

**CHAPTER NINETEEN: IMPERIAL AMERICA:
THE UNITED STATES IN THE WORLD, 1890–1914**

READING AND STUDY GUIDE

- I. Becoming a World Power
 - A. European Imperialism
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On February 15, 1898, a naval officer awoke President William McKinley in the middle of the night with the stunning news that the American battleship *Maine* had exploded in Havana, Cuba, killing 266 of the 354 crew members. The explosion turned the battleship into a hunk of molten steel. Americans read moving firsthand accounts in the press, including one from survivor James R. Young. "I was feeling a bit glum," Young recalled, "and in fact was so quiet that Lieutenant J. Hood came up and asked laughingly if I was asleep. I said, 'No, I am on watch.' Scarcely had I spoken when there came a dull, sullen roar. Would to God that I could blot out the sounds and the scenes that followed."

The United States and Spain had long been at odds over the question of independence for Cuba, then a Spanish colony. McKinley had sent the *Maine* to Havana to stop Spanish-instigated attacks on U.S.-held property in Cuba. Many Americans suspected that Spanish saboteurs had blown up the ship to protest the U.S. incursion into Spanish territorial waters. The shocking images and accounts of the *Maine* explosion fueled public anger against Spain for its supposed attack on the U.S. Navy, creating a moment of crisis between the two nations. An official investigation confirmed these widely held views, blaming the *Maine* explosion on a Spanish mine in the harbor. The exact cause of the blast, however, remained a mystery. Some experts now cite a spontaneous combustion from the coal stored alongside ammunition as the most likely

culprit, a misfortune shared by thirteen similar American naval vessels between 1895 and 1898. Others suggest that Cuban revolutionaries may have planted the explosives, expecting the United States to blame Spain and declare war.

The *Maine*'s explosion ignited a short, four-month war between the United States and Spain in 1898. This "splendid little war," as one official called it, ended with an overwhelming American victory. The overseas possessions that the United States gained from Spain, including Puerto Rico and the Philippines, gave the nation a new formal colonial empire. The United States simultaneously constructed an informal economic empire throughout the Caribbean and East Asia at the turn of the century. As the United States established itself as a budding world power, Americans offered conflicting visions of how the United States should behave outside its borders.

Learning Objectives

After a careful examination of Chapter 19, students should be able to do the following:

1. Outline the justifications that Americans used for their late nineteenth-century imperialism.
2. Identify Alfred Thayer Mahan and describe his contribution to the promotion of American imperialism.
3. Identify William H. Seward and list highlights of American foreign policy during his tenure as Secretary of State. Identify James G. Blaine and list highlights of American foreign policy during his tenure as Secretary of State.
4. Summarize why Americans had an interest in the annexation of Hawaii. Describe the Cleveland administration's handling of the annexation issue.
5. Identify Queen Liliuokalani and explain the significance of her role in the Hawaiian annexation issue.
6. Cite examples of United States intervention in the political affairs of Chile and Venezuela during the 1890s. Explain how these incidents reflected American ideas about the role of the United States in the Western Hemisphere.
7. Identify the factors that promoted American support for Cuban independence during the 1890s. Identify the events that served as catalysts in pushing the United States toward war with Spain.
8. Identify the Teller Amendment and explain why it was added to the bill declaring war on Spain.
9. Explain why so much importance was attached to the American victory in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War.

10. Outline the American arguments for and against ratification of the Treaty of Paris. Identify the Anti-Imperialist League and explain its role in the public debate over acquisition of the Philippines.
11. Identify Emilio Aguinaldo and explain his role in the Filipino-American War.
12. Describe the American treatment of the Filipino people during the Filipino-American War. Comment on domestic American reactions to this treatment.
13. Define the term *sphere of influence* and explain its relevance to the political status of China at the turn of the century.
14. Identify Secretary of State John Hay and outline the principles of his Open Door policy. Describe the circumstances surrounding the Boxer Rebellion and the U.S. reaction.
15. Outline the provisions of the Treaty of Portsmouth and explain the impact of this treaty on Japanese-American relations.
16. Describe the role of the United States in Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American War. Explain the importance of the Supreme Court decision in the Insular Cases.
17. Explain the provisions of the Platt Amendment and how they defined the role of the United States in Cuba following the Spanish-American War.
18. Discuss Theodore Roosevelt's role in the circumstances leading to the construction of the Panama Canal. Describe the American response to Roosevelt's approach to foreign policy.
19. Explain the intent of the Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Explain the corollary's impact on the role of the United States in the Western Hemisphere.
20. Define the term *dollar diplomacy* and explain its pertinence to the United States' relations with the nations of Latin America. Describe U.S. intervention in Nicaraguan affairs during the Taft administration.
21. Distinguish between Theodore Roosevelt's and Woodrow Wilson's approaches to foreign affairs.
22. Offer three major examples of United States intervention in Latin American affairs during the Wilson administration.

Key Terms & Definitions:

imperialism The late nineteenth-century term for colonizing foreign nations and lands, relying primarily on business, political, and military structures rather than settlers to rule colonized peoples and exploit their resources. (562)

reconcentration Spanish policy that herded Cuban peasants off their farms into heavily fortified cities followed by systematic destruction of the crops that fed the rebel armies. (565)

yellow press Tabloid journalists and newspapers that reported sensationalist stories with a strong emotional component. (565)

Teller Amendment Congressional promise “to leave the government and control of the [Cuban] Island to its people” at the end of the Spanish-American War. (568)

Rough Riders A volunteer unit of cowboys, Ivy League athletes, city police officers, and Pawnee scouts led by Theodore Roosevelt that gained fame by charging up the San Juan Heights during the Spanish-American War. (570)

Treaty of Paris Agreement that ended the Spanish-American War with Spain relinquishing its claim to Cuba and the United States receiving Puerto Rico, some smaller Caribbean islands, and the Pacific island group of Guam. In return for \$20 million, Spain turned the Philippines over to the United States. (571)

Platt Amendment Law linking U.S. withdrawal from Cuba to Cuban government granting the United States the right to maintain a naval base at Guantánamo Bay, to intervene militarily in Cuban domestic affairs, and to establish a privileged trading relationship with Cuba. The Cuban government also needed permission from the United States before entering into treaties with other nations. (572)

“the white man’s burden” The Anglo-Saxon quest to better the lives of so-called racially inferior peoples by spreading Western economic, cultural, and spiritual values and institutions. (575)

sphere of influence The term used to describe the exclusive political and trading rights that a foreign nation enjoyed within another nation’s territory. (579)

Open Door Policy A U.S.-sponsored nonbinding international agreement that kept the Chinese market open to all foreign nations. (579)

Gentleman’s Agreement (1907–1908) Japanese agreement to deny passports to Japanese workers intending to immigrate to the United States. (581)

Angel Island Immigration processing station in the San Francisco Bay for Asian immigrants. (581)

Panama Canal A manmade waterway through Panama completed in 1914 to link the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. (584)

Roosevelt Corollary (1904) Corollary to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine that announced the U.S. intention to act as an “international police power” in Latin America. (587)

Study Questions:

How has the meaning of this image changed since 1898? (560)

How did European imperialism affect the U.S. effort to create a formal empire? (562)

Which characteristics defined a nation as a world power in the late nineteenth century? (563)

How did European imperialism affect the U.S. effort to create a formal empire? (564)

Why did Americans take an interest in the Cuban rebellion against Spain? (565)

Why did popular media accounts depict the Cubans as light-skinned and the Spanish as dark-skinned? (566)

Why was McKinley unable to avoid war with Spain? (567)

Why did the United States first attack Spain in the Philippines? (568)

Why did Hawaii lose its independence in a war to liberate Cuba? (569)

How accurate were the legends that surrounded the charge up the San Juan Heights? (570)

Were Americans right to characterize the Spanish-American War as “the splendid little war”? (571)

What steps did the United States take to construct a formal and informal empire after its victory over Spain? (572)

What competing economic arguments did imperialists and anti-imperialists offer about colonies? (573)

How did white Americans’ racial views influence the debate over colonizing the Philippines? (574)

How did imperialists define the nation’s civilizing mission? (575)

Is Kipling’s poem best understood as imperialist propaganda or a satire of the civilizing mission? (576)

What tactics did the U.S. Army adopt to fight the Filipino rebels? (577)

How did imperialists try to quell debate over colonizing the Philippines? (578)

Why did Americans develop a strong interest in China at the turn of the century? (579)

What does this map reveal about relations between China and the world's leading powers, including the United States? (580)

How did domestic racial prejudices affect diplomatic relations with Japan? (581)

What insights does this photo offer into issues of ethnicity and gender in the early twentieth century? (582)

What differing ways have Americans defined racial identity? (583)

How did U.S. intervention in Panama compare with its colonization of the Philippines? (584)

How did U.S. engineers overcome the geological obstacles to building the Panama Canal? (585)

What does this photograph convey about Roosevelt and the feat of building the Panama Canal? (586)

How did the Roosevelt Corollary bolster U.S. status as a world power? (587)

What steps did Taft and Wilson take to protect the Caribbean as a U.S. sphere of influence? (588)