

CHAPTER
11

*Becoming a World Power in
the Late Nineteenth Century*



Strife over slavery, the sectional contest, and the bloody Civil War cooled the expansionist fervor of the early nineteenth century. But once the national crisis had subsided, expansionists again took up the call. Secretary of State William H. Seward (1861–1869) became their leader, and under his guidance the United States acquired the immense territory of Alaska and the tiny Midway Islands. Congress blocked Seward's other imperial ambitions, but the United States nonetheless steadily pushed its territorial and commercial frontiers farther abroad and became a major participant in the great power struggles that eventually led to the First World War. In the late nineteenth century, it built a "new navy" and ordered its ships to distant lands, participated in international conferences and fairs, scolded Europeans that the Monroe Doctrine remained sacrosanct, and launched Pan Americanism to bring Latin America under the Eagle's wings. U.S.-made products appeared in foreign marketplaces, and investors' dollars drove in other American stakes overseas. At the same time, imported consumer goods became standard fare on shop shelves and in homes across the United States, America exchanged growing numbers of travelers and tourists with distant lands, and the nation became increasingly connected with other peoples and societies worldwide. All of this activity commenced before the United States' defeat of Spain in the war of 1898 and the subsequent seizure of Spain's colonies for inclusion in the U.S. empire.

Historians have studied why and how American foreign policy and expansion shifted during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to become more coherent and sustained, even aggressive—moving the United States from a regional power to a world power. The role of economic factors has particularly drawn scholars' interests, for the faster pace of expansion coincided with the nation's transformation into a thriving industrial economy with an enlarged foreign trade. Some have argued that America's rapidly expanding industrial economy, especially its drive to increase foreign trade, made it a leading actor in the capitalist world system and a major political and military power. Others maintain that economics may explain the timing of the imperial surge, but the motivation for expansion sprang mainly from long-standing ideological and cultural assumptions that celebrated America's mission to extend—by force if necessary—the fruits of liberty and progress to weaker nations and peoples. Still others have emphasized the

impediments to expansionism imposed by domestic politics, ineptitude, ignorance, and the American aversion to a powerful federal government.

The late nineteenth century stands as an age of great-power colonialism and growing international integration, when economic, technological, military, and cultural forces connected states, territories, and peoples as never before. Why did the United States seek a pivotal role in the process? Why did it return so vigorously in the post-Civil War years to expansionism and empire? Wherein lie the roots of modern America's rise to world power? These fundamental questions are the subject of this chapter.

D O C U M E N T S

In Document 1, a speech delivered in St. Paul, Minnesota, on September 18, 1860, future secretary of state William H. Seward downplays the impending sectional crisis and expounds on his dream of a U.S. hemispheric empire. Known for his scathing rhetoric, Seward counted Alaska, Canada, Mexico, and the Latin American nations among the acquisitions that would constitute a greater America. Following the Civil War, U.S. policymakers began to fine-tune their overseas agenda. The Dominican Republic attracted U.S. attention because of the political turmoil that rocked the island nation, its potential as a naval base, and its proximity to North America. President Ulysses S. Grant decided to annex the Caribbean country to the United States. In a message to Congress on May 31, 1870, Document 2, he made his case.

Even after the Senate rejected Grant's treaty of annexation, the nation's passion for expansionism accelerated late in the century. In 1881, Secretary of State James G. Blaine planned to hold a Pan American Conference, but he soon left office. In 1888, however, he returned as secretary and organized the first such conference, which met in Washington, D.C., from October 1889 to April 1890. Document 3, a congressional resolution calling for the conference, spells out Blaine's objectives. Captain Alfred T. Mahan, a professor at the Naval War College, wrote the widely circulated book *The Influence of Seapower upon History* (1890), from which Document 4 is drawn. Mahan advocated a strong U.S. Navy and the acquisition of overseas bases. The quest for naval outposts and economic opportunities generated conflict with other nations and peoples. Queen Lili'uokalani of Hawaii, ousted in 1893 by a revolution engineered by American planters and lawyers eager for annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the United States, later recalled that the event succeeded only because U.S. forces assisted the conspirators. The United States formally annexed Hawaii in 1898, the year of the publication of her memoir, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*. Document 5 constitutes two of her formal protests against U.S. actions.

Document 6 sprang from a boundary dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela near British Guiana in South America. Determined to settle the crisis, Secretary of State Richard Olney sent an imperious message to London on July 20, 1895. He invoked the Monroe Doctrine and declared U.S. hegemony over the Western Hemisphere. Through the Treaty of Paris with Spain at the conclusion of war in 1898, the United States brought the former Spanish colonies of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico under its formal tutelage. The imperial cause served as a rallying point for Republicans that year in their successful bid to maintain control of the White House and the Congress in the fall elections. In Document 7, a speech delivered on September 16, 1898, Indiana's Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, Albert J. Beveridge, proclaims Americans to be God's "chosen people" and urges his compatriots to rally around the flag and the Anglo-Saxon mission to pursue military bases, commercial supremacy, and empire. Beveridge rode the wave of patriotism to victory and went on to serve two terms in the Senate, where he distinguished himself as a leading spokesperson for empire.

D O C U M E N T 1

Future Secretary of State William H. Seward Dreams of Hemispheric Empire, 1860

I find myself now, for the first time, on the highlands in the center of the continent of North America, equidistant from the waters of Hudson's bay and the gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic ocean to the ocean in which the sun sets—here on the spot where spring up, almost side by side, and so near that they may kiss each other, the two great rivers of the continent, the one of which pursuing its strange, capricious, majestic, vitacious course through rapids and cascade, lake after lake, bay after bay, and river after river, till, at last, after a course of two thousand five hundred miles, it brings your commerce into the ocean midway to the ports of Europe, and the other, which meandering through woodland and prairie a like distance of two thousand five hundred miles, taking in tributary after tributary from the east and from the west, bringing together the waters from the western declivity of the Alleghanies and the torrents which roll down the eastern sides of the Rocky mountains, finds the Atlantic ocean in the gulf of Mexico. Here is the central place where the agriculture of the richest regions of North America must begin its magnificent supplies to the whole world. . . .

This is then a commanding field; but it is as commanding in regard to the commercial future, for power is not to reside permanently on the eastern slope of the Alleghany mountains, nor in the seaports of the Pacific. . . . In other days, studying what might perhaps have seemed to others a visionary subject, I have cast about for the future the ultimate central seat of power of the North American people. I have looked at Quebec and at New Orleans, at Washington and at San Francisco, at Cincinnati and at St. Louis, and it has been the result of my best conjecture that the seat of power for North America would yet be found in the valley of Mexico; that the glories of the Aztec capital would be renewed, and that city would become ultimately the capital of the United States of America. But I have corrected that view, and I now believe that the last seat of power on the great continent will be found somewhere within a radius not very far from the very spot where I stand, at the head of navigation on the Mississippi river and on the great Mediterranean lakes. . . .

I have never until now occupied that place whence I could grasp the whole grand panorama of the continent, for the happiness of whose present people and of whose future millions of millions, it is the duty of an American statesman to labor. . . . I seem to myself to stand here on this eminence as the traveler who climbs the dome of St. Peter's in Rome. There, through the opening of that dome, he seems to himself to be in almost direct and immediate communication with the Almighty Power that directs and controls the actions and the wills of men, and he looks down with pity on the priests and votaries below who vainly try, by poring over beads and rituals, to study out and influence the mind of the Eternal. Standing here and looking far off into the northwest, I see the Russian as he busily occupies himself in establishing seaports and towns and fortifications, on the verge of this continent, as the outposts of St. Petersburg, and I can say, "Go on, and build up your outposts all

This document can be found in George E. Baker, ed., *The Works of William H. Seward*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1884, IV, pp. 331–334.

along the coast up even to the Arctic ocean—they will yet become the outposts of my own country—monuments of the civilization of the United States in the north-west." So I look off on Prince Rupert's land and Canada, and see there an ingenious, enterprising and ambitious people, occupied with bridging rivers and constructing canals, railroads and telegraphs, to organize and preserve great British provinces north of the great lakes, the St. Lawrence, and around the shores of Hudson bay, and I am able to say, "It is very well, you are building excellent states to be hereafter admitted into the American Union." I can look southwest and see, amid all the convulsions that are breaking the Spanish American republics, and in their rapid decay and dissolution, the preparatory stage for the reorganization in free, equal and self-governing members of the United States of America. In the same high range of vision I can look down on the states and the people of the Atlantic coast of Maine and Massachusetts, of New York and Pennsylvania, of Virginia and the Carolinas, and Georgia, and Louisiana, and Texas, and round by the Pacific coast to California and Oregon. I can hear their disputes, their fretful controversies, their threats that if their own separate interests are not gratified and consulted by the federal government they will separate from this Union. I am able to say, "peace, be still." These subjects of contention and dispute that so irritate and anger and provoke and alienate you, are but temporary and ephemeral. . . .

It is under the influence of reflections like these that I thank God here to-day, more fervently than ever, that I live in so great a country as this, and that my lot has been cast in it, not before the period when political society was to be organized, nor yet in that distant period when it is to collapse and fall into ruin, but that I live in the very day and hour when political society is to be effectually organized throughout the entire continent.



D O C U M E N T 2

President Ulysses S. Grant Urges Annexation of the Dominican Republic, 1870

The doctrine promulgated by President Monroe has been adhered to by all political parties, and I now deem it proper to assert the equally important principle that hereafter no territory on this continent shall be regarded as subject of transfer to a European power.

The Government of San Domingo has voluntarily sought this annexation. It is a weak power, numbering probably less than 120,000 souls, and yet possessing one of the richest territories under the sun, capable of supporting a population of 10,000,000 people in luxury. The people of San Domingo are not capable of maintaining themselves in their present condition, and must look for outside support.

They yearn for the protection of our free institutions and laws, our progress and civilization. Shall we refuse them?

I have information which I believe reliable that a European power stands ready now to offer \$2,000,000 for the possession of Samaná Bay alone. If refused by us, with what grace can we prevent a foreign power from attempting to secure the prize?

The acquisition of San Domingo is desirable because of its geographical position. It commands the entrance to the Caribbean Sea and the isthmus transit of commerce. It possesses the richest soil, best and most capacious harbors, most salubrious climate, and the most valuable products of the forests, mine, and soil of any of the West India Islands. Its possession by us will in a few years build up a coast-wise commerce of immense magnitude, which will go far toward restoring to us our lost merchant marine. It will give to us those articles which we consume so largely and do not produce, thus equalizing our exports and imports.

In case of foreign war it will give us command of all the islands referred to, and thus prevent an enemy from ever again possessing himself of rendezvous upon our very coast. . . .

San Domingo will become a large consumer of the products of Northern farms and manufactories. The cheap rate at which her citizens can be furnished with food, tools, and machinery will make it necessary that the contiguous islands should have the same advantages in order to compete in the production of sugar, coffee, tobacco, tropical fruits, etc. This will open to us a still wider market for our products. . . .

The acquisition of San Domingo is an adherence to the "Monroe doctrine"; it is a measure of national protection; it is asserting our just claim to a controlling influence over the great commercial traffic soon to flow from east to west by the way of the Isthmus of Darien; it is to build up our merchant marine; it is to furnish new markets for the products of our farms, shops, and manufactories; it is to make slavery insupportable in Cuba and Porto Rico at once and ultimately so in Brazil; it is to settle the unhappy condition of Cuba [in rebellion against Spain], and end an exterminating conflict; it is to provide honest means of paying our honest debts, without overtaxing the people; it is to furnish our citizens with the necessities of everyday life at cheaper rates than ever before; and it is, in fine, a rapid stride toward that greatness which the intelligence, industry, and enterprise of the citizens of the United States entitle this country to assume among nations.



D O C U M E N T 3

Congress Calls for a Pan American Conference, 1888

The Conference is called to consider—

First. Measures that shall tend to preserve and promote the prosperity of the several American States.

Second. Measures toward the formation of an American customs union, under which the trade of the American nations with each other shall, so far as possible and profitable, be promoted.

Third. The establishment of regular and frequent communication between the ports of the several American States and the ports of each other.

Fourth. The establishment of a uniform system of customs regulations in each of the independent American States to govern the mode of importation and exportation of merchandise and port dues and charges, a uniform method of determining the classification and valuation of such merchandise in the ports of each country, and a uniform system of invoices, and the subject of the sanitation of ships and quarantine.

Fifth. The adoption of a uniform system of weights and measures, and laws to protect the patent-rights, copyrights, and trade-marks of citizens of either country in the other, and for the extradition of criminals.

Sixth. The adoption of a common silver coin, to be issued by each Government, the same to be legal tender in all commercial transactions between the citizens of all of the American States.

Seventh. An agreement upon and recommendation for adoption to their respective Governments of a definite plan of arbitration of all questions, disputes, and differences, that may now or hereafter exist between them, to the end that all difficulties and disputes between such nations may be peaceably settled and wars prevented.

Eighth. And to consider such other subjects relating to the welfare of the several States represented as may be presented by any of said States which are hereby invited to participate in said Conference.

D O C U M E N T 4

Captain Alfred T. Mahan Advocates a Naval Buildup, 1890

The influence of the government will be felt in its most legitimate manner in maintaining an armed navy, of a size commensurate with the growth of its shipping and importance of the interests connected with it. More important even than the size of the navy is the question of its institutions, favoring a healthful spirit and activity, and providing for rapid development in time of war by an adequate reserve of men and of ships and by measures for drawing out that general reserve power which has before been pointed to, when considering the character and pursuits of the people. Undoubtedly under this second head of warlike preparation must come the maintenance of suitable naval stations, in those distant parts of the world to which the armed shipping must follow the peaceful vessels of commerce. The protection of such stations must depend either upon direct military force, as do Gibraltar and Malta, or upon a surrounding friendly population, such as the American colonists once were to England, and, it may be presumed, the Australian colonists now are. Such friendly surroundings and backing, joined to a reasonable military provision, are the best of defences, and when combined with decided preponderance at sea, make a scattered and extensive empire, like that of England, secure; for while it is true that an unexpected attack may cause disaster in some one quarter, the actual superiority of naval power prevents such disaster from being general or irremediable. History has sufficiently proved this. England's naval bases have been in all parts of the world; and her fleets have at once protected them, kept open the communications between them, and relied upon them for shelter.

This document can be found in Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1890), pp. 82-83, 87.

Colonies attached to the mother-country afford, therefore, the surest means of supporting abroad the sea power of a country. In peace, the influence of the government should be felt in promoting by all means a warmth of attachment and a unity of interest which will make the welfare of one the welfare of all, and the quarrel of one the quarrel of all; and in war, or rather for war, by inducing such measures of organization and defence as shall be felt by all to be a fair distribution of a burden of which each reaps the benefit.

Such colonies the United States has not and is not likely to have. As regards purely military naval stations, the feeling of her people was probably accurately expressed by an historian of the English navy a hundred years ago, speaking then of Gibraltar and Port Mahon. "Military governments," said he, "agree so little with the industry of a trading people, and are in themselves so repugnant to the genius of the British people, that I do not wonder that men of good sense and of all parties have inclined to give up these, as Tangiers was given up." Having therefore no foreign establishments, either colonial or military, the ships of war of the United States, in war, will be like land birds, unable to fly far from their own shores. To provide resting-places for them, where they can coal and repair, would be one of the first duties of a government proposing to itself the development of the power of the nation at sea. . . .

The question is eminently one in which the influence of the government should make itself felt, to build up for the nation a navy which, if not capable of reaching distant countries, shall at least be able to keep clear the chief approaches to its own. The eyes of the country have for a quarter of a century been turned from the sea; the results of such a policy and of its opposite will be shown in the instance of France and of England. Without asserting a narrow parallelism between the case of the United States and either of these, it may safely be said that it is essential to the welfare of the whole country that the conditions of trade and commerce should remain, as far as possible, unaffected by an external war. In order to do this, the enemy must be kept not only out of our ports, but far away from our coasts.

D O C U M E N T 5

Queen Lili'uokalani Protests U.S. Intervention in Hawaii, 1893, 1897

January 17, 1893

I, Lili'uokalani, by the grace of God and under the constitution of the Hawaiian kingdom Queen, do hereby solemnly protest against any and all acts done against myself and the constitutional government of the Hawaiian kingdom by certain persons claiming to have established a Provisional Government of and for this kingdom.

That I yield to the superior force of the United States of America, whose Minister Plenipotentiary, His Excellency John L. Stevens, has caused United States troops

This document can be found in Lili'uokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard, 1898), pp. 354-356, 387-388.

to be landed at Honolulu, and declared that he would support the said Provisional Government.

Now, to avoid any collision of armed forces, and perhaps the loss of life, I do, under this protest and impelled by said forces, yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representative, and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.

June 17, 1897

I, Liliuokalani of Hawaii, by the will of God named their apparent on the tenth day of April, A.D. 1877, and by the grace of God Queen of the Hawaiian Islands, on the seventeenth day of January, A.D. 1893, do hereby protest against the ratification of a certain treaty, which, so I am informed, has been signed at Washington by Messrs. Hatch, Thurston, and Kinney, purporting to cede those Islands to the territory and dominion of the United States. I declare such a treaty to be an act of wrong toward the native and part-native people of Hawaii, an invasion of the rights of the ruling chiefs, in violation of international rights both toward my people and toward friendly nations with whom they have made treaties, the perpetuation of the fraud whereby the constitutional government was overthrown, and, finally, an act of gross injustice to me.

Because the official protests made by me on the seventeenth day of January, 1893, to the so-called Provisional Government was signed by me, and received by said government with the assurance that the case was referred to the United States of America for arbitration.

Because that protest and my communications to the United States Government immediately thereafter expressly declare that I yielded my authority to the forces of the United States in order to avoid bloodshed, and because I recognized the futility of a conflict with so formidable a power.

Because the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and an envoy commissioned by them reported in official documents that my government was unlawfully coerced by the forces, diplomatic and naval, of the United States; that I was at the date of their investigations the constitutional ruler of my people.

Because such decision of the recognized magistrates of the United States was officially communicated to me and to Sanford B. Dole, and said Dole's resignation requested by Albert S. Willis, the recognized agent and minister of the Government of the United States.

Because neither the above-named commission nor the government which sends it has ever received any such authority from the registered voters of Hawaii, but derives its assumed powers from the so-called committee of public safety, organized on or about the seventeenth day of January, 1893, said committee being composed largely of persons claiming American citizenship, and not one single Hawaiian was a member thereof, or in any way participated in the demonstration leading to its existence.

Because my people, about forty thousand in number, have in no way been consulted by those, three thousand in number, who claim the right to destroy the independence of Hawaii. My people constitute four-fifths of the legally qualified voters

of Hawaii, and excluding those imported for the demands of labor, about the same proportion of the inhabitants.

Because said treaty ignores, not only the civic rights of my people, but, further, hereditary property of their chiefs. Of the 4,000,000 acres composing the territory said treaty offers to annex, 1,000,000 or 915,000 acres has in no way been heretofore recognized as other than the private property of the constitutional monarch, subject to a control in no way differing from other items of a private estate.

Because it is proposed by said treaty to confiscate said property, technically called the crown lands, those legally entitled thereto, either now or in succession, receiving no consideration whatever for estates, their title to which has been always undisputed, and which is legitimately in my name at this date.

Because said treaty ignores, not only all professions of perpetual amity and good faith made by the United States in former treaties with the sovereigns representing the Hawaiian people, but all treaties made by those sovereigns with other and friendly powers, and it is thereby in violation of international law.

Because, by treating with the parties claiming at this time the right to cede said territory of Hawaii, the Government of the United States receives such territory from the hands of those whom its own magistrates (legally elected by the people of the United States, and in office in 1893) pronounced fraudulently in power and constitutionally ruling Hawaii.

Therefore, I, Liliuokalani of Hawaii, do hereby call upon the President of that nation, to whom alone I yielded my property and my authority, to withdraw said treaty (ceding said Islands) from further consideration. I ask the honorable Senate of the United States to decline to ratify said treaty, and I implore the people of this great and good nation, from whom my ancestors learned the Christian religion, to sustain their representatives in such acts of justice and equity as may be in accord with the principles of their fathers, and to the Almighty Ruler of the universe, to him who judgeth righteously, I commit my cause.

DOCUMENT 6

Secretary of State Richard Olney Trumpets U.S. Hegemony During the Venezuela Crisis, 1895

That America is in no part open to colonization, though the proposition was not universally admitted at the time of its first enunciation [in 1823], has long been universally conceded. We are now concerned, therefore, only with that other practical application of the Monroe doctrine the disregard of which by an European power is to be deemed an act of unfriendliness towards the United States. The precise scope and limitations of this rule cannot be too clearly apprehended. It does not establish any general protectorate by the United States over other American states. It does not relieve any American state from its obligations as fixed by international law nor

This document can be found in the U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896), Part I, pp. 554-555, 558, 561-562.

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prevent any European power directly interested from enforcing such obligations, or from inflicting merited punishment for the breach of them. It does not contemplate any interference in the internal affairs of any American state or in the relations between it and other American states. It does not justify any attempt on our part to change the established form of government of any American state or to prevent the people of such state from altering that form according to their own will and pleasure. The rule in question has but a single purpose and object. It is that no European power or combination of European powers shall forcibly deprive an American state of the right and power of self-government and of shaping for itself its own political fortunes and destinies....

Today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition. Why? It is not because of the pure friendship or good will felt for it. It is not simply by reason of its high character as a civilized state, nor because wisdom and justice and equity are the invariable characteristics of the dealings of the United States. It is because, in addition to all other grounds, its infinite resources combined with its isolated position render it master of the situation and practically invulnerable as against any or all other powers.

All the advantages of this superiority are at once imperiled if the principle be admitted that European powers may convert American states into colonies or provinces of their own. The principle would be eagerly availed of, and every power doing so would immediately acquire a base of military operations against us. What one power was permitted to do could not be denied to another, and it is not inconceivable that the struggle now going on for the acquisition of Africa might be transferred to South America. If it were, the weaker countries would unquestionably be soon absorbed, while the ultimate result might be the partition of all South America between the various European powers. The disastrous consequences to the United States of such a condition of things are obvious. The loss of prestige, of authority, and of weight in the councils of the family of nations, would be among the least of them. Our only real rivals in peace as well as enemies in war would be found located at our very doors. Thus far in our history we have been spared the burdens and evils of immense standing armies and all the other accessories of huge warlike establishments, and the exemption has largely contributed to our national greatness and wealth as well as to the happiness of every citizen. But, with the powers of Europe permanently encamped on American soil, the ideal conditions we have thus far enjoyed can not be expected to continue. We too must be armed to the teeth, we too must convert the flower of our male population into soldiers and sailors, and by withdrawing them from the various pursuits of peaceful industry we too must practically annihilate a large share of the productive energy of the nation....

Thus, as already intimated, the British demand that her right to a portion of the disputed territory shall be acknowledged before she will consent to an arbitration as to the rest seems to stand upon nothing but her own *ipse dixit*. She says to Venezuela in substance: "You can get none of the debatable land by force, because you are not strong enough; you can get none by a treaty, because I will not agree; and you can take your chance of getting a portion by arbitration, only if you first agree to share don to me such other portion as I may designate." It is not perceived how such an attitude can be defended nor how it is reconcilable with that love of justice and fair

play so eminently characteristic of the English race. It in effect deprives Venezuela of her free agency and puts her under virtual duress. Territory acquired by reason of it will be as much wrested from her by the strong hand as if occupied by British troops or covered by British fleets. It seems therefore quite impossible that this position of Great Britain should be assented to by the United States, or that, if such position be adhered to with the result of enlarging the bounds of British Guiana, it should not be regarded as amounting, in substance, to an invasion and conquest of Venezuelan territory.

DOCUMENT 7

Indiana Republican Albert J. Beveridge Campaigns for Office and Empire, 1898

It is a glorious history our God has bestowed upon His chosen people: a history heroic with faith in our mission and our future; a history of statesmen who flung the boundaries of the Republic out into unexplored lands and savage wilderness; a history of soldiers who carried the flag across blazing deserts and through the ranks of hostile mountains, even to the gates of sunset; a history of a multiplying people who overran a continent in half a century....

Have we no mission to perform, no duty to discharge to our fellow-man? Has God endowed us with gifts beyond our deserts and marked us as the people of His peculiar favor, merely to rot in our own selfishness, as men and nations must, who take cowardice for their companion and self for their deity—as China has, as India has, as Egypt has?...

Hawaii is ours; Porto Rico is to be ours; at the prayer of her people Cuba finally will be ours; in the islands of the East, even to the gates of Asia, coaling stations are to be ours at the very least; the flag of a liberal government is to float over the Philippines, and may it be the banner that Taylor unfurled in Texas and Fremont carried to the coast.

The march of the flag! In 1789 the flag of the Republic waved over 4,000,000 souls in thirteen states, and their savage territory which stretched to the Mississippi, to Canada, to the Floridas. The timid minds of that day said that no new territory was needed, and, for the hour, they were right. But Jefferson, through whose intellect the centuries marched; Jefferson, who dreamed of Cuba as an American state; Jefferson, the first Imperialist of the Republic—Jefferson acquired that imperial territory which swept from the Mississippi to the mountains, from Texas to the British possessions, and the march of the flag began!...

[Opponents of empire] tells us that we ought not to govern a people without their consent. I answer, The rule of liberty that all just government derives its authority from the consent of the governed, applies only to those who are capable of self-government. We govern the Indians without their consent, we govern our territories without their consent, we govern our children without their consent. How do they

From Albert J. Beveridge *The Meaning of the Times* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1898), (Bobbs, Merrill), pp. 47-49, 51-57.

know that our government would be without their consent? Would not the people of the Philippines prefer the just, humane, civilizing government of this Republic to the savage, bloody rule of pillage and extortion from which we have rescued them?

And, regardless of this formula of words made only for enlightened, self-governing people, do we owe no duty to the world? Shall we turn these peoples back to the reeking hands from which we have taken them? Shall we abandon them, with Germany, England, Japan, hungering for them? Shall we save them from those nations, to give them a self-rule of tragedy? ...

And, now, obeying the same voice that Jefferson heard and obeyed, that Jackson heard and obeyed, that Monroe heard and obeyed, that Seward heard and obeyed, that Grant heard and obeyed, that Harrison heard and obeyed, our President to-day plants the flag over the islands of the seas, outposts of commerce, citadels of national security, and the march of the flag goes on! ...

And so, while we did not need the territory taken during the past century at the time it was acquired, we do need what we have taken in 1898, and we need be increased as much as American energy is greater than Spanish sloth. In Cuba alone, there are 15,000,000 acres of forest unacquainted with the ax, exhaustless mines of iron, priceless deposits of manganese, millions of dollars' worth of which we must buy, to-day, from the Black Sea districts. There are millions of acres yet unexplored.

The resources of Porto Rico have only been trifled with. The riches of the Philippines have hardly been touched by the finger-tips of modern methods. And they produce what we consume, and consume what we produce—the very predomination of reciprocity—a reciprocity "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." ...

The commercial supremacy of the Republic means that this Nation is to be the sovereign factor in the peace of the world. For the conflicts of the future are to be the conflicts of trade—struggles for markets—commercial wars for existence. ...

So Hawaii furnishes us a naval base in the heart of the Pacific; the Ladrones another, a voyage further on; Manila another, at the gates of Asia—Asia, to the trade of whose hundreds of millions American merchants, manufacturers, farmers, have as good right as those of Germany or France or Russia or England; Asia, whose commerce with the United Kingdom alone amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars every year; Asia, to whom Germany looks to take her surplus products; Asia, whose doors must not be shut against American trade. Within five decades the bulk of Oriental commerce will be ours. ...

Wonderfully has God guided us. Yonder at Bunker Hill and Yorktown His providence was above us. At New Orleans and on ensanguined seas His hand sustained us. Abraham Lincoln was His minister and His was the altar of freedom the Nation's soldiers set up on a hundred battle-fields. His power directed Dewey in the East and delivered the Spanish fleet into our hands, as He delivered the elder Armada into the hands of our English sires two centuries ago. The American people can not use a dishonest medium of exchange; it is ours to set the world its example of right and honor. We can not fly from our world duties; it is ours to execute the purpose of a fate that has driven us to be greater than our small intentions. We can not retreat from any soil where Providence has unfurled our banner; it is ours to save that soil for liberty and civilization.

U.S. History
H. A. Quast

ESSAYS

In the first essay, Robert Kagan of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace emphasizes the influence of the Civil War experience on America's late nineteenth-century rise to world power. Kagan casts the Union's victory over the forces of secession and slavery as America's first experiment in ideological conquest and postwar nation-building. He argues that the North's triumph infused U.S. foreign policy in the decades that followed with a distinctive moral tone. Postwar Republican leaders limited the nation's territorial acquisitions to a handful of overseas naval bases, but vigorously pursued commercial and ideological activism. Proud of their own liberty and progress, U.S. officials categorized other nations and peoples as needing varying degrees of reform. This body of thought, Kagan advises, often led policymakers to judge international politics according to simplistic and ethnocentric civilizational standards.

In the second essay, Michael H. Hunt of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill highlights America's economic and political development to explain its ascendancy to world power after the Civil War. Rich in natural resources and a safe distance from Europe's wars, the nation exploited its technological prowess and its ability to attract foreign capital and migrant labor to achieve primacy in the international economy. To maximize growth, local, state, and federal governments built extensive transportation systems, minimized business regulation, and kept taxes low. Hunt dismisses the notion of America's ideological uniqueness, noting that U.S. officials, very much like their counterparts in Europe and Japan, increasingly adopted a posture of racial and male chauvinism as they looked outward in search of economic opportunities, military bases, and empire.

In the last essay, Farred Zakaria, a political scientist and editor of *Newsweek's* international magazine, offers a different perspective. Although he agrees that America emerged from the Civil War a powerful, industrial nation, Zakaria argues that the country's weak central government, featuring a tiny military and ragged foreign service, inhibited overseas expansion and dictated a relatively isolationist posture toward the world. Held in check by strong congressional leaders, America's embrace of global activism awaited the emergence of a more powerful state structure, including the rise of the modern presidency, during the 1890s and the early years of the new century.

The Civil War and the Creed of Civilizational Progress

ROBERT KAGAN

The impact of the Civil War on American foreign policy was... profound. The Civil War was America's second great moral war, but unlike the Revolution it was a war of conquest. The North liberated the oppressed segment of the South's population and subjugated the oppressors. It established a decade-long military occupation of the South's territory, abolished the despotic institution of slavery, and attempted to establish reformed political and economic systems that would prevent a return to the old ways.

The Civil War was America's first experiment in ideological conquest, therefore, and what followed was America's first experiment in "nation-building." When Grant accepted Lee's surrender, the South lay in ruins. The southern economy was destroyed, and an entire generation of men had been killed, maimed, or incapacitated. The Confederate government was vanquished, so the U.S. Army became "the

From *Dangerous Nation* by Robert Kagan, copyright © 2006 by Robert Kagan. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.

sole source of law and order in occupied areas." Army provost marshals were the facto governors of southern civilians, regulating every aspect of life, from arresting suspected "rebels" to distributing food and clothing. During the war Lincoln had established loyalist governments in some of the occupied states, but even these were dependent on and subordinate to the military department commanders.

To the North, the defeated South was, in the angst of the twentieth century, an underdeveloped nation. Its underdevelopment, its backwardness, exemplified by the archaic institution of slavery, many northerners believed, had been responsible for the horrendous conflict that had almost destroyed the entire nation. Now the North, having subdued the rebellion and punished its leaders, had the task not only of standing the conquered land back on its feet, but of curing it of the evils that had led to war, which in turn meant dragging it forcibly into the modern world. . . .

For the generation that lived through it, the Civil War would forever remain the most important event of their lives. Theirs was, as Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., later said, a generation "touched by fire." Just as World War II cast its shadow over H. W. Bush, elected in 1988, had served as a pilot in the war—so the Civil War's influence on Americans persisted well into the beginning of the twentieth century. President William McKinley, elected in 1896 and again in 1900, had served as a major in the Union army, and in the nine presidential elections between the end of the Civil War and the election of Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, every Republican presidential candidate except one had served as an officer in the Civil War.

A living symbol of the continuing fixation on the sectional conflict and the issues of slavery and black rights was Charles Sumner, the onetime scourge of the slave power who after the war helped lead the Radical cause from his perch as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Probably no member of Congress in American history ever wielded more influence over foreign policy. . . .

The foreign policy question to which Sumner devoted most of his energies during the Reconstruction era, and on which he repeatedly frustrated the designs of two administrations, was the settlement of outstanding claims against England from the Civil War—the so-called *Alabama* claims. Most Americans, even the more vociferously anti-British politicians, focused chiefly on gaining British compensation for the economic damage done by Confederate commerce raiders operating with impunity out of British ports. That constituted a sizable claim, eventually determined by a commission of arbitration to amount to over \$15 million. Sumner cared more about justice than about compensation, however. He wanted to punish Britain for its pro-Confederate actions and sympathies during the Civil War. Had it not been for British sympathy with the South, he believed, the rebellion would have quickly collapsed. England's actions had prolonged the war, therefore, and exacerbated the suffering of the American people. But in Sumner's eyes, British sins were even greater than that. Once the leader of the worldwide antislavery crusade—the hope and inspiration of the American antislavery movement and of Sumner himself—the British government during the Civil War had sold its soul for cotton. By its "flagrant, unnatural departure from that anti-slavery rule which . . . was the avowed creed of England," Sumner charged, the British government had "opened the gates of war" and then fanned the flames of destruction. What kind of financial settlement could compensate for such a historic moral betrayal? Sumner toted up the cost at

something in excess of \$2 billion (more than \$25 billion in today's dollars), but he was prepared to accept Canada in lieu of a cash payment.

Sumner's passion for the issues of slavery and black rights also shaped his views on what became in the decade after the Civil War the perennial question of Santo Domingo. Whether to annex Santo Domingo (later the Dominican Republic) to the United States or, less ambitiously, to lease Samana Bay as a port for American warships, became one of the biggest foreign policy controversies of the Reconstruction era. But the hullabaloo over Santo Domingo had little to do with strategic or economic considerations. Senior American naval officers wanted Samana Bay partly because Confederate raiders during the Civil War had revealed the nation's vulnerability to attacks against its commerce and hence the desirability of acquiring what Seward called "island outposts" in the Caribbean for both military and commercial reasons. Merchants and West Coast politicians who favored building a transisthmian canal to secure easier passage between the Atlantic and Pacific viewed the island outposts as useful for defending and supplying the ships that would carry American trade through a Nicaraguan or Panamanian passage. The Dominican leader of the time, who eagerly sought either annexation or protectorate status to defend against his Haitian neighbors, held a dubious plebiscite that allegedly registered popular support for annexation. In the United States President Andrew Johnson supported the acquisition, as did Seward. President Grant was enthusiastic; [Secretary of State] Hamilton Fish was much less so but willing to go along. . . .

Instead, Sumner managed to build enough opposition in the Senate to deny Grant the two-thirds majority required to pass the treaty. Some of this opposition was purely partisan, and so was some of the support. But what ultimately killed the proposal was a combination of lingering sectional animosities, disagreements over what to do with the South, and the question of race. The defeat revealed the subtle changes that had come to American attitudes about foreign policy, and particularly about territorial expansion, as a result of the long sectional crisis and the Civil War.

Race and racism were a significant factor for many opponents of annexation, though for a variety of different and sometimes contradictory reasons. A powerful bloc of political leaders simply opposed adding the darker-skinned population of Dominicans to the already large population of African-Americans. . . .

Sumner opposed annexation of Santo Domingo not because he wanted to keep blacks away from whites but because he wanted to keep whites away from blacks. He wanted to preserve one place in the hemisphere where blacks could rule themselves free from white domination. An "ordinance of Nature," he claimed, a "higher law" had set aside the island of Santo Domingo for the "colored race" as a place where blacks could live free. . . .

The northern Republicans who dominated American politics after the war, meanwhile, brought to the Congress, the White House, and the State Department a perspective significantly shaped by long years of opposing the slave power. To many leading northerners, the Civil War had been fought precisely to prevent the South from expanding its territory, from annexing Santo Domingo, and from buying or conquering Cuba, more of Mexico, and parts of Central America. Containment of the southern expansionist drive had been the unifying principle of the Republican Party at its founding. Opposing territorial manifest destiny, when it aimed southward, was an established Republican Party tradition. After the Civil War this strain

of opposition to southern territorial expansion continued to influence Republican policies. Even in the 1880s Blaine would recall that the nation's territorial acquisitions prior to the Civil War had "all been in the interest of slavery."

As before the war, there were exceptions to Republican opposition to territorial expansion. Many who opposed expansion southward still looked longingly northward [Missouri Senator Carl] Schurz saw in the northern territories "a magnificent field for our ambition of aggrandizement" and mistakenly hoped, along with many others, that the Canadian people would happily choose annexation to the United States, given the opportunity. It "fills my soul with delight when I see events preparing themselves which will lead the whole continent north of us into our arms." With its white, predominantly Anglo-Saxon and Protestant population, Canada could be absorbed without injecting a tropical, dark-skinned population into the nation's bloodstream.

Some leading Republicans still wanted to acquire naval stations and "island outposts," such as Samana Bay, or a port in Haiti or the Danish West Indies, both for the protection of the American coastline and American shipping and for the defense of an eventual canal. When the era of Reconstruction passed, Republican policy makers would return to these plans again. The purchase or lease of naval stations from which to promote and defend commerce had always been considered by northern Whigs and Republicans to be morally superior to the southern desire for territory in which to implant slavery. Grant's plans for Santo Domingo had failed in part because they had crossed the line from seeking a harbor to annexing an entire foreign population and thereby had acquired an excessively southern flavor.

Finally, there was the question of Hawaii, which had long been an object of first Whig and then Republican ambitions in the antebellum years. In the 1840s the annexation of Hawaii had been blocked by the sectional struggle, partly because the Hawaiian population, fearing enslavement, had insisted on admission to the Union as a nonslave state. It was another measure of how much Republican policies after the Civil War continued to be shaped by prewar attitudes that the acquisition of Hawaii, despite its large, dark-skinned, "mongrel" population, remained high on the agenda of Blaine and most Republican leaders, even those who rejected expansion into the tropics south of the Rio Grande.

These exceptions did not prevent Republican leaders after the Civil War from insisting, and believing, that the Union victory had put an end to the nation's territorial expansionism and certainly to expansion by military conquest. Any island outposts would be acquired not by force of arms but by purchase or by voluntary annexation.

The postwar turn away from territorial expansionism was no turn toward isolationism. Republican leaders envisioned an enormous increase in American influence, commercial, political, and moral. They believed the United States, purged of slavery and slave power imperialism, stood on a higher moral plane. The path was clear for the United States to play the role it had always been destined to play, as a great power—indeed, the greatest of world powers—wielding its benevolent influence across the globe.

Americans did not embark on a positive "mission" to change the world after the Civil War. There was no grand strategy for global reform, nor any deliberate policy to remake any specific country in the liberal mold. But when events or their own actions brought Americans into contact with "great social and moral wrongs,"

they responded with protest, sometimes with diplomatic interference, and occasionally with force, depending on the circumstances. Even when the United States took no particular action at all to address perceived wrongs, Americans formed attitudes toward other countries and peoples that affected their judgment at critical moments. There is more to a nation's foreign policies than invasions and annexations or the acquisition of territory and markets. The attitudes that Americans developed toward the rest of the world provided the context in which they acted. And sometimes the actions came long after the attitudes were formed.

One example was the evolving American attitude toward tsarist Russia. During the Civil War most Union supporters had viewed Russia favorably, mistakenly believing the tsar had intervened on the Union's side when the Russian fleet, looking for a place to hide from the British and French, decided to put in at New York harbor. "God bless the Russians!" Navy Secretary Gideon Welles had exclaimed. Northern antislavery leaders had also developed a high opinion of Alexander II, the "Tsar Liberator" who freed the serfs two years before Lincoln freed the slaves.

Soon after the Civil War ended, however, this goodwill evaporated, and the reason had little to do with matters of commerce or security. When Russia sold Alaska in 1867, it backed out of the Western Hemisphere and for the next three decades posed less danger to perceived American interests than any of the other great powers. Yet from the 1860s onward a large number of Americans came to despise Russia on grounds that were moral, humanitarian, and ideological.

American hostility to the Russian government grew out of its treatment of its Jewish population. Starting in the 1860s Alexander II began enforcing old anti-Semitic regulations, and tsarist authorities, refusing to distinguish between Russian Jews and American Jews, abused and sometimes arrested the latter for doing proscribed business while in Russia. In the late 1860s the issue came to dominate Russian-American relations, thoroughly souring American attitudes toward the tsarist government over the next three decades.

Americans applied this measuring stick to all nations and peoples that came into their line of sight. Sometimes their judgments about who measured up were dubious, their perceptions distorted by being refracted through the lens of America's own circumstances and experiences. For instance, Bismarck's Germany enjoyed overwhelming American support for a brief time during and just after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. Northerners, Republicans, and the U.S. government they controlled were grateful for Prussia's pro-Union leanings during the Civil War and for German immigrants' contribution to the northern cause. It helped that Germany's opponent was France, since northerners hated France for its pro-southern sympathies (many southerners and Democrats took the opposite view, of course) and for attempting to implant a European monarch in Mexico. The French invasion force had departed only three years before the war with Prussia. It helped, too, that the ethnic German population in the United States outnumbered the French immigrants by fifteen to one and was a crucial Republican voting bloc in several states.

These factors would have weighed less in the scales had not many Americans also convinced themselves that Bismarck's newly unified Germany would be a beacon of liberalism in Europe. Its federal constitution looked on the surface to be much like the American federal constitution. Bismarck in the early years often allied himself with the German National Liberal Party, and Protestant America applauded his

Kulturkampf against the powers and privileges of the German Catholic church, while it lasted. One American observer happily declared that the prevailing "tendency in Europe" was toward "the American system of separating church and state." The U.S. minister in Berlin, the historian George Bancroft, predicted the new German Empire would be "the most liberal government on the continent of Europe." It was "the child of America," its very birth inspired by the Union victory. Hamilton Fish agreed that the Germans were copying the American Constitution and American-style liberalism, and President Grant in an address to Congress in February 1871 applauded "the adoption in Europe of the American system of union under the control and direction of a free people." German success could not "fail to extend popular institutions and to enlarge the peaceful influence of American ideas."

Many Americans viewed the Franco-German conflict not in geopolitical terms, as a struggle between great powers, but in ideological and civilizational terms, as a struggle between liberalism and tyranny, progress and reaction. If Germany was the alleged outpost of American-style liberty in Europe, Napoleon III's France was the exemplar of imperial despotism.

American's high expectations for a liberal Germany were indeed severely disappointed over the coming decades, as the imagined promise of liberal constitutional government soon devolved into the reality of conservative rule under the ever-shifting Bismarck and the kaiser. The early caricature of a peaceful, progressive, liberty-loving Germany metamorphosed into a very different caricature, of "Kaiser Bill" and an "autocratic, militaristic, rude, presumptuous Germany." Nasty trade battles in the 1880s helped this transformation along, and by the 1890s many Americans hated and feared the kaiser's Germany as much as they hated and feared the tsar's Russia. In both cases American perceptions of these nations as somehow backward, hostile to progress, despotic, and therefore aggressive shaped their strategic judgment. They provided the ideological backdrop for the confrontation between the United States and Germany over the tiny islands of Samoa in the 1880s and cast in a more sinister light Germany's tentative and mostly feeble probes in the Caribbean.

Americans made Manichean distinctions in Asia, too, and looked for signs that their model of political and economic progress was being emulated by others. They searched "to find in progressive Chinese and Japanese," and later in progressive Koreans, "an image of progressive Americans." By the late 1860s a sturdy consensus had formed around the proposition that the progressive force in Asia was Japan, while China was a bastion of backwardness and barbarism. The ancient Chinese civilization, with its confident sense of superiority and apparent lack of interest in the outside world, including the "modern" world of Europe and America, made it contemptible in the eyes of most Americans.

Japan, on the other hand, appeared to be everything China was not. Beginning in the late 1860s, when the restoration of the Meiji emperor produced a determined effort to copy Western ways and institutions, Americans looked upon Japan as a model of progress in Asia. They admired its people's "eagerness to adopt new ideas." The fact that Americans took credit for "opening" Japan, with Admiral Oliver Hazard Perry's expedition in 1853, enhanced their paternalistic fondness. A memorandum prepared for congressional committees in 1872 explained that "the Japanese people not only desire to follow, as far as possible, in all educational and political affairs, the example of the Americans, but . . . they look upon them as their best friends,

among the nations of the globe." A best-selling American travelogue in the 1870s reported that Westernization and modernization had "taken Japan out of the ranks of the non-progressive nations" and "out of the stagnant life of Asia." Japan's advancement toward civilization practically removed it from its racial category in American eyes. The Japanese were increasingly viewed less as true Asians than as honorary Anglo-Saxons, "more Western than Asian." (Or rather, more American. With their "vigil, thrift, and intelligence," the Japanese were "a bright, progressive people—the Americans, so called, of Asia." The strikingly different ways Americans viewed Japan and China had much to do with seeing their own reflection in the former but not the latter: "Japan was, and China was not, becoming like America.")

Americans viewed conflicts among the Asian nations much as they viewed European conflicts, as contests between progress and reaction. This perspective often outweighed narrow strategic calculations and was independent of economic calculations. Americans regarded China as weak and contemptible, and they recognized that Japan was a rising power destined to be a force in East Asia, where Americans also hoped someday to be a force. American interests were more likely to clash with a rising Japan than a prostrate China. Yet they rooted for Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, precisely because it was strong and progressive and China was backward and pitiful. To the American mind, it was China's backwardness that was threatening while Japan's modernization was reassuring.

American attitudes toward European and Asian powers revealed how after the Civil War the ideas of progress and civilization provided organizing principles for American thinking about foreign relations. This view was inherited from the Enlightenment and enjoyed an old pedigree in America. The founding generation had shared the prevailing Enlightenment faith in liberal progress, as well as the popular belief that the seat of civilization had over the centuries traveled west, from ancient China to Rome to Great Britain and finally to America. . . . Thanks to the work of Charles Darwin and his popularizers, it also acquired the aura of scientific "truth" in an age when reverence for science was growing. (The sociologist) Herbert Spencer, whose work was probably more widely read in America than Darwin's, extended evolutionary theory to human societies and also provided a new gloss of scientific authority to the old Enlightenment idea, well articulated by [the historian] Edward Gibbon, that human societies progressed on a developmental continuum from savagery to barbarism to civilization and then eventually, like Rome, to decay. Darwin's theory of evolution presented a dire challenge to theologians—though some, like Josiah Strong, managed to blend Darwinism and Christianity in their worldview—but it fit well with American ideas of progress that were rooted not in religion but in the secular ideas of the Enlightenment.

This fusion of old and new theories about human progress produced what one historian has called an American "ideology of civilization." Americans evaluated other nations and their relationship to the United States according to where they stood on the continuum of progress.

"Opening" other nations to commerce was in American interests, therefore, not only because there was money to be made but because in time commercial penetration would hasten the progress of backward peoples toward civilization. They would become more liberal, more commercial, and therefore less threatening to the United States and to the civilized world in general. The spread of civilization was

important not so much to accept a "white man's burden" but because it would bring "order worldwide through the spread of morality and the reinforcement of virtue." For some Americans, like [Theodore] Roosevelt, civilizing the world's "barbaric" peoples was all the more urgent because, according to the same reigning evolutionary paradigm, advanced liberal commercial societies like the United States were in danger of losing the martial spirit necessary to defend themselves. The world had to be made safe for civilized peoples....

This universalistic and moralistic belief in progress distinguished Americans from most other peoples around the world, even to some degree from the liberal British. The sharpest contrast was with the Chinese, with their ancient Confucian view of "an eternal political order." While the Americans' view of progress made them look expectantly to other cultures and societies, anticipating and hoping for their evolution toward civilization, the Chinese were secure in their belief in a fixed hierarchy of which they were at the summit. The difference between the American and the Chinese perspectives was the difference between a nation founded upon universal principles and a people who considered their own culture unique and not transferable to others. Americans considered the Chinese hopelessly backward and out of step with the spirit of the age. But in fact it was the American perspective that was the more unusual, the more distant from the general view of humanity at the time, and also the more revolutionary in its implications. Most of the nations and peoples in the world in the late nineteenth century actually stood closer to the Chinese view of eternal order than to the American view of eternal progress. Even Europeans, despite repeated revolutions and a growing movement toward liberalism in some countries, still had a more organic and fixed view of society and were less sure of the benefits of progress. Americans were by far the most extreme in their universalism and in their belief in the inevitability and desirability of change.

Even American optimism about progress was not unqualified, however. While backward societies could be led toward civilization by the more advanced nations, many believed there was a limit to how quickly this process could be accelerated. Civilization took time, even centuries. And this raised a conundrum for Americans. Were backward peoples capable of self-government? Many Americans in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as in the latter part of the eighteenth century, believed they were not. But just as before, this view clashed with the American belief in universal natural rights....

The nineteenth-century belief that the United States was the advance agent of civilization and morally superior to all others coexisted, of course, with a pervasive domestic racism that was hardening into the apartheidlike system of Jim Crow in the South. As Americans condemned pogroms in Russia and Romania in the 1890s and '90s, hundreds of innocent blacks were lynched, mostly but not exclusively in the South, tortured, and killed, their dead bodies sometimes torn to pieces by crazed white mobs. On the West Coast it was Chinese immigrant workers who were savagely beaten and murdered in great numbers....

Hypocrisy did not stand in the way of moralism, however. Many Americans were aware of their own nation's failings, but most nevertheless extolled what they regarded as its superior institutions and enlightened worldview. Those who did not share that worldview were to be assisted and converted, criticized and sanctioned, and in the case of the South militarily defeated and reconstructed. This powerful impulse to

reform had its roots in the universalist ideology of the Declaration of Independence. But the Civil War gave birth to new and more potent aspirations. As William Seward insisted, the war had a "positive moral and political significance," producing what he and other leading Americans considered "a homogeneous, enlightened nation, virtuous and brave, inspired by lofty sentiments to achieve a destiny for itself that shall, by its influence and example, be beneficial to mankind." Even in the age of Seward it was clear to foreign observers as well as to some Americans that their belief in progress, their constant evaluation and measurement of societies and civilizations against their own ideals, and their disapproval of those that refused to conform to the spirit of the age would upset the status quo if and when Americans accumulated sufficient power and influence and the desire to use them to shape the world more to their liking.

Economic Primacy, Righteous Nationalism, and an Activist State

MICHAEL H. HUNT

Conquering and securing a continent was an essential but hardly in itself sufficient condition to moving toward ascendancy. Americans needed to develop wealth if they were to cut a larger figure on the world stage. This they did with astonishing success over the course of the nineteenth century....

Every available yardstick shows the U.S. economy outstripping the rest of the world between 1820 and 1913, itself a remarkable time of growing global trade and investment. Perhaps the prime yardstick of growth is gross domestic product (or GDP), the value of all goods and services produced by a country in a given year. The United States had achieved exceptional, sustained growth to judge from a GDP that was forty times greater by the early twentieth century than it had been a century earlier. By 1919 the United States was firmly established as the world's largest economy, accounting for nearly a fifth of all global production. Per capita GDP is another revealing yardstick. By taking population into account, this measurement tells us what each person within an economy would receive were the value of the output divided evenly. That figure grew fourfold between 1820 and 1913 even though there were ever more Americans to claim a share of the total output. They had become the wealthiest people on earth.

This high level of economic performance pushed the United States past Britain, the leading power of the day. As early as 1870 the United States had caught up in total output and by 1913 dwarfed the British economy by a margin greater than two to one. By that latter date, Americans had also surpassed British per capita income, which was the highest in Europe. Germany and France lagged behind at about two-thirds of the U.S. figure. In terms of manufacturing, a defining feature of advanced economic development at the time, Americans could boast special success. In 1860 they stood behind the leaders, Britain and France. By 1913 the U.S. manufacturing output was far in the lead; indeed it exceeded the combined output of the two industrial powerhouses of the day, Germany and Britain, and accounted for a third of the total world production....

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Table 1 Forging ahead: Yardsticks of U.S. economic expansion

	1820	1870	1913
total GDP (billions of 1990\$) ^a	13	98	517
U.S. share of total world GDP (%)	2	9	19
per capita GDP (1990\$)	1,257	2,445	5,301
population (millions)	10	40	98
exports (billions of 1990\$)	.3	2.5	19.2

Source: Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective* (Paris: Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001), 183, 185, 261, 263, 361.

^aExpressing dollar figures in terms of the value of 1990 dollars creates what economists call "constant dollars" that can be compared across time. Otherwise, the effects of inflation would put the value of one year's GDP beyond comparison with that of another year, especially over long periods of time.

Foreign commentators and visitors at the end of the nineteenth century noted the striking if predictable results of relatively high levels of steady growth. Their accounts made the U.S. economy a byword around the world for speedy economic development, steady technological achievement, and rapidly rising affluence. That the country was already in the 1880s "a vast hive of industry" that had arrived at an "advanced position as a leader of nations" was a point that visitor after visitor repeated, no matter how otherwise critical they were of this bland, crass, soulless civilization without modesty or redeeming social or moral ideals. H. G. Wells came away from turn-of-the-century America convinced that "nowhere now is growth still so certainly and confidently *going on* as here. Nowhere is it upon so great a scale as here, and with so confident an outlook towards the things to come." A French visitor marveled at the "extraordinary intensity" that Americans devoted to their work, yielding them "great riches" and swiftly transforming open land into "populous and industrious districts."

What was true of European visitors was also true of East Asians on the lookout for models for their own development. A Japanese elite bent on making their country strong and modern looked with ill-concealed admiration at U.S. achievements, especially its devotion to technology and practical education. A Japanese who studied in the United States in the decade after the Civil War found Americans "a nervous, energetic, enterprising people" and their development of the continent a "stupendous undertaking." . . . The influential Chinese reformer and journalist, Liang Qichao, was equally impressed but also alarmed by his encounter in 1903 with what he described for readers at home as "the premier capitalist nation in the world." . . .

How did the United States manage this rapid and widely recognized economic ascent to a position of agricultural and industrial preeminence? An explanation begins with natural endowments—abundant fertile land and rich timber and mineral resources that accrued to settler societies as a prerogative of conquest. Americans, like South Africans and Australians, seized these valuable assets with little or no recompense. . . . They provided the bedrock for the U.S. economy well into the twentieth century, and even as late as 1914 nonindustrial goods were the main U.S. export.

To abundant, cheap resources must be added fortunate location and timing. The United States as a settler society was able to bring an entire continent rapidly into production and lay the enduring economic basis for U.S. global power because nineteenth-century Americans occupied a privileged place within a dynamic North Atlantic economy. They enjoyed a prolonged peace—a century of freedom from major conflict running from the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 to the onset of World War I in 1914. During that time liberal notions of free trade gained wide currency. They exercised especially strong appeal during the middle decades of the nineteenth century as Britain led in removing barriers to trade. The free-trade gospel spread to Europe and the United States and with the backing of gunboats to China and Japan. A backlash against free trade and toward stronger national protection from foreign competition took hold from the 1870s onward, driven by economic downturns, social unrest, and revived great-power rivalry. Even so, this trend did not erase the earlier gains toward greater international economic openness and specialization. Measured as a percentage of total world GDP, total world exports rose from 1 percent in 1820 to 5 percent in 1870 to 8.7 by 1913.

More than anything else, new technology drove economic integration in a calm, outward-looking North Atlantic world. New forms of transport and communication—trains and steamships as well as telegraph cables across land and under the ocean—deepened and tightened the connections among the parts of the international economy. The first cable crossed the North Atlantic in 1869. Freight costs on land and sea fell dramatically, while speed and convenience increased no less dramatically. Refrigeration, introduced in the late 1870s and early 1880s, made possible long-distance shipment of goods such as meat, dairy products, and fruit. Taken together, the machines exploiting steam and electricity had revolutionary implications perhaps greater than more recent and familiar innovations such as the telephone, the airplane, and the computer. Ingenious mechanical contraptions were critical to pushing world trade to a level in 1913 that would not be matched relative to total world output until several decades after World War II. . . .

Federal, state, and local government made signal contributions to the ensuing economic drive. Foremost were policies meant to shape a single national market. This effort began with the building of canals and roads early in the nineteenth century and continued into the age of steam and electricity. Railroads crisscrossed the country and by 1866 spanned the continent. Telegraph lines paralleled the tracks, creating what one inventor at the time described as "the nervous system of this nation and of modern society." These developments laid the basis for the continent-wide network of mass production and mass marketing that would soon establish the United States as the international economic leader.

Government policies contributed to economic growth in other ways. Taxes were low, with spending directed at critical infrastructure such as public education and transport. Regulations on economic activity stayed minimal. Resources in the public domain—whether land, mineral deposits, grazing rights, or timber—were available to exploit on attractive terms, including land grants to encourage westward settlement. Businesses gained the right to incorporate and thus to act freely as a kind of superindividual—accumulating resources under no more restraint than any real person and shedding employees during economic downturns without a second thought, all the while wielding political influence that no individual alone could match.

Beyond all this, the federal government provided patent protection to inventors and tariff protection to rising industries. To ensure an ample labor force, Washington followed a pro-immigration policy. Finally, a point easy to overlook, the federal government maintained political stability and national unity that allowed entrepreneurs to work in a predictable, stable setting. It resolutely crushed the southern attempt to destroy that unity.

Government measures themselves reflected the preferences of a settler society oriented toward growth. That society encouraged innovation and risk and chafed against the constraints imposed by informal social structures or formal political regulations common in Europe. Individuals shed local attachments that limited geographic mobility, rejected arrangements such as guilds that obstructed technological innovation and market access, and shook free from rigid class identities that put a brake on individual initiative. An inspired breed of independent inventors such as Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas A. Edison, and the Wright brothers epitomized the country's bias toward material creativity. Their labs set off what *Scientific American* in 1896 called "a gigantic tidal wave of human ingenuity and resource, so stupendous in its magnitude, so complex in its diversity, so profound in its thought, so fruitful in its wealth, so beneficent in its results, that the mind is strained and embarrassed in its effort to expand to a full appreciation of it."

A long peace, new technology, and an integrated, rapidly developing continental market not only accounted for the striking U.S. economic growth rates but also raised the U.S. profile in international trade. . . . Between 1870 and 1913, exports increased at an annual average of 4.9 percent. By the eve of World War I, they were seventy-six times higher than in 1820, and only Britain and Germany were more heavily dependent on exports. Unlike these and other trading powerhouses, the U.S. output was still primarily oriented toward a large and rapidly growing home market. External commerce was relatively marginal. Exports from the 1870s to the eve of World War I—a time of burgeoning international trade—held steady at 6–7 percent of gross national product (GNP).

The core of U.S. foreign trade was unprocessed goods sent to Europe. . . .

Industrial exports [however] began to loom larger in the course of the nineteenth century, raising the U.S. great-power profile. This shift was in part due to the relative decline of agriculture, which had fallen from 41 percent of GNP in 1840 to 18 percent by 1900. Manufacturing together with mining and hand trades rose between those same dates from 17 to 31 percent. In absolute terms, agricultural productivity remained high even though the proportion of workers in that sector dropped from three-quarters in 1800 to less than a third in 1910. Farms were operating with growing efficiency. Mechanization, improved transport for crops, and fertilizers all made possible higher output with fewer hands. This shift in the domestic economy away from agriculture was mirrored in exports. Around 80 percent through much of the nineteenth century, agricultural products fell rapidly to just over half of total U.S. exports by the first years of the new century. By then manufacturing had risen rapidly so that it accounted for a quarter of the whole. . . .

A few firms began already in the 1850s to carve out a significant international position for themselves. The earliest overseas pioneers specialized in mass-produced machine tools, guns, reapers, and sewing machines. The Singer Manufacturing Company led the way by taking its patented sewing machine technology to European

markets and creating an efficient system of general agents. They established offices first in London and then Hamburg, publicized the marvels of U.S. machinery, trained and supervised a local force, promoted installment purchases, and stayed in close touch with the home office. By 1874 more than half of Singer's total machine sales were abroad. To keep prices low and to circumvent national tariffs, Singer moved some of its production overseas. By the 1890s this multinational production, sales, and marketing system constituted (in the words of one of the company's pioneer executives) "a living moving army of irresistible power, peacefully working to conquer the world." . . .

The relative decline of agriculture in favor of industry transformed the labor force, shifting dependence from the African born and African descended to Europeans. In the early stages of American economic development, unfree labor—approximately 400,000 slaves introduced over the course of the eighteenth century—played a critical role in expanding production. Agricultural output in the South was heavily dependent on workers of African descent. 1.7 million by 1820 or nearly one in five of the total U.S. population. Industrialization created a fresh demand for labor that was only partially met by workers thrown out of the agricultural sector. Many new hands came from overseas. The railways and steamships that carried goods quickly and cheaply and the telegraph that supplied timely information for business also facilitated a major labor migration out of the European, Russian, and Asian countryside—in sum about 150 million people on the move in three great streams over long distances between the 1840s and the 1930s. Of the nearly 50 million Europeans who left their homeland between the 1840s and the onset of World War I, most headed toward the Americas—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, and above all the United States (the destination for two-thirds of these transplants). The net migration to the United States alone between 1870 and 1913 came to 15.8 million. The peak year was 1907 with 1.3 million arrivals. This influx, which made possible an extraordinary economic expansion, helped push the total work force from 14.7 million in 1870 to 38.3 million in 1913. . . .

Foreign capital as well as foreign labor fueled U.S. economic growth. But overall funds from overseas were less important to U.S. dynamism than repeated infusions of fresh labor. A high and increasing savings rate among Americans over the course of the nineteenth century made it possible to meet much of the demand for fresh investment from domestic sources. Gross savings climbed from about 14 percent in the 1840s to 23 percent in the years around 1890. European money did, however, make an important contribution, particularly in facilitating railway construction and economic restructuring during the 1830s and 1880–1896 when demand for fresh capital surged. London banks were especially important. About half of all British savings were directed abroad. . . .

What dependence there had been on foreign investors began to diminish around the turn of the century as U.S. money moving overseas began to exceed incoming foreign funds. By 1914 U.S. direct investments overseas had risen to \$2.65 billion, with nearly one-half directed at extracting raw materials (mining or oil operations). Canada and Mexico were the favored destinations as U.S. investors helped integrate these neighbors into U.S. economy. By 1914 65 percent of U.S. investments were to be found in the Western Hemisphere. Europe was next (the destination for about 20 percent) thanks largely to the commitment of companies like Singer, General

Electric, Westinghouse, and Standard Oil to creating marketing networks there. While even as late as 1914 the United States was on balance still a net debtor, international accounts to the tune of about \$2.5 billion, the trend line pointed to a reversal of that position in the near term. It was already easy to glimpse a financial colossus in the making....

[A] righteous sense of historical destiny was not unique to the United States; it found its counterpart in many lands where people increasingly defined themselves in national terms. Like the elites in other countries engaged in this ideological enterprise, their American counterparts (predominantly of English descent) constructed elaborate explanations for their country's dominion and created glowing images of its destiny. Their constructs drew from European sources, especially from Britain, but had to accommodate to the peculiar circumstances of a settler society. The resulting nationalist notions came to circulate widely thanks to publicly funded education, public celebrations, religious sermons, memorials and monuments, and the propaganda of political parties. And as they gained in reach, they were to prove important—as a force for creating cultural coherence out of a multiplicity of ethnic identities, as a response to a world of jostling European nationalisms, and as both a justification and tool for a central government devoted to an ambitious agenda.

Nationalism in the U.S. case developed a special intensity as a result of its relationship to an ethnically diverse society created by early settlement patterns and subsequently maintained by repeated waves of labor migration. That society consisted notably of peoples from Africa forced into economic service, free labor drawn from an increasingly wide swath of Europe, and vestiges of a native population. Leading intellectuals and politicians in the Anglo community set about establishing their dominion. They created and propagated a definition of the nation that entirely excluded blacks (as well as women) from citizenship, incorporated Europeans in relation to their perceived whiteness (a standard that became more inclusive over time, beginning with Scots and Germans), and banished Indians to the realm of myths and to remote reservations. In the process, these lords of North America practiced what has come to be called "orientalism"—expressing their own sense of superiority by diminishing others as infantile, feminine, and barbarous....

Having potential—whether technological or military and economic—is one thing; making use of it... is another.... The war with Spain (in 1898) whetted the national appetite for wider influence in regions under the imperialist onslaught and even for colonies. It proved a short step from joining in the European rivalries on the colonial periphery to intervening in Europe's first great war. Intervention in that war in turn gave rise to a plan, firmly linked to Woodrow Wilson's name, to replace the system of rival imperial states with one of American design—democratic, peaceful, and commercial. This succession of grand projects in turn helped launch the modern American state....

Far-reaching technological advances that made possible both globalization and imperialism help explain this sudden stirring of U.S. power. Technology was raising industrial and agricultural productivity in national markets, nowhere more dramatically than in (President William) McKinley's America. New technology was also boosting the destructive potential of warfare on land and at sea as well as the costs of preparing for war. The Civil War had already demonstrated how telegraph, train, and steamships together made possible the rapid movement, dependable supply, and

easy coordination of large, far-flung forces. More sophisticated armaments were coming in a rush—smokeless powder, torpedoes, mines, and breach-loading cannon with rifled barrels for greater long-range accuracy. Warships grew ever larger with bigger, more accurate guns and heavier armor....

Finally, technology was broadening the vistas of ordinary people. In the United States cheap newspapers ("penny press") reached the mass market with sensational international reports of yesterday's Spanish military outrage in Cuba or the slaughter of American innocents doing God's work in China....

This worldwide technological shakeup in the decades around the turn of the century gave rise to concerns that made [many U.S. officials] receptive to the idea of an American empire. Taken together, these concerns looked strikingly similar to those gripping coloniality-minded Europeans. Little wonder: American advocates of empire were fascinated witnesses to the new wave of European colonialism in Africa and Asia in the 1880s and 1890s, and they were especially influenced by the British example and British imperial ideology....

From their observations American imperialists extracted four simple propositions to justify overseas conquest. First, empire would make Americans feel good about doing their duty. British commentators described formal colonial holdings as the ornaments of a modern, powerful state and the testing grounds of civilized peoples. If Britain could claim a quarter of the world as its domain and even tiny Belgium could boast a major African kingdom, why should Americans not share in the glory? As a superior people in command of an advanced civilization, Americans were no less suited to exercise dominion over peoples unfit to direct their own affairs. The United States was in the words of one of the most fervent supporters of... empire, Indiana senator Albert J. Beveridge, "a greater England with a nobler destiny."...

Second, empire looked easy. Advances in military technology had lowered the costs of fixing control over peripheral peoples. Europeans had already demonstrated how gunboats, well-organized logistical trains linking colony to metropole, and rapid-fire guns could subdue even the most distant and hostile lands. Small French forces had extinguished repeated outbreaks of resistance in Vietnam, while equally limited application of British power had quelled opposition in India and at a variety of points in Africa. Surely Americans, tested in a running battle with Native Americans across the continent, knew how to coerce obedience as well as Europeans....

Third, empire also seemed to serve security. Cable and steam had made the world smaller, while an increasingly colonized periphery—Africa carved up, the Middle East staked out, the independent states of Southeast Asia gobbled up, China threatened on all sides, and Pacific islands annexed—hemmed Americans in. From the perspective of U.S. strategists these same developments provided potential foes, now possessed of greater mobility and firepower than ever, with bases to launch an attack across the once secure ocean approaches to North America. Fending off this danger required defense in depth—the control of Pacific and Caribbean outposts. These same outposts could also serve as coaling stations and bases of operation if the United States wished to enforce the Monroe Doctrine in Latin America and have a say in the future of a China undergoing a slow-motion collapse.

Finally, empire promised domestic benefits—something for everyone. Empire seemed an answer to the needs of a dynamic economy suffering from bouts

of overproduction that plunged the country into painful economic downswings in the 1870s, in the 1880s, and with special severity in the 1890s. To provide an outlet for the increasing output of American farm and factory, so one popular argument went, the government would have to help open and protect foreign markets. This might mean gaining access to Europe, the richest of the foreign markets. This entailed asserting American interests in regions under colonial pressure where investments were substantial (such as Cuba) or where future prospects seemed bright (China). Industry and trade groups, diplomats, and even missionaries thapsized over the nearly boundless prospects for U.S. products in a gigantic China market but worried about Europeans barring the way. One business journal warned in late 1897 that "we stand at the dividing of the ways between gaining or losing the greatest market which awaits exploitation." Empire promised in addition to promote national unity. Americans were badly divided by the 1890s by the socially disruptive effects of rapid industrialization and urbanization, the disaffection created by gyrations in the economy, the political insurgency in the rural heartland ignited by low farm prices, the reaction against a rising tide of immigrants that made the country work-somely heterogeneous, and the sectional bitterness left over from the Civil War. A single, unifying, stabilizing civic religion that made all Americans agents of progress abroad could help bridge or obscure these divisions.

State-Centered Realism: How a Weak U.S. Government Inhibited America's Rise to World Power

FAREED ZAKARIA

The strong are all the same, [the political scientist] Michael Mandelbaum writes. "They expand. They send their soldiers, ships, and public and private agents abroad. They fight wars, guard borders, and administer territories and people of different languages, customs, and beliefs far from their own capitals. They exert influence on foreigners in a variety of ways. . . . The strong do to others what others cannot do to them." Over the course of history, states that have experienced significant growth in their material resources have relatively soon redefined and expanded their political interests abroad, measured by their increases in military spending, initiation of wars, acquisition of territory, posting of soldiers and diplomats, and participation in great-power decision-making. [The historian] Paul Kennedy concludes that "there is a very clear connection between an individual Great Power's economic rise and fall and its growth and decline as an important military power (or world empire)."

So common was this pattern that European statesmen viewed the state that did not turn its wealth into political influence as an anomaly. In the eighteenth century, they spoke in astonishment and scorn of "the Dutch disease, a malady that prevented a nation enjoying unequalled individual prosperity and commercial prowess from remaining a state of great influence and power." With greater wealth, a country could build a military and diplomatic apparatus capable of fulfilling its aims abroad; but its very aims, its perception of its needs and goals, all tended to expand with rising

resources. As European statesmen raised under the great-power system understood so clearly, capabilities shape intentions.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States was afflicted with the Dutch disease. While America emerged from the Civil War as a powerful industrial state, unquestionably one of the three or four richest nations in the world, its foreign policy was marked by a persistent reluctance to involve itself abroad. Many historians of the period have asked why America expanded in the 1890s. But for the political scientist, viewing the country's power and expansion in comparative perspective, the more puzzling question is why America did not expand more and sooner. The period 1865-1908, particularly before 1890, presents us with many instances in which the country's central decision-makers noticed and considered clear opportunities to expand American influence abroad and rejected them. Certainly, between the time when they get rich and when they acquire expansive political interests abroad, countries often experience a time lag, frequently because policymakers fail to perceive the shift in their country's relative economic position. But America's central decision-makers were well aware of its economic strength and proudly proclaimed it. Nevertheless, the country heaved to a relatively isolationist line, with few exceptions, until the 1890s—a highly unusual gap between power and interests, for it lasted some thirty years. The United States would thus seem to represent an exception to the historical record and a challenge to the great-power rule. . . .

The ultimate measure of international influence in the late nineteenth century, a time of colonial competition and imperialism, was political control over foreign lands. Between 1865 and 1890, the United States acquired forsaken Alaska and the tiny Midway Islands and gained basing rights in Samoa. During the same period, Britain and France each acquired over three million square miles of new colonies. The American army was tiny, with an active force of twenty-five thousand in 1890—ranking it fourteenth in the world after Bulgaria, even though by this date the United States was the richest nation in the world. The state of the American navy was so unusual for a country with long coastlines that it was an object of ridicule in Europe. (After touring America in 1890, Oscar Wilde had his "Canterville Ghost" react with surprise when told by an American that her country had "no ruins and no curiosities.") "No ruins! no curiosities!" replied the Ghost; "you have your navy and your manners." The U.S. Navy was the smallest among the major powers, just behind that of Italy, and the Italian army, smallest among the European powers, was still eight times the size of America's. American industrial strength, however, was thirteen times that of Italy.

America's diplomatic apparatus was in even worse shape than its defenses. In all but a few important countries, the United States was represented by honorary ambassadors and ministers. The State Department itself was a tiny affair, housed in a few rooms and run by two assistant secretaries of state, a few junior officers, and a host of clerks. Messages between Washington and most other foreign capitals were few and far between. The United States attended hardly any international conferences, participated in no joint decision-making, and of course brokered no alliances. As a result, America was treated like a second-rank power, on a par with countries that possessed a fraction of its material resources. . . .

Historians have offered various explanations for American inactivity abroad in the second half of the nineteenth century that account for important aspects of

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American behavior. But they often contradict widely accepted propositions regarding foreign policy in general and American foreign policy in particular. For example, some historians argue that America was war-weary in 1865 and therefore uninterested in imperialist ventures. Yet historians often note that nations expand their interests abroad after a war, translating their military strength into political influence, as many European statesmen expected the United States to do in 1865....

The national security approach mirrors the views of some policymakers and explains expansion as a response to potential or existing threats from European powers.... [The scholar] Tony Smith concludes that while economic factors were clearly important, a better explanation for U.S. policy toward Latin America is pre-emptive imperialism, which sets policy "in a region of importance to the United States when a potentially hostile great power might create a sphere of influence for itself there." This approach... fails to appreciate that European behavior was viewed as benign in the 1870s and 1880s, then threatening in the 1890s in large part because the United States began to define its interests more broadly. The real question is why the United States adopted a more expansive definition of its interests and hence its security over that period.

Still other diplomatic historians maintain that domestic factors account for nineteenth-century American isolationism. There the agreement stops: some emphasize the American national character, others internal upheaval that distracted Americans from foreign affairs. But domestic trouble is often used, even by the same historians, to explain expansion as well. Revisionist historians have stressed the primacy of economic motivations in explaining American expansion. The severe recession of 1893 to 1897, one of the worst before the Great Depression, led, they argue, to fears of American "overproduction" and pressure for the acquisition of foreign markets....

If domestic ills like depressions prevented the United States from expanding in the 1860s and 1870s, how could the very same factors have forced it to expand—in a form of "social imperialism"—during the 1890s? This contradiction, common in the literature, underscores the general problem with domestic politics arguments. Clearly, the United States was significantly more active in foreign affairs during the 1890s than in the two decades before. Many of the factors that allegedly explain American inactivity during the first period were just as strong during the second, yet American foreign policy was markedly different. Statesmen in both periods perceived distinct opportunities to expand; some of these resulted in formal attempts at expansion, while others did not. If explanations for nonexpansion in 1865–89 cannot be reversed to explain the expansion of 1890–1908, they must be considered suspect....

In the past two decades, social scientists—primarily in the fields of comparative politics, American politics, and international political economy—have begun to assess the role of the state as an independent actor.... And modest studies have successfully layered a variable concerning the structure and power of the state onto systemic analysis. [The theory of] state-centered realism is an attempt at a marriage between this recently resuscitated tradition and the field of international security.... It recognizes that statesmen encounter not only pressures from the international system but also constraints that are the consequence of state structure, chiefly the degree to which national power can be converted into state power.... Thus state-centered realism predicts that *nations try to expand their political interests abroad when central decision-makers perceive a relative increase in state power*....

The pattern of American foreign policy from the end of the Civil War to the close of Theodore Roosevelt's term as president largely confirms the predictions of state-centered realism: central decision-makers, which in the American case means the president and his closest advisers, expanded American influence abroad when they perceived increases in state power. The decades after the Civil War saw the beginning of a long period of growth in America's material resources. But this national power lay dormant beneath a weak state, one that was decentralized, diffuse, and divided. The presidents and their secretaries of state tried repeatedly to convert the nation's rising power into influence abroad, but they presided over a federal state structure and a tiny bureaucracy that could not get men or money from the state governments or from society at large. The president also had to contend with a state that impaired his ability to translate his administration's preferences into national policy. Congress could, and often did, prevent him from exercising his will. It refused to enact civil service and military reform, and the Senate rejected several annexation projects the executive branch had proposed. During this period, the power of the presidency was at a historic low: Andrew Johnson was impeached for daring to fire his secretary of war without congressional approval. Also, the unprecedented national debt after the Civil War fostered a pervasive sense of national bankruptcy and weakness that exacerbated this tension. America was an unusual great power—a strong nation but a weak state....

William Henry Seward, who served as secretary of state from 1861 until 1869, greatly admired John Quincy Adams. Like Adams, he was a fervent believer in America's manifest destiny who had, as a staunch opponent of slavery, refused to sanction antebellum expansion that would have created slaveholding territories.... Throughout his political career, Seward advocated policies that strengthened the industrial economy, such as large investments in America's transportation infrastructure and the import of cheap foreign labor. He understood that a strong America would be active abroad and that it would annex territory whenever opportunities presented themselves. "All prosperous nations must expand," he argued. "That expansion will be in adjacent regions if practicable; if not it will then be made in those regions however distant, which offer the least resistance...."

Seward's plans for expansion were often cloaked in soaring, imprecise rhetoric. His vague, if uplifting, phrases could not serve as the basis for a coherent foreign policy: what did he mean when he said that "the borders of the federal republic shall be extended so that it shall greet the sun when he touches the tropics, and when he sends his gleaming rays towards the polar circle"? On several occasions, however, and in specific terms, he portrayed as inevitable the annexation of Alaska, Canada, and Mexico. Seward also spoke of the need for island bases in both the Pacific and the Caribbean to project American power abroad and to defend the country's interests. He was so confident of the continued continental growth of the United States that he even devoted serious consideration to the new location for the capital of this far-flung empire, deciding on Mexico City as the most strategically placed site.

If Seward's rhetoric was ambiguous, however, his actions were clear. From 1865 until the end of his term in 1869, Seward led vigorous American efforts to extend the country's borders on all these fronts and more. While not all of his "inquiries" can be deemed serious, he initiated at least some official steps toward expanding American political control in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Mexico, the Danish Islands,

Hawaii, the Danish West Indies, Santo Domingo, Haiti, Culebra, French Guiana, Tiger Island, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and St. Bartholomew. Of these, Alaska was his only success and, along with the unplanned acquisition of the Midway Islands, remained the only extension of American rule abroad for almost twenty years....

[O]ne after another, Seward's various efforts failed, the vast majority for a single dominant reason: constant strife between Congress and the executive branch both over plans for Reconstruction of the South and over more general issues of authority. In the end, Seward had less to fear from the Democrats than from the Republicans, who controlled Congress. In the postwar period, Congress took control of virtually all aspects of national government, opposing almost every proposal—domestic and foreign—put forward by the Johnson administration. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee was headed by Charles Sumner, the fiery abolitionist from Massachusetts, who regarded the executive branch's desire to control foreign policy as a "usurpation" of congressional power....

Seward's repeated failures did not entirely crush the expansionists' hopes, for the election of Ulysses S. Grant in 1868 gave the cause another chance. An "infinite expansionist," Grant had long been in favor of various plans, such as the 1854 Ostend Manifesto, that urged the acquisition of Cuba; and his secretary of state, the patrician Hamilton Fish, was also a strong proponent of American expansion. As the commanding general of what was, at its peak, the largest army in the world, Grant had a keen—perhaps even exaggerated—sense of American power. And given his immense popularity as the hero of the Civil War and Fish's friendship with Charles Sumner, Grant thought he would have less trouble than his predecessor with Congress. But personal friendship and respect could not alter the structural realities of the American government. This period in American history was marked by a "constant campaign" by the Senate "to establish itself as the dominant part of the government," a campaign that eventually succeeded. Against this backdrop of intractable rivalry, Grant's chances of turning his foreign affairs preferences into national policy were slim. He nevertheless made several serious efforts during his term, the most ambitious of which—and the one he tried hardest to achieve—being ratification of the treaty annexing Santo Domingo.

Grant went after Santo Domingo for a simple reason: the opportunity arose, and the costs seemed low.... One historian has listed the president's motives as "glory," "power," and "power." When Congress rejected a proposal in early 1869, supported by then-President Johnson, to establish a protectorate on the island, annexationists in America and Santo Domingo did not give up, and while Fish was not enthusiastic about the idea, Grant found it very appealing. After learning that the president of the Dominican Republic favored annexation and after receiving a positive report on the island from high-ranking naval officers, he sent a longtime aide, General Orville Babcock, there to prepare a report. Babcock did more than that, however: by September he returned to Washington with a protocol for the island's annexation. Grant was thrilled and, after formalizing matters through the consul, decided to present the treaty to the Senate. The key figure he had to persuade was Sumner, and so, on January 2, 1870, the president walked to the Foreign Relations Committee chairman's house on Lafayette Square to inform him of the treaty and to ask for his support....

Emerging from that fateful meeting, Grant believed that Sumner had promised his support. But Sumner vehemently denied the president's claim, and relations

between the two quickly worsened. The administration began to take the necessary steps to strengthen its case. It arranged with the Dominican government for a plebiscite, which showed strong local support for American rule, and Grant, who was increasingly obsessed by the issue, also took the unprecedented step of personally lobbying wavering senators. He argued that the island was rich in natural resources and strategically situated for both American commerce and the navy. But the administration soon realized that it lacked the two-thirds of the Senate required for ratification. The treaty's supporters let it lapse unconsidered on March 29, allowing Grant more time to lobby for his cause—which he did vigorously, making patronage appointments to satisfy the demands of borderline senators and modifying the new treaty to accommodate their concerns. But all of Grant's efforts were to no avail. Sumner was dead set against the project, and many Republicans broke with the president and followed Sumner's lead. On June 30, 1870, the treaty was defeated 28 to 28, with 16 absentions.

Senators cited three chief reasons for the treaty's defeat: the financial costs of annexation, the problems of assimilating a nonwhite populace, and the executive branch's improper unilateral attempts to initiate foreign policy. But the last was clearly the most critical. One of the shrewdest journalists in the country, E. L. Godkin, explained that the Senate's chief motive was the desire to preserve its newly acquired paramount role in government and "to gratify on every possible occasion its mania for humiliating the President and guiding the lower House."...

The administration of Rutherford B. Hayes (1877–81) represented the nadir of American state power and hence the low point of the expansion of American influence; some historians have called it the "dead center" of late-nineteenth-century American foreign policy. Hayes was elevated to the White House without the legitimacy that a clear-cut electoral victory would have bestowed, a fact that congressional Democrats never forgot, and his tenure was marked by severe gridlock. With one exception, Hayes and Secretary of State William Evarts did not even consider involving the United States in international events....

The one exception to this pattern of inactivity involved Samoa. In 1877 a tribal chief from Samoa journeyed to Washington to seek American annexation or at least protection of his island. He met with Frederick Seward, ... assistant secretary of state ... [who had long been] frustrated by the inability of the American government to fulfill his father's vision. Seward was delighted at this opportunity and, recognizing that Congress would simply dismiss either of the chief's preferred options, negotiated a treaty in which the United States would acquire a naval and coaling station at Pago Pago in return for Washington's "good offices" in the event of trouble between Samoa and any other nation. Strangely, the Senate approved the treaty unanimously in executive session, leaving no rationale on record to explain why, after rejecting a virtually identical treaty just six years earlier, it moved so quickly now. Even after the Senate ratified the treaty, however, the House of Representatives refused to allot any funds to build a coal yard at Pago Pago.

The Hayes administration marked a watershed in late-nineteenth-century American foreign policy. With its close, several powerful constraints on state power loosened, and the direction of foreign policy shifted slowly but discernibly. The minor opportunity was that for a period of two years (1881–83), the House of Representatives moved back into the hands of the Republican Party. The more important change

regarded the most fungible source of power: money. By the early 1880s, American statesmen realized that, despite several tax cuts, the Treasury was still yielding surpluses, year after year. In 1880 the surplus passed \$100 million. They could have reduced tariffs, thereby eliminating most of the surplus, but strong domestic constituencies—many of them Republican—favored protecting indigenous industries. Politicians searched for issues that the federal government could spend money on—"surplus financing" in the words of its critics. Concerns over the national debt and fears of large government expenditures persisted among Democrats, but the large recurring surplus gradually altered even their views on government spending. As the decade wore on, Congress abandoned the assumption that the government could not afford to spend money outside of bare necessities, and it grew receptive to increased spending in certain areas, particularly the U.S. Navy. These surpluses combined with the professionalization of the bureaucracy and a less divided government to result in the rise of "the new navy."

The 1880s and 1890s mark the beginnings of the modern American state, which emerged primarily to cope with the domestic pressures generated by industrialization. The exigencies of the growing national economy and the collapse of the congressional bid for supremacy gave the federal government a more centralized, less political, and rational structure. And as the only nationally elected officer of government, the president emerged with strengthened authority. This transformation of state structure complemented the continuing growth of national power, and by the mid-1890s the executive branch was able to bypass Congress or coerce it into expanding American interests abroad. America's resounding victory in the Spanish-American War crystallized the perceptions of increasing American power both at home and abroad. In keeping with the work of the political scientist Robert Jervis and Aaron Friedberg, this study confirms that statesmen's perceptions of national power shift suddenly, rather than incrementally, and are shaped more by crises and galvanizing events like wars than by statistical measures. Having defeated a European great power in battle, America expanded dramatically in the years that followed, and several goals that had been under contemplation for decades—the annexation of Hawaii and Samoa, for example—became reality within months. At the moment of its greatest strength and security, having driven Spain out of the Western Hemisphere and with only an accommodating Britain as a European presence in the Americas, the United States chose to fill the resulting vacuum by expanding its influence. Because of its now-recognized status as a great power, actual threats to American security decreased from then on, and this greater security bred greater activism and expansionism. When confronted by real threats, as it occasionally was, both before and after 1898, the United States usually opted to contract its interests rather than expand to counter the enemy....

With the birth of the modern presidency under William McKinley came a symbiotic relationship between national executive power and foreign policy activism that has continued throughout the twentieth century. Theodore Roosevelt exploited the powers McKinley created and developed new ones as well, such as the routine use of executive agreements instead of treaties. The Progressive era further strengthened the American state—again primarily for domestic reasons—and the great beneficiaries of this new authority were the national government and the president. Long

believer in congressional government, Woodrow Wilson became a particularly expansionist and unilateralist chief executive in matters of foreign policy....

During the late nineteenth century and the Progressive era that followed, the American state grew primarily in response to pressures generated by industrialization. In contrast to the European states, which developed largely to cope with external pressures, the American state came to the fore during a period that lacked external pressures, and the documentary record reflects no clear link between internal pressures and the building of the American state. The two wars at either end of the period under study—the Civil War and the Spanish-American War—left only slight impressions on the American state.... National power can be converted into international influence, but the state first requires the mechanisms and institutions that make this conversion possible.

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