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EDITION

9th Edition

EXPERIENCE HISTORY

INTERPRETING AMERICA'S PAST



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Essential Knowledge

- Economic instability inspired agrarian activists to create the People's (Populist) Party, which called for a stronger governmental role in regulating the American economic system.
- The major political parties appealed to lingering divisions from the Civil War and contended over tariffs and currency issues, even as reformers argued that economic greed and self-interest had corrupted all levels of government.
- Imperialists cited economic opportunities, racial theories, competition with European empires, and the perception in the 1890s that the Western frontier was "closed" to argue that Americans were destined to expand their culture and institutions to peoples around the globe.
- The American victory in the Spanish–American War led to the U.S. acquisition of island territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific, an increase in involvement in Asia, and the suppression of a nationalist movement in the Philippines.

1877–1900



The Statue of the Republic, by sculptor Daniel Chester French, stood 65 feet tall and dominated the Court of Honor at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. The fair's exotic buildings, with their domes, minarets, and flags from all nations, showed how conscious Americans were becoming of the wider world.

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>> An American Story

"THE WORLD UNITED AT CHICAGO"

On May 1, 1893, nearly half a million people jostled into a dramatic plaza fronted on either side by gleaming white buildings overlooking a sparkling lagoon. Named the Court of Honor, the plaza was the center of a strange ornamental city that was at once awesome and entirely imaginary. At one end stood the Administration Building, whose magnificent white dome exceeded even the height of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Unlike the marble-built Capitol, however, this building was all surface: a stucco shell plastered onto a steel frame and then sprayed with white oil paint to make it glisten. Beyond the Court of Honor stretched thoroughfares encompassing over 200 colonnaded buildings, piers, islands, and watercourses.

Located five miles south of Chicago's central business district, this city of the imagination proclaimed itself the "World's Columbian Exposition" in honor of the 400th anniversary of Columbus's voyage to America and to herald the country's aspirations for a place among the great industrialized powers of the globe.



Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-3270]

| The fair was opened by President Grover Cleveland, lower right.

President Grover Cleveland opened the world's fair in a way that symbolized the nation's industrial transformation. He pressed a telegrapher's key. Instantly, electric current set 7,000 feet of shafting into motion, unfurling flags, setting fountains pumping, and lighting 10,000 electric bulbs. The lights played over an array of exhibition buildings soon known as the "White City."

One English visitor dismissed the displays within as little more than "the contents of a great dry

goods store mixed up with the contents of museums." In a sense he was right. Visitors paraded by an unending collection of typewriters, pins, watches, agricultural machinery, cedar canoes, and refrigerators, to say nothing of a map of the United States made entirely of pickles. But this riot of mechanical marvels, gewgaws, and bric-a-brac was symbolic too of the nation's industrial transformation. The fair resembled nothing so much as a tangible version of the new mail-order catalogs whose pages were introducing the goods of the city to the hinterlands.

The connections made by the fair were international as well. This event was the *World's Columbian Exposition*, with exhibits from 36 nations. Germany's famous arms manufacturer, Krupp, had its own separate building. It housed a 120-ton rifled gun. Easily within the range of its gunsights was a replica of the U.S. battleship *Illinois*, whose own bristling turrets stood just offshore of the exposition on Lake Michigan. At the fair's amusement park visitors encountered exotic cultures—not just temples, huts, and totems, but exhibits in the flesh. The Arabian village featured Saharan camels, veiled ladies, and elders in turbans. Nearby, Irish peasants boiled potatoes over turf fires while Samoan men threw axes.

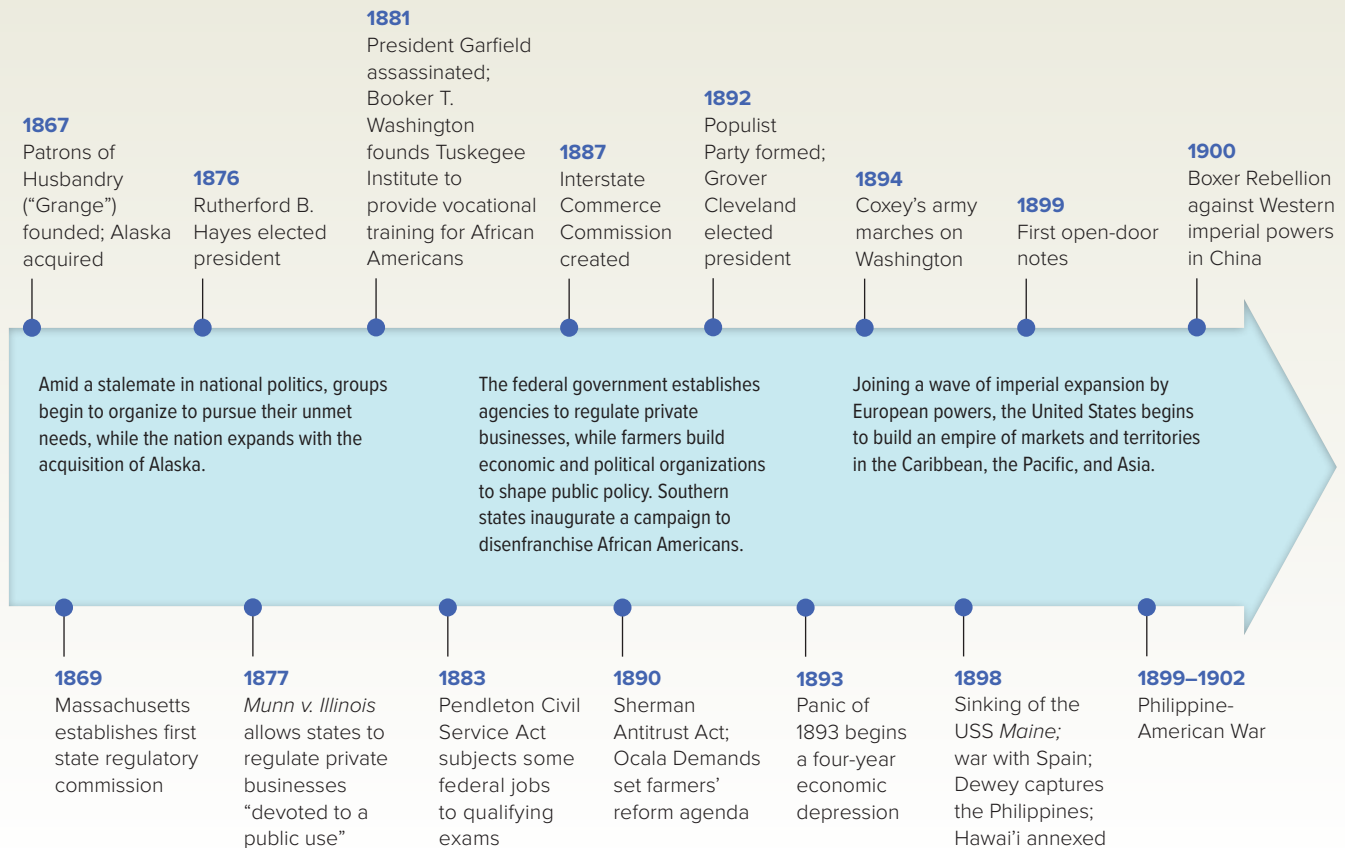
Like all such fairs, the Columbian Exposition created a fantasy. Beyond its boundaries the real world was showing signs of strain. Early in 1893 the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad had gone bankrupt, setting

off a financial panic. By the end of the year, nearly 500 banks and 15,000 businesses had failed. Although millions of tourists continued to marvel at the fair's wonders, crowds of worried and unemployed workers also gathered elsewhere in Chicago. On Labor Day, Governor John Altgeld of Illinois told a crowd that the government was powerless to soften the "suffering and distress" brought by this latest economic downturn.

In truth, the political system was ill-equipped to cope with the economic and social revolutions reshaping America. The executive branch remained weak, while members of Congress and the courts found themselves easily swayed by the financial interests of the industrial class. The crises of the 1890s strained the political order and forced it to confront such inequities.

The political system also had to take into account developments abroad. Industrialization had sent American businesses scurrying around the world in search of raw materials and markets. As that search intensified, many influential Americans argued that the United States needed to compete with European nations in acquiring territory overseas. By the end of the century the nation's political system had taken its first steps toward modernization, including a major political realignment at home and a growing empire abroad. The changes launched the United States into the twentieth century and an era of prosperity and global power. <<

THEMATIC TIMELINE



The Politics of Paralysis

DURING THE 1880s AND 1890s, as the American political system came under strain, Moisei Ostrogorski was traveling across the United States. Part of a flood of foreign observers, the Russian political scientist had come to see the new democratic experiment in action. His verdict was as blunt as it was widely shared: "the constituted authorities are unequal to their duty." It seemed that the glorious experiment had fallen victim to greed, indifference, and political mediocrity.

In fact, there were deeper problems: a great gulf between rich and poor; a wrenching cycle of boom and bust; the unmet needs of African Americans, Indians, women and other "others." Politics was the traditional medium of resolution, but it was grinding into a dangerous stalemate.

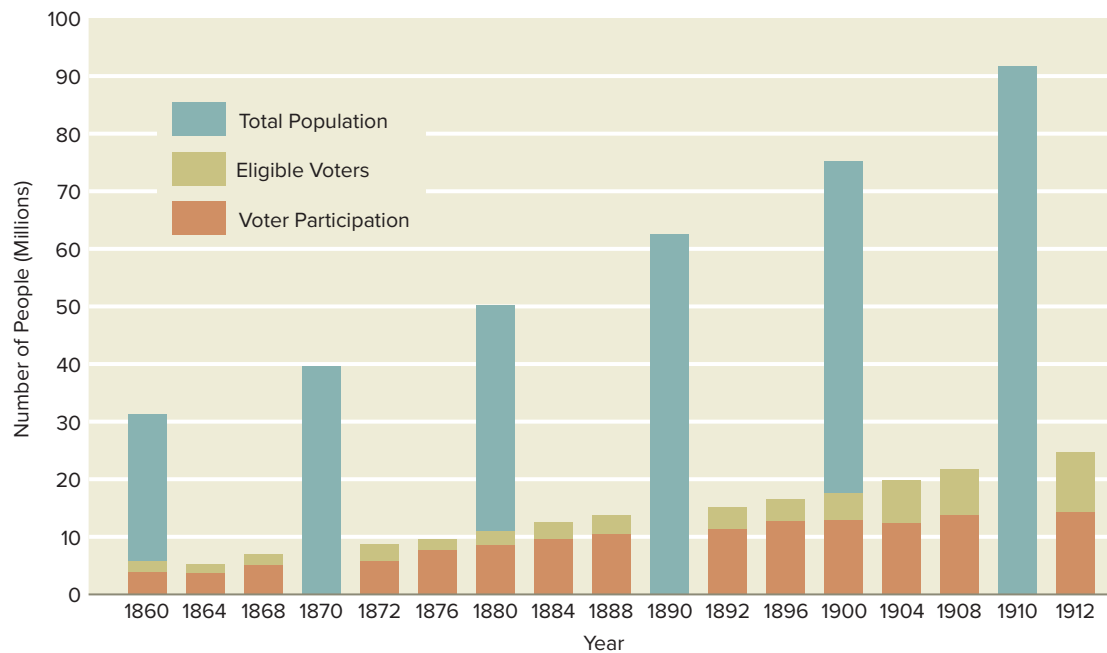
Political Stalemate

From 1877 to 1897 American politics rested on a delicate balance of power that left neither Republicans nor Democrats in

control. Republicans inhabited the White House for 12 years; Democrats, for 8. Margins of victory in presidential elections were paper thin. No president could count on having a majority of his party in both houses of Congress for his entire term. Usually Republicans controlled the Senate and Democrats the House of Representatives.

With elections tight, both parties worked hard to turn out voters. Brass bands, parades, cheering crowds of flag-wavers were "the order of the day and night from end to end of the country," reported a British visitor. When Election Day arrived, stores and businesses shut down. At political clubs and corner saloons men lined up for voting orders (along with free drinks) from ward bosses. Fields went untended as farmers took their families to town, cast their ballots, and bet on the outcome.

VOTER TURNOUT An average of nearly 80 percent of eligible voters turned out for presidential elections between 1860 and 1900, a figure higher than at any time since. New party discipline and organization helped to account for the turnout, but it is also true that the electorate made up a smaller percentage of the



The Voting Public, 1860–1912

Between 1860 and 1910 the population and the number of eligible voters increased nearly threefold. As reforms of the early twentieth century reduced the power of political machines and parties, the percentage of voter participation actually declined.

population. About one American in five actually voted in presidential elections from 1876 to 1892. Most voters were white males. Women could vote in national elections only in a few western states, and beginning in the 1880s, the South erected barriers that eventually disenfranchised many African Americans.

Party loyalty rarely wavered and was the key to electoral success. In every election 16 states could be counted on to vote Republican and 14 Democratic (the latter mainly in the South). In only six states—the most important being New York and Ohio—were the results in doubt.

The Parties

What inspired such loyalty? While Republicans and Democrats shared broad values, they also had major differences. Both parties supported business and condemned radicalism; neither offered embattled workers or farmers much help. Democrats believed in states' rights and limited government, while Republicans favored federal activism to foster economic growth. Their strength was in the industrial North. The stronghold of Democrats lay in the South, where they reminded voters that they had led the states of the Old Confederacy, “redeemed” them from Republican Reconstruction, and championed white supremacy. Republicans dominated the North with strong support from industry and business. They, too, invoked memories of the Civil War to secure votes, black as well as white. “Not every Democrat was a rebel,” they chanted, “but every rebel was a Democrat.”

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS FACTORS Ethnicity and religion cemented voter loyalty. Republicans relied on old-stock

Protestants, who feared new immigrants and put their faith in promoting pious behavior throughout society. In the Republican Party they found support for immigration restriction, prohibition, and English-only schools. In the North the Democratic Party attracted urban political machines, their immigrant voters, and the working poor. Often Catholic, these voters saw salvation in following their own religious rituals, not in dictating the conduct of others.

Outside the two-party system, reformers often fashioned political organizations of their own. Some groups aligned themselves behind issues rather than parties. Opponents of alcohol created the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1874) and the Anti-Saloon League (1893). Champions of women's rights joined the National Woman Suffrage Association (1890), a reunion of two branches of the women's suffrage movement that had split in 1869.

Like these political organizations, third political parties also crystallized around an issue or a group. Advocates of temperance rallied to the Prohibition Party (1869). Those who sought inflation of the currency formed the Greenback Party (1874). Angry farmers in the West and the South created the Populist, or People's, Party (1892). All drew supporters from both conventional parties, but as largely single-interest groups they mobilized minorities, not majorities.

The Issues

In Congress attention focused on well-worn issues: veterans' benefits, appointments, tariffs, and money. The presidency had been weakened by the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, the scandals

of Ulysses S. Grant, and the contested victory of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. So Congress enjoyed the initiative in making policy as the founders intended. Time after time legislators squandered it amid electioneering and party infighting or simply were swamped by the ever-increasing flood of proposed legislation.

Some divisive issues were the bitter legacy of the Civil War. Republicans and Democrats waved the symbolic “bloody shirt,” each tarring the other with responsibility for the war. The politics of the Civil War also surfaced in the lobbying efforts of veterans. The Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of more than 400,000 Union soldiers, petitioned Congress for pensions to make up for poor wartime pay and to support the widows and orphans of fallen comrades. By the turn of the century Union army veterans and their families were receiving \$157 million annually. It was one of the largest public assistance programs in American history. Unintentionally, it turned out to be one of the first government programs to offer benefits to African Americans and laid the foundations of the modern welfare state.

More important than veterans’ benefits was the campaign for a new method of staffing federal offices. From barely 53,000 employees at the end of the Civil War, the federal government had grown to 166,000 by the early 1890s. Far more of these new jobs required special skills. Dismantling the reigning **spoils system** proved difficult for politicians who had rewarded faithful supporters with government jobs regardless of their qualifications. American politics rested on such patronage. Without it, politicians—from presidents to lowly ward captains—feared they could attract neither workers nor money.

PENDLETON ACT It took the assassination of President James Garfield by a frustrated office seeker in 1881 to break the log jam. In 1883 the Civil Service Act, or Pendleton Act, created a bipartisan civil service commission to administer competitive examinations for some federal jobs. Later

| *New Yorkers gather to see the election returns in Manhattan’s Madison Square for the presidential election of 1888 between Democrat Grover Cleveland and Republican Benjamin Harrison. The New York Herald newspaper electrically projected the results on a large screen, proclaiming, “Harrison carries the State by 12000.” The narrow victory in New York gave Harrison enough electoral votes to win the presidency, despite losing the popular vote.*

©North Wind Picture Archives/Alamy



presidents expanded the number of positions covered by the system. By 1896 almost half of all federal workers came under civil service jurisdiction based on examination and merit.

The protective tariff also split Congress. As promoters of economic growth, Republicans usually championed this tax on imported goods to protect industries at home. Democrats, with their strength in the agrarian South, opposed such protectionism and generally sought to reduce tariffs in order to encourage freer trade, lower prices on manufactured goods, and cut the growing federal surplus. In 1890, when Republicans controlled the House of Representatives, Congress enacted the McKinley Tariff. It raised tariff rates to new highs and contained a novel twist called “reciprocity.” To promote less-restricted trade, the president could lower rates if other countries did the same.

GOLD, SILVER, AND GREENBACKS Just as divisive was the issue of currency. For most of the nineteenth century, currency was redeemable in both gold and silver. The need for more money during the Civil War had led Congress to issue “greenbacks”—currency printed on paper with a green back and not convertible to gold or silver. For the next decade and a half, Americans argued over whether to print more such paper money or take it out of circulation. Farmers and other debtors favored printing greenbacks as a way of inflating prices and thus reducing their debts. For the opposite reasons, bankers and creditors stood for “sound money” backed by the limited supply of gold to keep prices stable and interest rates (from which they drew their profits) high. Fear of **inflation** led Congress first to reduce the number of greenbacks and then in 1879 to make all remaining paper money convertible to gold.

CRIME OF '73 A more heated battle was developing over silver-backed money. By the early 1870s so little silver was being used that Congress officially stopped coining it in 1873, touching off a steep economic slide as the supply of money contracted and interest rates rose. With them came charges that a conspiracy of bankers had been responsible for “demonetizing” silver and wrecking the economy in what was widely referred to as the “Crime of '73.”

BLAND-ALLISON ACT In truth the money supply was inadequate to meet demand for the swelling number of manufactured goods. Interest rates—the charge for borrowing money—rose as consumers demanded more cash. Prices fell as too little money chased too many goods. All added to economic instability and increased calls for enlarging the supply of money. In 1878 the Bland-Allison Act inaugurated a limited form of silver coinage. But pressure for unlimited coinage of silver—coining all silver presented at U.S. mints—mounted as silver production quadrupled between 1870 and 1890. In 1890 the Sherman Silver Purchase Act obligated the government to buy 4.5 million ounces of silver every month. Paper tender called “treasury notes,” redeemable in gold or silver, paid for the purchases. The compromise satisfied both sides only temporarily. The price of silver fell, pushing less money into the economy than silver enthusiasts wanted but more than the advocates of gold liked.

| This cartoon, “The Tariff Tots,” portrays various trusts as ill-tempered children playing roughly with dolls representing the public, consumers, and small producers. Whenever reformers tried to reduce tariffs, political support for protection made the task nearly impossible. In 1882 Congress created a commission to consider lowering tariffs, but it was quickly captured by the interests who stood to gain most from high tariffs. Complained one senator: “There was a representative of the wool growers on the commission; . . . of the iron interest . . . of the sugar interest. . . . And those interests were very carefully looked out for.”

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ppmsca-25984]



The White House from Hayes to Harrison

From the 1870s through the 1890s a string of nearly anonymous presidents presided over the country. Not all were mere caretakers. Some tried to energize the office, but Congress continued to curb the president and control policy.

Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was the first of the “Ohio dynasty,” which included three presidents from 1876 to 1900. He moved quickly to end Reconstruction, but his pursuit of civil service reform ended only in splitting his party. Hayes left office after a single term, happy to be “out of a scrape.” In 1880 Republican James Garfield, another Ohioan, spent his first hundred days in the White House besieged by office hunters. After Garfield’s assassination only six months into his term, Chester A. Arthur, the “spoilsman’s spoilsman,” became president. To everyone’s surprise, the dapper Arthur turned out to be an honest president. He broke with machine politicians, worked to lower the tariff, warmly endorsed the new Civil Service Act, and reduced the federal surplus by beginning construction of a modern navy. Such evenhandedness left him little chance for renomination from divided party leaders in 1884.

THE DIRTY ELECTION OF 1884 The election of 1884 was one of the dirtiest ever recorded. Senator James G. Blaine fought off charges of corrupt dealings with the railroads, while Democrat Grover Cleveland, the former governor of New York, admitted to fathering an illegitimate child. In the last week of the race a New York minister labeled the Democrats the party of “Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion” (alcohol, Catholicism, and the Civil War). In reaction the Irish Catholic vote swung to Cleveland and with it New York and the election.

Cleveland was the first Democrat elected to the White House since James Buchanan in 1856 and was more active than many of his predecessors. He pleased reformers by

expanding the civil service. His devotion to gold-backed currency, economy, and efficiency earned him praise from business. He supported the growth of federal power by endorsing a new federal regulatory agency created by the Interstate Commerce Act (1887), new agricultural research, and federal arbitration of labor disputes.

Cleveland’s presidential activism nonetheless remained limited. He vetoed two of every three bills brought to him, more than twice the number of all his predecessors. Toward the end of his term, embarrassed by the large federal surplus, Cleveland finally reasserted himself by attacking the tariff, but to no avail. The Republican-controlled Senate blocked his attempt to lower it.

In 1888 Republicans nominated a sturdy defender of tariffs, Benjamin Harrison, the grandson of President William Henry Harrison. President Cleveland won a **plurality** of the popular vote but lost in the Electoral College. The “human iceberg” (as Harrison’s colleagues called him) worked hard and reasonably well with Congress, rarely delegated management, and turned the White House into a well-regulated office. He helped to shape the Sherman Silver Purchase Act (1890), kept up with the McKinley Tariff (1890), and accepted the Sherman Antitrust Act (1890) to limit the power and size of big businesses. At the end of Harrison’s term in 1893, Congress completed its most productive session of the era and enacted the nation’s first billion-dollar peacetime budget.

Ferment in the States and Cities

Despite its growing expenditures and more legislation, most people expected little from the federal government. Few newspapers even bothered to send correspondents to Washington. Public pressure to curb the excesses of the new industrial order mounted closer to home, in state and city governments. Experimental and often effective, state programs began to grapple with the problems of corporate power, discriminatory shipping rates, political corruption, and urban decay.



©The Granger Collection, New York

A Chinese laborer, holding his queue of long hair in hand, proudly displays patches in support of the 1888 Democratic presidential candidate, Grover Cleveland, and his running mate, Allen G. Thurman. Cleveland and Thurman lost to Benjamin Harrison and Levi P. Morton, a wealthy New York banker. After his victory Harrison, a pious Presbyterian, grabbed the hand of Senator Matthew Quay and crowed, "Providence has given us the victory." "Providence hadn't a damn thing to do with it," Quay said later, irked that Harrison seemed to have no idea how many Republicans "were compelled to approach the gates of the penitentiary to make him President."

STATE COMMISSIONS Starting in 1869 with Massachusetts, states established commissions to investigate and regulate industry, especially railroads, America's first big business. By the turn of the century almost two-thirds of the states had them. These weak commissions gathered and publicized information on shipping rates and business practices and furnished advice about public policy. On the West Coast and in the Midwest, state legislatures empowered commissions to end rebates and monitor freight rates. Illinois in 1870 became the first of several states to define railroads as public highways subject to regulation, including setting maximum rates.

NATIONAL MUNICIPAL LEAGUE Concern over political corruption and urban blight led reformers to hold state municipal conventions to address urban problems. Iowa convened the first one in 1877. Philadelphia sponsored a national conference on good city government in 1894. A year later reformers founded the National Municipal League. It soon had more than 200 branches. Its model city charter advanced such farsighted reforms as separate city and state elections, limited contracts for utilities, and more authority for mayors. Meanwhile, cities and states in the

Midwest enacted laws closing stores on Sundays, prohibiting the sale of alcohol, and making English the language of public schools—all in an effort to standardize social behavior and control the habits of new immigrants.

AP TEST REVIEW

What factors led to the paralysis in the late nineteenth century?

The Revolt of the Farmers

IN 1890 THE POLITICS OF stalemate cracked as the patience of farmers across the South and the western plains reached an end. Beginning in the 1880s a sharp depression drove down agricultural prices and forced thousands from their land. But farmers suffered from a great deal more, including heavy mortgages, widespread poverty, and railroad rates that sometimes discriminated against them. In 1890 their resentment boiled over. An agrarian revolt—called **Populism**—swept across the political landscape and helped break the political stalemate of the previous 20 years.



Source: Cornell University Library, Ithaca, NY

Mary Shelley's novel of a man-made monster who turns against its creator strikes the theme for this 1874 cartoon titled "The American Frankenstein." Here, the railroad is a monstrous creation that crushes the common people in its path. It carries the symbols of wealth and might—a cloak of ermine and a club of capital. "Agriculture, commerce, and manufacture are all in my power," the monster bellows in the caption. Figures of authority, like the policeman at the lower right, can only snap to attention and salute.

The Harvest of Discontent

TARGETS OF FARM ANGER The revolt of the farmers stirred first on the southern frontier, spreading eastward from Texas through the rest of the Old Confederacy, then west across the plains. Farmers blamed their troubles on obvious inequalities: manufacturers protected by the tariff, railroads with sky-high shipping rates, wealthy bankers who held their mounting debts, expensive intermediaries who stored and processed their commodities. All seemed to profit at the expense of farmers.

The true picture was more complex. The tariff protected industrial goods but also supported some farm commodities such as wool and sugar. Railroad rates, however high, actually fell from 1865 to 1890. Although mortgages were heavy, most were short, no more than four years. Farmers often refinanced them and used the money to buy more land and machinery, thus increasing their debts. Millers and operators of grain elevators or storage silos earned handsome profits, yet every year more of them came under state regulation.

In hard times, when debts mounted and children went hungry, complexity mattered little. And in the South many poor farmers seemed condemned forever to hard times. Credit lay at the root of their problem, because most southern farmers had to borrow money to plant and harvest their crops. The inequities of sharecropping and the crop-lien system (Chapter 18) forced them into debt. When the prices for their crops fell they borrowed still more, stretching the financial resources of the South beyond their meager limits. Within a few years after the Civil War, Massachusetts's banks had five times as much money as all the banks of the Old Confederacy.

Beginning in the 1870s nearly 100,000 debt-ridden farmers a year picked up stakes across the Deep South and fled to Texas to escape this ruinous system of credit, only to find it waiting for them. Others stood and fought, as one pamphlet exhorted in 1889, "not with glittering musket, flaming sword and deadly cannon, but with the silent, potent and all-powerful ballot."

The Origins of the Farmers' Alliance

PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY Before farmers could vote together, they had to get together. Life on the farm was harsh, drab, and isolated. Such conditions shocked Oliver Hudson Kelley as he traveled across the South after the Civil War. In 1867 the young government clerk founded the Patrons of Husbandry to brighten the lives of isolated farmers and broaden their horizons. Local chapters, called "granges," brought a dozen or so farmers and their families together to pray, sing, and learn new farming techniques. The Grangers sponsored fairs, picnics, dances, lectures—anything to break the bleakness of farm life. By 1875 there were 800,000 members in 20,000 locals, most in the Midwest, South, and Southwest.

At first Grangers swore off politics. But in a pattern often repeated, socializing led to economic and then political

action. Pooling their money to buy supplies and equipment to store and market their crops, Grangers could avoid the high charges of intermediaries. By the early 1870s they also were lobbying midwestern legislatures to adopt "Granger laws" regulating rates charged by railroads, grain elevator operators, and other middlemen.

GRANGER CASES Eight "Granger cases" came before the Supreme Court in the 1870s to test the new regulatory measures. *Munn v. Illinois* (1877) upheld the right of Illinois to regulate private property (in this case, the giant silos for storing grain) as long as it was "devoted to a public use." Later decisions allowed state regulation of railroads, but only within state lines. Congress responded in 1887 by creating the Interstate Commerce Commission, a federal agency that could regulate commerce across state boundaries. In practice it had little power, but it was a key step toward establishing the public right to oversee private companies.

SOUTHERN ALLIANCE Slumping prices in the 1870s and 1880s bred new farm organizations. Slowly they blended into what the press called the "Alliance movement." The Southern Alliance, formed in Texas in 1875, spread rapidly after Dr. Charles W. Macune took command in 1886. A doctor and lawyer as well as a farmer, Macune planned to expand the state's network of local chapters, or suballiances, into a national network of state Alliance Exchanges. Like the Grangers the exchanges pooled their resources in jointly owned enterprises for buying and selling, milling and storing, banking and manufacturing.

For a brief period, between 1886 and 1892, the Alliance cooperatives grew to more than a million members throughout the South and challenged accepted ways of doing business. Macune claimed that his new Texas Exchange saved members 40 percent on plows and 30 percent on wagons. But most Alliance cooperatives were managed by farmers without the time or experience to succeed. Usually opposed by irate local merchants, the ventures eventually failed.

COLORED FARMERS' ALLIANCE Although the Southern Alliance admitted no African Americans, it encouraged them to organize. A small group of black and white Texans founded the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union in 1886. By 1891 a quarter of a million farmers had joined. Its operations were largely secret, because public action often brought swift retaliation from white supremacists. When the Colored Farmers' Alliance organized a strike of black cotton pickers near Memphis in 1891, white mobs hunted down and lynched 15 strikers. The murders went unpunished, and the Colored Alliance began to founder.

The Alliance Peaks

The key to Alliance success was not organization but leadership, both at the top and in the middle. Alliance



Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ppmsca-28914]

The political and social turbulence of the era is reflected in this cartoon of a businessman being tossed and buffeted by agrarian Populists and “Silverites” as well as Republicans and Democrats.

lecturers fanned out across the South and the Great Plains, organizing suballiances and teaching new members about finance and cooperative businesses. At least one-quarter of Alliance members were women. The Alliance movement continued the old Grange practice of sponsoring family-oriented activities, such as songfests, parades, picnics, and even burial services. Although the Alliance remained sharply divided over woman suffrage, more than a few women became speakers and organizers. “Wimmin is everywhere,” noted one observer. The comment seemed to apply literally to Alliance member Mary Elizabeth Lease, who in the summer of 1890 alone gave 160 speeches.

Ocala Demands In 1890 members of the Alliance met in Ocala, Florida, and issued the “Ocala Demands.” The manifesto reflected their deep distrust of “the money power”—large corporations and banks whose financial clout gave them the ability to manipulate markets. The Ocala Demands called on government to correct such abuses by reducing tariffs, abolishing national banks, regulating railroads, and coining silver money freely. The platform also demanded a federal income tax to bring down high

property taxes and the popular election of senators to make government more responsive to the public.

The most innovative feature of the platform came from Charles Macune. His “subtreasury system” would have required the federal government to furnish warehouses for harvested crops and low-interest loans to tide farmers over until prices rose. Under such a system farmers would no longer have had to sell in a glutted market, as they did under the crop-lien system. And they could have exerted control over the money supply, expanding it simply by borrowing at harvest time.

In the elections of 1890 the old parties faced hostile farmers across the nation. In the South the Alliance continued to work within the Democratic Party and elected 4 governors, won 8 legislatures, and sent 44 members of Congress and 3 senators to Washington. In the Great



Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-5343]

This illustration by artist W. W. Denslow, titled “You Ought to Be Ashamed of Yourself,” is from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, published in 1900 by L. Frank Baum. It was the first of 14 best-selling books on the mythical land. Although Baum claimed only to be telling children’s stories, some readers have found a symbolic resemblance to the Populist politics of the day. The “yellow brick road” is the gold standard, they say, leading to a place of false promises (the Emerald City of Oz) under the spell of a bellowing politician (the Wizard), who is exposed by the Scarecrow (farmers), the Tin Man (laborers), and the Lion (the Populists).

Plains, Alliance candidates drew farmers from the Republican Party. Newly created farmer parties elected 5 representatives and 2 senators in Kansas and South Dakota and took over both houses of the Nebraska legislature.

In the West especially, Alliance organizers began to dream of a national third party that would be free from the corporate influence, sectionalism, and racial tensions that split Republicans and Democrats. In their minds it would be a party not just of farmers but also of the downtrodden and the “toilers,” including industrial workers.

THE PEOPLE’S PARTY In February 1892, as the presidential election year began, a convention of 900 labor, feminist, farm, and other reform delegates (100 of them black) met in St. Louis. They founded the People’s, or Populist, Party and called for another convention to nominate a presidential ticket. Initially southern Populists held back, clinging to their strategy of working within the Democratic Party. But when newly elected Democrats failed to support Alliance programs, southern leaders such as Tom Watson of Georgia abandoned the Democrats and began recruiting black and white farmers for the Populists. Although he was a wealthy farmer, Watson sympathized with the poor of both races.

The national convention of Populists met in Omaha, Nebraska, on Independence Day, 1892. Their impassioned platform promised to return government “to the hands of ‘the plain people.’” More-conservative southern Populists succeeded in blocking a plank for woman suffrage, though western Populists joined the campaign that would win women the right to vote in Colorado in 1893. Planks advocated the subtreasury plan, unlimited coinage of silver and expansion of the money supply, direct election of senators, an income tax, as well as government ownership of railroads, telegraph, and telephone. To attract wage earners the party endorsed the eight-hour workday, restriction of immigration, and a ban on the use of Pinkerton detectives in labor disputes—for the Pinkertons had engaged in a savage gun battle with strikers that year at Andrew Carnegie’s Homestead steel plant. Delegates rallied behind the old greenbacker and Union general James B. Weaver, carefully balancing their presidential nomination with a one-legged Confederate veteran as his running mate.

The Election of 1892

The Populists enlivened the otherwise dull campaign of 1892, as Democrat Grover Cleveland and Republican incumbent Benjamin Harrison refought the election of 1888. This time Cleveland won, and for the first session since the Civil War, Democrats gained control of both houses of Congress. The Populists, too, enjoyed success. Weaver became the first third-party candidate to poll over 1 million votes in a presidential contest. Populists elected 3 governors, 5 senators, 10 representatives, and nearly 1,500 members of state legislatures.

LONG-TERM WEAKNESSES OF THE POPULISTS

Despite these short-term strengths, the election revealed dangerous longer-term weaknesses in the People’s Party. Across the nation thousands of voters did change political affiliations, but most often from the Republicans to the Democrats, not to the Populists. No doubt a Democratic Party campaign of intimidation and repression hurt the People’s Party in the South, where white conservatives had been appalled by Tom Watson’s open courtship of black southerners. (“You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings,” Watson had told his racially mixed audiences.) In the North, Populists failed to win over labor and most city dwellers. Both parties were more concerned with family budgets than with the problems of farmers and the downtrodden.

The darker side of Populism also put off many Americans. Its rhetoric was often violent; it spoke ominously of conspiracies and stridently in favor of immigration restriction. In fact, in 1892 the Alliance lost members, an omen of defeats to come. But for the present the People’s Party had demonstrated two conflicting truths: it showed how far from the needs of many ordinary Americans the two parties had drifted and how difficult it would be to break their power.

AP TEST REVIEW

How did the Farmers’ Alliance and the People’s Party attempt to resolve the problems faced by farmers?

The New Realignment

ON MAY 5, 1893, ONLY four days after President Grover Cleveland opened the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a wave of bankruptcies swamped the economy. Overexpansion led to a massive economic contraction and once again set in motion the boom-and-bust business cycle that ruined major firms and drove stock prices to all-time lows. By the time the exposition’s gleaming White City shut its doors in October, nearly 200,000 workers had lost their jobs in Chicago alone. Millions more across the nation shared that fate in what became the worst depression the Republic had ever experienced.

The sharp contrast between the White City and the nation’s economic misery demonstrated the inability of the political system to smooth out the economy’s cycle of boom and bust. The new industrial order that had linked Americans economically had brought prosperity in the 1880s. But in 1893 the price of interdependence became obvious, as a downturn in one sector of the economy quickly affected others. With no way to control the swings in the business cycle, depression came on a scale as large as that of the booming prosperity. Out of it emerged a new political realignment that left the Republican Party in control of national politics for decades to come.

What Should the Government Do?

In 1887 President Grover Cleveland vetoed the "Texas Seed Bill," legislation designed to aid drought-stricken Texas farmers through the natural disaster (Document 1). Four years later, Nebraska farmer W. M. Taylor made a desperate plea for help in the face of natural and man-made disasters (Document 2).

DOCUMENT 1

Government Should Not Help Individuals: President Grover Cleveland

It is represented that a long-continued and extensive drought has existed in certain portions of the State of Texas, resulting in a failure of crops and consequent distress and destitution. Though there has been some difference in statements concerning the extent of the people's needs in the localities thus affected, there seems to be no doubt that there has existed a condition calling for relief; and I am willing to believe that, notwithstanding the aid already furnished, a donation of seed grain to the farmers located in this region, to enable them to put in new crops, would serve to avert a continuance or return of an unfortunate blight.

And yet I feel obliged to withhold my approval of the plan as proposed by this bill, to indulge a benevolent and charitable sentiment through the appropriation of public funds for that purpose.

I can find no warrant for such an appropriation in the Constitution, and I do not believe that the power and duty of the general government ought to be extended to the relief of individual suffering which is in no manner properly related to the public service or benefit. A prevalent tendency to disregard the limited mission of this power and

duty should, I think, be steadfastly resisted, to the end that the lesson should be constantly enforced that, though the people support the government, the government should not support the people.

The friendliness and charity of our countrymen can always be relied upon to relieve their fellow citizens in misfortune. This has been repeatedly and quite lately demonstrated. Federal aid in such cases encourages the expectation of paternal care on the part of the government and weakens the sturdiness of our national character, while it prevents the indulgence among our people of that kindly sentiment and conduct which strengthens the bonds of a common brotherhood.

It is within my personal knowledge that individual aid has, to some extent, already been extended to the sufferers mentioned in this bill. The failure of the proposed appropriation of \$10,000 additional, to meet their remaining wants, will not necessarily result in continued distress if the emergency is fully made known to the people of the country.

It is here suggested that the Commissioner of Agriculture is annually directed to expend a large sum of money for the purchase, propagation, and distribution of

seeds and other things of this description, two-thirds of which are, upon the request of senators, representatives, and delegates in Congress, supplied to them for distribution among their constituents.

The appropriation of the current year for this purpose is \$100,000, and it will probably be no less in the appropriation for the ensuing year. I understand that a large quantity of grain is furnished for such distribution, and it is supposed that this free apportionment among their neighbors is a privilege which may be waived by our senators and representatives.

If sufficient of them should request the Commissioner of Agriculture to send their shares of the grain thus allowed them, to the suffering farmers of Texas, they might be enabled to sow their crops; the constituents, for whom in theory this grain is intended, could well bear the temporary deprivation, and the donors would experience the satisfaction attending deeds of charity.

Source: President Grover Cleveland Vetoes Disaster Relief Legislation, February 16, 1887, as reprinted in Watts, J. F. & Israel, Fred, eds., *Presidential Documents: The Speeches, Proclamations, and Policies That Have Shaped the Nation from Washington to Clinton*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2000, 164–165.

DOCUMENT 2

Farmers' Problems Are Beyond Their Control: W. M. Taylor

This season is without a parallel in this part of the country. The hot winds burned up the entire crop, leaving thousands of families wholly destitute, many of whom might have been able to run through this crisis had it not been for the galling yoke put on them by the money loaners and sharks—not by charging 7 per cent per annum, which is the lawful rate of interest of even 10 per cent, but the unlawful and inhuman country destroying rate of 3 per cent a month, some going still farther and charging 50 per cent per annum. We are cursed, many of us financially, beyond redemption, not by the hot winds so much as by the swindling game of the bankers and money loaners, who have taken the money and now are after the property, leaving the farmer moneyless and homeless. . . .

I have borrowed for example \$1,000. I pay \$25 besides to the commission man. I give my note and second mortgage of 3 per cent of the \$1,000, which is \$30 more. Then I pay 7 per cent on the \$1,000 to the actual loaner. Then besides all this I pay for appraising the land, abstract, recording, etc., so when I have secured my loan I am out the first year \$150. Yet I am told by the agent who loans me the money, he can't stand to loan at such low rates. This is on the farm, but now come the chattel loan. I must have \$50 to save myself. I get the money; my note is made payable in thirty or sixty days for \$35, secured by chattel of two horses, harness and wagon, about five times the value of the note. The time comes to pay, I ask for a few days. No I can't wait; must have

the money. If I can't get the money, I have the extreme pleasure of seeing my property taken and sold by this iron handed money loaner while my family and I suffer.

Source: W. M. Taylor Letter to Editor, *Farmer's Alliance* (Lincoln), January 10, 1891, Nebraska Historical Society, reprinted in Marcus, Robert D. & Burner, David, eds., *America Firsthand*, Vol. II. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992, 90.

THINKING CRITICALLY: DBQ PRACTICE

What is the role of government, according to President Grover Cleveland, in subsidizing farmers? Besides seeds or money, what might W.M. Taylor want from the government?



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Charles Dana Gibson, the Massachusetts-born illustrator famous for his portraits of well-bred young women in the 1890s, tackles a different subject in this ink drawing, a bread line of mixed classes during the depression of 1893.

The Depression of 1893

Railroad baron and descendant of two presidents Charles Francis Adams Jr. called the depression a “convulsion,” but the country experienced it as crushing idleness. In August 1893 unemployment stood at 1 million; by the middle of 1894 it was 3 million. At the end of the year nearly one worker in five was out of a job.

Working- and middle-class families took in boarders, laundry, and sewing to make ends meet. With so many fathers and husbands unemployed, more wives and children left home to work. In the 1890s the number of laboring women increased, from 4 million to 5.3 million, but mainly in the exploitative fields of domestic and clerical work. In the South, where half the nation’s working children were employed, child labor rose by 160 percent in textile mills during the decade. Concern for the young became so acute that middle-class women created the League for the Protection of the Family in 1896. Among other things it advocated compulsory education to keep children out of factories and mines.

The federal government had no program to combat the effects of the depression. “While the people should patriotically and cheerfully support their Government,” President Cleveland had said at his inauguration, “its functions do not include the support of the people.” The states offered little more. Relief, like poverty, was considered a private matter. The burden fell on local charities, benevolent societies, churches, labor unions, and ward bosses. In city after city citizens organized relief committees to distribute bread and clothing until their meager resources gave out.

Others were less charitable. As the popular preacher Henry Ward Beecher told his congregation, “No man in this land suffers from poverty unless it be more than his fault—unless it be his sin.” But the scale of hardship was so great, its targets so random, that anyone could be thrown out of work—an industrious neighbor, a factory foreman with 20 years on the

job, a bank president. Older attitudes about personal guilt and responsibility for poverty began to give way to new ideas about its social origins and the obligation of public agencies to help.

The Rumbblings of Unrest

Even before the depression, rumbblings of unrest had begun to roll across the country. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 ignited nearly two decades of labor strife (Chapter 19). After 1893 discontent mounted as employers cut wages, laid off employees, and closed factories. During the first year of the depression 1,400 strikes sent more than half a million workers from their jobs. It was the closest the country had ever come to class warfare.

COXEY’S ARMY Uneasy business executives and politicians saw radicalism and the possibility of revolution in every strike. But the depression of 1893 had unleashed a more elemental force: popular discontent. In the spring of 1894, it focused on government inaction. On Easter Sunday, “General” Jacob Coxey, a 39-year-old Populist and factory owner, launched the “Tramps’ March on Washington” from Massillon, Ohio. His “Commonweal Army of Christ”—some 500 men, women, and children—descended on Washington to offer “a petition with boots on” for a federal program of public works. On May 1, Coxey’s troops, armed with “clubs of peace,” massed at the foot of the Capitol. When Coxey entered the Capitol grounds, 100 mounted police routed the protesters and arrested the general for trespassing on the grass. Nothing significant came of the protest, other than to signal a growing demand for federal aid.

Federal help was not to be found. President Cleveland had barely moved into the White House when the depression struck. The country blamed him; he blamed silver. In his view the Sherman Silver Purchase Act (1890) had shaken business confidence by forcing the government to use its shrinking reserves of gold to purchase (though not to coin) silver. Repeal of the act, Cleveland believed, was the way to build gold reserves and restore confidence. After bitter debates Congress complied. The economic tinkering only strengthened the resolve of “silverites” in the Democratic Party to overwhelm Cleveland’s conservative “gold” wing.

Worse for the president, repeal of silver purchases brought no economic revival and cost the Democrats seats in Congress. In the short run, abandoning silver hurt the economy by shrinking the money supply just when expansion might have stimulated it by providing needed credit. As panic and unemployment spread, Cleveland’s popularity wilted. Democrats were buried in the congressional elections of 1894. Dropping moralistic reforms and stressing national activism, Republicans won control of both the House and the Senate. With the Democrats now confined to the South, the politics of stalemate was over. All that remained for the Republican Party was to capture the White House in 1896.

The Battle of the Standards

The campaign of 1896 quickly became known as the “battle of the standards”—a reference to the burning question of whether gold alone or gold and silver should be the monetary

standard. Most Republicans saw gold as the stable base for building business confidence and economic prosperity. They adopted a platform calling for “sound money” supported by gold alone. Their candidate, Governor William McKinley of Ohio, cautiously supported the gold plank and firmly believed in high tariffs to protect American industry.

FREE SILVER Silverites campaigned for “free and independent” coinage of silver, in which the Treasury freely minted all the silver presented to it, independent of other nations. The supply of money would increase, prices would rise, and the economy would revive—or so the silverites’ theory held. But the free silver movement was more than a monetary theory. It was a symbolic protest of region and class—of the agricultural South and West against the commercial Northeast, of debt-ridden farm folk against industrialists and financiers.

“CROSS OF GOLD” SPEECH Silverites controlled the Democratic National Convention from the start. They paraded with silver banners, wore silver buttons, and wrote a plank into the platform calling for free and unlimited coinage of the metal. The high point came when William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska stepped to the lectern, threw back his head, and offered himself to “a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity.” The crowd was in a near frenzy as he reached the dramatic climax and spread his arms in mock crucifixion: “You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.” No condemnation of a single gold standard could have been stronger. The next day the convention nominated him for the presidency.

Populists were in a quandary. They expected the Democrats to stick with the pro-gold Cleveland and send unhappy silverites headlong into their camp. Instead, the Democrats stole their thunder. “If we fuse [with the Democrats] we are sunk,” complained one Populist. “If we don’t fuse, all the silver men we have will leave us for the more powerful Democrats.” At a bitter convention, fusionists nominated Bryan for president. The best antifusionists could do was drop the Democrats’ vice presidential candidate in favor of the fiery agrarian rebel from Georgia, Tom Watson.

Bryan knew he faced an uphill battle. Adopting a more active style that would be imitated in future campaigns, he traveled 18,000 miles by train, gave as many as 30 speeches a day, and reached perhaps 3 million people in 27 states. The nomination of the People’s Party actually did more harm than good by labeling Bryan a Populist (which he was not) and a radical (which he definitely was not). Devoted to the “plain people,” the Great Commoner spoke for rural America and Jeffersonian values: small farmers, small towns, small government.

McKinley knew he could not compete with Bryan’s barnstorming, so he contented himself with sedate speeches from his front porch in Canton, Ohio. There thousands of his supporters flocked regularly to hear him promise a “full dinner pail” for everyone. The folksy appearance of the campaign belied its reality. From the beginning it had been engineered by Marcus Alonzo Hanna, a talented Ohio industrialist. Hanna relied on modern techniques of organization and marketing. He advertised McKinley, said Theodore Roosevelt, “as if he were patent medicine.” Hanna also saturated the country with

millions of leaflets, along with 1,400 speakers attacking free trade and free silver. McKinley won in a walk, the first president since Ulysses Grant to win a majority of the popular vote.

REPUBLICAN COALITION The election proved to be one of the most critical in the Republic’s history.* Over the previous three decades political life had been characterized by vibrant campaigns, slim party margins, high voter turnout, and low-profile presidents. The election of 1896 signaled a new era of dwindling party loyalties, stronger presidents, and Republican rule. McKinley’s victory broke the political stalemate and forged a powerful coalition that dominated politics for the next 30 years. It rested on the industrial cities of the Northeast and Midwest and combined old support from business, farmers, and Union army veterans with broader backing from industrial wage earners. The Democrats controlled little but the South. And the Populists vanished, but not before leaving a compound legacy: as a catalyst for political realignment, a cry for federal action from the South and the West, and a prelude to a new age of reform.

The Rise of Jim Crow Politics

In 1892, despite the stumping of such Populists as Tom Watson, African Americans cast their ballots for Republicans, when they were permitted to vote freely. But increasingly, their voting rights were being curtailed across the South.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, a long-standing racialism—categorizing people on the basis of race—deepened. The arrival of “new” immigrants from eastern and southern Europe and the acquisition of new overseas colonies highlighted differences among races and helped encourage prejudices that stridently justified segregation and other forms of racial control. In the South racialism was enlisted into a political purpose: preventing an alliance of poor blacks and whites that might topple white conservative Democrats. The white supremacy campaign, on the face of it directed at African Americans, also had a broader target in the world of politics: rebellion from below, whether black or white.

DISENFRANCHISEMENT Mississippi, whose Democrats had led the move to “redeem” their state from Republican Reconstruction, in 1890 took the lead in disenfranchising or depriving African Americans of the right to vote. A new state constitution required voters to pay a poll tax and pass a literacy test, requirements that eliminated the great majority of black voters. Conservative Democrats favored the plan because it also reduced voting among poor whites, who were most likely to join opposition parties. Before the new constitution went into effect, Mississippi contained more than 250,000 eligible voters, black and white. By 1892, after its adoption, there were fewer than 77,000.

*Five elections, in addition to the contest of 1896, are often cited as critical shifts in voter allegiance and party alignments: the Federalist defeat of 1800, Andrew Jackson’s rise in 1828, Lincoln’s Republican triumph of 1860, Al Smith’s Democratic loss in 1928, and—perhaps—Ronald Reagan’s conservative tide of 1980.

Pinning the Winning Ticket

A lunch box (or “dinner pail”) used by workmen



What are the advantages of this transparent plastic (celluloid) button?

The back of the button includes a metal pin, allowing the button to be easily affixed to clothing

©The Frent Collection/Getty Images

Sometimes even the smallest objects yield a wealth of information to historians. This button from the presidential election of 1900 displays the names of running mates William McKinley (for president) and Theodore Roosevelt (for vice president), along with their campaign slogan, a repetition of the promise McKinley made in his first successful bid for the presidency four years earlier. Celluloid buttons first appeared in the presidential election of 1896. Cheap and easy to produce, they quickly turned

into electioneering staples and signaled a shift from big political rallies and emotional appeals to promotional campaigns based on education and advertising. The Ohio industrialist Mark Hanna pioneered many of these practices, including the use of short newsreel films of the candidate, when he managed McKinley's run for the White House in 1896. In 1900 McKinley's running mate Theodore Roosevelt at first deplored the unvarnished marketing of candidates. Still, the techniques worked. Celluloid buttons

became the fastest-growing article in the history of American political campaigns.

THINKING CRITICALLY: SOURCING AND SITUATION

What slogan is on the pin and to which voting groups might this appeal? What were the issues in the Presidential Election of 1900?

Soon an all-white combination of conservatives and “reformers”—those disgusted by frequent election-stealing with blocs of black votes—passed disenfranchisement laws across the South. In 1898 the Supreme Court upheld these laws in *Williams v. Mississippi*, ruling that they were valid because they did not discriminate solely against African Americans. The decision dealt a mortal blow to the Republican Party in the South for generations because much of its support in the region came from African Americans. By 1908 white-supremacy and disenfranchisement campaigns had won in every southern state, barring many poor whites as well as blacks from voting.

The disenfranchisement campaign succeeded in achieving its broad aim of splitting rebellious whites from blacks, as the tragic fate of Tom Watson demonstrated. Only a dozen years after his

biracial campaign of 1892, Watson was promoting black disenfranchisement and white supremacy in Georgia. Like other southern Populists, Watson returned to the Democratic Party still hoping to help poor whites. But under the increased atmosphere of intolerance, only by playing a powerful race card could he hope to win election. “What does civilization owe the negro?” he asked bitterly. “Nothing! Nothing!! NOTHING!!!”

To mount a successful campaign for disenfranchisement, white conservatives inflamed racial passions. They staged “White Supremacy Jubilees” and peppered newspaper editorials with complaints of “bumptious” and “impudent” African Americans. The lynchings of blacks peaked during the 1890s, averaging over a hundred a year for the decade. Most took place in the South.

The African American Response

IDA B. WELLS African Americans worked out their own responses to the climate of intolerance. Ida B. Wells, a black woman born into slavery, turned her talents into a nationwide campaign against lynching when a friend, Thomas Moss, and two of his partners in the People's Grocery were brutally murdered in Memphis after a fight with a white competitor in 1892. Wells meticulously documented the murders of African Americans across the South, demonstrating an astounding 200 percent increase between 1882 and 1892. Wells turned antilynching into a personal crusade. She spent much of her time educating Americans about the use of lynching and other forms of mob violence as devices for terrorizing African Americans in the absence of slavery. Black men like Thomas Moss, who might want to start black-owned businesses or alter race relations in the South, were particular targets because they threatened the prevailing racial and economic hierarchy in the South. Though her lobbying failed to produce a federal antilynching law, Wells did help organize black women, eventually into the National Association of Colored Women in 1896. It supported wide-ranging reforms, including in education, housing, and health care, and, of course, antilynching.

Wells's campaign focused on mob violence, but another former slave, Booker T. Washington, emphasized the need for

accepting the framework for race relations and working within it. "I love the South," Washington reassured an audience of white and black southerners in Atlanta in 1895. He conceded that white prejudice against blacks existed throughout the region but nonetheless counseled African Americans to accept what was offered them and work for their economic betterment through manual labor. Every laborer who learned a trade, every farmer who tilled the land could increase his or her savings. And those earnings amounted to "a little green ballot" that "no one will throw out or refuse to count." Toward that end Washington organized the Tuskegee Institute in 1881 and created a curriculum stressing vocational skills for farming, manual trades, and industrial work.

ATLANTA COMPROMISE Many white Americans hailed what one black critic called the "Atlanta Compromise" because it struck the note of patient humility they were eager to hear. For African Americans it made the best of a bad situation. Washington, an astute politician, discovered that philanthropists across the nation hoped to make Tuskegee an example of their generosity. He was the honored guest of Andrew Carnegie at his imposing Skibo Castle in Scotland. California railroad magnate Collis Huntington became his friend, as did other business executives eager to discuss "public and social questions."

Washington always preached accommodation to the racial caste system. He accepted segregation (as long as separate



(left) Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ds-07456]; (right) ©Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

| Booker T. Washington and Ida B. Wells reflected two different responses to the drive by southern whites for a comprehensive system of segregation and white supremacy. Washington called for hard work and patient humility on the part of African Americans as a way to achieve gradual progress. Wells viewed the rise in lynchings as clear evidence that African Americans were being walled off because they had achieved success through hard work. Only publicity, protest, and political action on a national scale, she argued, could overturn the campaign to enforce the increasingly strict "color line" of segregation.

facilities were equal) and qualifications on voting (if they applied to white citizens as well). Above all, Washington sought economic self-improvement for common black folk in fields and factories. In 1900 he organized the National Negro Business League to help establish African Americans in business as the leaders of their people. The rapid growth of local chapters (320 by 1907) extended his influence across the country.

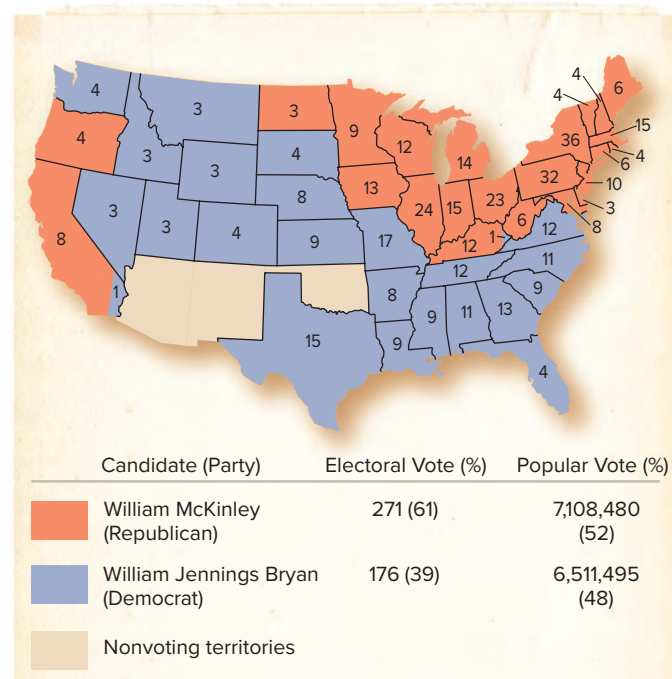
In the “Solid South” (as well as an openly racist North), it was Washington’s restrained approach that set the agenda for most African Americans. An all-white Democratic Party split the biracial coalition of the early 1890s between black and white Populists and dominated the region, but remained a minority on the national level.

McKinley in the White House

In William McKinley, Republicans found a skillful chief with a national agenda and personal charm. He cultivated news reporters, openly walked the streets of Washington, and courted the public with handshakes and flowers from his own lapel. Firmly but carefully, he curbed the power of old-time state bosses. When necessary, he even prodded Congress to action. In all these ways he foreshadowed “modern” presidents, who would act as party leaders rather than as executive caretakers.

Fortune at first smiled on McKinley. When he entered the White House, the economy had already begun its recovery. Factory orders were slowly increasing, and unemployment dropped. Farm prices climbed. New discoveries of gold in Alaska and South Africa expanded the supply of money without causing “gold bugs” to panic that currency was being destabilized by silver.

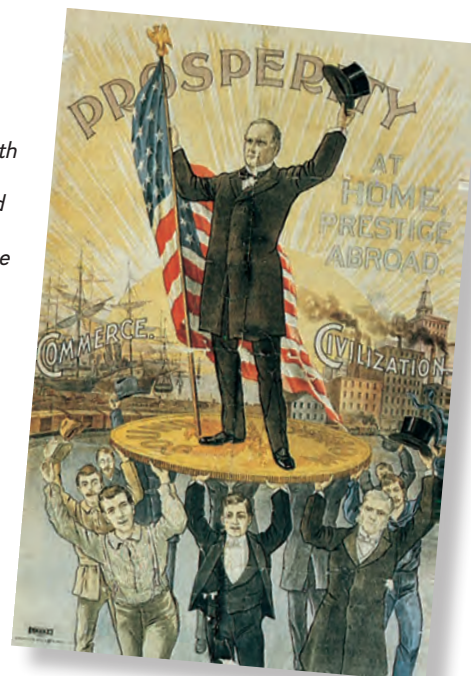
Freed from the burdens of the economic crisis, McKinley called a special session of Congress to revise the tariff. In



ELECTION OF 1896

An 1896 Republican campaign poster features presidential hopeful William McKinley atop a giant gold coin engraved with the words “sound money” and supported by workers and businessmen alike. The poster promises domestic prosperity and respect overseas. The links between prosperity and empire as well as commerce and civilization were made not only in McKinley’s campaign but also by later presidents.

Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-1329]



1897 the Dingley Tariff raised protective rates still higher but allowed tariffs to come down if other nations lowered theirs. McKinley also sought a solution for resolving railroad strikes, like the earlier Pullman conflict, before they turned violent. The Erdman Act of 1898 set up machinery for government arbitration of labor disputes with railroads. McKinley even began laying plans for stronger regulation of trusts.

The same expansiveness that pushed the United States across the continent and shipped grain and cotton abroad was also drawing the country into a race for empire and a war with Spain. Regulation—and a true age of reform—would await the next century.

AP TEST REVIEW

How did the election of 1896 resolve the politics of stalemate of the late nineteenth century?

Visions of Empire

THE CRISIS WITH SPAIN WAS only the affair of the moment that turned American attention abroad. Underlying the conflict were larger forces linking the future of the United States with international events. By the 1890s southern farmers were exporting half their cotton crop to factories worldwide, while western wheat farmers earned some 30 to 40 percent of their income from markets abroad. John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company shipped about two-thirds of its refined products overseas, and Cyrus McCormick supplied Russian farmers with his famous reaper for harvesting crops.

More than these growing commercial ties turned American heads overseas. Since the 1840s, expansionists had spoken of a Manifest Destiny to overspread the North American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Between 1880 and 1914

they watched enviously as Western nations gobbled up large chunks of the rest of the world. In 1878 less than 10 percent of Africa lay under European rule. By 1900 nearly the entire continent was controlled by Europeans. In Asia, British influence radiated outward from its stronghold in India, while France ruled Indochina (present-day Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos). Armed with new, rapid-firing machine guns and the drug quinine to control deadly malaria, Western soldiers, merchants, and missionaries established a new age of imperialism, sometimes through outright conquest and occupation, as in India and Indochina, sometimes by forging strong ties of trade and commerce, as in Latin America.

European technology could be devastating for native populations. In 1898, at the Battle of Omdurman, a small Anglo-Egyptian contingent under the command of British general Horatio Kitchener faced 40,000 Sudanese. The Anglo-Egyptian force was armed with machine guns and artillery, the Sudanese with muskets and spears. When the smoke cleared hours later, 11,000 Sudanese had been shredded to pieces; only 48 British lay dead.

Imperialism—European versus American Style

The scramble for empire was well under way by the time the Americans, Germans, and Japanese entered the race in the late nineteenth century. Spain and Portugal still clung to the remnants of their seventeenth-century colonial empires. In the early nineteenth century England, France, and Russia accelerated their drive to control foreign peoples and lands. By the late nineteenth century a new age of **imperialism** had dawned. For the first time, powerful new arms and intersecting networks of communication, transportation, and commerce brought truly global empires within reach.

The speed and efficiency with which Europeans expanded prompted many Americans to argue for this European-style imperialism of conquest and possession. But other Americans preferred a more indirect imperialism: one that exported products, ideas, and influence. To them, this American imperialism seemed somehow purer, for without naked conquest Americans could be portrayed as bearers of long-cherished values: democracy, free-enterprise capitalism, and Protestant Christianity.

While Americans tried to justify imperial control in the name of such values, social, economic, and political forces were drawing them rapidly into the hard-knuckled race for empire. The growth of industrial networks linked them to international markets as never before, whether they were Arkansas sharecroppers dependent on world cotton prices or Pittsburgh steelworkers whose jobs were made possible by orders for Singer sewing machines for Europe, China, and the Hawaiian Islands.

The Shapers of American Imperialism

Although the climate for expansion and imperialism was present at the end of the nineteenth century, the small farmer or steelworker was little concerned with how the United States advanced its goals abroad. An elite group—Christian missionaries, intellectuals, business leaders, and commercial farmers—joined navy careerists to shape a more active American imperialism.

Without a strong navy, imperialism of any sort was out of the question. By 1880 the once-proud Civil War fleet of more than 600 warships was rotting from neglect. The U.S. Navy ranked twelfth in the world, behind Denmark and Chile. The United States had a coastal fleet but no functional fleet to protect its interests overseas. Discontented navy officers now combined with trade-hungry business leaders to lobby Congress for a modern navy.

MAHAN CALLS FOR A STRONG NAVY Alfred Thayer Mahan, a U.S. Navy captain and later admiral, formulated their ideas into a widely accepted theory of **navalism**. In *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890), Mahan argued that great nations were seafaring powers that relied on foreign trade for wealth and might. In times of overproduction and depression, as had occurred repeatedly in the United States after the Civil War, overseas markets assumed even greater importance. The only way to protect foreign markets, Mahan reasoned, was with large cruisers and battleships. Operating far from American shores, these ships would need coaling stations and other resupply facilities throughout the world.

Mahan's logic was so persuasive and the profits to be reaped from foreign trade were so great that in the 1880s Congress launched a program to rebuild the old wood-and-sail navy with steam vessels of steel. By 1900 the U.S. Navy ranked third in the world. With a modern navy, the country had the means to become an imperial power.

MISSIONARIES Protestant missionaries provided a spiritual rationale for imperialism that complemented Mahan's military and economic arguments. Because missionaries often encountered people whose cultural differences often made them unreceptive to the Christian message, many of them believed that natives first had to become Western in culture before turning Christian in belief. Missionaries introduced Western goods, schools, and systems of government administration—any “civilizing medium,” as one minister remarked. They eagerly took up what they called the “white man's burden” of introducing Western civilization to the “colored” races of the world but opposed outright military or political intervention.

“SOCIAL DARWINISM” From scholars, academics, and scientists came racial theories to justify European and American expansion. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) had popularized the notion that among animal species, the fittest survived through a process of natural selection. “Social Darwinists” argued that the same laws of survival governed the social order. When applied aggressively, imperialists used social Darwinism to justify theories of white supremacy as well as the slaughter and enslavement of nonwhite native peoples who resisted conquest. When combined with the somewhat more humane “white man's burden” professed by Christian missionaries, American imperialism included uplifting natives by spreading Western ideas, religion, and government.

COMMERCIAL FACTORS Perhaps more compelling than either religious or racial motives for American expansion was the

>> MAPPING THE PAST <<

Imperialist Expansion, 1900



Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-5409]

“We cannot retreat from any soil where Providence has unfurled our banner; it is ours to save that soil for liberty and civilization.”—Senator Albert Beveridge on American imperialist expansion.

Context

The race for colonies accelerated in the late nineteenth century as European nations scrambled for empire. New world powers—in particular Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United States—expanded their holdings. A comparison of Africa in 1878 (inset) and 1900 shows how quickly Europeans extended their colonial empires. Often resource-poor countries like Japan and England saw colonies as a way to acquire raw materials: diamonds from South Africa or tin from Southeast Asia. A closer look reveals that four of the most rapidly industrializing countries—Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States—had few if any overseas possessions, even in 1900. And while China appears to be undivided, all the major powers had established spheres of influence there.



Test Practice: Document Analysis

1. What is the biggest U.S. possession on the map? The next biggest?
2. What raw materials were imperial nations seeking in Africa? In India and Southeast Asia? In Australia and New Zealand?
3. Which European nation appears to possess the most geographically widespread empire?

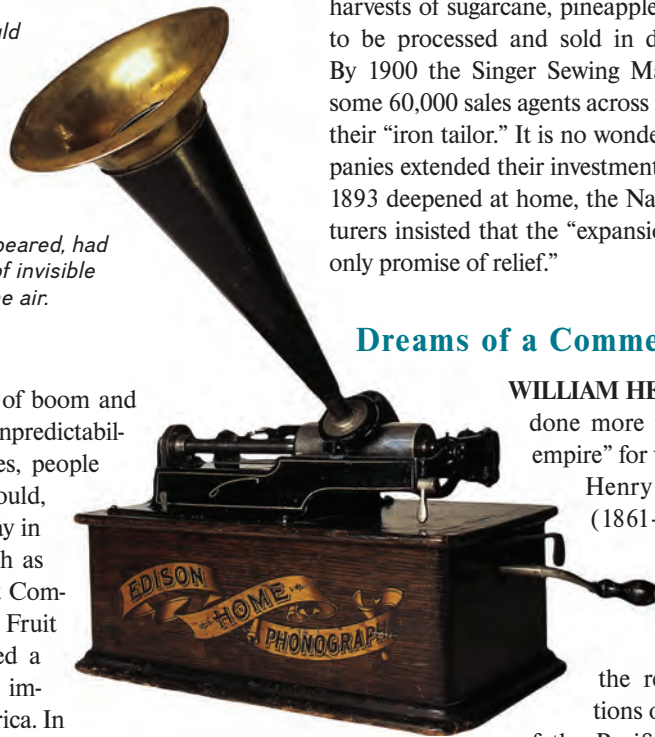
Analyzing Evidence: Contextualization

1. Which countries were winning the race for empire by 1900? On what grounds should we make that judgment?
2. What geographic factors explain the location of U.S. possessions?
3. Why did rapidly industrializing nations such as Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States have so few overseas possessions?

When Thomas Edison invented the phonograph in 1877, few people would have thought of it as a weapon of conquest. But when Americans and Europeans brought the machine to less technologically advanced societies, native peoples were awestruck by the sounds it made and sometimes cowed by those who controlled it. These white men, it appeared, had the power to conjure up the voices of invisible speakers and summon music from the air.

©Comstock Images/Alamy

need for trade. The business cycle of boom and bust reminded Americans of the unpredictability of their economy. In hard times, people sought salvation wherever they could, and one obvious road to recovery lay in markets abroad. Entrepreneurs such as Minor Keith and his Tropical Fruit Company (later the mammoth United Fruit Company) had already constructed a railroad in Costa Rica and begun importing bananas from Central America. In Cuba and Hawaii, American planters were reaping



harvests of sugarcane, pineapples, and other commercial crops to be processed and sold in domestic and foreign markets. By 1900 the Singer Sewing Machine Company was sending some 60,000 sales agents across the globe to hawk the virtues of their “iron tailor.” It is no wonder, then, that as American companies extended their investments abroad and the depression of 1893 deepened at home, the National Association of Manufacturers insisted that the “expansion of our foreign trade is [the] only promise of relief.”

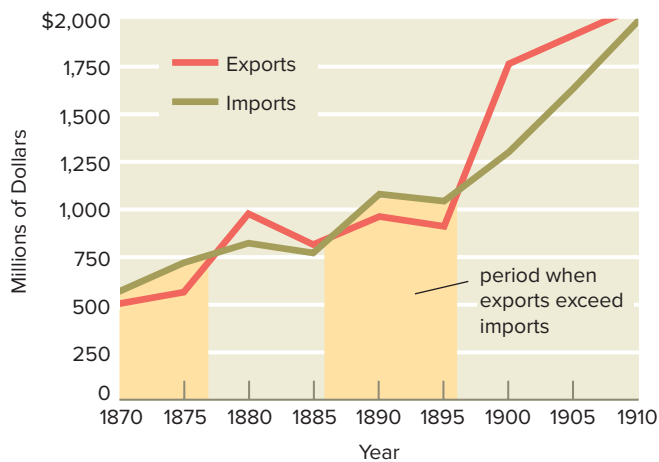
Dreams of a Commercial Empire

WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD No one had done more to initiate the idea of a “new empire” for the United States than William Henry Seward, secretary of state (1861–1869) under Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. Seward believed that “empire has . . . made its way constantly westward . . . until the tides of the renewed and decaying civilizations of the world meet on the shores of the Pacific Ocean.” The United States



Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC2-1029]

Missionaries often viewed the Chinese as uncivilized “heathen” whose souls needed saving and whose culture needed civilizing. This cartoon, published around 1900, pokes fun at the common stereotype by suggesting what the Chinese must think of American “heathens.” “Contributions Received Here to Save the Foreign Devils,” reads the sign of the Chinese “preacher,” who laments the uncivilized behavior of corrupt American city governments, feuding backwoodsmen, rioting laborers, and mobs tormenting Chinese and black Americans.



Balance of U.S. Imports and Exports, 1870–1910

After the depression of 1893 both imports and exports rose sharply, suggesting one reason why the age of imperialism was so closely linked with the emerging global industrial economy.

must thus be prepared to win supremacy in the Far East—not by planting colonies or sending troops but by pursuing trade. The idea that a commercial empire could be gained by demanding equal access to foreign markets made Seward’s strategy revolutionary.

ACQUISITION OF MIDWAY AND ALASKA While he pursued ties to Japan, Korea, and China, Seward promoted a transcontinental railroad at home and a canal across Central America. Link by link, he was trying to connect eastern factories to western ports in the United States and, from there, to markets and resources in Asia. In pursuit of these goals Seward made two acquisitions in 1867: Midway Island in the Pacific and Alaska. Unimportant by itself, the value of Midway lay as a way station to Asia not far from Hawaii, where missionary planters were already establishing an American presence. 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.

Seward’s conviction that the future of the United States lay in the Pacific and Asia produced little in his lifetime. 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 beyond the nation’s continental borders. In the 1880s Secretary of State James G. Blaine had already begun to look southward for ways to expand American trade and influence to Central and South America, where Great Britain had interests of its own to protect.

BLAINE’S PAN-AMERICAN UNION Blaine launched a campaign to cancel the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty (1850), which shared with Great Britain rights to any canal built in Central America. Only in 1901, when the two nations signed the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty (named for the American Secretary of State John Hay and British ambassador Julian Pauncefote), did Blaine’s efforts have the desired results. Great Britain ceded its



Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ggbain-13386]

Sisal, a form of agave, produced a strong fiber that was used for rope and twine. Native to Mexico, the plant was exported to Hawaii in the late nineteenth century as a way of diversifying the Hawaiian economy. It quickly multiplied, becoming an invasive species. The backbreaking work of harvesting the leaves was often done by workers recruited from Japan, such as those pictured here.

interest in building a canal across the Central American isthmus in return for a U.S. promise to leave such a canal open to ships of all nations. Blaine also tried to shift Central American imports from British to U.S. goods by proposing the creation of a “customs union” to reduce trade barriers in the Americas. His plan resulted in only a weak Pan-American Union to foster peaceful understanding in the region. Latin American nations balked at his more important aim of lowering their tariffs.

If American expansionists wanted to extend trade across the Pacific to China, Hawaii was the crucial link. It afforded a fine naval base and a refueling station along the route to Asia. In 1893 American sugar planters overthrew the recently enthroned Queen Liliuokalani, a Hawaiian nationalist eager to rid the island of American influence. Their success was ensured when a contingent of U.S. marines arrived ashore on the pretext of protecting American lives.

Eager to avoid the McKinley Tariff’s new tax on sugar imported into the United States, planters lobbied for the annexation of Hawaii, but President Cleveland refused. He was no foe of expansion but was, as his secretary of state noted, “unalterably opposed to stealing territory, or of annexing people against their consent, and the people of Hawaii do not favor annexation.” The idea of incorporating the nonwhite population also troubled Cleveland. For a time, matters stood at a stalemate.

AP TEST REVIEW

What social, economic, and cultural factors drew the United States into the race for empire?

The Imperial Moment

CUBA IN REVOLT IN 1895, AFTER ALMOST 15 years of planning from exile in the United States, José Martí returned to Cuba to renew the colony’s struggle for independence from Spain. With cries of “Cuba libre,” Martí and his rebels cut railroad lines,

destroyed sugar mills, and set fire to the cane fields. Within a year, rebel forces controlled more than half the island. But even as they fought the Spanish, the rebels worried about the United States. Their island, just 90 miles off the coast of Florida, had long been a target of American expansionists and business interests. Martí had no illusions. “I have lived in the bowels of the monster,” he explained of his exile in the United States, “and I know it.”

The Spanish struck back at Martí and his followers with brutal force. Governor-General Valeriano Weyler herded half a million Cubans from their homes into fortified camps where filth, disease, and starvation killed perhaps 200,000. Outside these “reconcentration” camps, Weyler chased the rebels across the countryside, polluting drinking water, killing farm animals, burning crops.

The revolt in Cuba was only the first round in a struggle that would eventually end in a war between the United States and Spain. By the time it was over the Spanish-American War left Spain defeated and banished from the Western Hemisphere, Cuba free of Spanish rule, and the United States with new colonial possessions in the Pacific and the Caribbean. The knotty problem of what to do with them soon became the subject of a national debate. For better or worse, America’s imperial moment had arrived.

Mounting Tensions

President Cleveland had little sympathy for the Cuban revolt, but Republican expansionists such as Theodore Roosevelt and Massachusetts senator Henry Cabot Lodge wanted to recognize Cuban independence—a step that if taken would likely provoke war with Spain. William McKinley, however, was only a moderate expansionist. As president, he lobbied Spain privately to stop cracking down on the rebels and destroying American-owned property. With over \$50 million invested in Cuban sugar and an annual trade of over \$100 million, American business interests had much to lose in a war with Spain.

In October 1897 Spain promised to remove the much-despised Weyler, end the reconcentration policy, and offer Cuba greater autonomy. The shift encouraged McKinley to resist pressure at home for more hostile action. But leaders of the Spanish army in Cuba had no desire to compromise. Although Weyler was removed, the military renewed efforts to quash the rebellion. Early in 1898, McKinley dispatched the battleship *Maine* to show that the United States meant to protect its interests and its citizens.

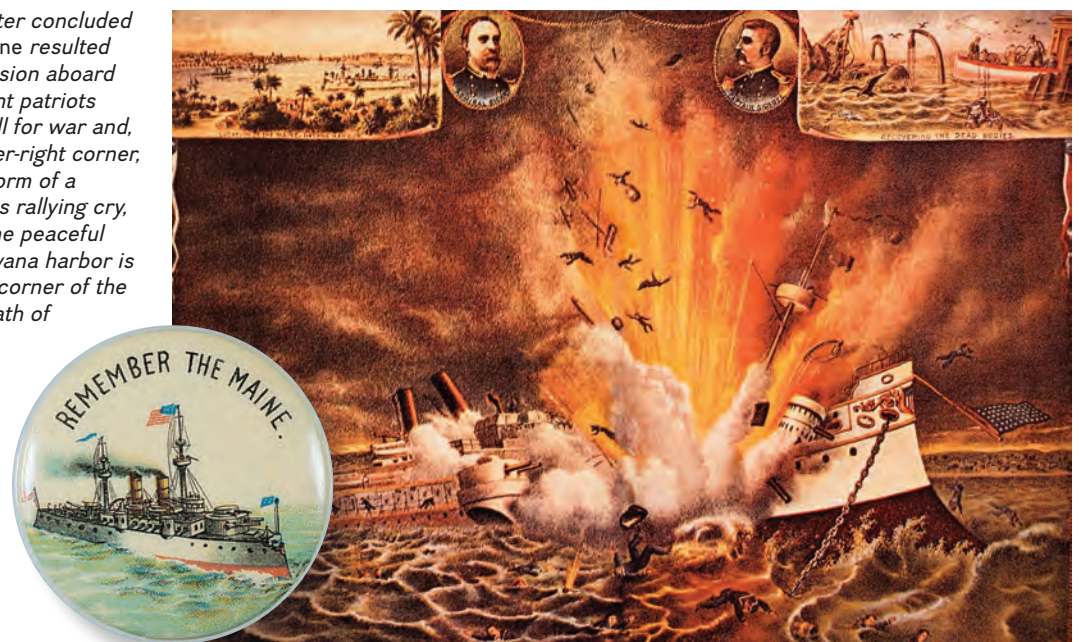
Then in February 1898 the State Department received a stolen copy of a letter to Cuba sent by the Spanish minister in Washington, Enrique Dupuy de Lôme. So did newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst, a pioneer of sensationalist, or **yellow, journalism**, who was eager for war with Spain. “WORST INSULT TO THE UNITED STATES IN ITS HISTORY,” screamed the headline of Hearst’s *New York Journal*. What had de Lôme actually written? After referring to McKinley as a “would-be politician,” the letter admitted that Spain had no intention of changing policy in Cuba. The Spanish planned to crush the rebels. Red-faced Spanish officials recalled de Lôme, but most Americans now believed that Spain had deceived the United States.

SINKING OF THE MAINE On February 15, 1898, as the USS *Maine* lay peacefully at anchor in the Havana harbor, explosions ripped through its hull. Within minutes the ship sank to the bottom, killing some 260 American sailors. Much later, an official investigation concluded that the explosion was the result of spontaneous combustion in a coal bunker aboard ship. Most Americans at the time, inflamed by hysterical news accounts, concluded that Spanish agents had sabotaged the ship. McKinley sought a diplomatic solution but also a \$50 million appropriation “to get ready for war.”

TELLER AMENDMENT Pressures for war proved too great to resist, and on April 11, McKinley asked Congress to authorize “forceful intervention” in Cuba. Nine days later

| An investigation years later concluded that the sinking of the *Maine* resulted from a spontaneous explosion aboard ship, but at the time fervent patriots turned the event into a call for war and, as can be seen in the lower-right corner, memorabilia, here in the form of a button carrying the famous rallying cry, “Remember the Maine.” The peaceful arrival of the *Maine* in Havana harbor is depicted in the upper-left corner of the painting, the grisly aftermath of the explosion in the large painting.

(left) ©The Frent Collection/ Getty Images; (right) ©Glasshouse Images/Alamy



Congress recognized Cuban independence, insisted on the withdrawal of Spanish forces, and gave the president authority to use military force. In a flush of idealism, legislators also adopted the Teller Amendment, renouncing any aim to annex Cuba. Certainly both idealism and moral outrage led many Americans down the path to war. But in the end, what Secretary of State John Hay called the “splendid little war” resulted from less lofty ambitions—empire, trade, glory.

The Imperial War

For the 5,462 men who died there was little splendid about the Spanish-American War. Only 379 gave their lives in battle. The rest suffered from accidents, disease, and the mismanagement of an unprepared army. As war began, the American force totaled only 30,000, none of whom had been trained for fighting in tropical climates. The sudden expansion to 60,000 troops and 200,000 volunteers overtaxed the army’s graft-ridden supply system. Rather than tropical uniforms, some troops were issued winter woolens, and some fed on rations that were diseased, rotten, or even lethally spoiled. Others found themselves fighting with weapons from the Civil War.

DEWEY AT MANILA The navy fared better. Decisions in the 1880s to modernize the fleet now paid off handsomely. Naval battles largely determined the outcome of the war. As soon as war was declared, Admiral George Dewey ordered his Asiatic battle squadron from China to the Philippines. Just before dawn on May 1, he began shelling the Spanish ships in Manila Bay. Five hours later the entire Spanish squadron lay at the bottom of the bay. Three hundred eighty-one Spaniards were killed, but only one American died, a ship’s engineer who succumbed to a heart attack. Dewey had no plans to follow up his stunning victory with an invasion. His fleet carried no marines with which to take the city of Manila. So ill-prepared was President McKinley for war, let alone victory, that only after learning of Dewey’s success did he order 11,000 American troops to the Philippines.

Halfway around the globe, another Spanish fleet had slipped into Santiago harbor in Cuba just before the arrival of the U.S. Navy. Under Admiral William Sampson, the navy blockaded the island, expecting the Spanish to flee under the cover of darkness. Instead, on July 3, the Spanish fleet made a desperate

daylight dash for the open seas. So startled were the Americans that several of their ships nearly collided as they rushed to attack their exposed foes. All seven Spanish ships were sunk, with 474 casualties. Only one American was killed and one wounded. With Cuba now cut off from Spain, the war was virtually won.

War in Cuba

Few Americans had heard of the Philippine Islands; fewer still could locate them on a globe. But most Americans knew that Cuba lay barely 90 miles off the Florida coast.

RACIAL TENSIONS Before the outbreak of hostilities, Tampa, Florida, was a sleepy coastal town with a single railroad line. When it became the port of embarkation for the Cuban expeditionary force, the town exploded. Some 17,000 troops arrived in the spring of 1898 alone. Tampa’s overtaxed facilities soon broke down, spawning disease, tension, and finally racial violence. President McKinley had authorized the army to raise five volunteer regiments of black soldiers. By the time war was declared over 8,000 African Americans had signed up, half of them stationed around segregated Tampa. They found that although they could sail off to die freeing the peasants of Cuba, they were forbidden from buying a soda at the local drugstore. “Is America any better than Spain?” one dismayed black chaplain wondered. After drunken white troops shot at a black child, black troops in Tampa rioted. Three white and 27 black Americans were wounded in the melee.

Matters were scarcely less chaotic as 17,000 disorganized troops and hundreds of reporters finally scrambled aboard ship early in June 1898. There they sat for a week, until sailing on June 14 for Santiago and battle. By June 30 the Americans had landed to challenge some 24,000 Spanish, many equipped with modern rifles. The following day 7,000 Americans—including the black soldiers of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry regiments—stormed up heavily fortified San Juan Hill and nearby Kettle Hill.

THE ROUGH RIDERS Among them Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt thrilled at the experience of battle. He had raised a cavalry troop of cowboys and college polo players, originally called “Teddy’s Texas Tarantulas.” By the time they arrived in Cuba, the volunteers were answering to the



Black veterans of the Indian Wars of the American West along with volunteers, segregated and commanded by white officers, made up almost a quarter of the U.S. force that invaded Cuba. Members of the Tenth Cavalry, shown here, were clearly in no mood to be subjected to the harassment they and other black troops encountered around Tampa. Later the Tenth Cavalry supported a charge by Colonel Teddy Roosevelt’s Rough Riders at the battle of San Juan Hill.

Courtesy of HMCPL Special Collections:
<http://digitalarchives.hmcpl.org>

nickname “Rough Riders.” As they charged toward the high ground, Roosevelt yelled: “Gentlemen, the Almighty God and the just cause are with you. Gentlemen, charge!” The withering fire drowned out his shrill, squeaky voice, so he repeated the call to his troops. Charge they did and conquer the enemy, though the battle cost more than 1,500 American casualties. (See After the Fact, at the end of the chapter.)

Without a fleet for cover or way to escape, the Spanish garrison surrendered on July 17. In the Philippines a similar brief battle preceded the American capture of Manila on August 13. The “splendid little war” was over in less than four months.

Peace and the Debate over Empire

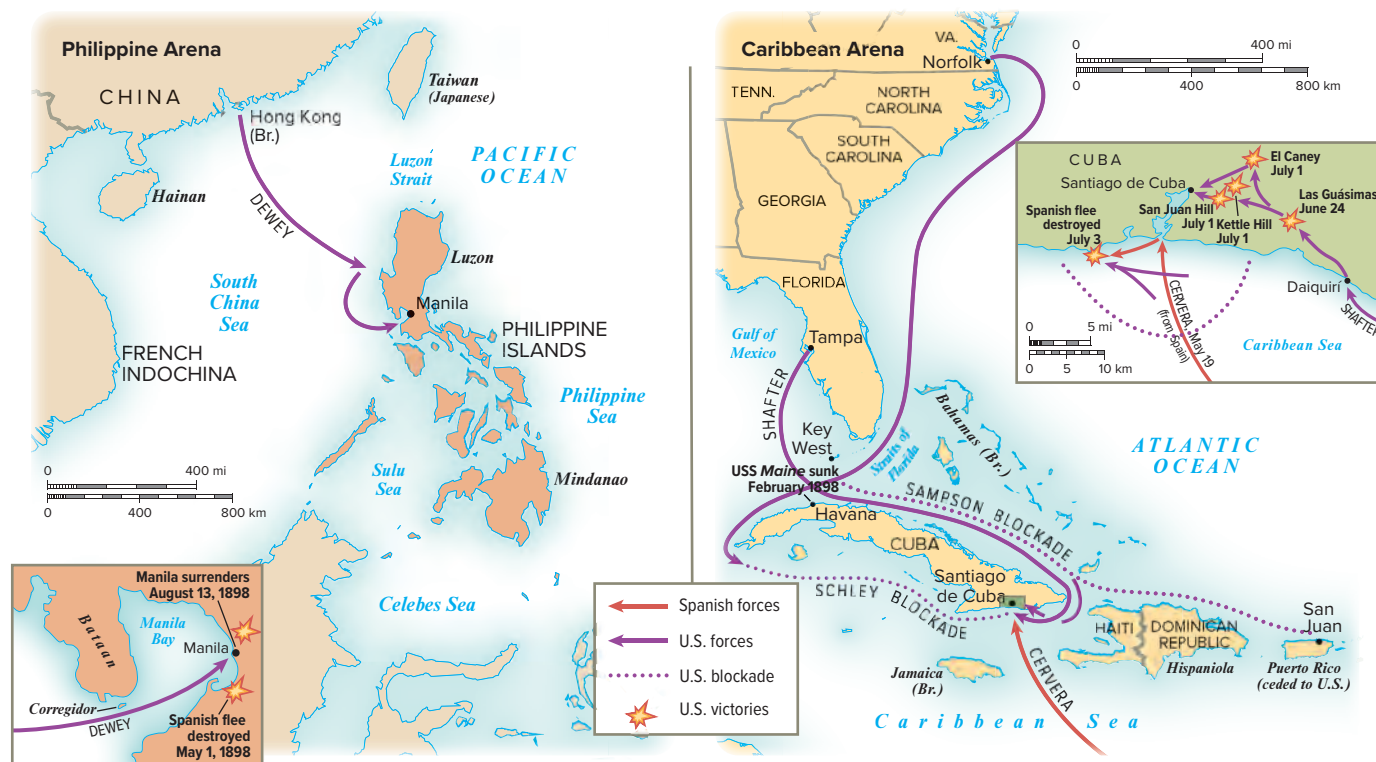
Conquering Cuba and the Philippines proved easier than deciding what to do with the islands. The Teller Amendment had renounced any American claim to Cuba. But clearly the United States had not freed the island to see chaos reign or American business and military interests excluded. And what of the Philippines—and Spanish Puerto Rico, which American forces had taken without a struggle? Powerful public and congressional sentiment pushed McKinley to claim empire as the fruits of victory.

ANNEXING HAWAII The president himself favored such a course. The battle in the Pacific highlighted the need for naval bases and coaling stations. “To maintain our flag in the Philippines,

we must raise our flag in Hawaii,” New York’s *The Sun* insisted. On July 7, 1898, McKinley signed a joint congressional resolution annexing Hawaii, as planters wanted for nearly a decade. The Philippines presented a more difficult problem. Filipinos greeted the American forces as liberators, not new colonizers.

AGUINALDO The popular leader of the rebel forces fighting Spain, Emilio Aguinaldo, had returned to the islands from exile in Hong Kong on an American ship. To the rebels’ dismay, McKinley insisted that the islands were under American authority until the peace treaty settled matters. Such a settlement, McKinley knew, would have to include American control of the Philippines. He had no intention of leaving Spain in charge or of seeing the islands fall to other European rivals. American military advisers warned that without control of the entire island of Luzon, its capital, Manila, would be indefensible as the naval base McKinley wanted. Nor, McKinley felt certain, were the Filipinos capable of self-government. Aguinaldo and his rebels thought otherwise, and in June Aguinaldo declared himself president of a new Philippine republic.

ANTI-IMPERIALISTS Many influential Americans—former president Grover Cleveland, steel baron Andrew Carnegie, novelist Mark Twain—opposed annexation of the Philippines. Yet even these anti-imperialists favored expansion, if only in the form of trade that would benefit the nation



THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

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. Proximity to Cuba also gave the United States an advantage in delivering troops and supplies and in maintaining a naval blockade that isolated Spanish forces. **How did the geographic location of the United States help and hinder it in the Spanish-American War?**

without the costs of maintaining the Philippines as a colony. Annexation would mire the United States too deeply in the quicksands of Asian politics, many business leaders argued. More important, a large, costly fleet would be necessary to defend the islands. To the imperialists that was precisely the point: a large fleet was crucial to the interests of a powerful commercial nation.

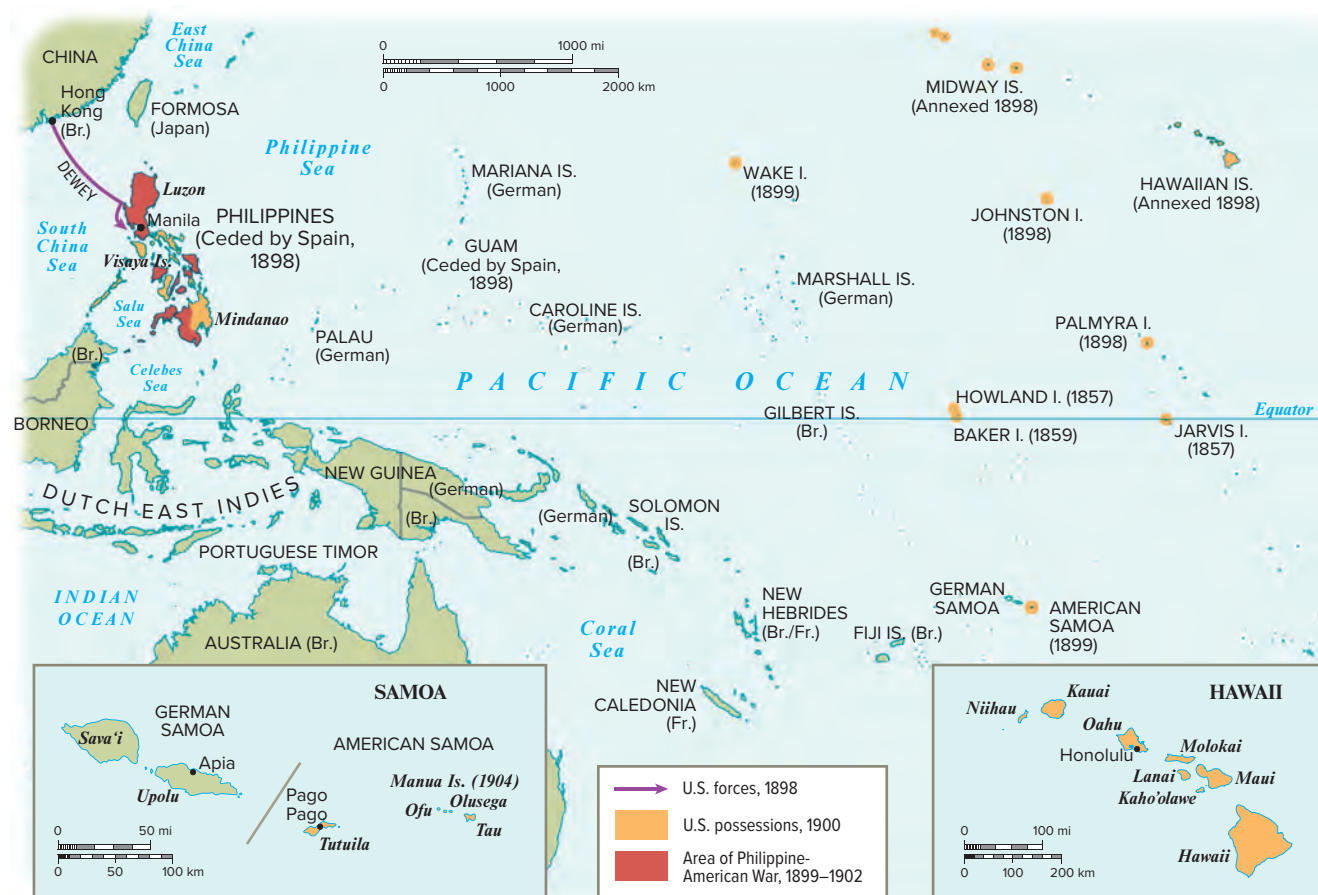
THE ROLE OF RACE Racial ideas shaped both sides of the argument. Imperialists believed that the racial inferiority of non-whites made occupation of the Philippines necessary, and they were ready to assume the “white man’s burden” by governing the islands. Filipinos, they said, would gradually be taught the virtues of Western civilization, Christianity, democracy, and self-rule. (In fact, most Filipinos were already Catholic after many years under Spanish rule.) Anti-imperialists feared racial intermixing and the possibility of Filipino and other Asian workers flooding the American labor market. They also maintained that dark-skinned people would never develop the capacity for self-government. An American government in the Philippines could

be sustained only at the point of bayonets—yet the U.S. Constitution made no provision for governing people without representation or equal rights. Such a precedent abroad, the anti-imperialists warned, might one day threaten American liberties at home.

Still, when the Senate debated the Treaty of Paris ending the Spanish-American War in 1898, the imperialists had the support of the president, most of Congress, and the majority of public opinion. Even a sturdy anti-imperialist such as William Jennings Bryan, defeated by McKinley in 1896, endorsed the treaty. In it Spain surrendered title to Cuba, ceded Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States, and in return for \$20 million turned over the Philippines as well.

From Colonial War to Colonial Rule

PHILIPPINE-AMERICAN WAR Managing an empire turned out to be even more devilish than acquiring one. As the Senate debated annexation of the Philippines in Washington, rebels fought with an American patrol outside of Manila. The few Americans who paid attention to the ensuing clash called



THE UNITED STATES IN THE PACIFIC

In the late nineteenth century both Germany and the United States emerged as major naval powers and as contestants for influence and commerce in China. The island groups of the central and southwest Pacific, though of little economic value, had potential strategic significance as bases and coaling stations along the routes to Asia. Rivalry (as in the case of Samoa) sometimes threatened to erupt into open conflict. Control of Hawaii, Midway, Samoa, Guam, and the Philippines gave the United States a string of strategic stepping-stones to Asia. Which islands seem best suited as stepping stones for empires stretching across the Pacific? What were the weaknesses of such stepping stones?

it the “Filipino insurrection,” but to those who fought, it was the brutal Philippine-American War. When it ended more than three years later, nearly 5,000 Americans, 25,000 rebels, and perhaps as many as 200,000 civilians lay dead.

Environment shaped the conduct of the war. After a series of conventional battles ended in their defeat, Filipino *insurrectos* quickly learned to take advantage of the mountainous, jungle terrain of the Philippine archipelago. From his hideaway in Bayombong, Aguinaldo ordered his men to employ “guerrilla” (literally “little war” in Spanish) tactics. Hit-and-run ambushes by lightly armed rebels perfectly suited the dense landscape. As *insurrectos* melted into tropical forests and friendly villages, Americans could barely distinguish between enemies and friends. It was the first instance of jungle warfare the United States had ever encountered.

Jungle warfare aggravated racial antagonisms and spurred savage fighting on both sides. Rebel resistance to foreign occupation was accompanied by reports of *insurrectos* treating American prisoners in “fiendish fashion,” burying some alive, dismembering others, and slaughtering even Filipinos who opposed them. For their part American soldiers dismissed Filipinos as nearly subhuman in ways that evoked the Indian Wars of the American West. “The only good Filipino is a dead one,” declared one U.S. soldier, echoing the infamous anti-Indian cry. Indeed, many Americans in the Philippines had fought Indians in the Dakota Badlands and northern New Mexico.

In such a climate the frustrations of ordinary troops sometimes boiled over into brutality, torture, and executions. To avenge a rebel attack, one officer promised to turn the countryside into a “howling wilderness.” Another, later court-martialed for the order, exhorted his troops to shoot any Filipino over the age of 10. To combat the insurgents, General Arthur MacArthur—father of Douglas MacArthur—imposed a brutal campaign of “pacification” late in 1899. Filipinos were herded into concentration camps for their protection, while food and crops in the nearby countryside were seized or torched to starve the rebels into surrender. The strategy was embarrassingly reminiscent of the actions of “Butcher” Weyler in Cuba. Only after the capture of Aguinaldo himself and the last gasps of rebel resistance did the war finally come to a close in 1902. It marked the end of the westward march of American empire that began nearly a century earlier with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

In contrast to the bitter guerrilla war, the United States ruled the Philippines with relative benevolence. Under William Howard Taft, the first civilian governor, the Americans built schools, roads, sewers, and factories and instituted modern farming techniques. The aim, said Taft, was to prepare the island territory for independence, and in keeping with it, he granted great authority to local officials. These advances—social, economic, and political—benefited the Filipino elite and thus earned their support. Decades later, on July 4, 1946, the Philippines were finally granted independence.

PUERTO RICO The United States played a similar role in Puerto Rico. As in the Philippines, executive authority resided in a governor appointed by the U.S. president. Under the Foraker Act of 1900, Puerto Ricans received a voice in their



Source: P. Fremont Rockett/*Our boys in the Philippines*, scanned by Library of Congress

I The American decision to occupy the Philippines rather than give it independence compelled Filipino nationalists to fight U.S. troops, as they had already been fighting the Spanish since 1896. Filipino forces such as these were tenacious enough to require more than 70,000 Americans to put down the rebellion. Sporadic, bloody guerrilla fighting continued until 1902, and other incidents persisted until 1906.

government as well as a nonvoting representative in the U.S. House of Representatives. All the same, many Puerto Ricans chafed at the idea of such second-class citizenship. Some favored eventual admission to the United States as a state; others advocated independence. The division of opinion persists even today.

An Open Door in China

Like a reciprocal equation, interest in Asia drove the United States to annex the Philippines, and annexation of the Philippines only whetted American interest in Asia. The possibility of markets in China—whether for Christian souls or consumer goods—proved irresistible.

Both the British, who dominated China’s export trade, and the Americans, who wanted to, worried that China might soon be carved up by other powers. Japan had defeated China in 1895, encouraging Russia, Germany, and France to join in demanding trade concessions. Each nation sought to establish an Asian **sphere of influence** in which its commercial and military interests reigned. Often such spheres resulted in restrictions against rival powers. Since Britain and the United States wanted the benefits of trade rather than actual colonies, they tried to limit foreign demands while leaving China open to all commerce.

THE OPEN-DOOR NOTES In 1899, at the urging of the British, Secretary of State John Hay circulated the first of two “open-door” notes among the imperial powers. He did not ask them to give up their spheres of influence in China, only to keep them open to free trade with other nations. The United States could hardly have enforced even so modest a proposal,

Acquiring an Empire, 1860–1900



MAJOR ACQUISITIONS	DATE	MEANS	STATUS
Alaska	1867	Purchased from Russia	Territory*
Hawaiian Islands	1898	Annexed	Territory*
Midway Island	1898	Annexed	Territory
Guam	1898	Ceded by Spain	Territory
Philippines	1898	Ceded by Spain	Territory**
Puerto Rico	1898	Ceded by Spain	Territory
American Samoa	1899	Annexed	Territory
Wake Island	1899	Annexed	Territory



*Granted statehood in 1959.

**Granted independence in 1946.

(left) Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-2678]; (right) Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ppmsca-25453]

because it lacked the military might to prevent the partitioning of China. Still, Japan and most of the European powers agreed in broad outline with Hay's policy out of fear that the Americans might tip the delicate balance by siding with a rival. Hay seized on the tepid response and brashly announced that the open door in China was international policy.

BOXER REBELLION Unrest soon threatened to close the door. Chinese nationalists, known to Westerners as Boxers for their clenched-fist symbol, formed secret societies to drive out the *fon kwei*, or “foreign devils.” Encouraged by the Chinese empress, Boxers murdered hundreds of Christian missionaries and their followers and set siege to foreign diplomats and citizens at the British Embassy in Beijing. European nations quickly dispatched troops to quell the uprising and free the diplomats, while President McKinley sent 2,500 Americans to join the march to the capital city. Along the way, the angry foreign armies plundered the countryside and killed civilians before reaching Beijing and breaking the siege.

Hay feared that once in control of Beijing the conquerors might never leave. So he sent a second open-door note in 1900, this time asking foreign powers to respect China's territorial and administrative integrity. They endorsed the proposal in principle only. In fact, the open-door notes together amounted to little more than an announcement of American desires to maintain political stability and commercial trade in Asia. Yet they reflected a fundamental purpose to which the United States dedicated itself across the globe: to open closed markets and to keep open those markets that other empires had yet to close. The new American empire would have its share of colonies, but in Asia as elsewhere it would be built primarily on trade.

SENSE OF MISSION To expansionists such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, Theodore Roosevelt, and John Hay, American interests would be secure only when they had been established

worldwide, a course of action they believed to be blessed by divine providence. Americans were “trustees under God of the civilization of the world,” declared Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana. But to one French diplomat, more accustomed to wheeling and dealing in the corridors of international power, it seemed that the Americans were tempting fate. With a whiff of Old World cynicism or perhaps a prophet's eye, he remarked, “The United States is seated at the table where the great game is played, and it cannot leave it.”

The United States chose to stay at the table. In the coming century, the “great game” of global power would pay handsomely for those who envisioned the country as a world leader. The game had already settled one account. The divisive shadow of the Civil War finally faded. Despite the concerns of critics, the Spanish-American War and the quest for empire united the North and South and revitalized a generation of Americans who longed to demonstrate their prowess in an age of imperialism.

AP TEST REVIEW

Why did imperialists launch their quest for empire, and why did anti-imperialists oppose them?

Putting History in Global Context

IN THE END, THE CHICAGO World's Fair of 1893 proved an apt reflection of the world at home and abroad. Though the fair showed off its exhibits within gleaming white buildings the political system was cracking under the strain of a depression. As the fair gathered exhibits from all over the globe, the scramble for resources and markets culminated in an age of imperialism. It seemed that national greatness went hand in hand with empire. Employing the gendered language of the

day, the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke proclaimed, “Every virile people has established colonial power.”

As in the United States, European imperialists sometimes justified their rule over nonwhite peoples in Darwinian fashion. “The path of progress is strewn with the wreck . . . of inferior races,” proclaimed one English professor in 1900. British poet Rudyard Kipling even suggested that Europeans were making a noble sacrifice on behalf of their colonial subjects. “Take up the White Man’s Burden,” he exhorted his fellow Britons in 1899. “Send forth the best ye breed—/ Go bind your sons to exile/To serve your captives’ need.”

European critics, like those in the United States, rejected imperialism on the grounds that it delivered few economic benefits, compromised the moral standing of the colonizers, and distracted the public from undertaking much-needed reforms at home. Just as Populists in the United States called on “toilers” to band together and on government to play a more active role in managing the excesses of the new industrial order, radicals in Europe such as the German-born Karl Marx exhorted “workers of the world” to unite and “throw off your chains” by abandoning capitalism and embracing socialism.

AP Test Practice

Multiple Choice Questions

Using the graph on page 510, answer questions 1–3.

1. What accounts for the historically high voter turnout from 1860–1900?
 - a. Women could not vote in most states.
 - b. African-Americans were prevented from voting in many parts of the country.
 - c. Most voters were rigidly loyal to their political party.
 - d. Recent immigrants voted in high numbers.
2. What was the most important issue separating the Democratic and Republican parties in the late 19th century?
 - a. Most Democrats favored limited government while most Republicans favored government intervention to promote business.
 - b. Most Democrats favored government support for farmers while most Republicans favored government support for industrial workers.
 - c. Most Democrats favored government welfare programs while most Republicans favored government support for banking.
 - d. Most Democrats favored government regulation of industry while most Republicans favored government ownership of industry.
3. What was the strongest similarity between the Democratic and Republican parties in the late 19th century?
 - a. Both parties had their strongest base of support in the Northeast.
 - b. Both parties supported business and condemned radicalism.
 - c. Both parties worked to move past the Civil War and its legacies.
 - d. Both parties pushed to expand suffrage to women.

Short Answer Questions

1. Using the excerpts on page 517, answer a, b, and c.
 - a. Briefly explain ONE significant difference between the interpretations of President Cleveland and W.M. Taylor.
 - b. Briefly explain ONE significant event from the late 19th century consistent with Cleveland’s interpretation.
 - c. Briefly explain ONE significant event from the late 19th century consistent with Taylor’s interpretation.
2. Answer a, b, and c.
 - a. Briefly explain ONE important continuity in the rights of African-Americans from 1865–1900.
 - b. Briefly explain ONE important change in the rights of African-Americans from 1865–1900.
 - c. Briefly explain ONE important reason for the continuity or change cited in (a) or (b).



After the Fact

| Historians Reconstruct the Past |

En-Gendering the Spanish-American War

For many years historians have examined foreign policy through the traditional lenses of diplomacy, commerce, imperial ambition, national mission, and national security. Such perspectives are not likely to go out of fashion, but recently cultural historians have begun to use new categories of analysis, particularly race and gender, to understand how foreign policy is made and carried out. Though gender may seem far-fetched in penetrating the complexities of diplomacy and military action, it can add new insights into the reasons why the United States declared war against Spain in 1898.

THE SAN JUAN CHARGE

“WHAT, ARE YOU COWARDS?” The shrill voice could barely be heard above the gunfire, but for the man who possessed it, the only sounds that mattered would be the cries of Spanish troops surrendering on the San Juan Heights. For the second time, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt was assaulting a hill during the soggy Cuban summer of 1898. The first attack had only just ended, with Roosevelt and his “Texas Tarantulas” (recently dubbed the “Rough Riders”) helping to overrun what the Americans called Kettle Hill. The colonel had been easy to spot: he was the only man on horseback. But Roosevelt had his reasons for the daring display, as he explained later: “It is always hard to get men to start when they can not see whether their comrades are going.” And perhaps there was another reason: it showed manly grit to defy death.

The second charge was aimed at nearby San Juan Hill, this time on foot. With a pistol recovered from the sunken battleship *Maine* and a pair of eyeglasses in each of his ten custom-made pockets, Roosevelt stormed the Spanish entrenchment—practically alone, as it



Courtesy Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York

Artist Frederic Remington painted a fairly accurate version of the charge up Kettle Hill. Only Roosevelt was on horseback, with the other Rough Riders running uphill on foot—literally for their lives—to avoid being hit by rifle fire.



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turned out. Bubbling with excitement, he had neglected to give the order to attack. A hundred yards into the assault he realized what had happened and returned to rally his men. Finally they charged and, this time, conquered.

Roosevelt's triumph during the Spanish-American War gave him a legendary, career-launching victory and the manly glory he had pursued since childhood. The sickly, bespectacled boy became a man, proving his courage, honor, and character in the way he thought best, in war. "San Juan," he recalled years later, "was the great day of my life."

WHY WAR?

FOR MANY AMERICANS, ESPECIALLY THOSE born after the Civil War or too young to have fought in it, the Spanish-American War was the grand moment when their country became a great power and they a new generation of war heroes. But why did the United States go to war with Spain in 1898?

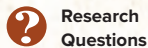
Historians have offered many explanations. Some stress the commercial rewards expected from newly acquired markets overseas. Others view the war as the global extension of the nation's Manifest Destiny to overspread the continent. Still others emphasize a geostrategic push for coaling stations in the Pacific to fuel a growing navy and for the islands in the Caribbean to block European imperialism. Humanitarian concern for the Cubans, a mission of Christian uplift for "lesser breeds," the glory of empire, political advantage at home and the spread of democracy abroad, revenge for the sinking of the *Maine*, frantic war cries from overheated journalists—all these factors enter into the historical calculus, depending on which historian is doing the math.

Yet the motives are so varied, the drums of war beating from so many quarters, historians have had difficulty tying the multiple causes into a coherent purpose. Is there a common thread among those who wanted war with Spain? Recent work has pointed to the broad-based political culture of shared values, institutions, and assumptions as the source of American belligerency. Within that political culture, some historians such as Kristin Hoganson have highlighted gender as key.

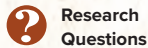
It may seem implausible to look for the sources of the Spanish-American War in the cultural roles assigned to men and women. Gender, after all, deals with the identity of individuals, whereas the study of international relations lies in the realm of sovereign nations. But the evidence pointing toward the role of gender in this war is intriguing, to say the least.

GENDERED CARTOONS AND WORDS

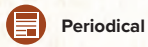
POLITICAL CARTOONS OFFER A GRAPHIC clue. William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* took the lead in howling for war. A surprising number of cartoons in Hearst's papers, and later in others, relied on then-popular images of masculinity and femininity to make their case. In one drawing, a determined Uncle Sam spoils for a fight as he rips his jacket from his chest. "Off comes his coat—now look out!" reads the caption. In another, Sam looks down from behind a cannon at an aristocrat labeled "Spain." The Spaniard holds a bloody sword and a burning torch. At his feet lie a ravaged mother ("Cuba") and her child. "Peace—But Quit That!" says Sam. In yet another cartoon, President McKinley, who had his doubts about fighting the Spanish, is depicted as an "Old Woman" trying to "Sweep Back the Sea" of congressional support for war. Finally, Secretary of State John Sherman wags his finger in disapproval at a diminutive Alfonso XIII, the boy-king of Spain, who stands



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Source: Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library
"Off comes his coat—now look out!"

near a shackled prisoner, a beheaded statuette, and a cage filled with Americans.

In these and other political cartoons, we find notions of masculinity and femininity at the center of the message. Resolute males stand ready to fight or to rebuke those who break the codes of chivalry. Men opposing war or indecisive about it, such as McKinley, are dressed as women. The Spanish are reduced to puny figures, like the petulant Alfonso, or are made out to be bloodthirsty violators of helpless womanhood.

True men, the cartoons seem to be saying, go to war to protect the principles of chivalry and the women who embody them; dishonorable, cowardly men ravage women or become them.

Words, too—in the halls of Congress, in boardrooms, on street corners, on the pages of newspapers—furnish more evidence. The country must take up arms, thundered Representative James R. Mann of Illinois—not because of some “fancied slight” or “commercial wrong” or lust for empire but “because it has become necessary to fight if we would uphold our manhood.” When the *Maine* was sunk, Senator Richard R. Kenny of Delaware exploded over the insult:

“American manhood and American chivalry give back the answer that innocent blood shall be avenged.” Some urged arbitration to resolve the matter, but Senator George Perkins rejected it as unmanly: “Men do not arbitrate questions of honor,” he insisted.

Such language, some historians have concluded, reflected a larger “crisis of manhood” imperiling American politics at the end of the nineteenth century. More than one observer of the political scene, they point out, worried that the creature comforts of the industrial age were making men “sluggish” and “soft,” particularly upper- and middle-class men who were the source of political leadership. Worse still, the hot pursuit of money and things was corroding the manly sense of honor, integrity, and valor that contemporaries believed to be essential for good government and the basis of leadership in politics.

THREATS TO MASCULINITY



©New York Public Library/Art Resource, NY
"Another Old Woman Tries to Sweep Back the Sea."

AS IF THESE DANGERS WERE not enough, the rise of the “New Woman” threatened to emasculate men as women charged into the all-male preserve of politics. Woman activists laid claim to the right to vote and asserted the superiority of feminine virtue, which was needed to temper the corrupt “male” influence dominating the political system. Alice Stone Blackwell, editor of the pro-suffrage *Woman's Journal*, put it bluntly: “Assuming for the sake of argument that this

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war is . . . utterly inexcusable . . . it is a Congress of men that has declared it.” Morality and intelligence rather than manliness, these women maintained, should be the touchstones of politics.

The depression of 1893 only aggravated this sense of crisis. Men lost their jobs, their self-respect, and with them their independence and vitality. In a Darwinian world of killing competition—in other words, the world as Americans of the late nineteenth century conceived it—the loss of male vigor could spell disaster at home and abroad.



©New York Public Library/Art Resource, NY
“Peace—But Quit That.”

RESOLUTION

WHATEVER ELSE IT DID, THE Spanish-American War offered a resolution to this crisis of manhood. The war furnished an opportunity for action in the tradition of the legendary father figures who fought in the American Revolution and the Civil War and thereby set the mold for political leadership. The war would toughen American men for survival in the realm of domestic politics as well as in the rough-and-tumble world of great imperial powers. At the same time, rescuing the Cubans from Spanish oppression would restore the heroic sense of honor believed to be so vital to leadership. In the process, the “New Woman” would be defanged. Women would resume their “proper” roles as nurturers who respected their men and raised their sons to be the next generation of brave, honorable males.

Undoubtedly, such gendered rhetoric is arresting. Whether it serves to tie together the various explanations for war and empire is another matter. Establishing the identity of a single individual is complicated enough, for character is shaped by many factors, including gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, and education. National identity and the actions that derive from it are more complex still, and the actions of real people in the real world are perhaps thorniest of all. Even a staunch booster of war and manly vigor such as Theodore Roosevelt was capable as president of pursuing the “unmanly” path of arbitration to end the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.

To say that gender shaped policy is different from saying that gender created policy. Even so, constructions of gender did play a role in the Spanish-American War, if only in their widespread use by those who sold the country on war and by those who fought it.



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“Secretary Sherman Talks to the Boy-King.”



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