



## The Policemen of the World

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### American Expansionism at the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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## 11/2016: Note to Students

- This presentation was partially used in class. It is something I had developed in years past and we discover some of this information through other activities now. However, I've provided the whole presentation so that you can have whatever you wish to take from it. ☺

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## First: The Spectrum of Foreign Policy

- Spectrum:
  - A broad sequence or range of related qualities, ideas, or activities
- Four main foreign policy stances:
  - Isolationism
    - a policy of remaining apart from the affairs or interests of other groups, especially the political affairs of other countries.
  - Collective Security
    - the cooperation of several countries in an alliance to strengthen the security of each.
  - Internationalism:
    - a political principle which advocates a greater political or economic cooperation among nations and peoples to advance their common interests, or that the governments of the world should cooperate because their mutual long-term interests are of greater importance than their short-term disputes.
  - Imperialism:
    - A policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force; particularly focused on the control that one group, often a state power, has on another group of people. There are "formal" or "informal" imperialisms. "Formal imperialism" is defined as "physical control or full-fledged colonial rule." "Informal imperialism" is less direct; however, it is still a powerful form of dominance

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**Background A:**  
**Washington's Farewell Address (1796)**

- In the late 1700s many nations formed their foreign policy in such a way as to maintain a balance of power with other countries. Nations often sought out alliances to ensure that they had enough allies to prevent an attack by an unfriendly nation. But George Washington, the first president of the United States, tried to steer the United States in a different direction. Washington, in his 1796 *Farewell Address*, advised, "The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is extending our commercial relations [but] to have with them as little political connection as possible." He argued that trade with other nations would benefit Americans, but that "entangling alliances" would draw the United States into undesirable conflicts. Washington's advice to avoid military alliances was followed throughout the 1800s and remained a major foreign policy consideration during the twentieth century as well.

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**Background B:**  
**The Monroe Doctrine (1823)**

- In December 1823 president James Monroe issued his final message to Congress. Concerned about European colonization in Latin America and on the West Coast, Monroe declared, "The American continents...are henceforth not to be considered as subject for future colonization by any European powers." In other words, the U.S. would not tolerate interference in the Western Hemisphere. This statement, known as the Monroe Doctrine, has come to be one of the most important foreign policy statements in U.S. history. In the 1820s, the U.S. did not have the military strength to back up Monroe's words. However, in the years since Monroe's speech, the United States has maintained a keen interest in Latin American affairs and has sent troops to that region more often than to any other region of the world.

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**Background C:**  
**The Mexican-American War (1846)**

- In 1846 president James K. Polk sent U.S. troops into an area of Texas just north of the Rio Grande that was claimed by both the United States and Mexico. Polk was intent on achieving "manifest destiny"—the belief that the United States was destined to occupy the territory between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans—by extending U.S. territory across the southwest from Texas to California. When Mexico refused to sell this territory to the United States, tensions between the two countries grew. In early May 1846, Mexican and U.S. troops engaged in a skirmish in the disputed area. President Polk expressed outrage at the loss of "American blood upon American soil," and called for war with Mexico. Congress was divided on the question of war with Mexico. Abraham Lincoln, then a congressman from Illinois, believed that a war with Mexico was nothing more than naked aggression. Nevertheless, the United States went to war, and by 1848 had invaded Mexico and had conquered the territory from Texas to the Pacific Ocean, an area now encompassing New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

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### Historian's Interpretations

- Before 1898, America was isolationist
- After the Civil War, America was expansionist
- America was isolationist in theory, but expansionist in practice

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### Belief:

- Three domestic concerns led the U.S. to expand global interests:
  - Industrial Expansion
  - Western Settlement
  - Growth of Federal Government
- How do these (and other factors) lead to U.S. Imperialism?

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### Industrial Expansion

- **Aspects affecting imperialist tendencies:**
  - **Business Cycles**
    - Alternating cycles of prosperity and recession caused overproduction
  - **International Investment Capital**
    - Foreign concerns invested \$3 billion in U.S. Economy
  - **Desire to expand markets**
  - **Favorable shift in balance of trade**
    - Standard Oil Example
    - Few exports in 1880
    - 1890: controlled 70% of world market

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### Western Settlement

- West settled with promise of overseas markets for surplus crops
  - Euro demand for U.S. crops drops after 1880
  - Farmers forced to seek new markets

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### "The Missionary Factor"

- Premises:
  - Soul saving and profit making go together
    - Industry learned about foreign markets from missionaries
    - Dole Pineapples and Hawaii
  - Government protection/International Agreements
    - More American missionaries=need to protect them
  - Faith in destiny of Christianity to conquer the world

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### Revitalized Navy

- By 1880s in shambles
  - Recovery from depression of 1873
    - More money to build modern navy
  - Realization that U.S. Navy was worst in world
    - Concern: unprepared if conflict erupted
  - Alfred Thayer Mahan
    - Surplus production requires commercial colonies
    - Oceans should be highways, not barriers
    - A powerful navy is essential for commerce

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### Let's Put Imperialism on Hold for Just Second...

- Anglo-Saxon Myth"—John Fiske
  - Evolution culminated with superior "A-S Race"
    - Responsible for "finer points" of civilization
  - "Primitive races" (not from NW Euro) did not possess mental, physical, or social capabilities of A-S
  - "Scientific" Evidence (Forehead Science)
    - A-S likely to have high forehead with more vertical angle of slope
    - Believed to be a sign of superior intelligence

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### Rhetorical Justification

- Frederick Jackson Turner—Influenced
  - Interaction with frontier promoted democracy
  - Americans seized this idea as frontier "closed"
    - Overseas expansion was the next great frontier
- "Anglo-Saxon Myth"
  - U.S. was an obvious seat of A-S power
  - Had a duty to expand influence globally
- Speeches of Albert J. Beveridge (Senator, IN)
  - "The March of the Flag" Speech
    - Shows prevalent themes of American DESTINY and DUTY

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### Summarize!

- What were the economic and political consequences of religious missionary work in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century?
- In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was the U.S. essentially isolationist, essentially expansionist, or a combination of both?
- FOCUS:
  - What leads to increased imperialistic policies for the United States?

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