

CHAPTER
18

Summary

TELESCOPING THE TIMES *America Claims an Empire*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW To compete with other powers, America gains colonies overseas, although some Americans object.

1 Imperialism and America

MAIN IDEA Beginning in 1867 and continuing through the century, global competition caused the United States to expand.

At the end of the 1800s, the United States joined the global trend to acquire lands overseas. Nations of Europe had taken control of almost all of Africa. Japan was seizing colonies in Asia. The United States competed with other nations to gain a trade foothold in China. Three factors pushed the United States to join the grab for land:

- Economic competition for raw materials and markets for its manufactured goods.
- Political and military competition, based in part on the creation of a powerful new navy.
- A belief in the racial and cultural superiority of the people of England and their descendants—which led many Americans to believe that the United States had a mission to spread civilization and Christianity.

Many Americans opposed this imperialist trend. They objected on moral or practical grounds. They felt that the taking of colonies was not right or would cost too much.

The first territory acquired was Alaska followed by Hawaii, where a number of Americans had established large and successful sugar plantations. Through a change in Hawaii's constitution, these planters came to control the government. In 1893, Hawaii's queen tried to change the constitution, and the planters seized control of the island. President Grover Cleveland refused to annex Hawaii, but his successor, William McKinley, did. Hawaii became a territory of the United States in 1898.

2 The Spanish-American War

MAIN IDEA In 1898, the United States went to war to help Cuba win its independence from Spain.

The United States had established close commercial ties to Cuba, still a Spanish colony. In 1895, José Martí launched a renewed drive for

Cuban independence. He hoped to force American intervention, but opinion in the United States was divided.

Spain sent an army to Cuba. Its commander put 300,000 Cubans in concentration camps while he tried to defeat the army of independence. American newspaper reports exaggerated stories of Spanish atrocities against the Cuban people. As more people began to clamor for giving aid to the Cubans, President McKinley tried to find a peaceful solution. Spain moderated its policies and granted limited self-rule to Cuba. The issue seemed to be dying down.

Then, two incidents fanned the fire. A newspaper published a Spanish diplomat's criticism of McKinley. Worse, a U.S. warship, the battleship *Maine*, mysteriously blew up in Havana's harbor. No one knew why the explosion occurred, but newspapers blamed Spain and the cry for war became too strong to resist.

The first battle of the war took place in the Philippines, another Spanish possession. Admiral George Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet there, and U.S. army units joined Filipino rebels. The Spanish in the Philippines surrendered.

In Cuba, an American army—despite being ill-prepared—won a decisive battle. Press accounts gave great fame to Theodore Roosevelt, who led a volunteer cavalry troop known as the "Rough Riders." Within two days, a naval battle resulted in destruction of the Spanish fleet and Spanish surrender in Cuba.

Spain quickly agreed to a peace that granted Cuba its independence and gained the United States the islands of Puerto Rico and Guam and the Philippines. By the time the Treaty of Paris was approved, the United States had an empire.

3 Acquiring New Lands

MAIN IDEA In the early 1900s, the United States engaged in conflicts in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines.

Many Puerto Ricans wanted independence, but Mothers were willing to accept being an

American territory. Still others wanted to become a state. The Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Ricans were not American citizens. In 1917, Congress granted that right to Puerto Ricans and allowed them to choose their legislature. But it still denied statehood to the island.

For the first four years after the end of the war, the U.S. army remained in Cuba. It imprisoned Cubans who protested American presence, but it also fed the hungry and helped wipe out yellow fever, a fatal disease. The United States insisted that the new Cuban constitution grant the United States privileges. Many American businesses had invested heavily in the island, and they wanted their property protected. These provisions were agreed to—reluctantly—and Cuba became independent but partly under U.S. control.

Filipinos—who had been fighting for independence for years—were outraged that the United States had annexed their islands. Rebel leader Emilio Aguinaldo led an armed revolt against the Americans. In a war that lasted three years, the American army used some of the same tactics that the Spanish had used in Cuba. The revolt was finally suppressed in 1902. The islands finally gained independence in 1946.

Imperialists hoped to use the Philippines as a way of gaining a foothold in Asia. The main goal was to build business ties with China. European nations and Japan had forced the Chinese to give them valuable trade benefits. Secretary of State John Hay announced the Open Door policy that opened China to the trade of any nation. This policy increased American presence in Asia. A brief, bloody Chinese uprising against western influence—the Boxer Rebellion—was put down by western forces. The United States then issued stronger safeguards of equal trade with China.

President McKinley—who supported this imperialist expansion—won re-election in 1900. Many, but not all, Americans favored the expansion of American power.

America as a World Power

MAIN IDEA *The Russo-Japanese War, the Panama Canal, and the Mexican Revolution added to America's military and economic power.*

As part of the increased American role in world affairs, President Theodore Roosevelt acted as

peacemaker to end a war between Japan and Russia. He also sent a fleet of navy ships to sail around the world, showing American power.

Roosevelt's major action was to ensure the building of the Panama Canal. The canal was wanted to link the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, cutting travel time for merchant ships—and for U.S. navy ships. Panama then was a province of Colombia, but won its independence in a U.S.-supported revolt. The new nation gave the United States land to build a canal.

It took ten years to build the 50-mile-long canal, and it was a success from the start. But Roosevelt's actions caused ill will toward the United States throughout Latin America.

The president warned European nations to keep their hands off Latin America. He also announced his intention to intervene whenever political turbulence in Latin America threatened U.S. business. President Taft took such a step in 1911, sending troops to Nicaragua.

In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson took a moral tone in Latin American policy. He said that the United States would refuse to recognize any Latin American government that was oppressive, undemocratic, or opposed U.S. interests. A revolution in Mexico quickly tested this policy. Conservatives favored by U.S. businesses that invested in Mexico seized the Mexican government. Wilson used a minor incident to send troops to Veracruz. When a new leader took power in Mexico, Wilson withdrew the troops.

Trouble did not end. A revolt against the new Mexican government by Francisco “Pancho” Villa involved the United States. Wilson sent General John J. Pershing to pursue Villa and punish him for the death of some Americans. The American soldiers clashed with units of the Mexican army, straining relations. Finally, they were withdrawn. The incident revealed Americans' willingness to assert their power in the western hemisphere.

Review

1. What factors shaped American imperialism?
2. How did the United States gain control of former Spanish colonies?
3. How did the United States administer its new-found territories?
4. How did Roosevelt assert American power?