

# 19 | The Progressive Era



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 19-1 Discuss the reform efforts of the Progressive era and the groups involved in those efforts.
- 19-2 Describe the methods used by the various states to bring about reforms in state governments during the Progressive era.
- 19-3 Compare and contrast the progressivism of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.
- 19-4 Discuss the involvement of women's groups in Progressive-era reform movements.
- 19-5 Describe ways in which American culture was influenced by the Progressive movement.

AFTER FINISHING  
THIS CHAPTER  
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FOR STUDY TOOLS

If Populism was a rural response to the Industrial Revolution and unionization the working-class response, Progressivism is often seen as the middle- and upper-class response. This is true, in a way. In an attempt to curb the potential radicalism of both the Populists and the working classes, it is often thought that middle-class reformers sought to use ideas of efficiency, sympathy, and a belief in progress to curb the worst abuses of the Industrial Age and ensure a more just social order, one that got rid of abject poverty while still ensuring that their comfortable, middle-class place in American life went undisturbed.

There is some truth to this generalization about Progressivism, but the reality was much more complicated. More than just the middle classes became infatuated with Progressive ideas, and what is today called the Progressive Movement eventually mushroomed to include numerous, sometimes contradicting, projects. Despite the diversity of ideas that fit under the moniker of *Progressivism*, it is true that the ideas at the heart of Progressivism—that benevolent government intervention could rectify the plight of the people, that the economic playing field needed to be regulated to ensure fair access for everyone, that American society could adapt to the advent of the Industrial Age without overthrowing democratic capitalism—became central to much of American social activism no matter what class proposed it. In this way, the ideas central to early-twentieth-century Progressivism have remained a fixture in modern American liberalism, defined most simply as the ideology that lionizes liberty and freedom, but which by the turn of the twentieth century came to mean the idea that the modern Industrial Age requires government to play a role in ensuring a fair distribution of wealth.

The movement that became turn-of-the-twentieth-century Progressivism began with a specific agenda: to clean up the nation's cities. But the social and political endeavors grew from there. Progressivism came to include reforms on state and national levels, including efforts to mitigate poverty, institute labor reform, create greater worker efficiency, and improve the unsatisfactory conditions of urban housing. Borrowing from the Populists, Progressives worked to create a more democratic political process. Borrowing from the labor movement, Progressives

also sought greater government regulation of industry. The reforms went on to include the development of conservation efforts like the creation of national parks and the use of experts to help solve persistent social problems. Progressives sought greater efficiency in both government and industry, institutions that would promote and teach middle-class values, and a more codified social order that would teach others the path to middle-class values. Indeed, the Progressives cast their nets so widely that some historians have debated the very utility of the word *progressive*. In general, it is an umbrella term for a host of changes demanded largely by the middle class to rein in the worst abuses of the Industrial Age. Its focus was on the search for stability, efficiency, and kindness within a rapidly changing world. The Progressives' demands propelled them into the political spotlight from the 1890s until the end of the First World War in 1918. Of the three initial waves of reform that emerged in the late nineteenth century, the Progressives were the most influential.

## 19-1 THE REFORMERS

The Progressives were composed mainly of middle-class men and women, most of whom lived in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York, although many were from more rural areas like Wisconsin. Most were raised in deeply religious families, and they pursued social reform with the zeal of religious missionaries. As members of the middle class, many Progressives had money, time, and resources to devote to the cause of reform.

### 19-1a Principal Reform Groups

Two groups were especially important: followers of the Social Gospel movement and women.

#### THE SOCIAL GOSPEL MOVEMENT

Beginning in the 1880s, Protestant ministers responded to the problems of industrialized society by fighting for social justice and concentrating on ending poverty and prostitution. Ministers like Washington

◀◀◀ Winning voting rights for women was perhaps the most transformative of the Progressive era reforms, but it was just one of many changes designed to adjust American life to the industrial age. Here, women and their babies march to advocate female suffrage.

Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch became nationally known leaders of the **Social Gospel** movement, and their actions prompted many middle-class citizens to fight for Progressive reform. The Social Gospel movement stood in direct contrast with those advocating Social Darwinism, whose focus was not on Jesus-inspired kindness but on the “survival of the fittest.”

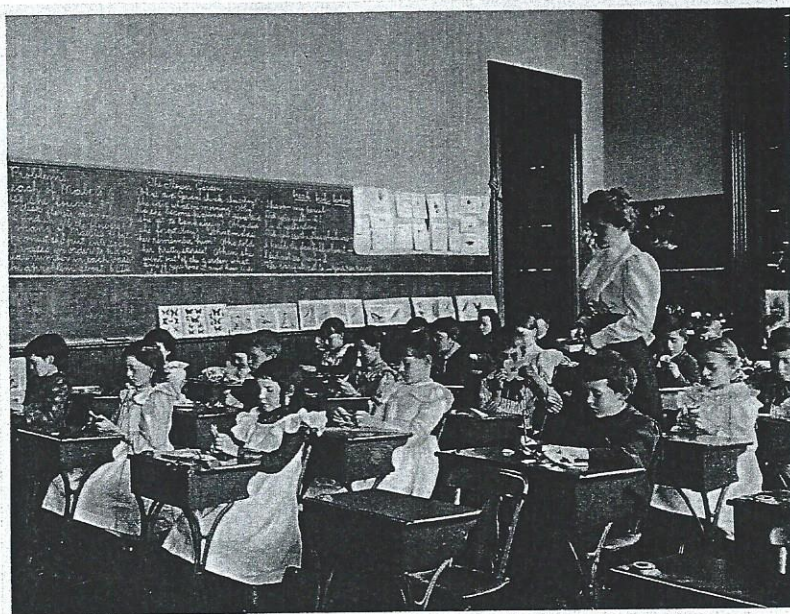
## WOMEN

Progressive reform particularly attracted urban middle-class women. By the late nineteenth century, many women were well educated, and many in this first generation of college graduates ignored traditional social norms and worked outside the home. These women were schoolteachers, nurses, librarians, business clerks, typists, and doctors. However, there were fewer professional jobs for women. Participating in reform organizations was a way to perform a public service and have a job. Furthermore, although since the early nineteenth century women’s roles were supposedly confined to indoor domestic spaces (for this, see Chapter 10), with the rise of the Industrial Age it became apparent that the lives of children and families could be affected by government action, such as clean water sanitation, garbage collection, and education for poor children.

Women thus became involved in the public arena as part of their domestic responsibilities. One of the best-known Progressive reformers, Jane Addams, referred to her work as “municipal housekeeping.” But Addams was not alone. Women were some of the most active reformers of the Progressive era. For example, nurse Margaret Sanger pushed to increase the availability of contraception. Journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett led the anti-lynching crusade to stop violence against African Americans. And Alice Paul and others fought for female suffrage on the grounds

**Social Gospel** An early-twentieth-century Protestant-inspired movement advocating widespread reforms to curb the worst abuses of the Industrial Revolution; its leaders included Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch

**settlement houses** Safe residences in poor neighborhoods where reformers could study local conditions and where residents could hold meetings and receive free health care



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>> By the late nineteenth century, many women were well educated, and many in this first generation of college graduates worked outside the home. Here, a female teacher oversees her classroom full of children.

that women’s new role in the public world demanded that they have the right to vote.

## 19-1b Reforming the Cities

The first target of Progressive reform was the nation’s cities. From 1870 to 1900, the urban population of the United States grew from 10 million to more than 30 million. By 1920, the U.S. Census declared for the first time that the United States had more urban than nonurban dwellers. This rapid growth made it difficult for urban governments to provide basic services, such as street cleaning, garbage collection, and schools. Progressive reformers focused on fixing these problems and improving living conditions in the poor areas. If many middle-class people had not noticed the urban poverty of the era, journalist Jacob A. Riis’s illustrated book about New York City’s tenements, *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), shocked many Americans into “discovering” poverty.

### SETTLEMENT HOUSES

One of the most effective Progressive solutions to the problem of poverty was the creation of **settlement houses**, safe residences in poor neighborhoods where reformers could study local conditions. Much like a social



PhotoQuest/Getty Images

>> Urban poverty drove many people to embrace Progressive era changes. Here, immigrant women sell clothes in a crowded marketplace.

scientist's fieldwork, living in the middle of these neighborhoods gave reformers a first-hand look at what needed to be changed. The settlement houses also provided a place for residents to hold meetings and receive free health care. Settlement houses became fixtures in many cities, including Chicago, Boston, and New York.

**Hull House** was the second but most renowned settlement house in the United States, founded in Chicago in 1889 by Jane Addams (the first, called Neighborhood Guild, was built in New York City in 1886). Hull House exemplified the type of contribution reformers could make. Women made up the majority of its residents, and they lobbied the government to pass better construction and safety laws to improve the conditions in the surrounding tenement houses. The women of Hull House also established a new, more effective process for collecting garbage and fought to eradicate prostitution in the cities by closing red-light districts. Addams's book about her experience, *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1910), became a reform classic and expressed



>> Jane Addams of Hull House.

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the moral tone of the Progressive era. Addams emphasized that it was not a matter of *noblesse oblige* that led her into the slums; she wrote that her own life was worthless before she undertook her mission and that the settlement house was as educational and therapeutic for her as its work was beneficial to the poor immigrants around her.

Settlement houses did have their critics, however. Many of the laboring poor who took advantage of the settlement houses were aware that their participation exposed them to "Americanization" efforts that sought to minimize their own cultural heritage and adopt instead middle-class American values. Similarly, many of the reformers disdained the laboring poor's infatuation with popular culture like Coney Island and movies instead of high culture, about which they sought to educate them. Thus, although there was much kindness at the heart of the Social Gospel and the settlement movement, there was a good bit of paternalism involved as well.

### THE ANTI-SALOON LEAGUE

Meanwhile, temperance advocates continued to attack the consumption of alcohol, thinking it had a negative effect on the working classes and on the stability of impoverished urban neighborhoods. Reformers saw many women and children plunged into poverty as their husbands and fathers abdicated responsibility by drinking away their paychecks. Temperance workers also feared that the large number of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, who mostly came from cultures that had long drinking traditions, were increasing America's dependence on alcohol, and thus pushing the nation farther from the middle-class ideal.

To influence legislation, temperance workers started the Anti-Saloon League in 1893, attempting to pass laws at local and state levels. Its interest in politics gave the Anti-Saloon League a higher profile than

**Hull House** The second but most renowned settlement house in the United States, founded in Chicago in 1889 by Jane Addams; its residents lobbied the government to pass better construction and safety laws to improve conditions in the surrounding tenement houses



akg-images/Newscom

>> Startling images of urban poverty, such as those created by Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, helped provoke a middle-class reaction that came to be known as Progressivism. In this image of Lewis Hine's, poor Italian immigrants sit near Chicago's famous settlement house, Jane Addam's Hull House.



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [C-USZ62-72568]

the Women's Christian Temperance League (WCTL), which continued to push for local, mandatory temperance education. And, unlike the WCTL, the Anti-Saloon League was composed mostly of men (such as its founder, Howard Hyde Russell, and its most prominent national leader, Wayne Wheeler), who felt the dirty work of politics should be carried out by men. The Anti-Saloon League became the first modern, single-issue lobbying group in the nation. As in the 1830s and 1840s, temperance was one of the major components of the reform impulse.

>> Wayne Wheeler was the chief lobbyist for the Anti-Saloon League, one of the largest Progressive-era organizations. He was said to have controlled six congresses, had the ear of two presidents, and exerted considerable control of innumerable state legislatures.

## The Reasons Why...

There were four principal reasons why the Progressive era occurred when it did:

**The Industrial Age.** The Industrial Age introduced a host of changes to the United States, including the tremendous growth of cities, the increasing plight of the industrial worker, and the close alignment of business interests and government. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, these problems became difficult to ignore, and a large swath of reformers attempted to address them. They sought to end corruption, take politics away from business interests, and create a more caring, if paternalistic, society.

**Growth of the middle class.** These industries also created an expansive middle class of bureaucrats, marketers, salesmen, and technical workers who possessed the wealth and leisure time to involve themselves in political causes. This was particularly true for middle-class women. The growing recognition that individuals are buffeted by social and economic forces beyond their control led middle-class women to embrace the notion that the outside world was encroaching on domestic space and thus entitled women to push for social and political change. Of course, only women with wealth and leisure were capable of undertaking these tasks, and so

it was middle-class women who constituted much of the ground troops of the Progressive movement.

**Fears of radicalism.** Beyond simply cleaning up cities and making industrial life less dangerous, these reformers were also afraid that, if changes were not instituted, more radical calls for change would gain strength. Thus, while southern and western farmers embraced the potential radicalism of the Populists, and the urban working class formed a potentially radical working-class movement, the middle classes sought to redress the most egregious aspects of the Industrial Age to keep the more radical claims at bay.

**Scientific authority.** Finally, although the vast majority of Americans claimed to be religious adherents, during the late nineteenth century science rose as an authority with the potential capacity to answer most of society's needs. Thus Progressives embraced a scientific ethos that advanced the notion that, through study and experimentation, people could change the world in which they lived. Scientific knowledge, of course, changes over time, and the Progressives' attempts to harness scientific knowledge led them to embrace dubious positions, such as Frederick Taylor's theory of scientific management and, more damningly, eugenics. But their embrace of scientific rationality also introduced a variety of government regulations and a professional corps of administrators, ensuring that jobs upon which dollars and even lives depended were not in the hands of unskilled political appointees.

19-2

## STATE POLITICAL REFORM

Urban reform was just the beginning of the Progressives' battle to rectify the nation's problems. Progressives soon realized that improving conditions for the poor required broader political efforts at both the state and federal levels. They were determined to take the country back from the corrupt and selfish corporate interests that dominated politics without allowing politics to be co-opted by radicals. Many had been influenced by the **Galveston hurricane** of 1900, which utterly destroyed the once-booming island town of Galveston, Texas. Even though previous storms had barraged the city and its population of 42,000, local leaders did not heed the warnings to build a protective storm wall. After the hurricane killed more than 8,000 people, numerous factions began to reform local and state politics, attempting to give the middle class a greater voice in American politics.

### 19-2a Democratizing Trends

One way Progressive reformers attempted to take greater control of the political process was to change how senators were elected. Hitherto, senators had been chosen by state legislatures. Progressives proposed that senators be elected directly by citizens, enabling citizens to vote for a candidate they trusted. Many senators and businessmen opposed the idea; they distrusted the voters' ability to select candidates and had no desire to campaign before the public. But, in 1913, after several years of agitation, the reform became law as the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution.

**Galveston hurricane** Devastating hurricane that killed more than 8,000 people in Galveston, Texas, in 1900; helped spur demands that local and state governments be more responsive to people's needs

Another democratizing trend was illustrated by the **initiative** and the **referendum**, which together were designed to allow citizens more control over state law. An initiative is a citizen's proposal for a new piece of legislation that can appear on a ballot and be voted on by his or her fellow citizens. A referendum is a citizen-led effort to strike down a law passed by a legislature. Both represented citizen's efforts to take greater control of their state governance. Between 1900 and 1920, initiatives and referendums were adopted in numerous states, and they are still in use today.

Similar democratic reforms were the **primary** election and the **recall**. The primary is a preliminary election designed to let voters choose which political candidates will run for public office, rather than leaving the selection to potentially corrupt politicians plotting in "smoke-filled rooms." The recall is a device by which petitioning citizens can, with a vote, dismiss state officers, governors, and judges deemed to have violated the popular interest.

Despite these democratic impulses, it must be said that most Progressives were not radically democratic, and most did not oppose the spread of the poll tax in the South or, for that matter, other voter elimination tactics that lowered voting numbers dramatically. In general, most Progressives wanted to limit the crony capitalism that shaped Gilded Age politics without allowing radicals to gain control of the political process.

### 19-2b Professional Administrators

In addition to reshaping the political process in order to ensure that middle-class goals were more easily met, reformers also sought measures to ensure that the right person got the right job. Sometimes this impulse meant that Progressive reformers made certain government positions exempt from voting altogether. One chronic complaint against city political machines was that

**initiative** A legislative device designed to allow citizens more control over state law; they could advocate a specific idea and introduce it on the ballot

**referendum** A legislative device designed to allow citizens more control over state law; citizens could collect a few thousand signatures on a petition in order to advance a specific idea and introduce it on the ballot

**primary** A preliminary election designed to let voters choose which political candidates will run for public office

**recall** A device by which petitioning citizens can, with a vote, dismiss state officers, governors, and judges who are deemed to have violated the popular interest

important administrative posts always went to friends of the "bosses" rather than to experts, and middle-class Progressives wanted to make sure their values were implemented.

To get rid of cronyism, most Progressives supported the creation of a professional corps of administrators. The corps required anyone who wanted a government job to take a competitive exam. Only those who passed could get a job, and only those who excelled could rise to influential, decision-making positions. Ideally, no matter what political party won each new election, jobholders would be allowed to maintain their positions. This system ensured continuity and efficiency rather than a chaotic turnover of personnel each time a new party came into office.

### 19-2c Progress of Reforms

One by one, states adopted these various reforms, mostly beginning in the West and the Midwest. In Wisconsin, Robert "Battling Bob" La Follette, the first Progressive governor of Wisconsin, created a Legislative Reference Bureau that became known as the "Wisconsin Idea." It consisted of a board of experts (including academics like Richard T. Ely) who ensured sound drafting of Wisconsin's laws for such things as worker's compensation, government regulation of railroad companies, and conservation of natural resources. The keys to reform were appointed commissions of experts working in the name of civil service.

19-3

## PROGRESSIVISM IN NATIONAL POLITICS

Progressives had pursued reform at the city and state levels, but the real power of reform lay at the national level. The expansion of Progressivism into the federal arena came after the initial reforms at the state level in the late 1800s and continued under the presidential administrations of Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, and Woodrow Wilson.

### 19-3a Theodore Roosevelt, Reformer

During his eight years in the White House (1901–1909), President Theodore Roosevelt strongly advocated (from what he called his "bully pulpit" in the White House) Progressive reform and intervened more decisively in national affairs than any president since Abraham



JACK AND THE WALL STREET GIANTS

Everett Collection/Newscom

>> Here, in this political cartoon of the era, a cartoonist compares Teddy Roosevelt to little Jack taking on the giants of Wall Street.

Lincoln. His larger-than-life personality had made him a celebrity. He built on this image during his presidency and developed what he called a “square deal” (a term he borrowed from his poker habit) because he offered an evenhanded approach to the relationship between labor and business.

Roosevelt believed that industrial society was threatened by the immorality of big businessmen, who were more interested in personal gain than in the good of society. Monopolies were the worst offenders, and yet Roosevelt did not believe in hastily breaking up concentrations of wealth and power. Rather, he hoped that large corporations or trusts could benefit the nation by providing more equitable employment and economic expansion. Thus, in 1902, he arbitrated a coal strike in West Virginia by finding a middle ground between the

miners and the owners (recall that earlier most strikes had been broken by the introduction of federal or state troops). Similarly, in 1903, he asked Congress to create a Bureau of Corporations to examine the conduct of businesses in America. As a result of the bureau’s findings, Roosevelt prosecuted several companies for breaking the **Sherman Antitrust Act** of 1890, which was the federal government’s first attempt to break up monopolies but which was not widely used until Roosevelt took office.

Roosevelt also developed and used the Hepburn Act of 1906, which limited prices that railroads could charge and allowed the federal government to monitor the financial books of the large railroad companies. Roosevelt’s actions showed that he was willing to put the force of the federal government behind antitrust laws, garnering him the nickname of **trustbuster**.

And, as a big-game hunter, Roosevelt shared the concern of many Progressives about the loss of the countryside and the conservation of nature. In particular, he was concerned about the nation’s dwindling natural preserves. In response, he didn’t wait for Congress to act but instead used his executive power to create five new national parks and fifty wildlife refuges designed to protect local animal species. This preserved millions of acres—the greatest amount of land ever protected by a U.S. president. Roosevelt also supervised the creation of the **National Forest Service**.

### 19-3b William Howard Taft, Reformer?

Roosevelt’s successor, William Howard Taft, was a distinguished lawyer and later chief justice of the Supreme Court (1921–1930). He too took on the mantle of being a Progressive. Politically speaking, by the 1910s, it was the only game in town. He busted more trusts than Roosevelt, and he was key in bringing down the Standard Oil Company in 1911. But Taft was never as politically capable as Roosevelt, and in a few instances he overturned some of Roosevelt’s own “progressive reforms.” Most damningly, Taft broke up U.S. Steel despite the fact that Roosevelt

**Sherman Antitrust Act** Passed in 1890, the federal government’s first attempt to break up monopolies

**trustbuster** A nickname for those in government advocating antitrust laws

**National Forest Service** Government agency created by Theodore Roosevelt to preserve land and protect local animal species

"When i say i believe in a square deal i do not mean to give every man the best hand. If the cards do not come to any man, or if they do come, and he has not got the power to play them, that is his affair. All i mean is that there shall be no crookedness in the dealing."

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT

had previously declared U.S. Steel a "good trust." The various meanings of *progressive* were becoming problematic. Both Republicans and Democrats claimed the term, and it meant different things to different people. Making things even more confusing, in 1912, this dispute between Teddy Roosevelt and Taft led Roosevelt to form a third party, the **Progressive Party**, to win back the presidency from his successor. But in the end, in 1912, Roosevelt and Taft split allegiances and lost to the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson, who advocated parts of the Progressive mission with just as much zeal as Roosevelt.

### 19-3c Woodrow Wilson, Reformer

When Woodrow Wilson became president in 1913, Progressive ideas were at their most influential. But Wilson did not trust big business as much as Roosevelt. In his platform message, entitled "**The New Freedom**," Wilson pledged to use government power to destroy big

**Progressive Party** Political party created by Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 to win back the presidency from Taft

**The New Freedom** Woodrow Wilson's platform message pledging to use government power to destroy big businesses and give smaller ones greater ability to compete

**Federal Trade Commission** A government agency charged with investigating unfair business practices

businesses and give smaller ones greater ability to compete. He passed a series of laws that increased the size and power of the federal government, and he helped pass the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, which established a regional banking system under the control of the federal government. The act also included a massive tariff reduction, the first since the Civil War, known as the Underwood Tariff. Because Wilson believed that high protectionist tariffs were unfairly enriching America's industrialists, this tariff reduction served as a symbol of his suspicion of big business.

In 1914, Wilson assisted in passing the Clayton Antitrust Act, which put limits on mergers and acquisitions, prevented individuals from being the director of two or more competing companies, and more or less defined what was meant by an illegal monopoly. Also in 1914, Wilson supported the creation of the **Federal Trade Commission**, a government agency that had the right to investigate business practices and issue rulings to prevent businesses from continuing such practices.

Wilson focused on Progressive reforms to regulate businesses, but he never fully supported the social reforms that other Progressives rallied for, such as child labor reform, women's suffrage, and regulation of laborer workdays. Because of the popularity of these ideas, however, Wilson eventually supported the passage of several bills, including the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act, which prevented the employment of children under the age of sixteen (which the U.S. Supreme Court later found unconstitutional), and a bill that mandated a maximum eight-hour workday for American railroad laborers.

By the time he was reelected president in 1916, Wilson had fulfilled many of his Progressive goals, although some were less than benign. For instance, claiming to "clean up" federal government on behalf of the "common good," Wilson allowed the racial segregation of a variety of federal departments within the nation's capital, including the Post Office and the Treasury. Wilson was, of course, a member of the Democratic Party, which, in the South at least, was premised on white supremacy. Thus, as conscientious as they were about the "common good," most Progressives like Wilson were not beyond the common racial perceptions of the time. Reforms of the Progressive era were not always progressive.

19-4

## WOMEN'S PROGRESSIVISM

Although women spearheaded many significant Progressive-era reforms, they were still denied the right to vote. This became increasingly problematic



eve of President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration in 1913, Alice Paul organized a rally of 5,000 women to demand a federal constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote. She also held a six-month vigil outside the White House to protest restrictions of woman suffrage.

Eventually, Paul and several others were arrested on false charges of "obstructing traffic," and, despite receiving wide publicity that embarrassed government officials, were sent to workhouses where they were brutally force-fed after going on a hunger strike and severely beaten by guards. They were eventually released, but their non-violent efforts increased pressure on the government to give women the right to vote.

The combined efforts of these two groups ultimately led to victory. In 1920, just after the end of World War I, the Nineteenth Amendment was passed, and women won the right to vote.

>> Margaret Sanger.

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>> Alice Paul.

Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Beyond advocating the right to vote, nonpolitical women's clubs were also vitally important to the Progressive cause. These clubs provided meeting places for African American and southern white women. They also organized social work, invited speakers to discuss topics of the day, and grew networks of women who discussed how issues uniquely affected women. Through these organizations, several women rose to national prominence. Margaret Sanger promoted reproductive rights for women, including advocating birth control. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's extensive writings exposed the inherent paternalism of early-twentieth-century America, especially the organization of its economic life.

**muckrakers** Investigative writers who exposed bad conditions in American factories, political corruption in city machines, and the financial deceit of corporations

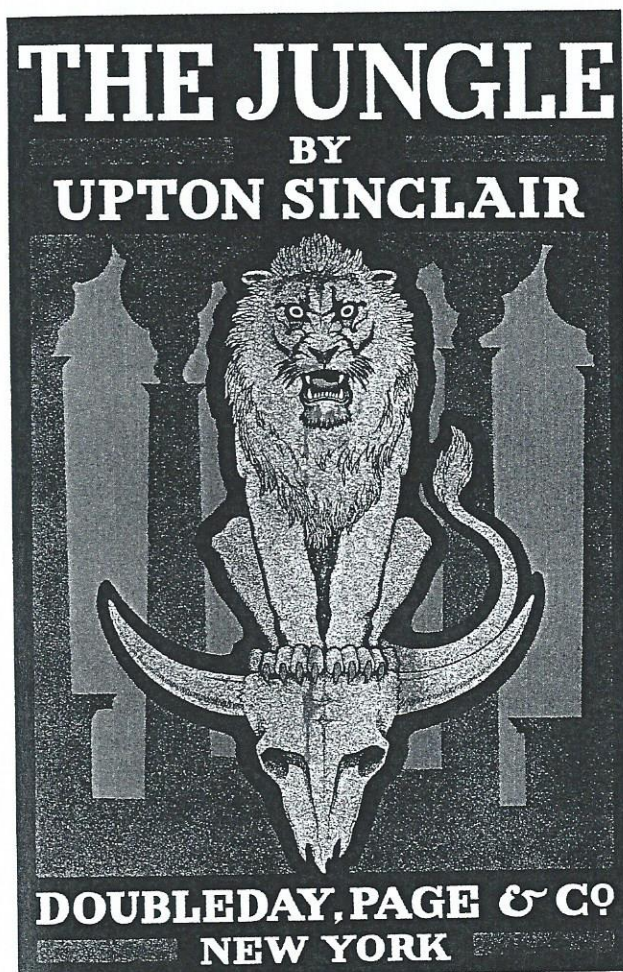
19-5 **PROGRESSIVE INFLUENCES ON AMERICAN CULTURE**

Progressive reformers did not limit their efforts to improving urban conditions and reforming political systems. Their ideas influenced business and educational practices and attempted to improve the overall quality of life for many Americans. Progressivism was about more than just politics. (To understand why the Progressive era occurred when it did, see "The Reasons Why . . ." box.)

19-5a **The Muckrakers**

In fact, Progressive ideas spread throughout the nation mainly through the voices of journalists, novelists, professors, and public intellectuals. Among the best remembered are the **muckrakers**, investigative writers who exposed miserable conditions

in American factories, political corruption in city machines, and the financial deceits of corporations. Through diverse means, the muckrakers used these exposés to influence city dwellers to be active in flushing out immorality and to understand the positive effects of an urban democracy. Jacob Riis, Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, and Upton Sinclair were the best-known muckrakers. All wrote classic books in the Progressive tradition, including Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890), Steffens's *The Shame of the Cities* (1904), Tarbell's *The History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904), and, most notable of all, Sinclair's



>> Rats running over rotten meat, embalming fluid dripping into sausages, workers spitting into steaks: it's no wonder *The Jungle* prompted the Pure Food and Drug Act. Pictured here is the cover from the book's first edition.



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-51788]

>> Meat inspectors.

*The Jungle* (1906), which told the harrowing tale of life in a Chicago meatpacking plant.

The details of Sinclair's factory were real, and middle-class meateaters, including President Roosevelt, were horrified. Sinclair described rats running over piles of rotten meat, embalming fluid mixed into the sausages to disguise the rot, and workers spitting tuberculosis germs into heaps of meat as it baked in the midsummer sun. Roosevelt's staff investigated these tales and found that the writer had not been exaggerating. This prompted Congress to pass, in 1906, the **Pure Food and Drug Act** and the Meat Inspection Act. The first national legislation of their kind, these acts gave the federal government responsibility for ensuring that meat would reach its customers fresh and disease-free.

### 19-5b Progressivism in Business

In business, Progressives sought not only to improve working conditions and professional standards, but also to improve efficiency. While one of the first measures the Progressives undertook was to improve the relationship between owners and labor, these efforts often

**Pure Food and Drug Act** Passed in 1906, this act, along with the Meat Inspection Act, gave the federal government responsibility for ensuring that meat would reach its customers fresh and disease-free

"The task before us, then, narrowed itself down to getting Schmidt to handle 47 tons of pig-iron per day and making him glad to do it."

—FREDERICK W. TAYLOR, *PRINCIPLES OF SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT*, 1911

fell flat. For instance, the National Civic Federation, founded in 1900, sought to build a partnership between owners and workers. But the organization never accomplished its goal because there were simply not enough business owners who wanted to help their workers, and many workers did not trust that owners were motivated to help them.

Besides, many Progressives were more interested in improving efficiency, no one more so than the engineer Frederick W. Taylor. Like Progressives who sought to open the political process to more efficient methods, Taylor believed that businesses could also be made more efficient if they changed some of their practices. Taylor's key interests were **scientific management** (the detailed study of the best ways to schedule, organize, and standardize tasks) and time-and-motion studies (the study of exactly how factory jobs functioned). Using minute scrutiny, cameras, and stopwatches, he worked out the most efficient way to wield a shovel full of coal and showed business managers that systematic employment of his methods could boost productivity. He published his results in 1911. However, historians have recently discovered that most of his results were fabricated, leading owners to make what we now know were impossible demands of their workers. Thus Taylor's

**scientific management** Pioneered by Frederick W. Taylor, the detailed study of the best ways to schedule, organize, and standardize work tasks

**Progressive Education Association** Formed in 1919, this national association supported and advocated for education reforms that taught children to make good moral and political choices

**eugenics** An early-twentieth-century movement centered on the belief that it was possible to improve the human species by discouraging or outlawing reproduction by various people thought to have undesirable traits

efforts to improve efficiency made working conditions even more miserable.

### 19-5c Progressive Education

Progressives also pursued efficiency in the educational system. They argued that, in order for citizens to work better in their jobs and participate in politics, they needed to be well educated. Thus, in cities and towns, Progressives helped build more schools and improved teacher education and salaries.

The most famous Progressive theorist of education was John Dewey, a philosopher at the University of Chicago. Dewey founded the Laboratory School for elementary and middle school children, where he pioneered child-centered education. The idea was to allow students to pursue their own interests rather than force them to memorize a curriculum. Dewey argued that this approach taught children to live in a democracy and to make good moral and political choices for the rest of their lives. Eventually, Progressive educational ideas became so popular that, in 1919, Progressives formed the **Progressive Education Association** to support and advocate for these education reforms.

### 19-5d The Role of Laws

Above all, the Progressives avowed a stern belief in laws as vital instruments of social change. Instead of using large social movements or force, Progressives sought to change the way Americans lived by crafting laws against what they saw as social wrongs. In addition to the many trustbusting, tariff, and voting laws they advocated, Progressives used the courts to limit the number of hours women and children could work and to end the most brutal forms of racial antagonism. They sometimes succeeded, as in the case of *Muller v. Oregon* (1908), which upheld a law limiting the number of hours that women could work in a day. Progressives were, however, unsuccessful in passing lasting child labor laws and in promoting a federal anti-lynching law.

The Progressives' love of laws led in dark directions as well. *Muller v. Oregon*, for example, was premised on the argument that women were weaker than men and unable to enter contracts on their own. This idea demonstrated the limitations of Progressivism in a male-dominated society.

More damningly, in the name of improving human genetic qualities on behalf of the common good, some Progressives argued that it would be better to sterilize people with so-called less desirable qualities. This movement, called **eugenics**, was a worldwide

phenomenon, led by the Briton Sir Francis Galton, who was Charles Darwin's cousin and who was infatuated with applying his cousin's ideas beyond the forces of biological evolution. In the United States, beginning in 1896, many states began prohibiting anyone who was "epileptic, imbecile, or feeble-minded" from getting married. In 1907, Indiana was the first of more than thirty states to require compulsory sterilization of certain kinds of criminals and the mentally ill. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of these laws in 1927, and they continued to be the law of the land in certain states until the 1970s. Prominent supporters of eugenics included Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Margaret Sanger.

## >LOOKING AHEAD . . .

By the 1910s and into the 1920s, three sizeable challenges to the politics and society of the Industrial Age had arisen. All were in some way a reaction to the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The establishment of the first labor unions created a system of industrial labor that existed throughout much of the twentieth century. The agrarian interests associated with the Populists may have failed politically, but some of the principal tenets of their cause eventually came to fruition. Finally, the Progressives, who were the most influential of the three, enacted political, social, and educational reforms that are with us today. Their efforts to fend off the threats to capitalism both from above (corporate interests and trusts) and from below (radicals and socialists) were the most successful, even if the panoply of ideas brought forward under the banner of Progressivism meant that, as a movement, it lost coherence. Still, the number of laws and reforms passed is remarkable, a reflection of the energy of the Industrial Age when that energy is aimed at instituting progressive reform.

By the 1910s, the word *progressive* had become almost synonymous with decency and cleanliness, and politicians of all kinds were careful to depict themselves as Progressives, even if their record showed them to

be dyed-in-the-wool conservatives. The fact that such a wide array of political types claimed the Progressive label illustrates how powerful the Progressive impulse had become.

But progressive ideas were not simply an American phenomenon. American reformers borrowed from other nations confronting the Industrial Age, especially those in western Europe. Jane Addams, for example, got the idea for Hull House after visiting a settlement house in England. And the paternalism mixed with kindness that marked American Progressivism would not stay in just the United States either. Many American Progressives sought to spread their ideals throughout the world. Although they often did so with the best of intentions, their actions would generate a host of critics both at home and abroad. And it is to America's renewed interest in world affairs that we turn next.

## STUDY TOOLS 19

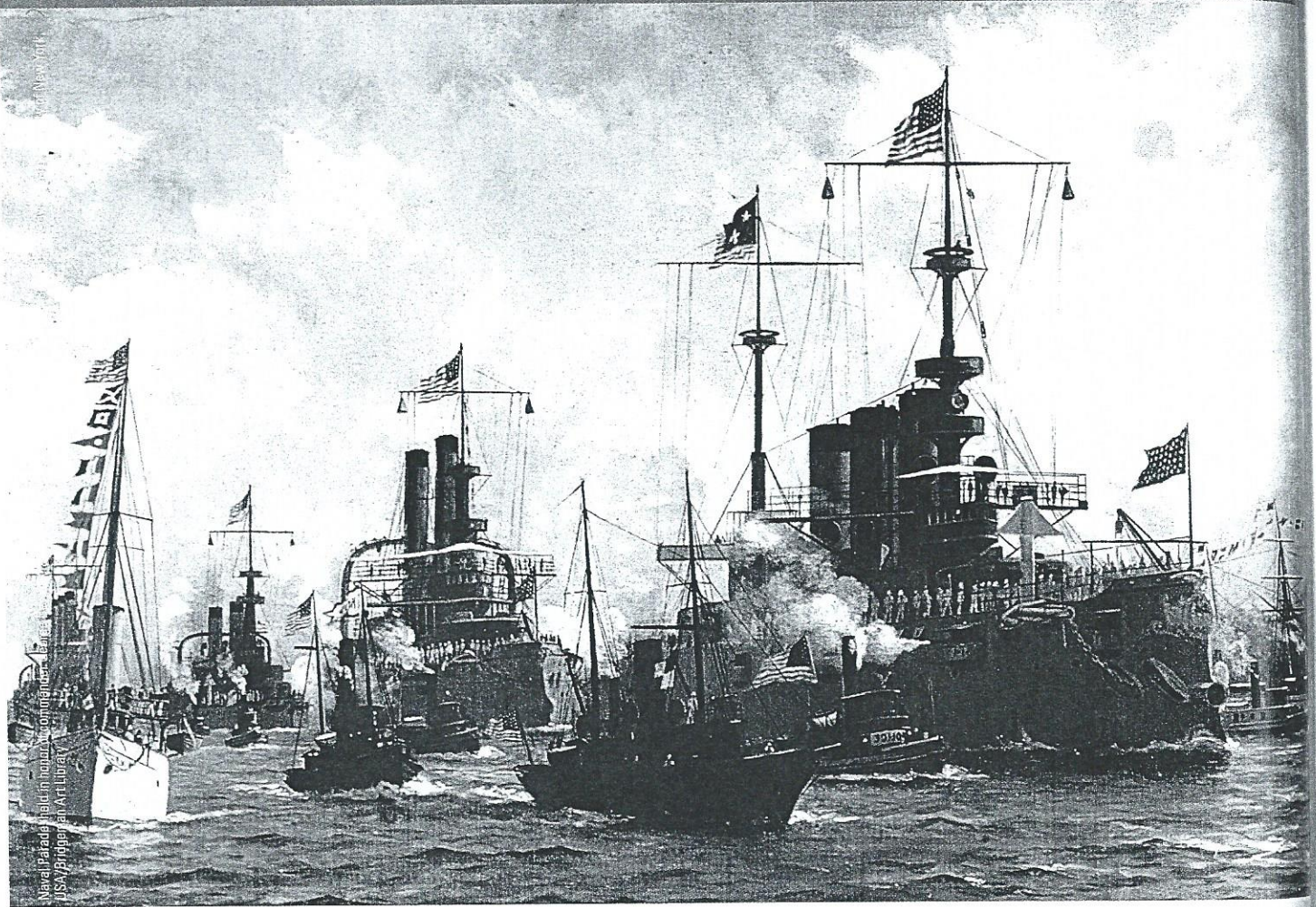
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- Read Margaret Sanger's speech "The Morality of Birth Control."
- Read Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management*.
- Read more from *The Jungle*.
- Read "The New Freedom."

# 20 | Becoming a World Power



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 20-1 Explain the major reasons for the growing call in the late 1800s for the United States to develop an empire.
- 20-2 Describe the first moves the U.S. made toward empire.
- 20-3 Explain the major reasons for the Spanish-American War of 1898, and discuss the controversy over imperialism that developed after the war.
- 20-4 Describe the growth of American imperialism during the Progressive era.
- 20-5 Discuss World War I, including reasons for the war, American experiences during the war, and effects of the treaty ending the war.

**AFTER FINISHING  
THIS CHAPTER  
GO TO PAGE 391  
FOR STUDY TOOLS**

Between 1867 and 1917, the United States became a true world power for the first time. To a large degree, this was a result of the Industrial Revolution. The search for overseas markets and the ideology of manifest destiny (which, as developed in the 1840s, held that Americans were destined by God to possess all the land between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans) spurred the United States to keep pushing outward, building up its navy in the 1880s and beginning to acquire overseas territories in 1890s. During these years, American military might often backed up American commercial interests, creating an “economic imperialism” that sometimes weighed on other countries almost as heavily as outright conquest. Many Americans also felt they had a duty to “civilize” the so-called “lesser” nations of the world, a notion based in no small part on feelings of racial superiority. Victory in the Spanish-American War in 1898 was a turning point, adding to the nation a string of island colonies in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean to U.S. territory, and declaring to the world that the United States was an emerging global power.

Many Americans vigorously protested their country’s new imperialism, citing the U.S. government’s violent atrocities, the racist ideals that propelled America’s imperial march, and the moral problem of allowing business interests to drive armed diplomacy. Nevertheless, these imperialist developments led the country into the First World War and then served as the basis for U.S. foreign policy for much of the twentieth century.

◀◀◀ A national naval parade in honor of Commander George Dewey, celebrating one of his victories—and the might of the U.S. Navy. During the final decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, the U.S. became a truly global power for the first time.

## 20-1 WHY AN AMERICAN EMPIRE?

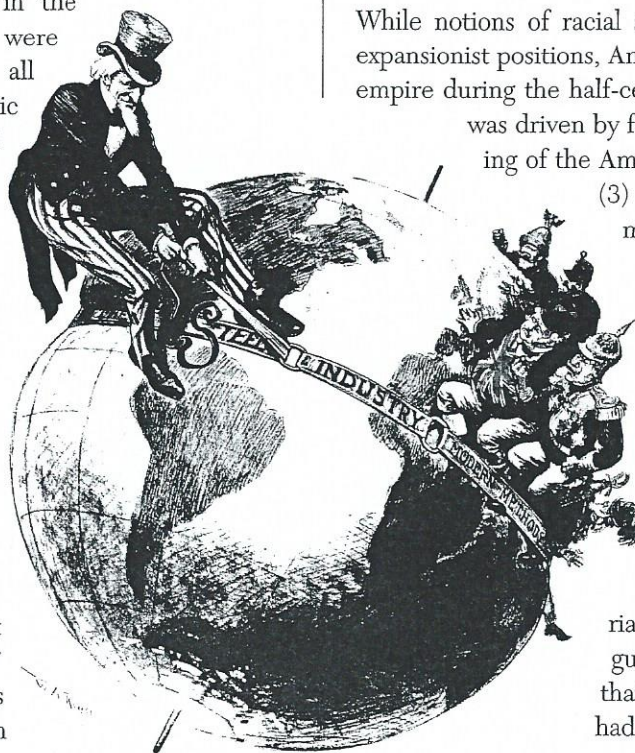
While notions of racial superiority justified America’s expansionist positions, America’s creation of an overseas empire during the half-century following the Civil War was driven by four basic reasons: (1) the closing of the American frontier, (2) economics, (3) religious and moral commitments, and (4) geopolitics.

### 20-1a Manifest Destiny and the End of the Frontier

In some respects, global imperialism was simply an extension of the way America had “won the West.” Historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued in an influential 1893 essay that America’s frontier experience had played a key role in shaping America’s national character, including its democratic political institutions and its free-spirited capitalism. In “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” Turner even suggested (with some trepidation) that the frontier was so integral to the nation’s psyche that Americans might require a new frontier in order to ensure the survival of its democracy. “American energy,” the **Turner Thesis** concluded prophetically, “will demand a wider field for its

require a new frontier in order to ensure the survival of its democracy. “American energy,” the **Turner Thesis** concluded prophetically, “will demand a wider field for its

**Turner Thesis** Argument put forward by historian Frederick Jackson Turner that the presence of the western frontier had shaped the American character and allowed the development of democracy and capitalism, necessitating in the wake of its 1893 disappearance “a wider field for its exercise”; was used to buttress attempts to propel American interests abroad



A STEEL CINCH ON THE WORLD

>>> This 1901 cartoon, showing Uncle Sam working with American Steel to control the world, demonstrated both the contentious nature of American imperialism, and its rising dominance at the turn of the twentieth century.

North Wind/North Wind Picture Archives

exercise.” To Turner, the widespread belief in the idea of manifest destiny meant that many Americans might feel it natural to continue to explore and conquer, even if that meant crossing seas and continents.

### 20-1b Financial Reasons

Another—and in many cases more decisive—reason for the surge in American overseas imperialism was that American business leaders wanted access to overseas markets and materials. Like those who had first explored the American West, these business leaders usually received the assistance and protection of the federal government. They articulated a “glut thesis,” which argued that the financial panics of the 1870s and the 1890s were the result of the overproduction of goods, as the industrialized economy endured painful fits and starts. One obvious resolution to overproduction is the creation of new markets, and this led business leaders and politicians to advocate American imperial adventures abroad. In addition to creating new markets, American business leaders worked in close contact with its political leaders in order to use American financial muscle both to allow American businesses greater access to nations around the globe, and also to use American financial strength to bully countries into doing what the U.S. wanted. The use of a country’s financial power to extend its diplomatic interests is often called “**dollar diplomacy**.” To a great extent, business interests drove American foreign policy very early on.

### 20-1c Religious and Moral Reasons

Meanwhile, many Christian leaders believed that Christianity had made Western society the evolutionary pinnacle of civilization. American missionaries sought converts, believing they were bringing both progress and salvation to the “uncivilized” peoples of the world. The mood of Protestant imperialism was captured in Reverend Josiah Strong’s *Our Country* (1885), which argued that white Christian Americans stood at the top of civilization and therefore had a moral duty to bring less privileged peoples the benefits of progress and the fruit of the Christian Gospel.

The racist tinge of this argument held that the United States should join the other nations of Europe in spreading the benefits of democracy and white

**dollar diplomacy** The use of a country’s financial power to extend its diplomatic interests, including but not limited to using private capital from the U.S. to further American interests overseas

**Treaty of Wanghia** Agreement between China and the United States signed in 1844, opening several Chinese ports to American trade

civilization to the world. In his famous 1899 poem, “The White Man’s Burden,” the British poet Rudyard Kipling urged the United States to embrace what he saw as its imperialist obligations. (For more on “the hierarchy of races,” see Chapter 18.)

### 20-1d Geopolitical Reasons

Finally, beginning in the 1870s, several European powers raced to conquer vulnerable but resource-rich regions of Africa and Asia. Such conquests brought these countries substantial profits and a worldwide network of commercial and military bases. Many Americans feared that the United States, by remaining isolated from the land grabbing, would lose access to world markets and geopolitical power.

## 20-2 BEGINNINGS

Dollars propelled the initial drive overseas, first throughout the Pacific, then to Latin America.

### 20-2a Pacific Acquisitions

American businessmen and diplomats had long been attempting to gain access to markets in the Pacific, seeking, first, access to China and Japan, then permanent settlements in various islands in the Pacific. Their goal was to sell American goods to Asia.

#### ASIA

Ever since the 1840s, the U.S. government had sought to increase commercial ties with China and Japan in hope of selling more U.S. goods. Treaties with China, notably the **Treaty of Wanghia** in 1844, had opened several Chinese ports to American trade. In 1853, the U.S. Navy appeared in Tokyo Bay and ultimately forced Japan to open to the West, too. As the European powers continued to scramble for power in the Pacific, the United States risked losing access to Asian trade unless it created more links to the region, and so it did.

#### SAMOA

Seeking its first permanent footholds in the Pacific, in 1856 the United States claimed a number of small, uninhabited islands strewn across the Pacific, and the tiny Midway Islands were annexed formally in 1867. In 1872, island chieftains in Samoa granted the United States a naval base at Pago Pago, but instability in the nation during the 1880s prompted Britain, Germany, and the United States to sign a treaty jointly occupying the islands. In 1899, the treaty was revised to grant the



TopFoto/The Image Works

>> A Japanese artist made this rendering of American Commodore Matthew C. Perry at the time of his arrival in Japan, in the 1850s. Its unflattering nature suggests not everyone was happy with the United States expanding its interests beyond its borders.

United States a protectorate over the eastern islands, which became today's territory of American Samoa.

### ALASKA

Further Pacific expansion occurred in 1867, when the United States purchased the huge territory of Alaska from Russia. Secretary of State William Seward orchestrated the purchase, claiming that (1) Russia, which had been a Union ally during the American Civil War, needed the money; (2) the United States needed more land for expansion; and (3) Britain, which controlled today's Canada, needed to be warned off the continent; possession of Alaska, he pointed out, would surround Canada from both the north and the south. Alaska was so isolated and barren, though, that the purchase was lambasted in the newspapers and was commonly called "Seward's Folly."

### HAWAII

But the major object of American expansion in the Pacific was Hawaii. Since the 1850s the independent kingdom of Hawaii had looked to the United States for protection against other colonial powers. It signed a trade agreement with the United States in 1875, and in 1887 it granted the United States the right to construct a naval base at Pearl Harbor, on the island of Oahu. By the 1880s, American businessmen had acquired a majority of the island's wealth through heavy investment in Hawaiian sugar plantations.

And in 1887, American settlers staged a nonviolent coup to transfer power from the Hawaiian monarchy to the legislature, which the settlers had elected and thus had some control over.

In 1890, after a change in U.S. tariff policy imposed heavy duties on exports from the islands to the mainland, the same group of settlers urged the United States to annex Hawaii, thereby granting its products exemption from U.S. tariffs. The Hawaiian leader, Queen Lili'uokalani, rejected this scheme, seeing it as nothing more than the illegal takeover of her country. And so, in 1893, American rebels, with aid from U.S. navy troops in Pearl Harbor, seized the queen and declared a provisional government under Sanford B. Dole, an American lawyer (his cousin was the pineapple magnate James Dole). The rebels applied for annexation to the United States but were rejected by President Grover Cleveland's administration, which considered the coup illegitimate.



Annie Rogers/Photo Resource Hawaii/Alamy Stock Photo

>> American business leaders helped orchestrate the dethroning of Hawaii's Queen Lili'uokalani, pictured here.

Using Texas as a model, Dole's rebels remained in control of what they now called the Republic of Hawai'i and continued to agitate for incorporation into the United States. The rebels eventually succeeded in 1898, when America, embroiled in a Pacific war against Spain, rediscovered the strategic importance of Pearl Harbor. Congress approved the annexation of Hawai'i, and, in 1900, the islands' people became U.S. citizens.

## 20-2b Latin America

Another region of American economic interest was resource-rich Latin America. The European powers had a centuries-old colonial presence there, and under the growing expansionist mood, the United States set about undercutting European control and opening up American business opportunities in Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic.

An influential showdown came in the Venezuela Crisis of 1895. Independent Venezuela had quarreled with Britain since the 1870s over its eastern border with British Guiana, a region rich in gold and with a river that served as a major commercial route. The British Empire's unrivaled naval power meant that it usually prevailed in conflicts with weaker nations, but in 1895 Venezuela gained the support of the U.S. secretary of state, Richard Olney, who declared that the situation was under the domain of the Monroe Doctrine, meaning that the United States was the controlling power in the Western Hemisphere. Britain backed off, especially when Theodore Roosevelt (the future president) called for war to back up U.S. policy. A British and American team of negotiators then settled the boundary issue peaceably, though scarcely bothering to consult the Venezuelans.

The world's governments took note that Britain had surrendered at least some of its claim rather than antagonize the United States. Thus emboldened, the United States began envisioning an ever-growing role on the world stage.

## 20-2c The Naval Buildup

Spurred by these kinds of acquisitions in the name of American business interests, in 1883 Congress authorized the construction of powerful all-steel, steam-driven battleships, armed with the latest long-range artillery. The North's decisive use of naval power during the Civil War influenced this buildup. Using ironclad warships, the Union had successfully blockaded several key Confederate ports, all but crippling the South in the process. With its eyes now further afield, the American military began a broad naval buildup.

## MAHAN

Another influence on U.S. military leaders was the work of Alfred Thayer Mahan, a former Civil War naval officer. In 1890 Mahan published *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783*, which argued that, in modern times, national greatness was always based on naval strength. Using eighteenth-century Britain as a model, Mahan argued that America must have warships to protect its merchants and must also maintain overseas colonies for naval supply bases.

## BUILDUP

The Civil War experience and Mahan's arguments led the United States to build up its navy. Between 1889 and 1893, the U.S. Navy grew from fifteenth largest in the world to seventh. In addition, Mahan's arguments about the importance of naval warfare led American strategists and policymakers to call for a stronger U.S. territorial presence overseas.

## 20-3 THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

Using this naval might, the next major international dispute—the Spanish-American War of 1898—transformed the United States into a major overseas power. Ironically, the war was not motivated by imperial appetites. Instead, it was fought for a range of humanitarian, geopolitical, and commercial reasons that, once the war was won, prompted the United States to take a larger global role at the turn of the century.

The Spanish-American War was ignited by Spain's harsh treatment of the Cuban independence movement. Cuba was one of Spain's last colonial possessions in the Western Hemisphere, but the Cuban people, resentful of Spain's heavy-handed rule, had struggled for decades to win their independence. In 1895, their resentment burst into violence when Cuban resistance leader José Martí sparked an interracial rebellion that the Spanish government attempted to put down with brutal force. Martí was eventually killed in battle, making him a martyr to the Cuban people. As the war for Cuban independence continued, the political instability devastated Cuba's economy, which was a blow to Americans who had invested in Cuba's sugar plantations. Having an unstable nation so close to U.S. borders concerned American politicians, especially when American business interests might be compromised.

Recognizing a good story when they saw one, newspaper editors (notably Joseph Pulitzer with his



>> Newspapermen Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst published provocative, incendiary stories about Spanish atrocities in an effort to push the United States to war—and sell newspapers—a technique known as yellow journalism. This political cartoon shows them in yellow dresses playing with toy blocks that read, “W-A-R.”

*New York World* and William Randolph Hearst with his *New York Journal*) published graphic descriptions of the atrocities committed by the Spanish. These sensationalistic stories fomented anti-Spanish feeling among the American public, who may or may not have known of the substantial American investment in Cuba’s sugar and who probably were unaware of the interracial nature of Cuba’s fighting forces. During these years, this kind of journalism garnered the name **yellow journalism**, defined as journalism that shows little dependence on fact or research and instead uses sensationalized headlines and storylines to sell newspapers or magazines.

The war between Spain and Cuba had been raging for three years, and Spain was virtually defeated, when two events in February 1898 finally pushed the United States into the fray: (1) American spies intercepted a letter from Spain’s U.S. ambassador Enrique Dupuy de Lôme to his superiors back home. Published from coast to coast, the so-called de Lôme letter disparaged U.S. president William McKinley as a petty popularity seeker who was not strong enough to intervene in Cuba and (2) less than a week later, the American battleship USS

*Maine* (stationed in Havana’s harbor, ostensibly to protect American citizens in Cuba from riots) suddenly blew up, killing 266 men. Historians now know that the *Maine* exploded due to a fire that started in its coal bunkers, but at the time, war provocateurs argued that Spanish saboteurs were responsible.

Cubans did not want Americans to enter the war, considering it an unnecessary and unwelcome imperialistic grab in a war they had nearly already won. However, anti-Spanish animosities in the United States were at a fever pitch, and pro-war agitators such as Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge insisted on entering the war. The Spanish government, aware of its inferior forces, offered to capitulate to American demands and recognize Cuban autonomy. Nevertheless, President McKinley, fearful of a biracial republic so close to the Florida coast and worried about what a Cuban government might do with American business interests, sought war in order to prevent the Cubans from winning. Two days later he asked Congress for the right to use the military to blockade Cuba.

Spain responded by declaring war on April 24, 1898. McKinley’s war message to Congress proclaimed that the United States would fight Spain “[i]n the name of humanity, in the name

of civilization, [and] in behalf of endangered American interests.” McKinley thus presented the war, not as the beginning of an imperial conquest, but as a necessary humanitarian intervention, although he noted America’s economic reasons behind the war as well. Congress tried to hold McKinley to this point by passing the **Teller Amendment**, which barred the United States from annexing Cuba, forcing the U.S. to leave Cuba independent once the war was over.

## 20-3a War on Two Fronts

American military strategists decided to fight Spain on two fronts: in Cuba and the Philippines.

**yellow journalism** Journalism that shows little dependence on fact or research and instead uses sensationalized headlines and storylines in order to sell more newspapers or magazines; pioneered by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst during the buildup to the Spanish-American War

**Teller Amendment** Legislation that barred the United States from annexing Cuba, forcing it to leave Cuba independent once the Spanish-American War was over

## THE PHILIPPINES

Like Cuba, the Philippines had long been a Spanish colonial possession, and Spain's fleet was stationed in Manila Bay. For months the U.S. fleet in the Pacific had been secretly preparing to invade the Philippines in the event of war, and, when war was finally declared, a squadron of American ships left its port in Hong Kong. In Manila Bay on May 1, the American squadron took advantage of its superior equipment to destroy or damage all Spanish ships, killing nearly four hundred Spanish sailors while suffering no American fatalities. Commodore George Dewey became a hero in America for his leadership.

## FILIPINO INDEPENDENCE?

Lacking sufficient ground troops, Dewey was able to beat the Spanish fleet but was unable to occupy the islands. Filipino resistance leader Emilio Aguinaldo, who had been fighting the Spanish for years, declared the Philippines independent in June. In August, American reinforcements arrived, occupying Manila and barring Aguinaldo's forces from the city, a move that would have grave consequences. Filipino independence was not what America had in mind when it decided to fight Spain on the Filipinos' behalf.

## CUBA

Meanwhile, back in Cuba, the United States mounted a rapid campaign to shatter the Spanish army and besiege the port city of Santiago, where Spain's Caribbean fleet was anchored. In June 1898, 17,000 U.S. troops invaded Cuba and quickly surrounded Santiago. The most colorful contingent of the American forces was the **Rough Riders**, led by the future president Theodore Roosevelt. An early and energetic supporter of the war, Roosevelt had long argued that American society needed to be more rugged and "manly." It was in this spirit that he resigned his desk-bound naval post in order to lead a regiment of cavalry volunteers. Roosevelt and Leonard Wood, a veteran of the Indian Wars, gathered a mixture of Wall Street businessmen, Ivy League volunteers, western cowboys, and a few Native Americans to fight in Cuba.

## SAN JUAN HILL

In early July 1898, the Rough Riders joined other American forces, including an African American squadron, in

**Rough Riders** The most colorful contingent of the American forces in the Spanish-American War, led by Theodore Roosevelt



Image Asset Management Ltd./SuperStock

>> Roosevelt gathered a mixture of Wall Street businessmen, Ivy League volunteers, western cowboys, and a few Native Americans to fight in Cuba. Here Roosevelt is pictured dressed in Rough Rider garb and striking a "manly" pose.

the attack on Santiago. Roosevelt's group successfully charged the hills overlooking the capital city, Kettle Hill and San Juan Hill (where he met up with the African American squadron, which had already claimed the hill). With these strategic positions now in hand, American forces turned their attention to Santiago's harbor and proceeded to bombard the Spanish fleet, which was almost completely destroyed. The Spanish forces in Cuba surrendered on July 17.

## SPANISH SURRENDER

American victories in the Philippines and Cuba prompted a full Spanish surrender. The war had lasted only four months, leading Secretary of State John Milton Hay to refer to it as “a splendid little war.” In the peace treaty, signed in Paris, Spain granted independence to Cuba and ceded most of its overseas possessions to the United States, including Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam, in exchange for \$20 million. In addition, Congress had annexed Hawai’i during the war.

Within a matter of a few months, then, the United States had amassed an island empire in the Pacific and the Caribbean. It had not created a group of independent nations, but rather developed a string of subordinate countries, beholden to American business and military interests.

### 20-3b Why Become an Empire? Anti-Imperialism at Home

After the war—and even before—many Americans began to wonder whether the United States should become an imperial power. From the outset of the Spanish-American War, McKinley had assured the American public that the aim of the war was not to create an American empire but to protect the sovereignty of the Cuban people. That was the point of the Teller Amendment. Now that the war was over and Cuba and the Philippines were clearly not independent, McKinley and other political leaders (including Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hay) pushed for annexation of the Philippines by declaring that the Filipinos (as well as inhabitants of Puerto Rico and Guam) were too weak to govern themselves.

#### ANNEX THE PHILIPPINES?

Many Americans were skeptical about further annexation. In early 1899, during congressional debates over ratification of the Paris treaty with Spain, Democrats and Populists declared that annexation violated America’s anti-imperialist principles. William Jennings Bryan argued that the treaty should be accepted, but only as a stage in the liberation of all of Spain’s former colonies. In the end, the Senate ratified the treaty with Spain, but just barely. The idea that America should persist in its colonial expansion was meeting rising opposition.

#### THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE

In 1899, opponents of overseas expansion formed the Anti-Imperialist League, with leaders drawn from a number of disparate groups, including Andrew Carnegie, Samuel Gompers, Mark Twain, and Jane Addams. Labor

“Is there anything grand or noble in any of these motives of war?

Not a bit.”

—WILLIAM GRAHAM SUMNER, IN OPPOSITION TO IMPERIALISM, 1881

leader Gompers opposed annexation from a racist and nativist point of view. He feared that Filipino immigrants (he called them “half breeds and semi-barbaric people”) would flood the United States with cheap labor. It is important to recognize that, though they were on opposite sides of the debate over imperialism, supporters of expansion and anti-imperialists shared a rhetoric and logic about the superiority of American civilization and the white race.

#### THE ELECTION OF 1900

The showdown between pro- and anti-imperialist forces came in the election of 1900, a rematch of the 1896 contest that had pitted Bryan against McKinley. This time Bryan based his candidacy not on the idea of free silver but on condemning imperialism and the annexation of the Philippines. Thanks in part to the country’s prospering economy, most Americans were uninterested in Bryan’s arguments, and McKinley (now with Roosevelt as his running mate) once again emerged victorious. In subsequent years, anti-imperialism ceased to be a major issue in American politics. Detecting its lack of appeal at the ballot box, most American politicians became supporters of America’s new imperial role.

### 20-3c Anti-Americanism Abroad

If most Americans were supportive of a growing American empire, Filipinos and Cubans were not.

“We cannot retreat from any soil where Providence has unfurled our banner; it is ours to save that soil for liberty and civilization.”

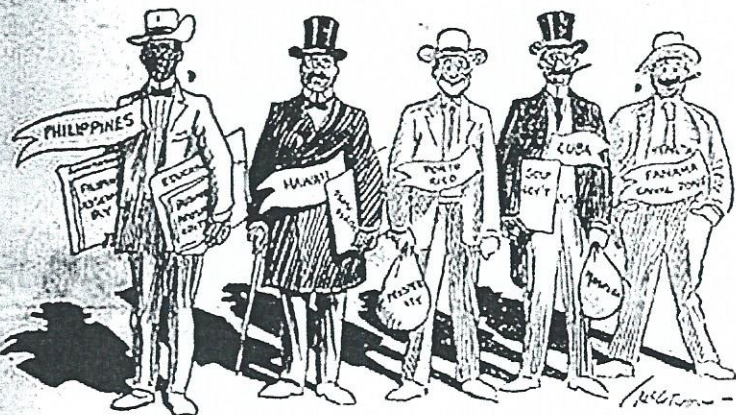
—SENATOR ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE, IN FAVOR OF THE WAR, 1898

## WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAS FOUGHT FOR

December 1914. By John T. McCord.



Before the United States intervened in behalf of these oppressed people.



After the United States had rescued them from their oppression.

>> American imperialism was often imagined to be a civilizing experience, freeing the darker-skinned people of the world from their various oppressions and turning them into happy Victorian businessmen. This pro-imperialism cartoon shows people from the Philippines, Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Panama at first under various oppressions only later to be turned into middle-class businessmen after being freed by the US.

Both countries wanted independence, not American overlordship. Americans also frequently relied on violence and threats to preserve control in those countries. These two factors created deep veins of anti-American sentiment. Small nations were fearful that America would never allow them to be independent, and so they fought back in the ways they could.

**Platt Amendment** Legislation intended to overrule the Teller Amendment and then added to the Cuban constitution, allowing the United States to militarily intervene on the island whenever revolution threatened

## FILIPINO RESISTANCE

Enraged at the prospect of a permanent American presence after they had themselves fought so hard to remove Spanish power, Filipino leader Aguinaldo launched the same type of guerrilla war against the Americans that he had waged against the Spanish. In response, a large American force hastened to the islands and, between 1899 and 1902, fought a vicious anti-insurgency war. Both sides tortured and killed their prisoners, treating them as murderers rather than soldiers. American soldiers wrote home questioning the morality of their overseas experiences, citing atrocities like “the water cure,” in which American soldiers would hold down a suspect, place a stick between his teeth, and force him to drink tremendous amounts of salt water. If the suspect did not divulge information, an American soldier would stomp on his stomach and begin the “cure” again. In 1901, American forces captured Aguinaldo, and future president William Howard Taft, sent by McKinley to create a government for the Philippines, persuaded Aguinaldo to call for peace.

The fighting subsided the following year: the war had claimed some 4,300 American lives, while more than 200,000 Filipino died, many from disease and starvation brought about by war. This was a major atrocity. Meanwhile, Taft directed the establishment of a new government. The United States designated the Philippines an “unorganized territory” and made Filipinos U.S. citizens. Revolt smoldered there until 1906, and on some islands the fighting did not end until 1935. In 1946, the Philippines, whose people had fought valiantly alongside the United States in World War II, finally gained its independence.

## CUBAN RESENTMENT

Resentment of Americans also smoldered in Cuba. Although Cuba was declared independent on January 1, 1899, American occupation of the island continued for two more years while the U.S. installed a Cuban regime that would be friendly to American commercial interests. The new relationship between the two countries was laid out in the **Platt Amendment** of 1901. Written to overrule the Teller

Amendment and then eventually added to the Cuban constitution, the Platt Amendment allowed the United States to militarily intervene on the island whenever revolution threatened. Many Cubans were infuriated when the United States invoked the amendment in 1906, 1912, and 1917. It clearly violated the vision of Cuban independence that the United States had articulated during the buildup to war.

### HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

At the same time that their government was guilty of violence and deceit, there were many Americans who genuinely sought to help the peoples of Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. On these islands, American missionaries built churches and orphanages, educators built schools, and doctors built hospitals. One of those doctors, Walter Reed, in collaboration with William Gorgas and Carlos Juan Finlay, solved the mystery of yellow fever transmission. Still, the American-made regimes that had been established in these countries remained a source of anti-American sentiment throughout the twentieth century.

20-4

## PROGRESSIVE-ERA IMPERIALISM

After 1900 the United States entered a period of heightened imperialistic activity somewhat similar to that of the 1840s, although this time oceans ceased to serve as boundaries for expansionist activity. Under the energetic Progressive-era presidencies of Roosevelt and Wilson, the United States took a bolder, more aggressive role in international affairs. Toward this end, Roosevelt, whose foreign policy credo was “speak softly and carry a big stick,” supported Secretary of War Elihu Root’s policy of increasing U.S. armed forces. By 1906, only the navies of Britain and Germany were larger than that of the United States.

The United States used its new power to pursue three major goals: to (1) open trade with China, (2) build the Panama Canal, and (3) police Latin America to protect American interests.

### 20-4a Trade with China

After winning the Spanish-American War, the United States sought to demonstrate its status as a major international power. American policymakers first turned to China. In 1899, U.S. Secretary of State John Hay called for an “Open Door” policy, which would allow all nations

to trade with China on equal terms. This policy also aimed to prevent foreign powers from partitioning China as they had Africa.

### FORCING THE OPEN DOOR

The Chinese **Boxer Rebellion** of 1900 helped Hay’s plan. Angered by growing outside influence in their country, Chinese nationalists, led by a secret society specially trained in fighting rituals (and thus called “Boxers” by English-speaking foreigners) attacked embassies in Beijing in an attempt to oust foreigners. Supported by the Chinese government, the rebels killed the German ambassador and besieged Christian churches in Beijing. The United States joined a multinational military expedition to put the rebellion down and to rescue businessmen and diplomats who had sought refuge in the American embassy. After the multinational forces successfully suppressed the rebellion, most of the other powers agreed to Hay’s Open Door policy in principle (although they did not always honor it in practice). The Chinese government reluctantly agreed. The Boxer Rebellion, instead of ejecting outside influences, actually strengthened America’s foothold in the Far East.

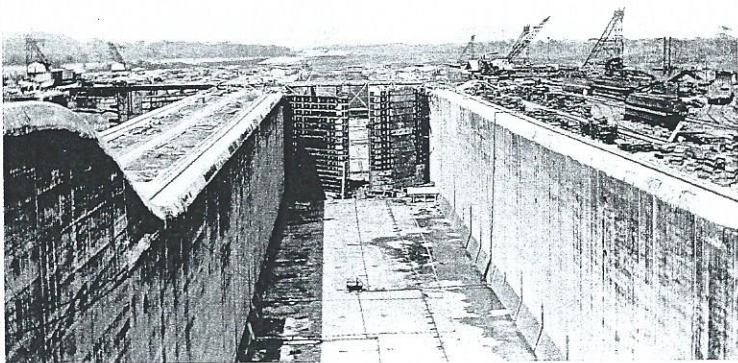
### 20-4b The Panama Canal

The United States next focused on Panama. Ever since the 1840s, American commercial and military planners had eyed Panama’s narrow isthmus as a potential site for a canal. Such interest increased after 1898, when America’s new empire required easier transit between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Panama, however, belonged to Colombia, whose rights to the isthmus the United States had explicitly guaranteed in an 1848 treaty.

### PANAMANIAN REVOLT

In 1901, negotiations with Colombia broke down over the price of renting the right of way for a canal. Undeterred, Roosevelt, the American president, encouraged an independence movement among the Panamanian people. This would free them from Colombia and, presumably, lead them to grant the United States unobstructed access to build its canal. The Panamanian revolt proved successful, thanks in part to an American naval blockade that prevented Colombian soldiers from getting to the rebellion. As a thank-you to the United States

**Boxer Rebellion** Conflict that erupted in China in 1900; Chinese nationalists attacked embassies in Beijing in an attempt to oust foreigners



>> Building of the Panama Canal.

for its timely intervention, in 1903 the new Republic of Panama leased to it a 10-mile-wide Canal Zone. American companies immediately started construction.

### BUILDING THE CANAL

Building the canal was no easy task. French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, who had built the Suez Canal in 1869, had already attempted to build a canal in Panama. He went bankrupt in 1887 after most of his work force died of yellow fever. By 1903, however, Walter Reed's work on the disease had made the threat of yellow fever a manageable concern. After cutting through mountains and dense jungle, and then constructing a series of innovative locks, workers completed the canal just before the First World War broke out in 1914. One of the world's modern mechanical marvels, the canal project used tons and tons of concrete and was the largest dam in the world at the time. It cut the sailing distance between America's Atlantic and Pacific Coasts from 15,615 miles to just 5,300.

However, Roosevelt's timely blockade bred a legacy of resentment in Colombia that damaged U.S.–Latin American relations for decades. Moreover, the presence of the Canal Zone eventually caused tensions between Americans and Panamanians until a treaty placed it under Panamanian control in 1999.

### 20-4c Policing Latin America

Concurrent with the building of the Panama Canal, the United States assumed an interventionist role throughout Latin America. Much of this new activity was prompted

by continued rivalry with other imperial powers. In 1902, for example, when the Venezuelan government was unable to pay its foreign creditors, British, German, and Italian naval forces threatened to bombard Venezuelan cities unless payments were resumed. Roosevelt regarded this action as a violation of the Monroe Doctrine; by a combination of threats and promises, he persuaded the European navies to withdraw.

### INSTABILITY AS AN AMERICAN PROBLEM

Roosevelt argued that instability in Latin America was likely to be a recurrent problem for American interests. He therefore announced, in 1904, his own amendment to the Monroe Doctrine (called the "Roosevelt Corollary"). The United States, he declared, would not only prevent European colonization of Latin American countries but would also intervene

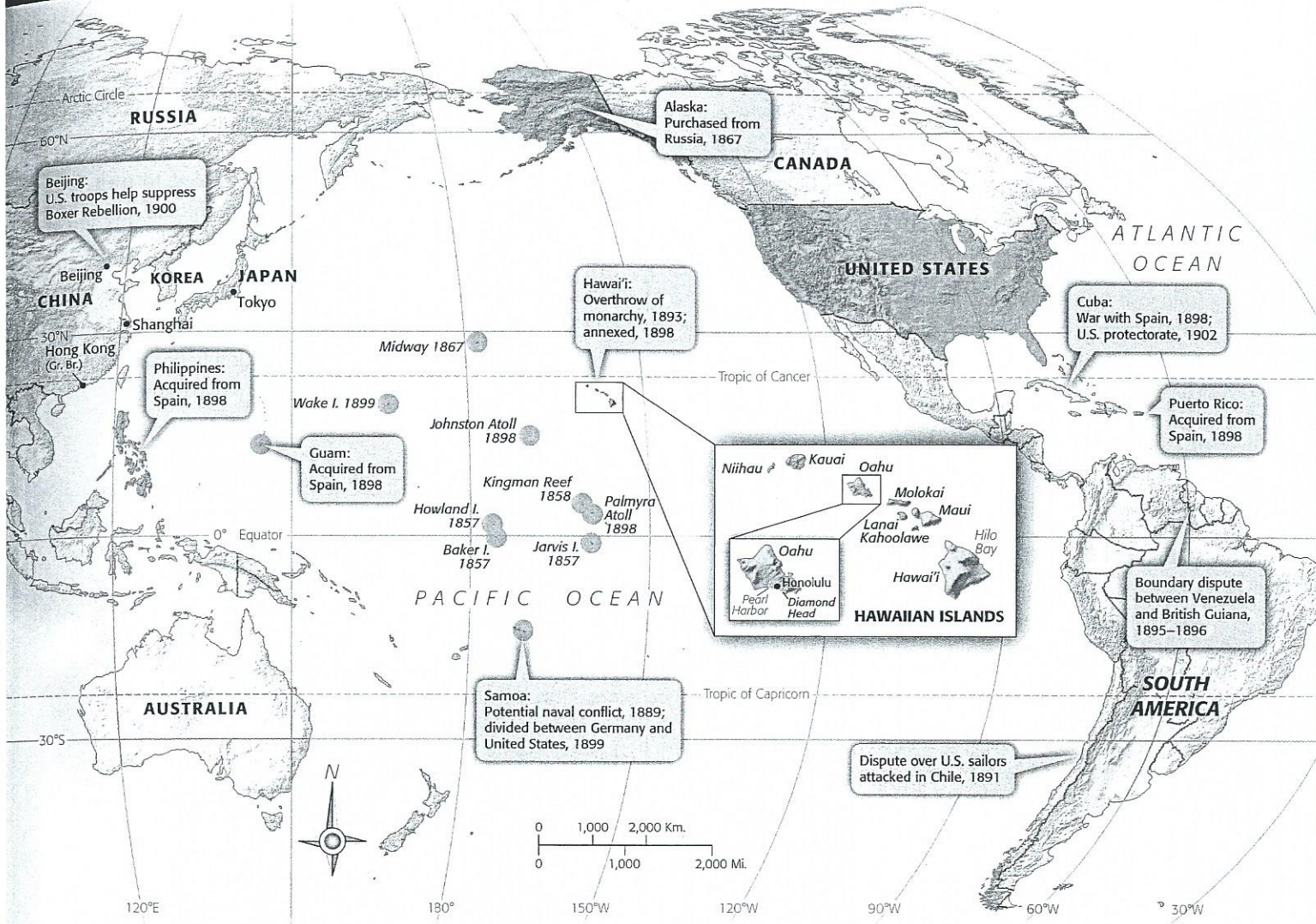
in the domestic affairs of any Latin American nation whose instability threatened the security of the Western Hemisphere. The policy allowed Roosevelt to intervene in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Mexico, routinely resulting in American control of the contested lands for several decades (see Map 20.1).

Nicaragua's experience was typical. In 1909, an American mining company in Nicaragua became dissatisfied with the current regime and provoked a coup. President Taft sent troops in support of the coup and later helped American bankers finance the new regime. When this regime faced its own revolutionary discontent, Taft sent more soldiers to protect it. Thus Taft frequently used American troops to advance the interests of the American business community, which is why his critics derided his policies as little more than "dollar diplomacy."

### MEXICO

Taft and Wilson also intervened during the early stages of the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910. A bewildering succession of soldiers, strongmen, and democratic idealists competed for power after the overthrow of the old dictator, Porfirio Diaz, whose policies had benefited American investors. Both Taft and Wilson tried to find a Mexican candidate who could take care of American businesses. One by one, these candidates proved either too ruthless or too ineffective, provoking political strife that often turned violent. In 1914 and again in 1916, Wilson sent troops to Mexico to restore order, first by capturing the port city of Veracruz, later





### Map 20.1 American Imperialism by 1912

>> This map of most of the world shows the numerous locations of American imperial involvement between 1895 and 1902.

by sending General John Pershing in pursuit of Pancho Villa, a Mexican general and kingmaker who had raided American towns in New Mexico. Neither of these expeditions solved Mexico's instability.

#### 20-4d America as a World Power

By the early twentieth century, the United States was committed to being a major player in Latin America and Asia. The belief that America's interests ended at its oceans had been shattered. Americans could no longer think of themselves as isolated from international affairs. Nor could they smugly see their nation as completely different from the European empires whose navies and armies had conquered much of the globe.

But did American interests end at the nation's borders, at the Western Hemisphere, or never? What

would America's role in the world be now that its commercial interests were worldwide? Should American business interests have a role in the nation's foreign policy? How salient was the notion that the United States should share the "white man's burden" to spread democracy and "white civilization" to the world? Americans fell into three camps when it came to viewing themselves as a world power: (1) isolationists, (2) realists, and (3) idealists.

#### ISOLATIONISTS

Isolationists believed the United States could return to isolationism and treat the Spanish-American War and its corollaries as an aberration. In the years immediately following the war, many Americans seemed to favor this course of action, especially those who felt that controlling

the Philippines was a betrayal of America's anti-imperialist roots. In general, isolationists believed that alliances did not improve security, but simply drew nations into costly wars.

## REALISTS

The so-called realists hoped the United States would follow the tradition of the leading states of Europe, assuming the role of a great world power. This belief was founded in the notion that the international environment was lawless and that all nations pursued only their own self-interests. Thus, power and military strength were the only meaningful factors in international affairs. Students of international relations use the term *realism* to describe this viewpoint.

## IDEALISTS

Idealists believed that the United States could enter international politics not as a competitor but as a moral reformer, using its influence not to grab power but to promote democracy and free trade around the world. Woodrow Wilson was the most prominent proponent of this view. He believed that the rules of international affairs could be changed to prevent or mitigate conflict between nations. It was within this tradition that President Roosevelt negotiated the end of the bloody Russo-Japanese War in 1905, an event that earned Roosevelt the first-ever Nobel Prize awarded to an American. It was also in this tradition that Woodrow Wilson led the United States into World War I.

While most Americans didn't adopt one of these sensibilities in a hard-nosed way, choosing to alter their perspective depending on the conflict, all of these viewpoints would be represented during the debate over American intervention in World War I.

20-5

## WORLD WAR I

World War I, which lasted from 1914 to 1918, was a conflict of colossal proportions, killing more than 10 million soldiers and civilians, bringing down governments and empires, and pitting armies against each other all around the globe. The United States entered the war in 1917, just in time to try to manipulate the terms of surrender. It was a vital test of America's imperial ambitions.

### 20-5a The Reasons

#### ECONOMIC COMPETITION

World War I erupted out of conflicts between rival powers in Europe, largely based on the competition for colonial empires. In the late nineteenth century, European nations were locked in a worldwide competition

to establish ever-expanding overseas empires. At home they built powerful economies premised on the Industrial Revolution, while abroad they scrambled to turn weaker countries in Africa and Asia into colonial possessions that would serve as sources of raw materials. Britain and Germany were the two largest powers. Both had embraced the transformations of the Industrial Age, and both were in competition to win raw materials found abroad. To many observers, a confrontation between the two expanding European powers seemed inevitable.

## ALLIANCES

Anxiety about the impending clash between Britain and Germany led nearly all of Europe's powerful nations to enter into alliances, each pledging to come to the other's defense in the event of a war. France and Russia joined Britain, calling themselves the Allied Powers. Germany made treaties with the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Turkey. They were called the Central Powers. Forging these alliances set the stage for tragedy, because a conflict between any two nations was bound to trigger a wider war.

## THE SPARK

The spark that ignited the war was the assassination of Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He and his wife Sofia were shot on June 28, 1914, during a visit to Sarajevo, by Gavrilo Princip, a member of the Serbian nationalist group called the Black Hand, which was bent on driving the Austro-Hungarians out of Serbia. This event set off a chain reaction in Europe's military alliances. Austria declared war on Serbia, which prompted Russia to help the Serbians, which led Germany to declare war on Russia and France, which triggered Britain to declare war on Germany. Over the next several weeks, many other nations joined the conflict, and fighting spread to the European colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (see Map 20.2).

### 20-5b The European War

Hoping for a quick victory against its enemies to the west, Germany invaded France in August 1914. With British help, the French managed to hold off the German advance. A military stalemate resulted, and both sides dug into the fields of northern France. For the next four years, the Allied and Central Powers battled each other on what became called "the Western Front." Along the Western Front, both the Central and Allied Powers dug deep webs of



"As the car came abreast he stepped forward from the curb, drew his automatic pistol from his coat and fired two shots."

—BORIJOVE JEVTIC, WHO WAS ARRESTED WITH GAVRILLO PRINCIP

European War," distancing themselves from the conflict. Yet they could not ignore such a massive war for long, and their sympathies were mixed. Following the tremendous immigration that had resulted from the Industrial Revolution, many Americans were recent European emigrants who felt strong ties to their homelands. On the other hand, many of the nation's political and industrial leaders were Anglophiles, who instinctively favored the British.

### COMPROMISED NEUTRALITY

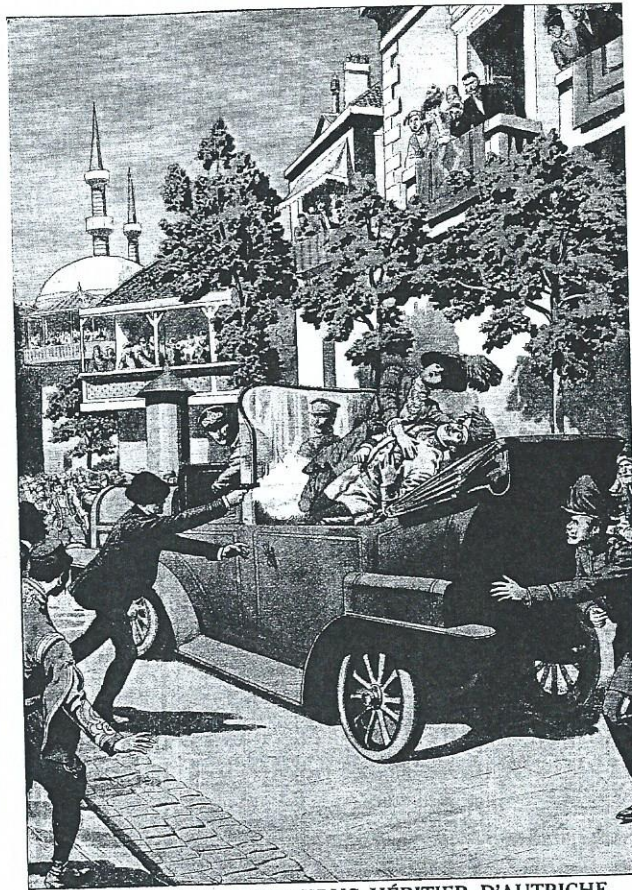
Faced with divided loyalties, President Wilson urged his fellow citizens to remain "impartial in thought as well as action." Running for reelection in 1916, he turned the race into a referendum on neutrality. He won easily, campaigning on the slogan "He Kept Us Out of War."

Despite Wilson's best intentions, the United States was slowly being drawn in. With Allied and German armies stalemated in France, both sides realized their best hope for victory was to starve their enemy into submission. They did this all too well, cutting off supply routes and containing each nation as best they could. With their economies in tatters, each side looked to the United States for supplies. By 1915, the economic incentive to trade with them proved irresistible. American farms and factories soon began to work overtime to meet the demands of the war-torn nations of Europe. But could this be done neutrally?

### NEUTRAL TRADING?

Both Allied and Central Powers believed it was essential to deprive their enemies of the benefits of trade with

**U-boat** Primitive but effective submarine invented by the Germans and used extensively in the First World War



ASSASSINAT DE L'ARCHIDUC HÉRITIER D'AUTRICHE ET DE LA DUCHESSE SA FEMME A SARAJEVO

Leemage/Getty Images

>> This print of an engraving shows the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, which was the domino that began the First World War.

the Americans, and Wilson's call for all sides to respect American trade rights ran directly counter to the military strategies of both the British and the Germans. Britain and France, for instance, mined the North Sea, forcing American ships into British ports. There, the British detained supplies headed for Germany. When Wilson protested, the French and British agreed to pay for all materials seized in this way. But they still didn't let the goods get to Germany.

The Germans, meanwhile, concluded that their best hope was to prevent American goods from getting to Britain at all. To do so, they launched a new weapon that profoundly changed the nature of naval warfare and eventually brought the United States into war—the **U-boat**, a primitive but effective submarine. On May 7, 1915, a U-boat sank Britain's *Lusitania*, a famed passenger liner that the Allies had used occasionally



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>> The sinking of the *Lusitania* created a rallying cry for the Allies. Pictured here are two posters urging men to enlist.



**REMEMBER THE 'LUSITANIA'**

THE JURY'S VERDICT SAYS:  
 "We find that the said deceased died from their prolonged immersion and exhaustion in the sea eight miles south-south-west of the Old Head of Kinsale on Friday, May 7th, 1915, owing to the sinking of the R.M.S. 'Lusitania' by a torpedo fired without warning from a German submarine."

"That this appalling crime was contrary to international law and the conventions of all civilized nations, and we therefore charge the officers of the said submarine and the Emperor and Government of Germany, under whose orders they acted, with the crime of wilful and wholesale murder before the tribunal of the civilized world."

**IT IS YOUR DUTY**  
 TO TAKE UP THE SWORD OF JUSTICE  
 TO AVENGE THIS DEVIL'S WORK  
**ENLIST TO-DAY**

to transport war material. Knowing of the ship's dual uses, Germany took out advertisements in newspapers warning Americans not to sail on it. Still, many did, and when the *Lusitania* sank, more than 1,000 civilians were killed, including 128 Americans. Provoked by anti-German newspaper editorials, mobs lashed out at innocent German-Americans.

Responding to Wilson's threats that the *Lusitania* disaster would likely force the United States into the war, Germany temporarily halted its use of the U-boat against passenger vessels. By 1917, however, Germany was nearly starved into submission and, in a last-ditch gamble, declared it would wage unrestricted submarine warfare against all shipping in the Atlantic. When Russia negotiated peace after the successful Bolshevik revolution of February 1917, Germany hoped it could handle a one-front war, even if the United States entered the war on the Western Front.

German-named foods were renamed: sauerkraut became "liberty cabbage."

## 20-5d Declaring War

### THE ZIMMERMANN NOTE

After the declaration of unrestricted warfare in the Atlantic, German-American relations deteriorated. Not only had Germany initiated a threatening campaign, but also Americans discovered that Germany was also encouraging Mexico to attack the United States. On January 16, 1917, the German foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, sent a note to Mexico in which he promised German support for a Mexican invasion, the goal of which was to reconquer New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas for Mexico. Unluckily for the Germans, the British intercepted the note, and they eagerly turned it over to the United States. The so-called Zimmermann Note proved a powerful tool in rallying American public support for a war against Germany.

### DECLARATION OF WAR

By the spring of 1917, the combination of German U-boat attacks and the Zimmermann Note left many Americans feeling the time had come to admit they really were involved in the "European War." On April 2, 1917, Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war. In his request, Wilson outlined the nation's grievances against the Central Powers and invested the war effort with a moral purpose. American soldiers would go to Europe, he insisted, not to punish Germany, but to help create a new international order. "The world must be made safe for democracy," he declared.

### A MIXED REACTION

Americans were not fully united in this decision. Six senators and fifty congressmen voted against the declaration. In addition, a substantial minority of the American public still favored neutrality. Unconvinced by Wilson's idealistic rhetoric, they insisted that sending American troops to settle a distant European war was a misguided departure from traditional American diplomacy.

### FORMING PUBLIC OPINION

The government responded to these criticisms by taking unprecedented steps to mobilize public opinion. It formed the Committee on Public Information (CPI), a group led by journalist

George Creel that recruited some of the nation's finest artists to create and distribute millions of pieces of war propaganda. On street corners and in theaters, "Four-Minute Men" delivered stirring pro-war speeches. Newspapers printed government-written stories detailing questionable tales of German war atrocities. Ubiquitous posters urged Americans to buy Liberty Bonds, conserve food and coal, and otherwise do everything possible to "Beat Back the Hun."

### HYPHENATED AMERICANS

In addition to worrying about popular support, government officials were particularly anxious about the loyalties of the nation's recent immigrants, many of whom maintained strong ties with their European homelands. These newcomers were branded "hyphenated Americans" (German-Americans, Irish-Americans), the hyphen suggesting that these recent arrivals might not have left their Old World allegiances behind to fully embrace their new American identities. Creel's committee tried to apply its powers of persuasion to turn these newcomers into "100 percent Americans." The CPI included a "Division for Work with the Foreign Born" that encouraged recent immigrants to show their loyalty by purchasing **war bonds** and staging patriotic demonstrations.

### WARTIME REPRESSION

The government also took steps to silence critics. In 1917, Congress passed the **Espionage Act**, which meted out large fines and twenty-year jail terms to anyone who protested the draft or said anything that might impede the war effort. A year later the act was broadened, making it illegal to say anything "disloyal" about the American form of government or the armed forces. The U.S. Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson was authorized to seize and destroy any publication he deemed treasonous—a power he exercised freely. School boards banned the teaching of German language and history. Universities fired professors who spoke out against the war.

**war bonds** Securities bought by ordinary people to fund and support the war effort

**Espionage Act** Legislation that meted out large fines and twenty-year jail terms to anyone who protested the draft or said anything that might impede the war effort



>> U.S. bonds poster. The U.S. sought not only to raise revenue by selling bonds to its citizens, but also to demonstrate the parameters of good Americanism.

Towns changed street signs to erase German names. German-named foods were renamed: sauerkraut, for example, became "liberty cabbage." "Patriotic" mobs attacked German-language and socialist newspaper offices, beat innocent German immigrants, and, in at least one case, lynched a man wrongly suspected of being a German spy. Government-stimulated war fervor ran hot.

Several prominent Americans spoke out against these forms of repression. Eugene V. Debs was imprisoned for speaking out against the war effort. Hull House's Jane Addams was another outspoken opponent. Watching such dignified opponents be punished or rebuked for their antiwar efforts led many Americans to question what freedom meant, and if it meant the same thing in wartime as in peace.

## 20-5e American Involvement in the War Effort, 1917–1918

When it came to battle, the United States in 1917 was woefully unprepared. It entered the war with no army and no stockpiles of military supplies, nor any means to recruit, train, equip, or transport a modern army across the Atlantic. And, with the American economy booming, shifting to war production was a slow process. In fact, by the end of the war, the United States managed to mobilize little more than a small fraction of its economy and raised only a modest military force; fewer than 5 million men entered the armed services, and only 2.5 million of them went overseas.

### THE AMERICAN ARMY IN BATTLE

In the end, Americans were slow to join the battle. Making matters worse, American political leaders refused to send troops that would fight under the control of French or British Allied commanders. President Wilson sought to maintain American independence, and only when the complete army was ready did American soldiers fight. They fought in two major battles before Germany capitulated and ended the war.

Historians have debated the impact American forces had on the outcome of World War I. Some assert that, even after committing themselves, Americans made only a minimal contribution. Proponents of this view stress that, after such a long delay, American soldiers had little impact in either of the two military battles they fought. Other historians contend that this interpretation downplays the American impact. They argue that the U.S. declaration of war dashed Germany's hope for a quick victory on the Western Front after Russia had sued for peace. Food shortages were widespread on the German home front, and demoralized soldiers threatened mutiny. Plus, not only military might but also field ingenuity helped Americans turn the tide of war. During one large battle on the Western Front, for instance, the U.S. deployed Choctaw Indians to serve as communication agents, thus befuddling any attempt at German espionage. According to this interpretation, the entrance of the resource-rich Americans dealt a powerful psychological and military blow to the Germans and greatly hastened their capitulation.

### THE FOURTEEN POINTS

Regardless of how large an impression the American military made on the battling nations, this did not inhibit

President Wilson from attempting to determine the conditions for peace. On January 8, 1918, while the war still raged, Wilson issued a proclamation, called the **Fourteen Points**, outlining the principles he believed should shape the postwar peace settlement.

The statement came as a great surprise to the Allies. That an American president, who had brought his country into the war only a few months earlier, was attempting to dictate a sweeping peace program was certainly a shock. But Wilson's independent course was consistent with his actions and statements. To Wilson, the United States could lead the world to a more enlightened way of conducting international affairs. Some of his Fourteen Points involved proposals for resolving specific border disputes, but the rest of Wilson's ideas amounted to a blueprint for what he called "a world made fit and safe to live in." Among the major tenets were free trade, disarmament, and a "general association of nations" that would provide a forum for nations to resolve differences peacefully. Wilson also advocated national self-determination, which would break up empires and allow new national boundaries to be drawn along "clearly recognizable lines of nationality."

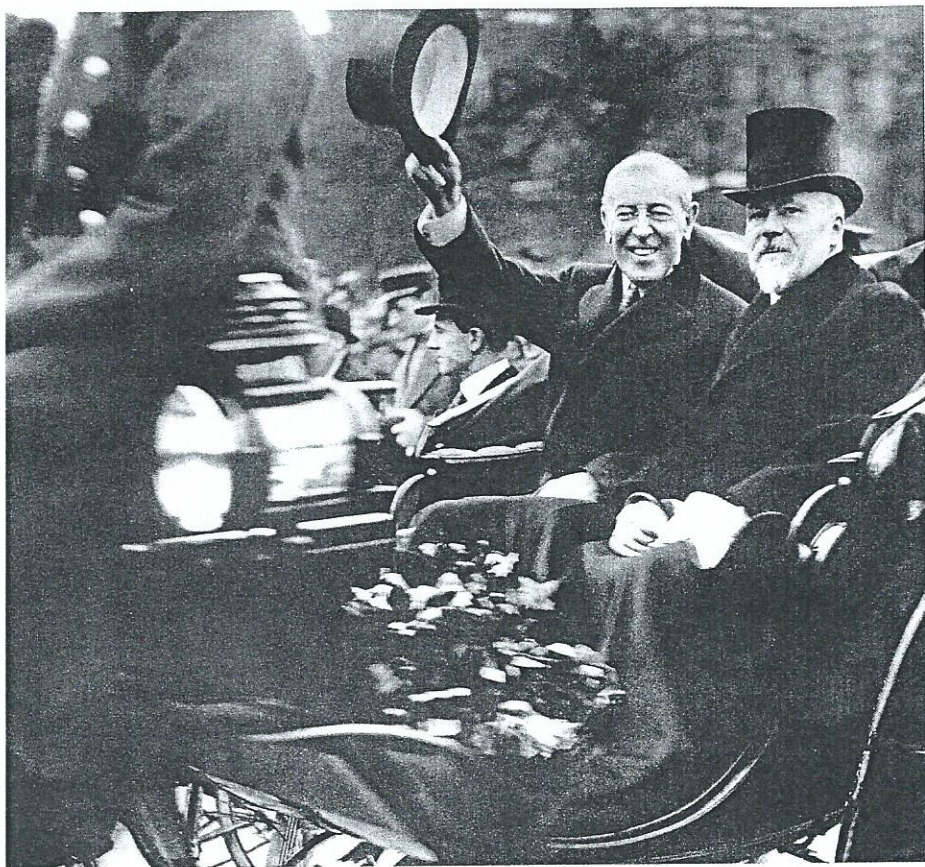
## 20-5f Making Peace

In October 1918, Germany made peace overtures to Wilson, agreeing to end the war on the basis of his declaration that there could be "peace without victory." The Allied Powers wanted to fight on, believing they finally had a decisive advantage on the battlefield. The war had been viciously fought in Europe, especially after the introduction of new technologies such as planes, tanks, and chemical weapons like deadly "mustard gas." The Allied Powers wanted to punish German wartime atrocities. But they yielded when Wilson threatened to pull American troops out of the war if the Allies were unwilling to accept peace. On November 11, 1918, both sides signed an armistice ending the war.

### DEBATING PEACE

After the armistice, Wilson made an unusual decision to travel to Europe himself to represent the United

**Fourteen Points** Declaration by President Wilson that outlined the principles he believed should shape the postwar peace settlement; a blueprint for what he called "a world made fit and safe to live in"



>> Despite the United States' late entry in the war, a buoyant President Woodrow Wilson thought he could dictate the terms of peace. His optimism is contrasted here by the more chastened look of French President Raymond Poincaré.

SZ Photo/Scherl/The Image Works

States at the peace talks. Crowds in Paris greeted him as a hero and applauded his vision for a better world. Despite this popular support, however, Wilson ran into difficulties at the bargaining table, as the victorious Allies pursued very different ideas about how to shape the postwar world. After four years of brutal war and suffering, the Allies had little interest in “peace without victory,” and they were eager to punish their enemies and divide the spoils of Germany’s overseas colonies. Indeed, Germany wasn’t even invited to the peace talks. As a result, Wilson had only limited success in incorporating his vision for a new world order into the final peace treaty, which was signed in the French palace at Versailles on June 28, 1919.

### THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

The treaty included three major provisions: (1) reparations that forced Germany to accept full responsi-

bility for the war and pay heavy fines to the Allies; (2) self-determination for nationalities; and (3) Wilson’s “general association of nations,” which the treaty called the League of Nations. Each of these provisions would have unforeseen consequences. Forcing Germany to pay steep financial reparations meant that the German economy could not recover from the war, leading to political instability that encouraged the rise of Adolf Hitler. The concept of national self-determination has led to a century of struggle in the Balkan Peninsula and other areas, where groups of people, seeing themselves as distinct nations, resist the rule of others. And the League of Nations would be toothless from the beginning, because the United States, of all countries, refused to participate.

### WILSON’S FOLLY

Although Wilson had arrived in Europe as a conquering hero, when he returned to Washington he faced a desperate political fight to save his cherished League of Nations. Many Ameri-

cans, he discovered, were already disillusioned about the nation’s decision to get involved in European affairs. The champion of this brand of isolationism was Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, who worked to block American participation in the new League of Nations because he believed it would draw the United States into future European conflicts. In particular, he objected to Article X of the League’s charter, which would have committed the United States to defending the territory of other League members. Wilson considered this “the heart of the League,” a provision that would require nations to join together to protect each other from attacks by international aggressors.

Wilson fought hard for the League, touring the country in a direct appeal to the public. But the Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, and the United States never joined the League of Nations.

The president stubbornly refused to compromise and was crippled by a stroke while waging his campaign. Woodrow Wilson died a broken man in 1924.

### A WEAKENED LEAGUE

In 1920, the League of Nations met for the first time, but it was diminished from the start by the absence of the United States. By the mid-1930s, the League was irrelevant, incapable of changing the course of events that would soon draw Europe into World War II. But the idea of a worldwide association of nations had been articulated and would surface again.

## >LOOKING AHEAD...

World War I underscored America's role as a significant power in the world. After the war, for instance, America for the first time replaced Great Britain as the world's greatest creditor nation, further enhancing American power.

But Americans' willingness to intervene in world affairs was not a foregone conclusion. After being somewhat grudgingly brought into world affairs by a series of expansionist leaders, Americans continued to debate the importance of playing a role in world affairs. Between 1867 and 1918, the ethos of expansion was strong, and during the four decades following 1880, the United States had flexed its military muscle throughout Latin America, Asia, and Europe. It had done so to (1) support American economic development, (2) establish the United States as a world power worth reckoning with, and (3) show that many Americans believed the United States was destined to share the benefits of democracy and white civilization with the rest of the world. In doing so, it confronted new problems, such as how colonial powers are supposed to manage relations with their subjected peoples. Was the United States to be a great liberating force for democracy in the wider world, or was it to serve the interests of the business classes who advocated dollar diplomacy? These debates would continue throughout the twentieth century.

## STUDY TOOLS 20

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- Read the Espionage Act.
- Read the Fourteen Points.