The end of the 19th century was marked by dramatic global integration. As the countries of the Americas emerged into this new global reality, they were exposed to the benefits and drawbacks of more closely linked national economic and foreign policies. To the profit of expanded trade had to be added the costs and dangers of war and expansion. This was perhaps most evident when the global calamity of the First World War impacted countries throughout the region, even those determined to stay out of it. Of course, the roots of the Americas' emergence into global affairs lay in the mid-century and it is here that we begin.

During the second half of the 19th century, the United States was emerging from a period of bitter civil war and fitful reconstruction into a period of rapid economic expansion. Industries such as railroads, mining, iron and coal production made great advances and in the process created great fortunes. Such economic growth requires ever expanding supplies of resources and ready markets for the finished products. To this end, ambitious settlers from the United States began to look to territory beyond the continental United States. Opposition to the notion of territorial expansion also grew during this period forcing the United States to seriously consider the status and role of the republic in the community of nations.

The status of the United States' northern neighbor also underwent a drastic change from the mid-century. From 1867, the Dominion of Canada was independent in all matters domestic. Foreign policy, however, was still the purview of the United Kingdom. At the same time, Canada was undergoing her own version of territorial and economic expansion that would challenge her dependence on the United Kingdom. While in the United States the debate was whether or not to become an imperial power, in Canada it revolved around whether or not to remain an imperial dependent. The strains of the First World War and Canada's response would help bring some resolution to the question.

South of the United States the countries of South and Central America were likewise caught between the economic and territorial expansion of the United States and Europe and their own ambitions. The internationalization of trade and the increased availability of credit sparked immigration and economic growth in South America, changing both domestic social and economic structures as well as the place of these countries in the global economy. Central American and Caribbean states labored under challenging economic structures and their strategic position in relation to the United States.

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- analyze the political, economic, social and ideological reasons for US expansion in the region

**Discussion point**

US president Harry Truman once said that the "responsibility of the great states is to serve and not to dominate the world."

To what extent do powerful countries have an obligation to ensure the stability of the global community? Do they have an economic obligation to countries that are less well-off? To what extent did the powerful countries of the world fulfill any such obligation in the years 1870–1929?
The United States: setting the stage

The most deadly war in US history came to an end in the spring of 1865. By the time General Robert Lee had surrendered the army of northern Virginia to General Grant and the remaining Confederate armies had laid down their arms, over 620,000 citizens of the United States had died. What lay ahead was the difficult process of Reconstruction. How to bring the secessionist southern states back into the union in a meaningful and productive way? At the same time, the northern economy had to adjust to a decline in industrial demand that would accompany the peace. Banking, railways, and other industrial interests had all expanded during the war. In an effort to maintain this growth, government land grants, subsidies and loans flowed to the private sector, most notably to the railway industry. The inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant in 1869 ushered in an aggressive period of Reconstruction that would sweep over the southern United States. Industrial interests became political interests and accusations of political corruption were common.

The 1870s were also a period of economic dislocation and depression. The rapid industrial expansion of the war years and the early Reconstruction period had caused an expansion of the money supply inducing the Grant administration into a restrictive monetary policy as a countermeasure. When Jay Cooke & Company, an important Philadelphia banking firm, collapsed in September 1873 the subsequent panic lead to a cascade of bank failures, plunging the United States into what became known as the Long Depression. Grant's monetary policy exacerbated matters, restricting access to capital that could stimulate the stagnating economy. Unemployment and low wages spread across the country and with it labor strife culminating in the Great Railway Strikes of 1877 that further paralyzed commerce, revealing deep class divisions in US society.

In 1879, the United States emerged from the Long Depression into yet another period of rapid and immense economic expansion. As capital became more available, industrial enterprises consumed natural and human resources with a voracious appetite. A new wave of immigration brought labor from Southern Europe and Asia to feed this appetite. New supplies of coal, iron, and oil were discovered.
and exploited. Electricity powered more and more of the country. The efficiency of agriculture, mining, textile manufacture, and steel production dramatically improved, creating new wealth across the country. Infrastructure networks multiplied throughout the land led by another wave of railway construction moving raw materials, finished goods and even consumers across all regions of the United States. New business models and financial vehicles accelerated the already dizzying pace of expansion. Terms like vertical and horizontal integration began to appear and monopolies, trusts and corporations became powerful archetypes of business organization. Money, legislation, and land from state and federal governments lubricated the entire process and iconic businessmen such as Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie, and Mellon arose as commanding figures in American society.

Such expansion must necessarily be accompanied by some dislocation. Rapid urbanization created poor living conditions in areas of many US cities. Workers toiled under poor working conditions, long hours, low wages and no job security. In response, workers began to organize into unions large and small, local and national. With this organization came conflict with those whose profits depended on the status quo. Strikes, demonstrations and riots dotted this period in all major industries from mining, to railways to the steel industry. New political alternatives such as socialism, Marxism and anarchism surfaced in response to worker exploitation.

It is against this backdrop of rapid economic and social change that the United States embarked on an increasingly expansionist foreign policy both within the Americas and around the world. Although this expansion coincided with another wave of European imperialism and shared many motives and elements with it, it was also distinct in its manifestation. It is to this expansion that we now turn.

Discussion point
Canada and Latin American countries were developing resource-based economies during this period. How did the Long Depression affect this development? How did these effects compare with those in the United States?

Ideological reasons for US expansion

Monroe Doctrine
By the 1820s, the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas had been replaced by nascent, and largely unstable independent states—states, the legitimacy of which, the United States unilaterally recognized in 1822. The Monroe Doctrine, however, was a product of the situation in Europe as much as it was reflective of the situation in Latin America. In the years following the Congress of Vienna, which rebuilt Europe following the Napoleonic Wars, Russia emerged as a dominant continental force, a European power with definite interests on the North American continent. Ideologically, much of the system set up at Vienna and after was designed to disempower nationalist independence movements of the very kind that were so recently triumphant in Latin America. In such a situation it was easy to conceive of situations in which European powers might feel the need to intervene in the western hemisphere.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidents of the United States, 1880–1929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>William McKinley</strong> (Republican) 1897–1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thomas Woodrow Wilson</strong> (Democrat) 1913–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warren G. Harding</strong> (Republican) 1921–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Herbert Hoover</strong> (Republican) 1929–33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With this in mind, President Monroe with his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, sent a note to Congress outlining what would later become known as the Monroe Doctrine. This doctrine would raise its head throughout the rest of the century, in Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba. Early in the 20th century, President Theodore Roosevelt would expand on the doctrine in what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary. He added to the essentially defensive nature of Monroe’s original idea the view that the United States had the right to intervene to manage the independent states of the western hemisphere.

**Manifest destiny in the post-Reconstruction period**

First coined in the 1840s as a justification for the annexation of Texas, “Manifest Destiny” came to mean different things to different people throughout the rest of the 19th Century. At its simplest it was the belief that it was the inevitable mission of the United States to expand beyond its 1840s boundaries and to eventually stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The popularizer of the phrase, John L. Sullivan, took as its evidence the population growth to that point (1845) and used terms like “natural law” and “natural flow of events” and “the spontaneous working of principles.” It fit well with other emerging, often equally as malleable ideas, such as American Exceptionalism and Continentalism. With such a broad concept it is not hard to understand that it could be molded to any number of specific worldviews—geographic, racial, economic, religious, practical, or social Darwinian. Although the convulsions of the civil war meant that notions of Manifest Destiny were consumed with more pressing internal issues, it would again emerge in the post-Reconstruction period when the US began again to look beyond its borders.

**Expansion as moral duty**

We can see two broad impulses to US expansion that developed in the last half of the 19th century. The first has sometimes been broadly characterized as a moral justification and motive for an expanded hegemony of the United States. From 1859, this argument drew increasing energy from the spread of Darwin’s powerful ideas. Although Charles Darwin had really only discussed the evolution by means of natural selection of animals in his *Origin of Species* (1859), it did not take long for thinkers from all over Europe and North America to apply this concept to all manner of social constructions, from business to human society, in which the United States saw itself taking a leadership role. Emblematic of the growing popularity of a Darwinian approach to social issues was the growing influence of the British philosopher Herbert Spencer. Spencer, who coined the phrase “survival of the fittest”, conceived of society as evolving from a state of undifferentiated homogeneity to one of highly differentiated heterogeneity as exemplified in the modern industrial state driven by relatively unfettered individualism. This became a notion popular with the growing class of US industrialists who sponsored Spencer’s tour of the United States in 1882. Spencer
seemed to hold out a philosophical if not scientific justification for
the continued growth of the United States' industrial economy and
therefore the United States itself.

The ideas of Spencer and Darwin and later Francis Galton—the
father of the eugenics movement—spread around the world.
As Jürgen Buchenau has pointed out, Latin American leaders who
read these philosophers developed a view of society as evolving
from simple to complex, following the European model. Buchenau
goes on to argue that this is reflected in the massive amounts of
European migration to Latin America at the end of the 19th
century. This migration was encouraged by these leaders to increase
the influence of European values and institutions on their
"evolving" countries.

In Canada, one of Spencer's chief advocates was historian and
journalist Goldwin Smith. Spencer's ideas led Smith to the conclusion
that the new country of Canada was not economically developed
enough to be viable in the context of the late 19th century. To Smith
the only logical solution was to join Canada and the United States.

The ideas of Spencer and Darwin found a supporter in the writings of
US historian John Fiske. Fiske's writings and lectures in the 1880s
emphasized the evolutionary superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race as
evidenced in its population growth, geographic influence and
economic strength. He envisioned a day when the world would
resemble the United States in institutions, language and religion.
Although he stopped short of calling for anything like a crusade of
annexation and military expansion, he certainly helped develop an
intellectual foundation for US expansion as "natural."

Fiske's position was given a more racial and religious tone by the
clergyman Josiah Strong. In his book *Our Country: Its Possible Future and
Its Present Crisis* he posited the Anglo-Saxon race, especially as it had
developed in the United States, as destined to dominate the globe. In
many ways he saw such domination by what he believed to be a
superior race as a duty. According to Strong, the combination of liberal
democracy and Christianity as expressed in the United States was the
chief means by which the world would progress and the vehicle of this
progress was to be imperialist expansion—US expansion.

John Burgess, a political scientist from Columbia University argued in
*Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law* (1890) that it was
the Teutonic races that had the greatest innate ability to create the
modern nation-state and those who resisted the progress toward
such states were justly subjugated. Among the most notable of
Burgess's students was one who would have the power to act directly
on the foreign policy implications of Burgess's ideas—Theodore
Roosevelt.

Of course these sentiments were not confined to the United States.
European powers were busy parceling out portions of Africa and other
territories throughout this period and they too looked to racist theories
for justification. Notions of the superiority of the "white races" and its
attendant responsibilities appear in the arguments of German, French
and British imperialists throughout this period. Perhaps one of the

Discussion point

How "Christian" was the United States at the end of the 19th century?
What other religious traditions existed in the US during this period?

Discussion point

How valid is the concept of "race"?
Does it have a basis in biology? How has the term "race" been used throughout
the 19th and 20th centuries? How is the term "race" used in society today?
most famous of these justifications came not in a scholarly work, but rather a popular poem by Rudyard Kipling that lent its title to many a rationalization for imperial expansion at the time. Although published in 1899 and directed at the Philippines annexation debate, “The White Man’s Burden” expressed what many had been arguing in various forms for the previous two decades.

Expansion as practical necessity

While vague notions of duty, destiny and race may have inspired the imperial visions of some in the United States, others were more practical in their outlook. This realist approach to US expansion took as its starting point the rapid population, economic, and geographic expansion of the United States in the last half of the century and then looked to what it would take to protect this and ensure further growth. Such concerns naturally revolved around military and economic might.

Foremost among these “realists” was Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan was the president of the United States Naval War College whose lectures, magazine articles and books such as *Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660–1783* (1890), popularized the thesis that it was maritime trade and the tools of this trade, ships both merchant and military, that brought national greatness. To Mahan, it further meant secure supplies of coal for these ships be readily available at ports around the world. It also meant control of any advantageous waterways, natural and man-made. In this he was primarily looking to any future canal cutting across the Isthmus of Panama and islands that could potentially protect the approaches to this future waterway. Mahon’s thesis found avid readers around the world, perhaps most notably in Berlin. His book was a major influence on Kaiser Wilhelm’s decision to embark on a major naval building program that would have such far-reaching consequences. Closer to home his work also found an audience in the likes of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge.

**Activity**

Social Darwinism in action

So influential were the ideas of Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton that many of their ideas found their way into legislation and the press throughout the Americas. Examples included eugenics legislation in Canada and immigration policies throughout the region. Conduct some research and complete the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Social Darwinian idea</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Economic reasons for expansion

There was a growing economic imperative to national expansion at the end of the 19th century. But even those who saw in expansion a more divine or moral mission, men such as the Protestant clergyman and author Josiah Strong, saw the expansion of the Anglo-Saxon race as inextricably linked to the expansion of its institutions and economic system.

We have already discussed the context of domestic economic expansion in the 1880s. The leaders of this expansion also sought markets beyond North America. Despite the fact that a great deal of European capital was still flowing into the United States, US oil and
steel companies sought new markets and resources around the globe, and in so doing came into competition with other economic powers such as the Great Britain and Germany. Other US companies such as DuPont, Colt and Singer also explored foreign markets with their manufactured goods. The depression that hit the world after 1873 meant that businesses, regardless of nationality, had to work that much harder to maintain profits. The move to the gold standard by most industrializing powers by the 1870s also placed downward pressure on prices until new gold deposits were discovered at the end of the century. On the other hand, the convertibility that the gold standard provided greased the wheels of international trade by making most currencies easily exchangeable through convertibility into gold. Although the United States had a massive domestic market, importing far less than it consumed domestically, there was a growing sense that by the 1890s, the United States economy was destined to produce more than could be consumed by existing markets, domestic and foreign, and thus these markets had to expand.

Another depression gripped the United States in 1893, bringing with it a sense of social and economic dislocation the solution to which seemed to some the expansion of the United States itself. The Historian Richard Hofstadter contends that the depression affected the country like never before. The depression was radicalizing the working class and this seemed to pose a dangerous threat to what the middle class perceived as the established economic order. Having stretched the republic from sea to sea, there appeared no obvious opportunities to funnel this discontent into North American expansion, as had been the case in the past. Despite the depression, the flow of immigrants continued unabated, as did the growth of urban centers. To Hofstadter, one of the prime expressions of this mood was national self-assertion and aggression.

**Political reasons for expansion**

In some cases of US foreign expansion in the second half of the 19th century, policy and official action seemed hard-pressed to keep pace with the actions of its citizens and officials abroad. In the case of the Samoan Islands, US merchant ships had used the island increasingly as a coaling station for Pacific trade, a trade that had quickened since the transcontinental railroad opened up the Pacific coast to the goods of the US interior. The strategic importance of the islands was not lost on the US navy, which contemplated a naval base at Pago Pago in the 1870s. Despite Congress’s rejection of a formal treaty with Samoa at that time, US commercial interests continued and by the end of the decade a treaty established a formal relationship between the Samoans and the United States. Britain and Germany also recognizing the importance of the islands were not
about to allow the US a free hand and after some tense encounters agreed to a three-way protectorate over the islands. The threat posed by Germany and Britain elicited a great deal of posturing and bellicose rhetoric from politicians and newspapers across the country. By 1899, this arrangement became a two-way split of the islands between Germany and the United States.

Just as the Samoan Islands were an important mid-ocean link between the United States and the South Pacific, the Hawaiian Islands grew into an important way station in the growing China trade. Missionaries, merchants, and sailors settled in the islands throughout the mid century. As the non-native population increased, stories of the islands' commercial potential reached the United States and sugar plantations soon followed providing some evidence for Strong's claim in 1885 that "commerce follows the missionary." And then followed the military. To the growing US navy, Pearl Harbor in the islands seemed to provide an easily defended natural harbor from which it could protect US trade interests.

Hawaii's sugar trade with the United States provided at once a reason and a method by which the US could exert more influence on the islands. In 1875, the United States dropped all tariffs on Hawaiian sugar and guaranteed against any third party influence in its affairs, thus making the Hawaiian Islands a protectorate of the US in all but name. By 1887, the US navy had the use of Pearl Harbor.

The US commercial presence in the islands grew steadily. Fruit and sugar plantations made up the bulk of these enterprises with the United States as their sole destination. When a representative from Ohio named William McKinley introduced a tariff bill that was passed into law in 1890, Hawaiian sugar interests fell through the cracks. While the McKinley Tariff as it became known drastically increased the tariffs on foreign-produced goods it also paid subsidies to US sugar producers. All at once Hawaiian sugar was subject to the tariffs, but ineligible for the subsidy.

Fearing economic ruin, US citizens in the islands took matters into their own hands and overthrew the young Hawaiian queen Liliuokalani early in 1893. Those involved immediately petitioned

Activity

To expand or not

For each of the following groups, write a paragraph taking and defending a position on the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands in 1893.

• Josiah Strong
• Alfred Mahan
• A San Francisco merchant
• A US naval officer
• A US clergyman
• The British Ambassador to the United States
• A US sugar producer

Discussion point

What is a protectorate?

How does it differ from a colony?
For the protectorate?
For the protecting country?
What were the benefits of this situation for the Hawaiians?
What were the benefits for the United States?
the United States government for annexation—to bring them within
the McKinley Tariff wall. The request caught the government and the
voting public in the US by surprise. Now they had to confront the
reality of the theories of Strong, Burgess, Fiske and Mahan. Did the
US really want to be an imperial power?

The immediate answer to this question was ... not right now. The
new president, Cleveland, may have been moderately in favor of
annexation; he was enough of a politician to understand that the
people of the United States and the politicians that represented them,
and upon whom he would depend to pass legislation, were split on
the issue. He sent a fact-finding mission to the islands and found that
the so-called “revolution” was engineered by US business interests in
the islands and had little native support. Nevertheless, the provisional
government put in place would not be dissuaded and Cleveland was
in the unenviable position of having to depose the revolutionaries
with force or to find some sort of intermediate status for Hawaii. He
chose the latter. It proved only a temporary reprieve for the anti-
annexationists. By the time William McKinley had taken office as
President of the United States in 1897 the global context had changed
considerably and by joint resolution of Congress the US annexed
Hawaii in 1898.

Venezuela

The Monroe Doctrine would again emerge as a vital US policy in the
mid 1890s when a boundary dispute re-erupted between Great
Britain and Venezuela. Gold had been discovered in the border
region between Venezuela and British Guiana and this raised the
stakes considerably. The relative merits of the gold standard and the
free coinage of silver had been building as an important issue, both
with politicians and the public for some years. Cleveland and other
supporters of the gold standard saw in this discovery a possible
source of new gold that could take out some of the fight of the free
silver agitators.

Cleveland, on the whole a conservative when it came to matters of
foreign policy, was torn between those in Congress, state
legislatures and the press who called for a strong response to what
was perceived as high-handed British interference in the US sphere
of influence and his own beliefs on foreign policy. After studying
the somewhat limited information available to him, Cleveland came
to the conclusion that the former was indeed the case and
advocated for arbitration of the dispute by a third party sending a
note saying as much to the British Foreign Ministry. In a letter
drafted by his aggressive Secretary of State, Richard Olney,
Cleveland reasserted the Monroe Doctrine as he interpreted it
applying to the Venezuelan situation. The note also made veiled
threats of more aggressive action should the British not heed the US
demand for arbitration. The reply from Lord Salisbury was
straightforward. Britain would not submit the matter to arbitration
and the Monroe Doctrine did not apply nor was it a recognized
element of international law.
When Cleveland’s response to the British rebuff came before Congress in December 1895, its bellicose tone and language startled the British and energized jingoists in Congress and the press. After a period of negotiation, the US and Britain agreed on an arbitration treaty and eventually the terms of the arbitration itself. On the surface, the aggressive sabre-rattling of Cleveland and Olney seemed to bear fruit. He had reclaimed for himself and the Democratic Party the status of defender of US interests from their Republican Party critics such as Theodore Roosevelt. Further, the Monroe Doctrine seemed to be alive and well as the century drew to a close.

Activity

The gold standard
Research the issue of the gold standard at the end of the 19th century.

1 How was coinage minted in the United States prior to the 1890s?

2 Describe how the gold standard worked in the international economic system of the 1890s.

3 Which countries in the world benefited from the gold standard? Which counties were put at a disadvantage by the gold standard? Why was this?

4 What are the advantages and disadvantages of a country adopting the gold standard as a basis for its monetary system?

5 How was this issue resolved in the United States?

Read the following excerpt from a speech by William Jennings Bryan delivered in 1896. Bryan was the Democratic presidential nominee and a supporter of the free coinage of silver.

We say to you that you have made the definition of a business man too limited in its application. The man who is employed for wages is as much a business man as his employer; the attorney in a country town is as much a business man as the corporation counsel in a great metropolis; the merchant at the cross-roads store is as much a business man as the merchant of New York; the farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day—who begins in the spring and toils all summer—and who by the application of brain and muscle to the natural resources of the country creates wealth, is as much a business man as the man who goes upon the board of trade and bets upon the price of grain; the miners who go down a thousand feet into the earth, or climb two thousand feet upon the cliffs, and bring forth from their hiding places the precious metals to be poured into the channels of trade are as much business men as the few financial magnates who, in a back room, corner the money of the world. We come to speak for this broader class of business men.

It is the issue of 1776 over again. Our ancestors, when but three millions in number, had the courage to declare their political independence of every other nation; shall we, their descendants, when we have grown to seventy millions, declare that we are less independent than our forefathers? No, my friends, that will never be the verdict of our people. Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bimetallism is good, but that we cannot have it until other nations help us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has it, we will restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States has it. If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”

Questions

1 Bryan supports bimetallism as being advantageous to the majority of US workers. To what degree do you agree with him? How does the gold standard help or hurt the working classes?

2 What does this speech tell us about political divisions in the United States at the turn of the century?

3 Draft a response to Bryan from the perspective of a supporter of the gold standard.
To war?

War over the Venezuelan boundary dispute seemed a definite possibility in December 1895. Evaluate the case for and against war in both Great Britain and the United States. To what degree do you think that war was a real possibility throughout this crisis?

The Venezuelan Response

In groups, brainstorm possible responses of the Venezuelan government to the British and US positions on the border dispute. Discuss possible outcomes for each response. Use the following chart to help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Possible US reaction</th>
<th>Possible British reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Spanish–American War

The Spanish–American War started as a revolution by Cuban nationalists on behalf of a population oppressed by a colonial power. Indeed it was not the first time the Cubans had tried to shake off their Spanish overlords. In the 1870s, Cuban revolutionaries had waged a ten-year struggle for independence. Although there was considerable sympathy in the United States for the plight of the revolutionaries, and not a small amount of provocation from Spain, the US government remained neutral.

In 1895, the Cubans rose up against the Spanish colonial administration, which seemed just as determined to retain the island colony as they had been two decades earlier. The most influential Cuban nationalist in 1895 was the poet and writer José Martí. Martí called for an insurrection and in February of that year Cuban guerillas began attacking government installations and troops. In response, General Valeriano Weyler led some 150,000 Spanish troops across the Atlantic to quell the rising. What ensued was a war, the ferocity of which startled many. As in many such wars, civilians bore much of the suffering. In order to deprive the guerillas of food and support, Weyler ordered rural populations into camps without adequate food or sanitation and in which thousands died.

The United States took a keen interest in this war for a number of reasons. The US had invested some $50 million in Cuba and the revolution was threatening this investment and damaging business interests. But this was not enough to explain the growing popular outrage at the Spanish actions in Cuba. By 1895, there were an
estimated 20,000 Cubans living in the United States and a number of these organized a committee to agitate in favor of independence, lobby the American government to recognize the revolutionary government organized by the rebels and to raise funds to fight the war. Centered in New York, this committee attempted to gain the support of organized labor, springing from the support of the cigar-makers union. The committee also fed sensational news stories to newspapers across the country. The infamous “Yellow Press” of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer capitalized on these stories eventually sending their own correspondents to supply the lurid copy. Mass meetings and demonstrations were held in major cities such as Chicago, New York, Kansas City and Philadelphia. When the issue reached the floor of Congress, many of the ideological arguments for expansion were again voiced. Some argued that a free Cuba would mean expanded markets for US business. Others invoked the Monroe Doctrine in support of the rebels. A friendly Cuba could help the United States navy protect the eastern approaches to the much-heralded canal to be cut across the Isthmus of Panama in the same way that Hawaii could protect its western approaches. Despite this initial furor, interest in the plight of the revolutionaries did not hold the popular US imagination for long and President Cleveland steadfastly refused to intervene. Even during the 1896 election campaign, there was little talk of Cuba. The war, however, was hurting some American interests more than others. By 1897, the revolution in Cuba had significantly affected the sugar market in the United States. Likewise, tobacco imports from the embattled island were shrinking, driving prices higher.

Activity
The Yellow Press

In groups of three, choose a current event in your country that has two or more clearly identifiable and opposing positions. One of you write a newspaper article or draw a cartoon keeping as strictly as possible to the established facts of the event. The other two of you write a newspaper article or draw a political cartoon on that event in the style of the Yellow Press, each taking an opposing point of view. There are examples from the Spanish–American War at the PBS site on its series “The Crucible of Empire” (http://www.pbs.org/crucible/frames/_journalism.html).

Use the following chart to help:

|--------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|----------|-----------|

Discussion questions:
1. How much did the three articles/cartoons differ from each other? Were there facts/ideas that appeared in all three accounts?
2. Analyze the language or symbols used in each of the accounts. To what extent are these used to evoke emotion or appeal to reason?
3. How is the choice of audience important to the writing/drawing of these articles/cartoons?
4. What is the value and limitation for the historian of using Yellow Press articles in understanding the past?
The US diplomatic response

President McKinley, who succeeded Cleveland, was more willing to confront the Spanish diplomatically over their conduct in the war than Cleveland had been, but stopped short of advocating US intervention. Nevertheless, he was torn by conflicting domestic sentiments about the war. The business lobby, on the whole, disliked the idea of war while some politicians of both parties advocated more aggressive action. Much of the public saw intervention in some way, shape or form as a moral duty while diplomats worried about the response of European powers to any sort of US involvement. McKinley attempted to strike a middle ground in his inaugural address by promising a foreign policy that was “firm and dignified ... just, impartial and ever watchful of our national honor ...” At the same time this foreign policy “want[ed] no wars of conquest.” His inaugural address went on to warn against the “temptation of territorial aggression.” The Yellow Press, nonetheless, continued to be filled with stories of Spanish cruelty in Cuba. McKinley, again trying to walk a middle line, put the Spanish government on notice that its conduct in Spain was unacceptable and that if it did not remedy the situation the United States would take further action. This threat seemed to have the desired result. The Spanish government recalled General Weyler and proposed some limited reforms. By the end of 1897, the Cuban insurrection again appeared to recede from the public eye in America.

“Ever watchful of our national honor” took on a more immediate meaning in early 1898. The Yellow Press, in this case the New York Journal, printed a letter that had been leaked from the Spanish ambassador in Washington, Dupuy de Lôme, to the Spanish government in Madrid in which he derides McKinley as a weak and...
pandering politician. Although his political opponents in the United States made the same accusations, when they came from a foreign country they took on the robes of a national insult. Congress again took up the cause, dormant for some time, of recognition of the revolutionary government. A week later, a more serious and deadly blow to "national honor" occurred when the USS Maine, a US battleship, exploded in Havana harbor killing 260 of her crew.

McKinley’s response was initially measured. An inquiry was ordered into the causes of the explosion. The inquiry concluded that it had been an underwater mine that had touched off explosions in the ship’s magazines. Congress allocated $50 million to the looming war and the press and the public increasingly called for aggressive action against Spain. Although still wary of war, McKinley went to Congress on April 11 for the authority to use force against the Spanish. The Teller Amendment, one of the resolutions that Congress passed authorizing the war, stated that the United States had no intention of annexing Cuba.

The United States invades the Philippines

On April 19, Congress authorized the use of force against the Spanish. Although Spain’s colonial holdings included Guam, Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines, the fighting was largely contained to Cuba and the Philippines. The United States navy was well-prepared for the war. It was a modern fighting force that had developed a strategic plan should war with Spain come. Once the war broke, it put this plan into action. Commodore George Dewey assembled a squadron of seven ships of the American Asiatic Squadron in Hong Kong in February and with this force set out for Manila Bay in the Philippines in late April.

The Spanish naval force defending the islands consisted of older ships that were outgunned and out-armored by the US force, although the Spanish commander, Admiral Montojo, had hoped that shore batteries could support his ships in defending the islands against a US naval attack. The Spanish preparations were still underway when Dewey’s squadron arrived in the Philippines on April 30. After seeking out Montojo’s fleet, the United States attacked at dawn on May 1. After an hour and a half of action, the Spanish force was destroyed. But what to do now? Dewey had enough marines to hold the naval yards in Manila Bay, but not to wrest the city, much less the islands, from the Spanish troops stationed there. The US navy held the waters around the islands and waited for a landing force to arrive, which it had by the end of the summer and by August 13 the Philippines were in US hands. The first major success of the war, the Battle of Manila Bay, had been won half the globe away from the fight to free Cuba.

The United States army was not the modern fighting force that the United States navy was in 1898. At the outbreak of the war, the regular army consisted of 28,000 soldiers and officers spread out across the continent. State militias were estimated to have something under 115,000 additional men, although the federal government’s authority to press them into overseas service was debatable. Volunteers would be needed. In this instance, the war fever that had

Discussion point

What did McKinley mean by “national honor?” What type of affront to this honor do you think would provoke a war? What do you think would rouse your country to war?

Activity

President McKinley and war fever

There has been considerable historic debate on the forces that led President McKinley to war with Spain in 1898. Some historians have argued that it was the Yellow Press that incited the public to pressure the government to take action. Others have argued that it was the business lobby that influenced the president. Analyze the arguments of historians such as:

- Walter Lefeber
- Julius Pratt
- Howard Zinn
- Robert C. Hilderbrand
- John Dobson
gripped the country in the preceding months paid dividends. Citizens of the United States responded to the president’s call for 125,000 volunteers enthusiastically. It was, however, one thing to call for 125,000 volunteers and quite another one to clothe, arm, equip, train and transport that many men.

These problems were soon obvious. As regulars and volunteers assembled in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia for the anticipated invasion of Cuba, it became evident that the army was not prepared. The camps were rife with disease. Despite the fact that they were going to fight in a tropical climate, the majority of the men were issued with the traditional dark woolen uniforms. While the regular troops were issued with modern repeating rifles, much of the volunteer force had to make do with the Springfield single-shot “Trapdoor” rifle.

Confusion also characterized the early command decisions made by the army. Lacking a coherent strategic plan prior to the Congressional resolutions, the army high command, led by General Nelson Miles, debated how to proceed and where to attack. Havana was considered and then rejected, as the bulk of the Spanish force was stationed there. Eventually, it was decided to launch an attack from the Florida camp, in Tampa, on Santiago. The regular army units were in Tampa as was the volunteer cavalry force that became known as the Rough Riders led by its second in command, Theodore Roosevelt. The Rough Riders, the regular army units and the state militia that embarked at Tampa on June 6 for the invasion numbered some 17,000 men and were led by General William Shafter. This force would face about 125,000 Spanish troops. Spain’s land forces were augmented by a squadron of obsolete ships under the command of Admiral Cervera that had managed to elude the US fleet and slip into Santiago Harbor, only to be subsequently trapped.

After a chaotic landing in Cuba, the US forces moved toward Santiago. En route they fought the battles of El Caney and San Juan Hill, defeating the Spanish forces and by early July found themselves in front of Santiago, exhausted and lacking supplies. Within days the Spanish fleet attempted to break through the US naval blockade and was destroyed, leading the Spanish commander to negotiate the surrender of his forces defending Santiago. Meanwhile, a force of 18,000 US soldiers embarked for Puerto Rico, another Spanish Caribbean possession defended by 9,000 Spanish soldiers. After a series of battles in early August, the Puerto Rican campaign was cut short by an armistice signed by Spanish and US officials on August 10. The war had lasted a matter of months and cost the United States about 2,500 dead, only about 16 per cent of which were battle deaths, the remainder perishing from disease.

Of what strategic importance were the Philippines to the United States in 1899? What challenges did its occupation of the Philippines pose for the United States?

Discussion point

How did the Spanish–American War differ from the other wars that the United States fought in the 19th century? In what ways was it similar? What lesson might the US have taken from the organization and conduct of the war?
The aftermath: The imperial debate

From October to December 1898, US and Spanish representatives negotiated a treaty in Paris. The resulting Treaty of Paris ceded Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States. Cuba would gain her independence as the Teller Amendment prohibited its annexation. It was the Philippines that proved to be a difficult point. The Spanish were less ready to relinquish it than they had been their Caribbean possessions, but had no realistic way of holding them against American demands backed up by a naval squadron in Manila Bay. The United States for its part recognized the strategic importance of the islands to the growing China trade. In the end, the United States agreed to pay $20 million for the Philippines. But the real debate was only getting started.

In the United States, the Treaty of Paris had to be ratified by the Senate with a two-thirds majority. Groups such as the American Anti-Imperialist League with prominent members like Mark Twain and Samuel Gompers formed to argue against the annexation of the Philippines. They were joined by many Democrats, sugar growers and isolationists. The Republican Party led by President McKinley, the navy and those who would benefit from increased Asian trade argued in favor of annexation. In early February 1899, the fate of the Philippines was put to the question in the Senate. Annexation carried the day by the narrowest of margins.

While the Teller Amendment ensured Cuba’s nominal political independence, the United States still maintained an occupation force on the island until 1902. During this period American capital poured into Cuba. The infrastructure was modernized while the occupiers renovated the financial system and government administration. American fruit and tobacco companies bought up huge tracts of land such that by 1901 much of Cuba’s economy and trade was dominated by the US. How, then, to protect these extensive interests while at the same time upholding the Teller Amendment in word if not in spirit? The answer came in the form of the Platt Amendment. Passed in 1901, the Platt Amendment “guaranteed” Cuban independence by forbidding Cuba from entering into any other foreign treaties. The amendment further reserved for the United States the right to intervene in Cuba to protect this independence and to be sold or leased military installations on the island for this purpose. Amid popular Cuban protests, the Platt Amendment became a part of the Cuban constitution.

The status of the Philippines was less complicated; it was part of the United States. In 1899, under the leadership of an erstwhile US ally, Emilio Aguinaldo, Filipinos rose against their colonizers and carried on a brutal guerilla war until 1901. By the time Aguinaldo was captured the US had come to understand the price of empire building—the war had occupied some close to 100,000 soldiers and cost close to 5,000 US lives. It is estimated that over 200,000 Filipinos died in the two and a half years of fighting. When William Taft took over the governorship of the Philippines in 1901 he embarked on a paternalistic program of reform that involved the construction of schools and infrastructure to support the US-dominated industry and the creation of a political assembly to practice a limited form of self-rule. Despite this, it would take the severe dislocations accompanying the end of the Second World War to secure Philippine independence.
The imperial debate

**Source A**

The following is an excerpt from an essay written in August 1898 by Andrew Carnegie, a wealthy steel magnate and vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League.

To reduce it to the concrete, the question is: Shall we attempt to establish ourselves as a power in the far East and possess the Philippines for glory? The glory we already have, in Dewey's victory overcoming the power of Spain in a manner which adds one more to the many laurels of the American navy, which, from its infancy till now, has divided the laurels with Britain upon the sea. The Philippines have about seven and a half millions of people, composed of races bitterly hostile to one another, alien races, ignorant of our language and institutions. Americans cannot be grown there. The islands have been exploited for the benefit of Spain, against whom they have twice rebelled, like the Cubans. But even Spain has received little pecuniary benefit from them. The estimated revenue of the Philippines in 1894–95 was £2,715,980, the expenditure being £2,656,026, leaving a net result of about $300,000. The United States could obtain even this trifling sum from the inhabitants only by oppressing them as Spain has done. But, if we take the Philippines, we shall be forced to govern them as generously as Britain governs her dependencies, which means that they will yield us nothing, and probably be a source of annual expense. Certainly, they will be a grievous drain upon revenue if we consider the enormous army and navy which we shall be forced to maintain upon their account.


**Source B**

The following is an excerpt of a speech given by Albert Beveridge, a Senator from Indiana.

The Opposition tells us that we ought not to govern a people without their consent. I answer, The rule of liberty that all just government derives its authority from the consent of the governed, applies only to those who are capable of self government. We govern the Indians without their consent, we govern our territories without their consent, we govern our children without their consent. How do they know what our government would be without their consent? Would not the people of the Philippines prefer the just, humane, civilized government of this Republic to the savage, bloody rule of pillage and extortion from which we have rescued them?

3 • The emergence of the Americas in global affairs, 1880–1929

Source C

President McKinley related the following to General James Rusling in 1899. Rusling recalled the conversation for an interview in 1901.

When next I realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess I did not know what to do with them ... I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance. ... And one night late it came to me this way, ...

1 That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable;
2 That we could not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and dishonorable;
3 That we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule worse than Spain's war;
4 That there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them as our fellow men for whom Christ also died.


Questions

1 What does Carnegie mean by “glory”? (source A)
2 What evidence is there of a practical approach to the issue of imperialism in each of the documents?
3 What evidence is there of ethnocentrism in the documents?
4 Compare and contrast how the people of the Philippines are regarded in sources A and B.
5 What role did religion play in McKinley’s decision to annex the Philippines, according to Rusling?
6 With reference to its origin and purpose, evaluate the value and limitations of source C to historians studying McKinley’s decision to annex the Philippines.

Activity

Nationalist reaction

In groups of two, research the post Spanish–American War positions of Cuban nationalists and Filipino nationalists. Write a speech from your allocated country’s perspective. Come together and write a joint essay, comparing and contrasting postwar nationalism in Cuba and the Philippines.