

# Definition of american imperialism history essay



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The Oxford Dictionary gives several definitions of the word imperialism. It refers to the rule of an emperor, especially when arbitrary or despotic. Imperialism as it is defined on the national level refers to a nation or group of nations that has power over others and uses it to shape the destiny of other nations. In American history, this concept that a nation has the ability to change the course of history and other nations as well is sometimes referred to as nationalism. In the 19th century, imperialism and nationalism was at its highest, spurred by events such as the Spanish-American War and the sinking of the Maine. As a result of the political climate, there were two very distinct camps that evolved as a result of the political climate. The Nationalists had the firmly held belief that a legitimate state is based on the people rather than a dynasty, God, or religion. Much of the nationalist creed involves inclusion, which does essentially destroy regional ethnicities and language variances. Part of the American democratic system assumes that civic involvement is a form of nationalism, while a system like the German nation during the 19th century was more ethnically nationalistic. This secondary interpretation of ethnical nationalism led to the rise of the Aryan Nation and eventually the Nazi Movement that created the first and second World Wars.

While it is not necessarily true that nationalism leads to dictatorships and despotic administrations, it does at very least hold several ideals that require for boundaries to be drawn. The early 1900's showed a period of world expansion both on the American and European nations that were looking to improve the world view their way. This is yet another way of describing colonialism. Colonialism, the ideal of Manifest Destiny, and the proposal to

expand democracy through the newly developing world at the beginning of the century. The direct goals for America and Europe at this time were to spread themselves beyond their borders. As a result of such an increase in imperialistic policies and behavior, the Anti-Imperialist League was formed in 1899. The purpose of this league was to create public concern over the government making decision from the citizens of the respected countries. At that time, the United States was occupying Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. It was almost a strictly pacifist platform, because the anti-imperial league primary goal was to end the Spanish-American War. There was also a controversy with the position the nationalist party, and the United States in general, had on 'preventive occupation' because the main goal at the time by the army was to end local rebellion, change local government leaders, and create a new democratic system. It is considered as such, because the main goal the Army had at each of the locations was to suppress the local rebellions, get rid of local government, and create new and democratic government.

The Spanish-American War was a brief conflict won quickly by the United States over an inexperienced Spanish army and navy. "Thanks to the encouragement of expansionists and the reckless as a result of the expansionist, and the sensation journalism practice by the press, Americans enthusiastically supported the war. Many volunteered, but the long unused Army, was not well prepared to manage the fighting. The Navy, on the other hand, was in good trim, having been built up beginning with the Harrison administration in response to the writings of Mahan and the support of other "navalists" like Theodore Roosevelt". (www. sagehistory. net) "The Navy

fought well - from the destruction of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay to the defeat of the Spanish fleet by Cuba but it was ruled by defeat and bureaucracy. Although plagued by inefficiency, disease and disorder, the Army, bolstered by volunteers such as the famous " Rough Riders," fought bravely enough to defeat a hapless Spanish army near Santiago". (www. sagehistory. net). American troops also occupied Puerto Rico. " The Treaty of Paris that ended the war granted independence to Cuba; Spain turned over Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands to the United States, for which the U. S. paid \$20 million to Spain. The " Splendid Little War" lasted only four months, the fighting itself only weeks". (www. sagehistory. net) " Thanks to Dewey's victory in Manila, American military forces occupied the Philippine Islands. Philippine revolutionary refused to accept the occupation and they continued to fight. It was a short war, and when the Philippines were annexed, more controversy for America as an imperial power. Imperialists argued that the U. S. had a duty to help civilize and control the underdeveloped parts of the world, but Anti-Imperialist League was founded that opposed America's acquisition of colonies as anti-democratic and destructive of American ideals. The result of the debate was the Philippine were granted independence, and Puerto Rico was slowly given autonomous rule, which is still being decided.

Even with all of this, a third theory or viewpoint, sometimes known as American Imperialism, seems to fit the perfect balance between imperialism or nationalism and anti-imperialism. American Imperialism refers to the theory that the United States occupies a special niche among the nations of the world in terms of its national credo, historical evolution, political and

religious institutions and origins. This means that even though we may not want to force our democratic ideals and beliefs onto other nations in the guise of the greater good, in order to maintain balance in the world we are unwillingly cast in the role of the world's policeman, while struggling to maintain a neutral and objective stance regardless of the issues. The merging of the puritanical view of the city on a hill and the laissez-faire tradition are the best description of the roots of imperialism, which is the best theory for where the changing political climate led to after the years of nationalism.