**American Imperialism**

**1.** Imperialism, if defined in the strict sense as **“occupying and governing foreign lands”**, lasted for only a limited period in American history, between 1898 and 1903.

**2.** A variety of motives lay behind this imperial expansion:

a. The idea developed was that America had a **“manifest destiny”** to spread the benefits of American civilization to all the world.

b. Some argued for imperial expansion in order to open up new markets for American industrial products but other businessmen opposed imperialism as a threat to peace and stability.

**3.** Quick and easy victory in the **Spanish-American War (1898)** brought the United States face to face with the issue of colonial possessions.

a. American sympathies were aroused in support of **Cuban Nationalists** fightingagainst the colonial rule of Spain.

b. Mounting public feelings against Spain finally led to a resolution in Congress recognizing the independence of Cuba and authorizing the armed forces to drive out the Spanish. Quick victory followed.

c. After a few years of transitional military rule, Cuba became an independent republic.

**4.** After much debate, the Philippines were acquired as a US colony, and three years of fighting against nationalist guerrillas followed.

a. Filipino revolutionaries fought together with American forces in the war against the Spanish.

b. The issue whether or not to acquire the Philippines as a colony was a matter of heated debate in America, until finally the imperialist side won out.

c. After refusing to grant independence to the Philippines, the US became involved in a three years of bitter guerrillas fighting during the Philippines Insurrection (1899-1902).

5. The acquisition of Hawaii provides another example of increasing US expansionism at the turn of the Century.

a. House Joint Resolution 259, 55th Congress, 2nd session, known as the "Newlands Resolution," passed Congress and was signed into law by President McKinley on July 7, 1898 — **the Hawaiian Islands were officially annexed by the United States**. Sanford Dole became the first Governor of the Territory of Hawaii.

b. America's annexation of Hawaii in 1898 extended U.S. territory into the Pacific and resulted from economic integration and the rise of the United States as a Pacific power. For most of the 1800s, leaders in Washington were concerned that Hawaii might become part of a European nation's empire. During the 1830s, Britain and France forced Hawaii to accept treaties giving them economic privileges. In 1842, Secretary of State Daniel Webster sent a letter to Hawaiian agents in Washington affirming U.S. interests in Hawaii and opposing annexation by any other nation. He also proposed to Great Britain and France that no nation should seek special privileges or engage in further colonization of the islands. In 1849, the United States and Hawaii concluded a treaty of friendship that served as the basis of official relations between the parties.

c. A key provisioning spot for American whaling ships, fertile ground for American protestant missionaries, and a new source of sugar cane production, Hawaii's economy became increasingly integrated with the United States. An 1875 trade reciprocity treaty further linked the two countries and U.S. sugar plantation owners from the United States came to dominate the economy and politics of the islands. When Queen Liliuokalani moved to establish a stronger monarchy, Americans under the leadership of Samuel Dole deposed her in 1893. The planters' belief that a coup and annexation by the United States would remove the threat of a devastating tariff on their sugar also spurred them to action. The administration of President Benjamin Harrison encouraged the takeover, and dispatched sailors from the USS*Boston* to the islands to surround the royal palace. The U.S. minister to Hawaii, John L. Stevens, worked closely with the new government.

d. Dole sent a delegation to Washington in 1894 seeking annexation, but the new President, Grover Cleveland, opposed annexation and tried to restore the Queen. Dole declared Hawaii an independent republic. Spurred by the nationalism aroused by the [Spanish-American War](https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/gp/90609.htm), the United States annexed Hawaii in 1898 at the urging of President William McKinley. Hawaii was made a territory in 1900, and Dole became its first governor. Racial attitudes and party politics in the United States deferred statehood until a bipartisan compromise linked Hawaii's status to [Alaska](https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/gp/17662.htm), and both became states in 1959.

6. To gain rights to build a canal in Panama, President Theodore Roosevelt engaged in some high-handed activities in Central America.

a. In 1880 a French company run by the builder of the [Suez Canal](https://www.history.com/topics/suez-canal) started digging a canal across the Isthmus of Panama (then a part of Colombia). More than 22,000 workers died from tropical diseases such as yellow fever during this early phase of construction and the company eventually went bankrupt, selling its project rights to the United States in 1902 for $40 million.

b. President [Theodore Roosevelt](https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/theodore-roosevelt) championed the canal, viewing it as important to America’s economic and military interests. In 1903, Panama declared its independence from Colombia in a U.S.-backed revolution and the U.S. and Panama signed the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, in which the U.S. agreed to pay Panama $10 million for a perpetual lease on land for the canal, plus $250,000 annually in rent. The United States also agreed to guarantee the independence of Panama.

c. On December 31, 1999, the United States, in accordance with the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, officially hands over control of the [Panama Canal](https://www.history.com/topics/panama-canal), putting the strategic waterway into Panamanian hands for the first time.

7. Through the so called **“Open Door Policy”** toward China, the US opened up American trade in Asia.

a. **Open Door policy**, statement of principles initiated by the [United States](https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States) in 1899 and 1900 for the protection of equal privileges among countries trading with [China](https://www.britannica.com/place/China) and in support of Chinese territorial and administrative [integrity](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integrity). The statement was issued in the form of circular notes dispatched by U.S. Secretary of State [John Hay](https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Hay) to [Great Britain](https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom), [Germany](https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany), [France](https://www.britannica.com/place/France), [Italy](https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy), [Japan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Japan), and [Russia](https://www.britannica.com/place/Russia).

b. The Open Door Policy was received with almost universal approval in the United States, and for more than 40 years it was a cornerstone of American [foreign policy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-policy) in East Asia.

8. Soon after the turn of the century America turned away from a policy of direct imperialism. Instead, more indirect forms of involvement and influence with foreign nations were adopted such as **“Dollar Diplomacy”** under President Wilson.

a. The [foreign policy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-policy) of Taft and Knox, called “dollar diplomacy” by critics, sought to expand American political influence overseas by increasing American investments abroad, and to minimize the danger of European intervention in [Central America](https://www.britannica.com/place/Central-America) or the Caribbean by persuading the nations in those regions to borrow from U.S. rather than European banks. It was a policy which had only minimum success, but it was widely misunderstood and widely [condemned](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/condemned).