

American history
american imperialism
assignment



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The decaying Spanish and French empires had relinquished most of their Imperialist goals to control more overseas territories and were left with the remains of what they could hold onto. The British Empire however was still going strong and as the saying went: "The sun never sets on the British Empire".

But even then, in the presence of European Imperialism began to diminish and a new player would enter the game of Imperialism and Jingoism. That player was the United States; consequently it was established as a nation in 1776 after seceding from the British Empire. The US originally had the goals of being a neutral/isolationist State; not interfering in what the general public detested about foreign imperialism. But what had changed?

In the course of the next 50-60 years, the US would undertake a major foreign policy shift and steer towards the policies of Imperialism and American Exceptionalism, where most historians argue that the founding fathers had not planned the United States to pan out. This essay discusses the effects of the most important rallying cry for US policy before World War One: The infamous "March of the Flag" speech, as presented by Senator Albert Beveridge. It was the words and ideas behind the speech which helped rally many Americans to support Jingoism under Roosevelt presidency.

This culminated in the acquisition of the former Spanish territories of the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico and Guam among many other islands. With Beveridge's speech influencing the annexation and governance of regions which were "unfit" for self-rule, the United States became the new great Imperialist power; replacing the United Kingdom as the vanguard of

freedom and civilization. To begin, we must analyze the foundations of Senator Beveridge's speech and highlight the points made to justify American intervention in Latin America and Southeast Asia/Pacific.

The March of the Flag speech was delivered to the public in September 1898, just a month after the US had defeated the Spanish Empire in the Spanish-American War. The end result was the transfer of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines over to American administration. Beveridge's speech comes into play here; as these colonies were swapped over to another Imperial power, one that was beginning to change its foreign policy and start the role of the "world's policeman".

This also marks Beveridge's use of words in his speech that promoted justifications for America's interventionist attitudes. " And, regardless of this formula of words made only for enlightened, self-governing people, do we owe no duty to the world? Shall we turn these peoples back to the reeking hands from which we have taken them? Shall we abandon them, with Germany, England, Japan, hungering for them? Shall We save them from those nations, to give them a self-rule Of tragedy? " I.

The Jingoist policy that Bridge was promoting in his speech was US foreign policy; at the time still strongly influenced by the Monroe Doctrine. The document granted the USA apparent rights to intervene in any Latin American state that was being manipulated by European powers. It was clear that the US considered Latin America in its sphere of influence, and it was not to be meddled with by foreign powers. However, for the most part up until the Spanish American War, the United States was generally isolationist.

Essentially what happened was the government's policy to build a strong international presence through military strength, capitalism and the drive to impose the democratic, civilizing mission across from the Americas over to the Pacific/South East Asia. In other words, this foreign policy became known as "Jingoism" 4. It emphasized aggressive foreign policy, with strong nationalist/patriotic belief; and as a result, there was modest opposition to it such as the Anti-alienists Leagues.

However, the public was made to live that there was justification behind the US annexing the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Guam; as it fell into the principles of American Exceptionalism. This brings us to the second point behind Beveridge's speech, which deals with why exactly was the US so interested in administering rule in those areas gained by defeat of Spain. The acquisition of the Philippines, Guam, Cuba and Puerto Rico were of mass importance to the United States. It was a leading factor in Beveridge's speech, where he discussed the riches of natural resources and capitalist interest in the countries.

The Latin American and Asian countries were quite lucrative in terms of wealth to capitalists, this was because US business interests were threatened (bananas, tobacco, coffee, cotton). This argument ties in with Albert Beveridge's speech, where he points out that American economic strength must be bolstered through the annexation and administration of the aforementioned nations while maintaining a strong military presence around the world with naval bases in key strategic locations.

For example as of 2003; the US Armed Forces have bases in over 36 countries across the globe. The relation of economics ties in with military principles greatly in what Bridge was attempting to put out. If the US is able to station forces in military bases to monitor foreign powers under the guise of interventionism or spreading democracy; then it would be clear the US government would have an upper hand at coming out as the number one player on the international scale of politics.

As Bridge quotes in segment 27; " So Hawaii furnishes us a naval base in the heart of the Pacific; the Philippines another, a voyage further on; Manila another, at the gates of Asia-?? Asia, to the trade of whose hundreds of millions American merchants, manufacturers, farmers, have as good right as those of Germany or France or Russia or England; Asia, whose commerce with the United Kingdom alone amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars every year; Asia, to whom Germany looks to take her surplus products; Asia, whose doors must not be shut against American trade.

Within five decades the bulk of Oriental commerce will be ours" 7. This meant that Bridge strongly desired America to soar above in monopolizing trade and the world markets. He believed the US had the ability and resources to conduct a campaign in order to branch out to foreign markets and the vast untapped riches that waited. To sum it up, the US would head towards an increasingly capitalist mentality but the militaristic and mission to civilize/teach the world the American way would be another factor in why the foreign policy became so increasingly interventionist in the 20th century and the present.

To come to the final point behind this essay, Beveridge's speech has touched upon the numerous underlying interests the US had in those certain regions such as American Exceptionalism, Jingoism, the hunger for stronger economy and military might overshadowed what might be one of the most powerful factors in explaining the foreign policy shift. Bridge came to state in The March of the Flag that the people who inhabited the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Guam among many others, were in fact incapable of "self-rule".

Why was this idea put forth by Bridge and many other American politicians of their day? This was a direct result of the ideology which US politicians put forward to the American public known as "American Exceptionalism" 8. Essentially, this theory put the US in a position where the nation itself was defined as unique in history. It also promoted an American centric point of view, ones that laced certain values pertaining to the USA such as liberty, egalitarianism, free market, consumerism at the focal points. How did this tie in with the March of the Flag speech?

Exceptionalism was a strong fundamental belief of Albert Bridge; and his idea of administering civilization to the newly acquired colonies was actually in fact a play on extending the hand of American centric lifestyles. It was Beveridge's belief (among many other politicians, and citizens) that the United States had its duty to extend American values/lifestyles to the rest of the world by means of capitalism. In relation to my first point where the US was beginning to take the route of increasing militaristic might and taking on the role of the world's policeman; it can safely be said this same ideology was echoed by the British Empire.

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The two nation-states had a similar empire building policy which relied on spreading their version of "civilization" to colonial acquisitions. The phrase where Bridge uses the word "incapable of self-rule" I O, was basically a ploy to get inside the heart and minds of the average American in order to instill a justification for spreading the American way across the globe (of course, the average American was not as educated/back in those times, where political motives required more subtle approaches to justify certain policy maneuvers).

In all, the explosion of a new American culture and the ideals of Exceptionalness matched quite well with the elimination of isolationist foreign policy; all of which ushered in a new American government; one which was increasingly internationalist. To conclude the effects of Senator Albert Beveridge's March of the Flag speech; the issue surrounding the drastic change in US foreign policies became applied to the governance of new arterial acquisitions.

In the long run, the foreign policy of the United States became increasingly interventionist; especially in areas of interest. This enabled the shift to become much stronger in the years to come; as evidenced by American intervention in World War One and the post-World War Two role America played, squaring off against the Soviet Union in a game of world domination. However, this being said, Beveridge's speech only prompted a proto interventionist policy (it was not as clear cut as it would be later on).

Bridge only believed in the glory of the United States, the image of the duty of the nation to protect freedom and establish democracies styled after

American Exceptional point of view. Also the interests of capitalist corporations in certain areas were also touched upon by Bridge, where he fully supported the economic growth of the US by opening up trade with Latin American and Asian markets. Bridge proved to be right; as US influence over Southeast Asia and Latin America would last long into the next century.