

# The Age of Imperialism

## THE UNITED STATES REACHES BEYOND NORTH AMERICA

*How did the United States gain territories outside its boundaries? What happened to the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba after the Spanish-American War?*

1. After the Civil War, most Americans were busy rebuilding farms, working in factories, or settling the plains. Some Americans, however, dreamed of opening new lands beyond our borders. One of these Americans was William Seward, secretary of state for the nation in the 1860s. In 1867 Russia offered to sell its territory of Alaska. Seward wanted the United States to buy it. He favored freeing the Americas of another foreign power. Seward was able to get the Senate to approve the purchase. Alaska became a possession of the United States for the price of \$7,200,000. But many Americans did not agree with the purchase of Alaska. They thought the United States should not have colonies. They thought it was a waste of money. The sale was called Seward's Folly or Seward's Icebox. The people who called it this were wrong. Alaska's riches of fish, forests, oil, and minerals have added greatly to the wealth of the United States. In 1959 Alaska joined the United States as a state.

2. Toward the end of the 19th century, Americans became more interested in other parts of the world. They had settled their western lands. They were growing more cotton, wheat, and tobacco than they could use. Business people were looking for foreign markets in which to sell these goods. Some wanted to invest their money in foreign lands. Others saw that some nations of Europe were gaining colonies and trading rights in Asia and Africa. They were envious. They felt that the United States also should expand its territory and power. They thought that the United States had a duty or mission to carry its way of life to new lands and peoples. Other Americans disagreed. They believed that it was wrong to have colonies and rule other peoples. Despite their feelings, though, the drive to extend America's power abroad guided this country's relations with other peoples in the years ahead.

3. Although other Spanish colonies in Latin America gained their freedom, Cuba remained a Spanish colony. The Cuban people were not happy under Spanish rule, however. Attempted revolts against the Spanish failed. When a rebellion broke out in 1895, the Spanish

government sent an army to crush it. Both the Spanish and the Cubans destroyed fields and towns and put prisoners to death. The Spanish turned whole towns into prisons in which they kept women, children, and old people. The people of the United States were shocked when they read in their newspapers of the conditions in Cuba. They understood the desire of the Cubans to be free. Also, many Americans had money invested in Cuban sugar plantations and mines. War in Cuba was a threat to American property.

4. The stories coming out of Cuba disturbed the American people. When they read that the American battleship, the *Maine*, was blown up in the harbor of Havana in February 1898, they became angry. Americans demanded war. The cause of the explosion of the battleship is still not known. But the cry, "Remember the *Maine*!" was heard throughout the nation. On April 25, 1898, Congress declared war on Spain at the request of President McKinley.

5. The Spanish-American War was short. In the Pacific, an American fleet under Commodore George Dewey trapped the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in the Philippines. Dewey's force destroyed all the Spanish ships without any loss of American ships. On the other side of the world, American warships sank another Spanish fleet in the harbor of Santiago, Cuba. On land, United States troops were just as successful. Theodore Roosevelt, who later became president, headed a group of soldiers who fought on horseback. He won fame by leading these Rough Riders in a charge at San Juan Hill. This charge opened the way for the army to enter Santiago and prevent the Spanish from escaping.

6. The war ended less than four months after it began. More Americans had died from impure food and tropical diseases than from enemy bullets. Spain lost all its colonies in America. As a result of Spain's defeat, the United States took temporary control of Cuba as a protectorate, that is, a territory to be governed and protected. In addition, the United States gained Puerto Rico in the Caribbean Sea and the island of Guam in the Pacific Ocean. Spain sold the Philippine Islands to the United States for \$20,000,000. Spain no longer had colonies in the Americas.

7. The United States now had the problem of governing the new colonies. When the Filipinos learned that the United States would not free them at once, they took up the fight for freedom. The revolt continued until their leader, Emilio Aguinaldo, was captured in 1901. When the rebellion ended, Congress helped the islands form

their own government under the United States. In 1907 the Philippines elected their own assembly.

8. In 1916 Congress passed an act that led to the independence of the Philippines. It allowed the island people to elect their own legislature. This gave them experience in governing themselves and making their own laws. In time, the American people began to favor complete independence for the islands. But it was not until after World War II that the Philippines became independent. On July 4, 1946, the Philippines gained their freedom. The new nation agreed to allow the United States to keep army and navy bases on the islands for their protection.

9. In 1898 the United States gained Puerto Rico from Spain. It is a beautiful island southeast of Florida. The Puerto Ricans accepted the government of the United States immediately. Over the years, the United States has given the Puerto Rican people more and more power to govern themselves. It has allowed them to make their own laws. At first the United States appointed the governor of the territory. In 1948 the people began to elect their own governor. They chose Luiz Munoz Marin as their first governor. Five years later, Puerto Rico became a commonwealth. As a commonwealth the Puerto Ricans elect their own government and pass most of their own laws. Puerto Ricans are American citizens and serve in the American armed forces. There are some Puerto Ricans who want complete independence from the United States. Others want their island to become a state of the Union.

10. During the Spanish-American War, Cuba suffered great damage. The American army remained in Cuba to help the people recover from the war. The Americans built schools, hospitals, roads, railroads, and bridges. American and Cuban doctors attacked the problem of yellow fever, the cause of so many deaths during the war. Major Walter Reed proved that yellow fever was carried by a mosquito. Places where the mosquitoes laid their eggs were cleaned up. The disease was stopped on the island.

11. In 1902 American troops left Cuba, leaving a Cuban government to run the island. Cuba was free. However, the United States kept the right to send troops if there was trouble on the island. The American government wanted to protect American lives and property. Our country did enter into Cuban affairs in the years that followed. This was not welcomed by Cuban patriots. In 1934 under President Franklin Roosevelt, the right of the United States to enter Cuban affairs was ended. But the United States kept a great naval base at Guantanamo Bay.

12. As a result of the Spanish-American War, the United States had become a world power. At the beginning of the 20th century, it had colonies in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Its interests extended from the Caribbean

Sea to the Far East. From this time on, Americans had greater concern about happenings all over the world.

## THE UNITED STATES IMPROVES RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA

*Why did the United States obtain the Canal Zone and build the Panama Canal? What kinds of relations has the United States had with Latin America?*

1. During the Spanish-American War, the United States tried to send help to its fleet in Cuba. It ordered the battleship Oregon from the Pacific Ocean to Cuba in the Atlantic. The trip around South America took so long that the war was almost over by the time the Oregon arrived. The American government saw the need for a shorter route between the two oceans.

2. In 1882 a French company started to dig a canal across the isthmus of Panama. (An isthmus is a narrow strip of land, with water on both sides of it. It connects two larger bodies of land.) Panama was then a province of Colombia. The French made some progress but had to give up the job. Too many workers died of yellow fever and malaria. Also, the cost of building the canal was higher than the French had expected.

3. The United States wanted to continue the work started by the French. It had to receive permission from Colombia to build in Panama. At first, Colombia refused. But President Theodore Roosevelt wanted the canal built in Panama. The people of Panama wanted the canal, too. If the canal was built, the people of Panama would be helped by the trade that followed. In November 1903, Panama revolted from Colombia and declared itself an independent nation. President Roosevelt recognized the new nation and arranged for the purchase of a strip of land through Panama. This land, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) wide, stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It was called the Canal Zone. The United States paid the new government of Panama \$10 million for use of the land on which the canal was built. The United States also agreed to pay Panama yearly rent for the land. The Panama Canal was finished and opened to traffic in 1914.

4. The route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans was now shortened by thousands of miles. Goods could now be sent more cheaply by water from coast to coast. The canal also became of great importance to the defense of the United States. Our navy could now protect both our shores. It could move warships from one ocean to another in a short time. In order to protect the canal, the United States bought the Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917, at a cost of \$25 million. The Virgin Islands are on the sea route from the Atlantic Ocean to the canal.

5. Not all the Latin-American countries were happy over the way the United States gained rights to build the canal. Some felt that the United States was too quick to recognize the independence of Panama. Some people believed that President Roosevelt had urged Panama to revolt. The whole affair caused distrust of the United States in Latin America. In 1921 the United States paid the government of Colombia \$25 million to help make up for its loss of Panama. The United States increased its yearly rent payment to Panama for use of the canal. But this did not satisfy the people of Panama. They felt that the canal was like a "knife through their heart."

6. Over the years, the people of Panama made more demands for the return of the canal. They felt strongly that a foreign country should not rule part of their territory. Of course, many Americans disagreed. They felt that the United States had built the canal despite many hardships and, therefore, that the United States had a right to keep it. As time passed, the canal lost the importance it once had. In past wars, the United States needed the canal to send warships from one ocean to another. Today, there are separate American fleets in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Recognizing these changes, the United States and Panama signed two treaties in 1978. The first one gradually turns over the Panama Canal to Panama. By the year 2000 Panama will have complete control of it. The second one gives the United States the right to defend the canal even after that date.

7. For a long time, the United States has been interested in Latin America. First, we have a large trade with our Latin-American neighbors. They send us products that we need and enjoy, such as tin, copper, coffee, bananas, and chocolate. In turn, their people buy many products from the United States. Second, the United States has tried to keep the Americas free from foreign control. If a strong and unfriendly nation controlled the nations near us, it would be a threat to the safety of the United States. As early as 1823, President Monroe had stated this policy of keeping European nations out. This policy became known as the Monroe Doctrine. (See page 215.) For these reasons, the United States has continued to take part in the affairs of Latin America.

8. After the Spanish-American War, the American people took an even greater interest in the Caribbean area. In 1902 several European countries sent warships to blockade the ports of Venezuela. Venezuela owed these countries money. President Theodore Roosevelt did not want any European nations to occupy Venezuela. Pointing to the Monroe Doctrine, he asked for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. When an agreement was reached, the European nations withdrew their warships.

9. Between 1905 and 1934, American troops were also sent to keep order in other Latin-American countries. These included the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, and Nicaragua. The people of Latin America did not always want this kind of help. Many of them

resented the power of the United States. They felt they were able to take care of themselves.



10. In 1889 a meeting had been held promoting friendship among all American nations. As a result of this meeting, an organization that came to be known as the Pan American Union was formed. Twenty-one American nations were members. The organization had headquarters at Washington, D.C. It held meetings in different countries every few years. For a long time, however, Latin Americans remained suspicious of the actions of the United States.

11. In 1934 President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that our policy toward Latin America would be that of a "good neighbor." He believed that all American nations must cooperate with each other. He brought the Marines home from Haiti and Nicaragua. The United States treaty with Cuba was changed. The United States agreed not to interfere in the affairs of that country. However, the United States kept its great naval base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

12. During World War II, the nations of the Americas felt threatened by the Axis countries. With the exception of Argentina, they cooperated to defeat the Axis countries. After the war was won, the American nations met at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and agreed that each nation of the Americas would help any other nation if it were attacked by a foreign power. In 1948 the Pan American Union became part of the Organization of American States (OAS). The OAS works to improve living conditions and education. It also works for peace and human rights and defends the independence of its 28 member nations.

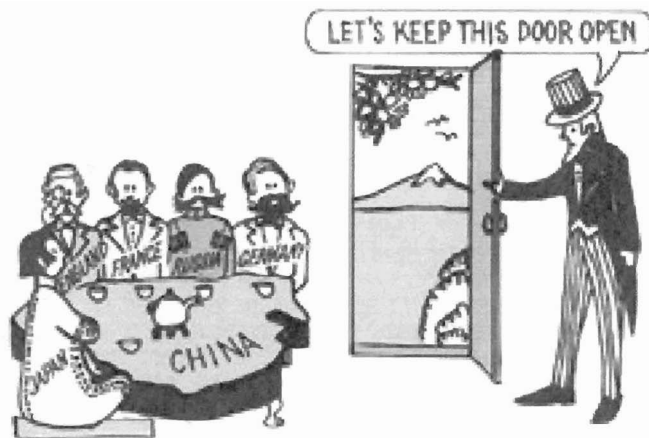
13. In 1961 the United States suggested that the American nations be partners in improving the living standards of Latin American peoples. The United States offered a plan that was called the Alliance for Progress. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the United States provided billions of dollars in aid. The aid was used to bring more land, homes, and schools to the people of Latin America. In the 1980s, the United States continues to seek close cooperation with the countries of Latin America.

## THE UNITED STATES BECOMES INTERESTED IN THE FAR EAST

*How did the United States gain control of Hawaii?  
Why did the United States suggest the Open Door policy?*

1. Two events in 1898 turned the interest of the United States toward the Far East. First, as a result of the Spanish-American War, the United States gained possession of the Philippines. These islands are about 500 miles from the China coast. Second, the United States annexed the Hawaiian Islands in 1898.
2. The Hawaiian Islands are located in the Pacific Ocean, about 2,000 miles southwest of California. In the early years of the 19th century, New England trading and whaling ships stopped at the islands. In 1820 a small group of American missionaries went to the Hawaiian Islands. They taught the people to read and write the English language. They gave them ideas about the American form of government. After the Civil War, more Americans went to Hawaii and invested in sugar and pineapple plantations. Sugar and pineapple became the chief crops of the islands. The rulers of Hawaii let the United States use Pearl Harbor as a place to repair and refuel its ships on the long trip across the Pacific Ocean to the Far East.
3. Early in 1893, Americans living in Hawaii, supported by United States Marines and some Hawaiians, led a revolt against Queen Liliuokalani. The revolt was successful and a republic was established. The new government asked the United States to annex it. It was not until 1898, during the war with Spain, that Congress voted to annex the Republic of Hawaii. The islands soon became a territory of the United States.
4. In 1959 Hawaii became the 50th state of the Union. This was only a few months after Alaska was admitted as a state. The rich lands of Hawaii are now an important part of the United States. Almost a million people of many races live in Hawaii. Some are native Hawaiians. Thousands are the descendants of settlers from Japan, China, the Philippines, and the United States. Many people visit the islands. The flowers, trees, and fruits are part of Hawaii's great natural beauty. Pearl Harbor is still a great base for United States warships.
5. The United States opened trade with China in the 1800s. In the 1890s Russia, Japan, and some Western European nations began to take over parts of China. China was too weak to defend itself. Americans were worried that their trade with China would be stopped. Our government wanted to help China and to protect American trade. In 1899 Secretary of State John Hay suggested the idea of the "Open Door." By this idea he meant that China should be open to all nations that

wished to trade or do business there. The European nations agreed to the idea, although they were not happy about it. In 1900 Hay added another idea to the Open Door policy. He said that the United States would help keep other countries from taking over any of China's territory. The Open Door policy won the friendship of the Chinese. For a time, the nations stopped dividing China among themselves.



6. The islands of Japan lie east of China. Tokyo, the capital of Japan, is about 500 miles from Shanghai. In 1853 and 1854 Commodore Matthew Perry took a fleet to Tokyo. He wanted to open trade between the United States and Japan. Perry brought with him many inventions. A small railroad and a small steam engine were two of them. He hoped these inventions would convince the emperor that it would help Japan to trade with the United States. The people of Japan were quick to learn to use the machines of the Western world. Within fifty years, they had greatly changed their ways of living. Japan became the strongest nation in the Far East.
7. Japan is a crowded nation. It has millions of people on its small islands, and yet there is little farmland to be used. In the late 19th century, Japan began to look for colonies. It looked toward Manchuria, a rich but weak province of North China. Japan also wanted Korea, a peninsula on the eastern coast of Asia. Russia wanted these same places, too. Early in 1904, Japan and Russia went to war over these territories. President Theodore Roosevelt offered to help settle the dispute. In 1905 both sides agreed to make peace. The Russians gave up their claims to Korea and Manchuria. Japan was now the most powerful nation in the Far East. A belief was growing that Japan might invade China.