

American imperialism
the united states
(u.s.) assignment



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American Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's the United States (U. S.) pursued an aggressive policy of expansionism extending its political and economic influence around the world. What is imperialism? Why this policy was adopted and how it was rationalized. The major events that took place and which countries of the world the U. S. became involved due to this policy. Finally, we will see, not everyone supported foreign affairs by the U. S. and in 1899 they founded the American Anti-Imperialist League.

I will discuss their view of Imperialism and discuss the outcome of the foreign policy going into the twentieth century. Imperialism is the " acquisition of control over the government and the economy of another nation, usually by victory. The U. S. became an imperialistic world power in the late nineteenth century by gaining control over the Hawaiian Islands and, after the Spanish American War (1898), Guam, the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico" (Davison, Delay, Heyrman, Lytle, & Stoff, 2008, p. G-4). American Imperialism has been a big part of U. S. istory ever since the American Revolution. The U. S. became an imperialist nation at the end of the 19th century because Americans wanted to expand overseas with their belief in manifest destiny. " As Democratic editor John L. O'Sullivan put it, that it had become the United States' " manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (2008, p. G-5). " Since the 1840's expansionists had spoken of a manifest destiny to overspread the North American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific" (2008, p. 11). " But it flourished in the 1890s, when Mahan provided the naval theory necessary to make the leap and the

vanishing American frontier supplied an economic rationale for extending Manifest Destiny” (2008, p. 615). The Industrial revolution was the ammunition for Imperialism which thrived during the 19th century.

Imperialism alleviated the hunger for wealth desired by the western world and thereby forming the modern world through wars. Imperialism is practice by which powerful nations or people seek to expand and maintain control or influence over weaker nations.

Throughout the years there have been many instances where the Americans have taken over other countries and almost every time we go into war we have taken over a piece of the host countries land. The Americas first taste of imperialism came about five hundred years ago when Columbus came to America. We fought the inhabitants and took over the land making them slaves. American people over the years have become selfish. No matter how much we have, we desire more. The United States adopted the policy of imperialism because they saw the potential to control foreign markets and earn vast amounts of money. The speed and efficiency with which Europeans expanded prompted many Americans to argue for this European-style imperialism of conquest and possession” (2008, p. 611). The United States was never completely isolated from the rest of the world. Trade made them an active member of world affairs. It was during the period of the 1890s that the U. S. foreign policy became influenced by imperialism. During that decade, the U. S. became the most important industrial power in the world. That meant we had to find markets and areas overseas to provide a cheap labor force and plenty of natural resources with which to fuel the U.

S. economy. Business was also looking at other areas in the world as potential customers for our products. The U. S. business wanted new markets to sell and trade our products and gain resources that we did not have in America. The thirst for new markets was one reason for the imperialistic era. We bought Alaska for 7. 2 Million from the Russians, which provided us with oil, timber, and minerals. “ Critics called Alaska “ Seward’s Folly,” but he paid only about 2 cents an acre for a mineral-rich territory twice the size of Texas” (2008, p. 15). “ The battle of the Pacific highlighted the need for naval bases and coaling stations. On July 7, McKinley signed a joint congressional resolution annexing Hawaii, as planters wanted for nearly a decade” (2008, p. 622). This led to the annex of Hawaii, Pearl Harbor naval base being built and after the Spanish-American War we received Guam and Puerto Rico. During this period, we gained territories, resources and our military was expanding forces in areas of the world where we had not gone in force before.

There were several major events that took place during this time that led up to this change. The main reason this policy was adopted was because the U. S. industrial economy was growing so fast that they were producing more goods than they could consume. This abundance of goods forced the U. S. to look for new markets to sell their goods. Another reason this was adopted was because the Americans were discontent with the way Spaniards were treating the Cubans. This led to the Spanish American War, which really opened the doors for American Imperialism.

The U. S. forces defeated the Spanish forces which caused Spain to lose Cuba, Guam and Puerto Rico. The U. S. also gained control of the Philippines
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during this time. “ Had the Spanish-American War depended largely on ground forces, the ill-prepared U. S. Army might have fared poorly. But the key to success, in both Cuba and the Philippines, was naval warfare, in which the recently modernized American fleet had a critical edge” (2008, p. 621m). The Spanish American War also made the U. S. want a canal to have better access for trade and military support. Strategic necessity and the desire of Eastern businessmen to have easy access to Pacific markets combined in the late 1890s to convince the president, Congress, and a vast majority of Americans that an isthmian canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans was vital to national security and prosperity” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010). This led to the building of the Panama Canal. A French citizen and long-time official of the French Canal Company, Philippe Bunau-Varilla, gave the United States more Panamanian land they needed for the canal.

This company also led to the United States having the right to use troops to intervene in Panama. “ Some Americans still cast jealous eyes north toward Canada and south toward Mexico and Cuba. More often they dreamed of an empire in more distant lands in Asia and Latin America, less through traditional territorial conquest than by opening the doors of trade to foreign markets and resources. Such visions of empire, however, soon brought the United States into conflict with old imperial powers-Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Spain-and with newcomers Germany and Japan.

All had imperial visions of their own” (2008, p. 611). The event of Spain’s crisis made American’s turn the focus of expanding abroad and overseas.

This brought American imperialism to influence political and military contention creating a strong naval force, economic competition with other

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industrial nations (Great Britain Belgium, & France) and lastly, acceptance in the cultural prestige for the people of Anglo-Saxon decent. Although industrialization, brought forth the expansion of railroads and irrigation systems it also had negative effects- disease, famine and war.

Trading with international events had its advantages but it also inflicted pressure for undeveloped countries. “ The American Anti-Imperialist League was founded in 1899, after the U. S. occupied Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands” (Halsall, 1997, paragraph 1). “ They founded the American Anti-Imperialist League in order to campaign, unsuccessfully as it turned out, against the annexation of the Philippines” (1997, paragraph 1). The anti-imperialists were rooted in an earlier era, and opposed the expansion because they believed imperialism violated the principles of republicanism.

They did not oppose expansion on commercial, constitutional, religious, or humanitarian grounds. The Anti-imperialist league made a bold statement in what they hold as their platform. Part of the statement that was made is as follows, “ We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism, an evil from which it has been our glory to be free. We regret that it has become necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It was very clear that they opposed the interference in other countries affairs. In conclusion, this policy and the American Anti-Imperialist League’s view of Imperialism and foreign policy expanded its role as an imperialistic

nation in the 19th century to derive economic benefits. In the world today only the strongest survive and our ancestors have made sure that we will continue to be the strongest for some time. References Davison, J. W. , Delay, B. , Heyrman, C. L. , Lytle, M. , Stoff, M.

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