**CHAPTER 20**

**Becoming a World Power**

**Learning Outcomes**

* 1. Explain the major reasons for the growing call in the late 1800s for the United States to develop an empire.

**Objectives**

1. Explain how the closing of the American frontier and the concept of Manifest Destiny contributed to a growing support for expansion outside the borders of the United States.

2. Discuss the various reasons for a growing imperialism in the United States during the late 1800s.

* 1. Describe the first moves the US made toward empire.

**Objectives**

1. Explain Alfred T. Mahan’s beliefs about the need for a strong navy, and discuss the resultant buildup of naval forces in the United States.

2. Explain America’s interest and involvement in Samoa, Hawai’i, and parts of Asia.

3. Describe American actions in Latin America, and explain the reasons given for intervention there.

* 1. Explain the major reasons for the Spanish-American War of 1898, and discuss the controversy over imperialism that developed after the war.

**Objectives**

1. Compare the perceived reasons for America precipitating the Spanish-American War, and discuss the “true” reasons for that conflict.

2. Describe Admiral Dewey’s actions in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War.

3. Describe the fighting that took place in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, and explain why it was occasionally referred to as a “splendid little war.”

4. Explain the results of the Spanish-American War and describe the opposing points of view in America about what to do concerning the Philippines.

5. Provide details of the growing resentment of America in the Philippines and Latin America after the Spanish-American War, and explain how the U.S. government attempted to diffuse the issues.

* 1. Describe the growth of American imperialism during the Progressive era.

**Objectives**

1. Explain how a growing trade with China and more involvement in Latin America helped make America into a world power by the early 1900s.

2. Discuss the lengthy process the United States went through to gain access to land and then construct the Panama Canal, and explain the importance of such a waterway.

* 1. Discuss World War I, including reasons for the war, American experiences during the war, and effects of the treaty ending the war.

**Objectives**

1. Discuss the issues that brought Europe to the brink of war by 1914, and describe the precipitating event that dragged the European countries into the war.

2. Describe the first years of the war in Europe, and explain America’s position up until 1917.

3. Explain what brought America into the war, evaluating the significance of the various contributing factors.

4. Explain how Wilson planned for peace even as he sent American troops to battle in Europe and describe how the conflict came to an end.

5. Analyze the major points of the Versailles Treaty, evaluate the degree to which it was a success and describe Wilson’s missteps along the way that kept America from fully participating in the treaty.

**Chapter Summary**

An American empire developed for various reasons. Proponents claimed that it was destiny for the U.S. to be an overseas power, especially after the frontier regions were tamed. Creating new markets appealed to the business sector, while Protestant missionaries hoped to make new converts in foreign lands. Geopolitical strategists worried that the expansion of foreign powers would cause a loss of American military capabilities if the U.S. did not respond.

Due to the desire to access Chinese markets, the beginnings of U.S. overseas expansion looked westward. Their goal was to sell American goods to the nations of Asia. After pushing for open markets in China and Japan, the U.S. claimed, purchased, and annexed Samoa, Alaska, and Hawai’i, respectively. The U.S. looked southward, establishing that the implementation of the Monroe Doctrine would lead to direct interventions in the nations of Latin America. The growth of U.S. interests overseas led to the call, most prominently by Alfred Thayer Mahan, for a boost of American naval power abroad. In addition, Mahan’s arguments about the importance of naval warfare led American strategists and policymakers to call for a stronger U.S. territorial presence.

The U.S. flexed its new naval power in a clash with Spain; as a result, the U.S. would soon possess new overseas territories. The Spanish-American War was ignited by Spain’s harsh treatment of the Cuban independence movement. Americans and Spaniards clashed on two major fronts: Cuba and the Philippines. On San Juan Hill, Theodore Roosevelt took advantage of the success of the African American and Rough Rider actions to press for the Spanish surrender. The Spanish forces in Cuba surrendered on July 17.

America’s fears of being similar to European imperialist nations and racist notions had stopped the annexation of the Philippines. However, continued U.S. occupation of the Philippines and Cuba sparked anti-American sentiments abroad. Small nations were fearful that America would never allow them to be independent, and so they fought back in ways that they could. Especially fierce was the bloody resistance waged by determined Filipino freedom fighters against the American Army in the Philippines where the latter force engaged in atrocities. Other Americans supplied humanitarian assistance to needy people abroad.

America started the twentieth century with policies that impacted other nations in Asia and Latin America. The U.S. helped force the Open Door policy on a weakened China. Theodore Roosevelt pushed for the creation of the Panama nation and canal. Any instability, real or perceived, in Latin America served as an excuse for American military intervention. On the eve of a major war, the U.S. still debated its proper role in the world. The belief that America’s interests ended at its oceans had been shattered.

After avoiding European conflict, the U.S. would get involved in the First World War. Imperial rivalries and an alliance system led to a European war after the assassination of an Austrian Archduke. The U.S. attempted to remain neutral, trading with any belligerent nation. This policy benefited the British and French; Germany responded by using their *U-boats* to sink American ships in the Atlantic. The German plan to involve Mexico caused the U.S. to enter the war.

The American population had mixed reactions to the war, leading to the government shaping public opinion and repressing dissenters. American intervention ended the war and President Wilson pushed his Fourteen Points as a postwar plan for Europe. Despite this popular support, however, Wilson ran into difficulties at the bargaining table, as the victorious Allies pursued very different ideas about how to shape the postwar world. In the end, Britain and France implemented the harsh Treaty of Versailles. In part due to Wilson’s intransigent position, the Americans did not join the postwar League of Nations. The president stubbornly refused to compromise and was crippled by a stroke while waging his campaign.

**Chapter Outline**

I. Why an American Empire?

A. Manifest Destiny and the End of the Frontier

B. Financial Reasons

C. Religious and Moral Reasons

D. Geopolitical Reasons

II. Beginnings

A. Pacific Acquisitions

1. Asia

2. Samoa

3. Alaska

4. Hawai’i

B. Latin America

C. The Naval Buildup

1. Mahan

2. Buildup

III. The Spanish-American War

A. War on Two Fronts

1. The Philippines

2. Filipino Independence?

3. Cuba

4. San Juan Hill

5. Spanish Surrender

B. Why Become an Empire? Anti-Imperialism at Home

1. Annex the Philippines?

2. The Anti-Imperialist League

3. The Election of 1900

C. Anti-Americanism Abroad

1. Filipino Resistance

2. Cuban Resentment

3. Humanitarian Assistance

IV. Progressive-Era Imperialism

A. Trade with China

1. Forcing the Open Door

B. The Panama Canal

1. Panamanian Revolt

2. Building the Canal

C. Policing Latin America

1. Instability as an American Problem

2. Mexico

D. America as a World Power

1. Isolationists

2. Realists

3. Idealists

V. World War I

A. The Reasons

1. Economic Competition

2. Alliances

3. The Spark

B. The European War

C. American Neutrality, 1914–1917

1. Compromised Neutrality

2. Neutral Trading?

D. Declaring War

1. The Zimmerman Note

2. Declaration of War

3. A Mixed Reaction

4. Forming Public Opinion

5. Hyphenated Americans

6. Wartime Repression

E. American Involvement in the War Effort, 1917–1918

1. The American Army in Battle

2. The Fourteen Points

F. Making Peace

1. Debating Peace

2. The Treaty of Versailles

3. Wilson’s Folly

4. A Weakened League

VI. Looking Ahead…

**Suggested Lecture Topics**

1. Frederick Jackson Turner and “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”

2. Early American Imperialism: Pros and Cons

3. Alfred T. Mahan’s Influence on America’s Naval Development

4. The Spanish-American War: A “Splendid Little War”?

5. America As a World Power—Problems and Benefits

6. “It Only Needs a Spark”—The Outbreak of World War I

7. America’s Move from Neutrality to Participation in the War

8. African Americans in the Armed Forces: Their involvement in the war effort and treatment in France.

9. Wilson’s Fourteen Points—An Evaluation of the War’s Outcome

10. Should America Have Joined the League of Nations?

**Research Topics—Projects and Papers**

Students might choose to complete a project to be presented in class or to write a more traditional research paper. Or the instructors could decide which they prefer to have them do. Below are a few topics that are relevant to this chapter. Instructors may, of course, choose to develop their own topics.

1. Gather statistics from the Census of 1890 and obtain a copy of the summary report written by the Director of the Census: Locate Frederick Jackson Turner’s paper, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” and extract from it Turner’s main thesis statement. How does it relate to the census figures? Prepare for a roundtable discussion in class.

2. Prepare a timeline of the major events in which America was involved between 1890 and 1920: Select the five most interesting ones, or those that students think were most significant for the country, and compile a notebook with a section for each. Include photos, maps, and a paragraph in which students explain the reasons for their choices.

3. Make a list of alliances, treaties, and ententes in which European countries became entangled in the decades leading up to World War I: Have a competition among the students to see who can find the most.

4. Prepare a two-page paper in which students will examine the extent to which American businessmen had invested in Cuba before the Spanish-American War.

5. Collect information from the Internet on well-known individuals in America who publicly supported American involvement in World War I but later came to regret it: Cull quotes that explain their reasons.

**Additional www Resources**

“The World of 1898: The Spanish American War.” Hispanic Division, Library of Congress.

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/>

“The Rough Riders Storm San Juan Hill, 1898.” EyeWitness to History.com.

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/roughriders.htm>

“Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen by Liliuokalani 1898.” Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1898. Online text at “A Celebration of Women Writers,” University of Pennsylvania.

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/liliuokalani/hawaii/hawaii.html>

First World War.com—this site has everything students might want to study about World War I.

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/>

**Primary Source Discussions**

**Assignment Name: Josiah Strong, Our Country (1885)**

*Introduction:* Josiah Strong’s Our Country (1885) advocates many of the theories justifying U.S. imperialism in late 19th century America. The author, a Protestant clergyman, believes that the Anglo-Saxon race, especially as it has developed in America, is the bearer of liberty and Christianity to the rest of the world. In this excerpt, Strong asserts that American imperial expansion is not only inevitable but is a positive duty as well. He cites both Charles Darwin and the Bible in support of his propositions.

*Visit this URL:* *http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth\_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/country.html*

[Josiah Strong, Our Country (1885)](http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/country.html)

*Instructions:* After reading the introduction and the primary source provided, answer the questions below.

1. Why did Strong believe that imperialism was good for the United States?

2. What ethnic group/race did he think was dominant, and what did he see as its duty?

3. How does Strong use the theory of evolution to bolster his assertions?

4. And how does Strong also make use of biblical passages?

5. In what ways does this document illustrate how racism fed the imperialist impulse?

**Assignment Name: Woodrow Wilson, Fourteen Points (1918)**

*Introduction:* The second reading for this chapter is President Woodrow Wilson’s address to Congress on January 8, 1918, in which he announced his “Fourteen Points.” The Fourteen Points stated Wilson’s objectives for the war and his goals for a peace settlement. They included the right of self-determination for all nation-states, promoting democracy, protecting the freedom of the seas, and the creation of a League of Nations to resolve international disputes. The Fourteen Points also included a declaration that there could be “peace without victory,” meaning that the combatants could end the war in a truce, without either side surrendering. However, only one of the Fourteen Points—the establishment of the League of Nations—was included in the Treaty of Versailles, which ultimately concluded the war. Despite this failure, however, many of the aims articulated in the Fourteen Points continued to guide U.S. foreign policy throughout the 20th century.

*Visit URL:* *http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth\_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/fourteen.html*

[Woodrow Wilson, Fourteen Points (1918)](http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/fourteen.html)

*Instructions:* After reading the introduction and the primary source provided, answer the questions below.

1. What does Wilson propose to do with the defeated European empires?

2. How do Wilson’s ideas promote democracy, freedom, and self-determination?

3. Did the victorious European powers accept Wilson’s Fourteen Points?

4. In what ways have the sentiments expressed in this speech affected foreign policy over the last century or so?