US denied any territorial ambitions (no intent to expand territory)
• The US expressed a desire for peace with its hemispheric neighbors
• The US desired its neighbors to be stable, orderly, and prosperous
• If those neighbors did anything harmful to US interests or seemed to be inviting intervention from other countries, the US would intervene.

The first test of the Roosevelt Corollary concerned the island republic of Santo Domingo, where US bankers ultimately took over the country’s finances and paid its European debt. Under Roosevelt, US intervention in Latin America became common, angering many Latin Americans and displeasing many in Congress. Roosevelt’s single-handed foreign policies seemed to strengthen the President’s powers while weakening Congress.

In Asia, Roosevelt’s chief concern was preserving an open door to trade with China. However, growing conflicts between Japan and Russia threatened Asian security. These conflicts led to a war in 1904 and in which Japan did better.

In 1905 Roosevelt mediated a peace agreement to end the war, as a result of which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Roosevelt’s successors continued to play an active role in foreign affairs, but each brought his own unique methods.

Japan had won a war against China just ten years earlier, prompting Roosevelt to worry about its growing strength. He was also concerned about problems resulting from discrimination against Japanese immigrants in California.

William Howard Taft, elected in 1908, was not as aggressive as Roosevelt. A distinguished lawyer from Ohio, he had served as Roosevelt’s Secretary of War and headed the government of the Philippines. His main foreign policy goals were to maintain the open door to Asia and preserve stability in Latin America.

Taft preferred substituting “dollars” for “bullets” by increasing investment in foreign economies. This approach, called Dollar Diplomacy, did not work as well as hoped. The results were not always profitable, and both anti-colonialism abroad and anti-imperialism at home checked further expansion of US power overseas.
Woodrow Wilson, elected in 1912, intervened in Mexico and generated even more anti-American feeling in Latin America. After a longtime dictator resigned, a revolution led by General Victoriano Huerta overthrew the new president. Americans had invested more than $1 billion in the country, but Wilson decided to apply moral and legalistic standards to foreign policy decisions.

Wilson blocked weapons shipments to the Mexican government, occupied the city of Veracruz in 1914, and in 1916 sent more than 5,000 troops under General John J. Pershing into Mexico to pursue the bandit Pancho Villa. Wilson’s interference had not worked well and soured relations between the countries for years.

Wilson also sent troops to occupy Haiti from 1915 until 1934. He also sent marines to occupy the Dominican Republic from 1916 until 1924.

Until the annexation of the Philippines in 1898, most Americans supported overseas involvement. The occupation quickly raised voices wary of imperialism. In November, opponents of US policy established the Anti-Imperialist League. This group included Democratic politician William Jennings Bryan and novelist Mark Twain. They argued that expansionist behavior was a rejection of American traditions and ideals of liberty for all.

Supporters of US policy argued that the people in occupied territories were not ready for democracy and that the US would prepare them for self-government.

Many Americans of this period believed that people of Anglo-Saxon heritage were superior to other races. Some argued that this belief fostered imperialism. Others used racist reasoning to oppose imperialism because they did not want the US to absorb more people of different races.

Finally, some raised economic objections to expansionist policies. Maintaining the necessary armed forces required more taxation, debt, and possibly even compulsory military service.
• Samuel Gompers also argued that laborers coming from annexed territories would compete with American workers for jobs, driving down wages. Industrialists worried that goods produced abroad could be imported without customs duties, hurting many industries.

Samuel Gompers
- Founder and long-time president of the American Federation of Labor
- Steered his unions in a less radical direction than others

• Despite these arguments, imperialism maintained a powerful hold on the American imagination. Some saw it as a way to keep Americans from losing their competitive edge. It offered a new kind of "frontier", for American explorers and pioneers.

• The growth and popularity of youth scouting programs during this period showed that many Americans shared this mentality. Sir Robert Baden-Powell, a British army officer famous for his exploits in South Africa, founded the Boy Scout movement. This movement came to the US in 1910 and soon became immensely popular; two years later Juliette Low founded the American Girl Scouts.

Robert Baden-Powell and Juliette Low

• Appeal of Scouting Programs
- Social reformers in both the United States and Britain were increasingly concerned about what they dubbed the "Boy Problem". Boys growing up in modern cities, with all of their abundant problems, were not expected to be as healthy, strong, patriotic, and productive as previous generations had been.
- Numerous organizations were started to train boys in the desired virtues and skills.
- Girls were not perceived to be as susceptible to the corrupting influences of modern life as boys, but organizations for them soon followed.

• In December 1907, Roosevelt sent part of the US Navy, known as the "Great White Fleet" on a cruise around the world. This trip demonstrated the nation's impressive naval power and made a big impression everywhere it sailed.

• The US soon discovered that international involvements frequently took on a life of their own. In the Caribbean and Central America, for example, the US often had to defend governments that were unpopular with local inhabitants. Even before the Panama Canal was completed in 1914, people in that country began to complain that they suffered from discrimination.
On the other hand, because the US was quickly becoming so powerful, other countries began to turn to the US for help. Both welcomed and rejected, the US would spend the rest of the century trying to decide the best way to reconcile its growing power and national interests with its relationships with other nations.