

"theodore roosevelt and the rise of america to world power" discussion

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Theodore Roosevelt And the Rise of America to World Power Howard K. Beale
Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power was published by John Hopkins University Press in 1956. Beale's books emphasized and interpreted economic factors during the Reconstruction Era. His scholarly works gained the term "the Beale Thesis", which was based upon Beale's theory that Reconstruction was the effort of big business to seek control over the federal government for their own gain by eliminating agrarian competition.

Among having published several books, Beale also edited the diaries of Edward Bates and Gideon Welles, both of Lincoln's cabinet, and edited a work of scholarly essays by leading historians. Beale was a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin. Beale's book, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power" covers the major developments, policies, and actions by which the "Imperialists" helped guide America into world power. It gives insight into the role Roosevelt played in the policies at the turn of the century.

Beale gives detail into Roosevelt's personal diplomacy, his feelings for other nations, and why he believed it was appropriate that America tied itself with England as an "English-speaking" power. Beale also questions to what extent did Roosevelt and his fellow expansionists influence the course of America? Did the need for American imperialism eventually lead us into danger? During the last decade of the nineteenth century, national loyalties strengthened nations and a struggle for power would become the dominating ambition for industrialized nations.

Competition had aroused nations " to expand their political and economic, perhaps too their cultural, control beyond their national boundaries as far as their energies and opportunities permitted. " (pg 31) This new imperialism was based on industrial rivalry and America had to choose if she would follow suit. " The people of America never really consciously decided what they wanted to do. Yet as the obvious trend toward becoming an imperial power in real or potential conflict with other empires emerged, many Americans foresaw dangers and opposed steps that were leading us into imperialism. (pg 33) Theodore Roosevelt came into presidency with a firm belief that America needed to expand its power abroad and that we should stand ready to defend our interests. Even before he became president, Roosevelt and his fellow expansionists already had an influence in foreign policy. Roosevelt had an affinity for war history since he was a youth so it was only natural to him to believe a big part of America's power came from its navy. In 1897, Roosevelt, with the help of his friends, became the Assistant Secretary of Navy under President McKinley.

He used his office to promote building a stronger, bigger navy fleet. Roosevelt was known to glorify war, as he " believed only in " just wars", but then any war America fought would be just. " (pg 40) Fearing the danger Spain posed to Cuba, Roosevelt supported America's involvement in war against Spain. Roosevelt tried to appeal war to McKinley, but failed. " The best Roosevelt could do was prepare the Navy for war. " (pg 68) One day while Secretary Long was out for a few hours, Roosevelt, standing in as secretary, ordered deliberate acts that he and his friends planned for months.

Two months later the Spanish-American War began and Roosevelt abandoned his office to join in the war. In the campaign of 1900, Roosevelt campaigned for vice president under McKinley. He promoted expansion and asserted the relevance of the Monroe Doctrine. He insisted during his speeches that expansion "was not the same as imperialism" because the term turned people off. Roosevelt had convinced himself and others that his was the cause of righteousness. The Spanish-American War brought the U. S. the Philippines and Roosevelt insisted that extending the rule over the Philippines would bring them civilization. To him this meant that the anti-imperialists who opposed expansion were also opposing civilization. "Roosevelt seems not to have foreseen the possibility that the spread of civilization through expansion of the rule of "superior" races over "backward" ones might someday arouse nationalist aspirations that would threaten that civilization itself. (pg 79) Roosevelt assumed presidency in 1901 after McKinley was assassinated and his first major step as president was establishing Britain as an ally.

Roosevelt recognized that common language and way of life established a connection. By attainment of the Anglo-American understanding, "British and American imperialists were joined together in an effort to dominate parts of the world they dubbed backwards. Second, Roosevelt and his friends had brought England and America together in an effort to preserve through united action an unstable balance among the nations he considered civilized." (pg 157) The establishment of an alliance between America and Britain was also essential to balance the power of a rising Germany.

In 1902, Roosevelt prepared to go to war with Germany to prevent any foothold in South America. He asserted use of the Monroe Doctrine. As it became evident that China needed allies, Roosevelt also recognized an economic motive. " He saw the possibility of America joining Britain to enforce an open door policy in China. " (pg 163) Although economics was not particularly the main focus driving Roosevelt's vision of expansion, he understood the importance of commercial interests in the Far East.

If America had not attained the upper hand in China, China could have had a closed door policy and wouldn't have secured the benefits of open door.

Roosevelt wanted China to have a policy similar to the Monroe Doctrine, and to let China develop on its own. Roosevelt began to feel an annoyance with Russia, fearing that the growing trade with China could be interrupted if the issues with Manchuria weren't solved. So in an effort to balance the power and open the doors to Manchuria, Roosevelt supported China in its struggle against Russia.

As Britain's power began to decline, Russia's power began to rise and Roosevelt saw the imbalance. He knew he had to restore the stability. While Germany still posed a threat, Russia was thought to be the more immediate danger. " Russian expansion, which had once seemed desirable, no longer meant extending control of a superior over a backward race, but had become an obstacle to the push of another civilizing power. " (pg 231) When the Japanese attacked Russia, Roosevelt was proud. He admired the Japanese people and believed if he supported them they would serve American interests in Japan.

While Roosevelt saw the danger in Japan becoming too powerful, the power of Russia in the present outweighed that fear. Roosevelt hoped that with a Japanese win, Japan would organize China and together they would become great civilized powers. Roosevelt held part in the negotiation treaty between the two nations. Roosevelt had foreseen the dangers Japan posed, in which ultimately defeated his goal to balance power in the Far East. Roosevelt's concern to balance power led to an interest in Europe. He had thought of the possibility of war if balance were not maintained.

In order to keep from war, Roosevelt tried to bring America and Europe closer together in hopes of removing distrust and threats of war. Roosevelt felt that "Japan, England, France, Russia, or Germany, his "civilized powers", and even the United States, could be as serious threats to each other and to world peace as the backwards people." (pg 305) In his efforts to prevent war, Roosevelt called the Portsmouth Conference, and in 1905 played a role in the Algeciras Conference. The dispute between Britain, France and Germany had no direct interest to the United

States, but Roosevelt wanted to keep the peace. Roosevelt became an intermediary as to keep Morocco open to American trade, as well as to keep Germany from becoming the dominant power in Europe or to expand into South America. Although Roosevelt wanted to expand America and civilize the inferior races, he knew that "his country's interests could be protected only if no power became powerful enough to threaten the rights of other powers." (pg 382) Roosevelt saw the rivalries between nations and understood the threat too much power posed.

Roosevelt was successful in most of his endeavors, Germany was kept out of South America and Japan influenced Korea and China. The open door remained. Roosevelt's uncommon approach to diplomacy gained him much respect among other rulers. The way he personally handled foreign relations with directness put people at ease. His keen sense in foreign policies and almost prophetic insights made Theodore Roosevelt one of America's most influential men. As well, his extraordinary diplomatic skills made him one unforgettable man. If Roosevelt had made different choices in foreign policy would today's America be the same? We will never know.