

Based on *The Americans*
Ch. 18: America Claims an Empire: Imperialism and America

Learn about: economic and cultural factors that shaped American foreign policy at the turn of the century

To understand: why the United States became an imperial power

Global Imperialism

- Imperialism: the policy in which stronger nations extend their economic, political, or military control over weaker territories.
- 1880's, policymakers wanted the US to join imperial powers of Europe and claim an empire
- European Imperialism, est. practice for centuries
 - Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Spain competed for raw materials in Africa, and carved up the continent into colonies.
 - Only Ethiopia, and Liberia were independent nations during this time.
 - Great Britain acquired an empire that included a quarter of the world's population; "The sun never sets on the British Empire."
 - Berlin Conference: first international agreement on imperialism in Africa. 14 nations attended and set up a system for claiming lands in Africa without going to war with each other. (1884)
- Asian Imperialism, late nineteenth-century Japan replaced feudal system with a central government based on Western nations.
 - Japan joined European nations in carving up interests in China.
 - US did not want colonies in Asia - it did compete with other nations to expand trading opportunities with China.
- American Imperialism, Manifest Destiny leads into imperialist tendencies in American pop.
 - Three reasons
 - Econ. Competition among industrial nations (Europe and Japan)
 - Political and military competition, including the creation of a strong naval force
 - Belief in the racial and cultural superiority of people of Anglo-Saxon descent, esp. in comparison with nonwhite people.

Question: If you were a foreign policy expert for the US at the turn of the twentieth-century would you advise US leaders to enter into an imperialistic policy based on these three reasons? Would you stress all of these reasons or only some? Are there any reasons given that you think would not justify an imperialistic policy?

- A Thirst for new markets
 - Advances in technology enabled farmers and manufacturers to produce more products than the American people could consume – need of trade important (exporting more than importing)

- Albert J. Beveridge, Indiana Senator and staunch imperialist, “Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours...We will establish trading-posts throughout the world as distributing-points for American products...Great colonies governing themselves, flying our flag and trading with us, will grow about our posts of trade.”
 - Quoted in Beveridge and the Progressive Era.
- \$234 million in exports at the end of the Civil War
- \$1.5 billion in exports by 1900
- US was a leading economic power

Question: How did the US become a leading economic power after the Civil War? In other words, what were some of the historic factors that enabled the US to become so strong economically?

- Desire for Military Strength
 - Other nations est. global military presence, (strong navies) foreign policy experts advised the US to get in the game
 - Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, president at the Naval War College, became outspoken advocate of military expansion
 - *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1793*, (1890) book in which Mahan argued for strong US navy to:
 - Defend peacetime shipping lanes
 - Create a modern naval force
 - Est. strategic bases for refueling, acquire Hawaii and other Pacific islands
 - Construct a canal through the Isthmus of Panama connecting Pacific and Atlantic fleets
 - Between 1883-1890 US did develop modern navy with nine steel- hulled cruisers, i.e. U.S.S. Maine, and Oregon
 - Nation became third largest naval power behind Great Britain and Germany

Question: How would George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and John Quincy Adams each react to building a strong naval force in the late nineteenth-century? Why?

- Belief in Anglo-Saxon Superiority
 - Social Darwinism, an economic and social philosophy – supposedly based on the biologist Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection – holding that a system of unrestrained competition will ensure the survival of the fittest.
 - Imperialism justified because White Anglo-Saxon Protestants were culturally superior to everyone else and had a religious duty to spread Christianity to the world’s “inferior people”

Question: How does Social Darwinism justify the concepts of “A City Upon a Hill,” and change its

meaning to adapt to the needs of Americans at the turn of the century to justify US Imperialistic objectives?

- Anti-Imperialism
 - Some Americans saw imperialism as a threat to their Anglo-Saxon heritage
 - Nothing justified US domination of other countries, or depriving those countries of Constitutional rights
 - Others argued that it would be too expensive to maintain a military force large enough to protect US interests overseas
 - Mark Twain a leading anti-imperialist of the time

Question: Think about current US foreign policy in regards to terrorism especially in Afghanistan, and Iraq. What historic lessons if any could current US foreign policy experts use from the period of US Imperialism to execute their current war on terror?

Sentence Summary: _____

Where will we see US Imperialism?

- China
- Hawaii
- Cuba
- Philippines
- Puerto Rico