Expansion and Empire, 1867–1914

The last decades of the 19th century were a period of imperial expansion for the United States. The American story took a different course from that of its European rivals, however, because of the U.S. history of struggle against European empires and its unique democratic development.

The sources of American expansionism in the late 19th century were varied. Internationally, the period was one of imperial frenzy, as European powers raced to carve up Africa and competed, with Japan that the United States would oppose any disturbance of Chinese territorial or administrative rights and restated the Open Door policy. Once the rebellion was quelled, Hay

With the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, the Chinese struck out against foreigners. In June, insurgents seized Beijing and attacked the foreign legations there. Hay promptly announced to the European

commercial privileges for all nations. In September 1899, Secretary of State John Hay advocated an “Open Door” for all nations in China – that is, equality of trading opportunities (including equal

European nations had acquired established spheres of influence there in the form of naval bases, leased territories, monopolistic trade rights, and exclusive concessions for investing in railway

The completion of the Panama Canal in 1914, directed by Colonel George W. Goethals, was a major triumph of engineering. The simultaneous conquest of malaria and yellow fever made it possible

the Canal Zone between the Atlantic and the Pacific, in return for $10 million and a yearly fee of $250,000. Colombia later received $25 million as partial compensation. Seventy-five years

At the turn of the century, what is now Panama was the rebellious northern province of Colombia. When the Colombian legislature in 1903 refused to ratify a treaty giving the United States the right

the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific, the United States saw a canal as both economically beneficial and a way of providing speedier transfer of warships from one ocean to the other.

The Spanish-American War, fought in 1898, marked a turning point in U.S. history. It left the United States exercising control or influence over islands in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific.

The 1898 Cuba and Puerto Rico were the only remnants of Spain's once vast empire in the New World, and the Philippine Islands comprised the core of Spanish power in the Pacific. The outlying colonies and islands sources; popular support for autocratic Spanish rule in Cuba; U.S. sympathy with the Cuban fight for independence; and a new spirit of national assertiveness, stimulated in part by a nationalist and sensationalist press.

By 1895 Cuba's growing restiveness had become a guerilla war of independence. Most Americans were sympathetic with the Cubans, but President Cleveland was determined to preserve

The Spanish-American War, fought in 1898, marked a turning point in U.S. history. It left the United States exercising control or influence over islands in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific.

To some extent, in Hawaii especially, economic interests had a role in American expansion, but to influential policy makers such as Roosevelt, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, and Secretary of State

The Spanish-American War, fought in 1898, marked a turning point in U.S. history. It left the United States exercising control or influence over islands in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific.

The completion of the Panama Canal in 1914, directed by Colonel George W. Goethals, was a major triumph of engineering. The simultaneous conquest of malaria and yellow fever made it possible

The last decades of the 19th century were a period of imperial expansion for the United States. The American story took a different course from that of its European rivals, however, because of the

manifest destiny," first used to justify America's continental expansion, was now revived to

The sources of American expansionism in the late 19th century were varied. Internationally, the period was one of imperial frenzy, as European powers raced to carve up Africa and competed,
protected China from crushing indemnities. Primarily for the sake of American good will, Great Britain, Germany, and lesser colonial powers formally affirmed the Open Door policy and Chinese independence. In practice, they consolidated their privileged positions in the country.

A few years later, President Theodore Roosevelt mediated the deadlocked Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, in many respects a struggle for power and influence in the northern Chinese province of Manchuria. Roosevelt hoped the settlement would provide open-door opportunities for American business, but the former enemies and other imperial powers succeeded in shutting the Americans out. Here as elsewhere, the United States was unwilling to deploy military force in the service of economic imperialism. The president could at least content himself with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize (1906). Despite gains for Japan, moreover, U.S. relations with the proud and newly assertive island nation would be intermittently difficult through the early decades of the 20th century.

Source Citation:
By 1910, a handful of colonial powers had carved up most of the world. This map shows each country's holdings.

Watch and Listen:
The Overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani

American Imperialism | Crash Course History

For Teachers:

Imperialism and the Spanish-American War Interactive lesson

Primary Sources:

Check for the Purchase of Alaska (1868)
from the National Archives

Joint Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States (1898)
from the National Archives

Platt Amendment (1903)
from the National Archives

The fifty-mile Panama Canal, shown here under construction in 1913, shortened travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific by weeks and realized a centuries-old dream of convenient sea travel from Europe to Asia. It was the most expensive construction project in U.S. history to that time, and more than 5,000 lives were lost to disease and accidents.
This cartoon in the Chicago Tribune portrayed Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines as dirty children knocking on Uncle Sam’s door.

![Cartoon](https://www.ncpedia.org/media/knocking-door)

This map of “Greater America” in 1899, shows the expanded territories and possessions of the United States after the Spanish-American War.

![Map](https://www.ncpedia.org/media/map-greater-america-1899)

3 January 2018

Source URL: https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/expansion-and-empire-1867

Links
2. [https://i.usaembassy.de/lestea/history/id7.html#braviken](https://i.usaembassy.de/lestea/history/id7.html#braviken)
3. [https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user/tags/pacific-0](https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user/tags/pacific-0)
4. [https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user/tags/pacific](https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user/tags/pacific)
5. [https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user/tags/philippines](https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user/tags/philippines)
6. [https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user/tags/panama-canal](https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user/tags/panama-canal)
7. [https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/military](https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/military)
8. [https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/history](https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/history)
9. [https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/diplomacy](https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/diplomacy)
10. [https://www.ncpedia.org/media/queen-liliuokalani-hawaii](https://www.ncpedia.org/media/queen-liliuokalani-hawaii)
15. [https://www.ncpedia.org/media/work-panama-canal-1913](https://www.ncpedia.org/media/work-panama-canal-1913)
16. [https://www.ncpedia.org/media/knocking-door](https://www.ncpedia.org/media/knocking-door)
17. [https://www.ncpedia.org/media/map-greater-america-1899](https://www.ncpedia.org/media/map-greater-america-1899)