

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

America Eyes Hawaii

"The Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it." John Stevens, U.S. minister to Hawaii, was not talking about fruit when he sent this note to the Secretary of State in 1893. He was talking about the United States taking over the Hawaiian Islands—along with their rich fields of sugar cane and pineapples. And Stevens did more than just talk. He ordered the United States Marines to aid in a revolt against the queen of Hawaii.

Five years later, the Senate finally agreed to annex Hawaii. The "Hawaiian pear" became part of the United States.

◀ A Hawaiian plantation worker harvests pineapples.

The Roots of Imperialism

Objectives

- Identify the key factors that prodded America to expand.
- Explain how the United States took its first steps toward increased global power.
- Summarize the chain of events leading up to the U.S. annexation of Hawaii.

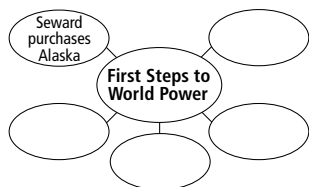
Terms and People

imperialism
extractive economy
Alfred T. Mahan
Social Darwinism

Frederick J. Turner
Matthew Perry
Queen Liliuokalani

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas As you read, fill in a concept web like the one below with the key events that marked America's first steps toward world power.



Why It Matters For most of its early history, America played a small role in world affairs. But in the late 1800s, this began to change. With leading spokesmen calling for the United States to join the ranks of the world's major powers, the United States began to acquire influence and territories outside its continental borders. The United States was abandoning isolationism and emerging as a new power on the global stage. **Section Focus Question: How and why did the United States take a more active role in world affairs?**

The Causes of Imperialism

During the Age of Imperialism, from the mid-1800s through the early 1900s, powerful nations engaged in a mad dash to extend their influence across much of the world. European nations added to colonies they had established during the Age of Exploration by acquiring new colonies in Africa and Asia. Following European success, Japan and the United States also began to consider the benefits of **imperialism**, the policy by which strong nations extend their political, military, and economic control over weaker territories.

Imperialists Seek Economic Benefits One reason for the rush to grab colonies was the desire for raw materials and natural resources. This was especially true for European nations and Japan. They sought colonies to provide tea, rubber, iron, petroleum, and other materials for their industries at home. These colonial economies were examples of **extractive economies**. The imperial country extracted, or removed, raw materials from the colony and

shipped them to the home country. Possession of colonies gave nations an edge in the competition for global resources. In contrast to other world powers, the resource-rich United States had fewer concerns about shortages of raw materials in the nineteenth century.

For Americans, the problem was not a shortage of materials, but a surplus of goods. The booming U.S. economy of the late 1800s was producing more goods than Americans could consume. Farmers complained that excess production resulted in declining crop prices and profits. Industrialists urged expanding trade into new overseas markets where American commodities could be sold. Otherwise, they warned, American factories would close and unemployment would rise. Senator Albert J. Beveridge, a Progressive and friend of Theodore Roosevelt, explained why the United States needed to become a world power:

Primary Source

“Today we are raising more [crops] than we can consume. Today we are making more than we can use. . . . Therefore we must find new markets for our produce, new occupation for our capital, new work for our labor.”

—Senator Albert J. Beveridge, “The March of the Flag,” 1898

Imperialists Stress Military Strength To expand and protect their interests around the world, imperialist nations built up their military strength. **Alfred T. Mahan**, a military historian and an officer in the United States Navy, played a key role in transforming America into a naval power. In *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, Mahan asserted that since ancient times, many great nations had owed their greatness to powerful navies. He called upon America to build a modern fleet. Mahan also argued that the United States would need to acquire foreign bases where American ships could refuel and gather fresh supplies. Influenced by the ideas of Mahan and others, the United States expanded and modernized its navy by building new steel-plated, steam-powered battleships such as the USS *Maine*. By 1900, the United States had the third largest navy in the world.

Vocabulary Builder

commodity—(kuh MAHD uh tee)
n. anything bought or sold; any article of commerce

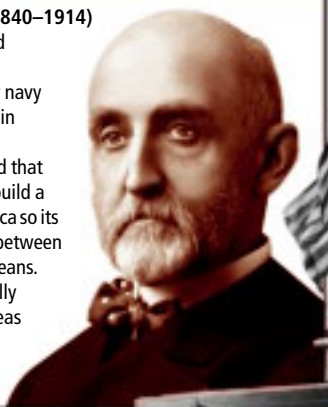
A Strong Navy

Prominent imperialists like Alfred T. Mahan called for a strong American navy to protect U.S. interests overseas. *How could a strong navy benefit American exporters?*

HISTORY MAKERS

Alfred T. Mahan (1840–1914)

Mahan, a naval officer and historian, urged American leaders to build a stronger navy and to obtain naval bases in Cuba, Hawaii, and the Philippines. He also argued that the United States should build a canal across Central America so its ships could move quickly between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. American leaders eventually adopted all of Mahan's ideas to bolster the power of the United States Navy.



Imperialists Believe in National Superiority Imperialists around the world used ideas of racial, national, and cultural superiority to justify imperialism. One of these ideas was **Social Darwinism**, the belief that life consists of competitive struggles in which only the fittest survive. Social Darwinists felt that certain nations and races were superior to others and therefore were destined to rule over inferior peoples and cultures. Prominent Americans worried that if the United States remained isolated while European nations gobbled up the rest of the world, America would not survive.

One reason that these Americans embraced Social Darwinism was that they had long believed that God had granted them the right and responsibility to settle the frontier. They spoke of America's "Manifest Destiny" to expand all the way to the Pacific Ocean. In a best-selling work titled *Our Country*, Josiah Strong picked up on this theme. A religious missionary, Strong argued that Americans had a responsibility to spread their Western values. "God is training the Anglo-Saxon race," he asserted, "for its mission [to civilize] weaker races." American missionaries who shared Strong's belief journeyed to foreign lands to gain converts to Christianity.

In *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, historian **Frederick Jackson Turner** noted that the frontier had been closed by gradual settlement in the nineteenth century. Throughout American history, he continued, the frontier had traditionally supplied an arena where ambitious Americans could pursue their fortunes and secure a fresh start. It had thus served as a "safety valve," siphoning off potential discontent. Now that America had spanned the continent, advocates of Turner's thesis urged overseas expansion as a way to keep the "safety valve" open and avoid internal conflict.

 **Checkpoint** What factors influenced Americans to play a more active role in the world?

America's First Steps Toward World Power

Beginning in the mid-1800s, with little fanfare, America focused more and more on expanding its trade and acquiring new territories. One of America's first moves toward world power came before the Civil War.

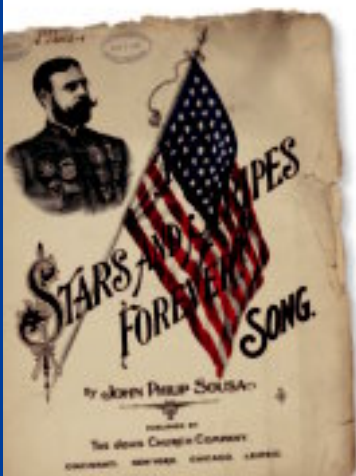
U.S. Power Grows in the Pacific In 1853, Commodore **Matthew Perry** sailed a fleet of American warships into present-day Tokyo Bay, Japan. Prior to Perry's arrival, Japan had denied the rest of the world access to its ports. In fact, because most Japanese people had never seen steamships before, they thought the ships in Perry's fleet were "giant dragons puffing smoke." Perry cleverly won the Japanese emperor's favor by showering him with lavish gifts. Japanese leaders also realized that by closing off their nation to the outside world, they had fallen behind in military technology. Within a year, Perry negotiated a treaty that opened Japan to trade with America.

Perry's journey set a precedent for further expansion across the Pacific Ocean. In 1867, the United States took possession of the Midway Islands. Treaties in 1875 and 1887 increased trade with the Hawaiian Islands and gave the United States the right to build a naval base at Pearl Harbor.

Seward Purchases Alaska In 1867, Secretary of State William Seward bought Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million. Journalists scoffed at the purchase and referred to Alaska as "Seward's Folly" and "Seward's Icebox." They wondered why the United States would want a vast tundra of snow and ice 1,000 miles north

Nationalism Fuels Pursuit of Empire

In the late nineteenth century, patriotic songs by composers such as John Philip Sousa reinforced Americans' widespread belief in the national superiority of the United States. *How did nationalism contribute to the rise of American imperialism?*



Causes of Imperialism

Quick Study

Economic gain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrialists want raw materials for industries in their home countries. Entrepreneurs want to sell their goods and invest in new overseas markets.
Militarism	Colonial powers seek bases for naval forces that protect their global trade networks.
Nationalism and Social Darwinism	Imperialists feel a moral duty to spread their culture to peoples they consider inferior.

U.S. Acquisitions in the Pacific

Geography Interactive

For: Interactive map
Web Code: nep-0502



Map Skills Between 1853 and 1898, the United States opened Japan to American trade and gained valuable possessions across the Pacific Ocean.

1. Locate: (a) Japan, (b) Alaska, (c) Hawaiian Islands

2. Place Which islands lie about halfway between the United States and Japan?

3. Analyze Why were the Hawaiian Islands important to U.S. naval and merchant ships?



Engraving of Matthew Perry on an animal tusk

of its border. But Seward's purchase almost doubled the country's size, and the "ice-box" turned out to be rich in timber, oil, and other natural resources. Alaska also greatly expanded America's reach across the Pacific. Scholars today see Seward's purchase as a key milestone on America's road to power.

U.S. Influence in Latin America Grows U.S. businessmen saw Latin America as a natural place to expand their trade and investments. Secretary of State James Blaine helped them by sponsoring the First International Pan-American Conference in 1889. Blaine preached the benefits of economic cooperation to delegates of 17 Latin American countries. The conference also paved the way for the construction of the Pan-American Highway system, which linked the United States to Central and South America.

In 1895, tensions rose between America and Great Britain because of a border dispute between British Guiana and Venezuela. Claiming that Britain was violating the Monroe Doctrine, President Cleveland threatened U.S. intervention. After some international saber-rattling, the British accepted a growing U.S. sphere of influence in Latin America. Relations between Britain and the United States soon improved.

Checkpoint Why did journalists criticize Seward for his purchase of Alaska?

The United States Acquires Hawaii

The Hawaiian Islands had been economically linked to the United States for almost a century. Since the 1790s, American merchant ships had stopped at Hawaii on their way to East Asia. Missionaries had established Christian churches and schools on the islands. Americans had also established sugar cane

plantations there. In 1887, American planters convinced King Kalakaua (kah LAH kah oo ah) to amend Hawaii's constitution so that voting rights were limited to only wealthy landowners, who were, of course, the white planters.


American Planters Increase Their Power In the early 1890s, American planters in Hawaii faced two crises. First, a new U.S. tariff law imposed duties on previously duty-free Hawaiian sugar. This made Hawaiian sugar more expensive than sugar produced in the United States. The sugar-growers in Hawaii therefore feared that they would suffer decreasing sales and profits.

The other problem was that in 1891, Kalakaua died and his sister Liliuokalani (lih lee oo oh kah LAH nee) was his successor. A determined Hawaiian nationalist, **Queen Liliuokalani** resented the increasing power of the white planters, who owned much of the Hawaiian land. She abolished the constitution that had given political power to the white minority.

With the backing of U.S. officials, the American planters responded quickly and forcefully. In 1893, they overthrew the queen. John Stevens, U.S. minister to Hawaii, ordered United States Marines to help the rebels seize power. The new government, led by wealthy planter Sanford B. Dole, asked President Benjamin Harrison to annex Hawaii into the United States.

The United States Annexes Hawaii President Harrison signed the treaty of annexation but could not get the required Senate approval before Grover Cleveland became President. Cleveland ordered a full investigation, which revealed that the majority of the Hawaiian people did not approve of the treaty. Cleveland refused to sign the agreement and apologized for the “flagrant wrong” done by the “reprehensible conduct of the American minister.”

However, American sentiment for annexation remained strong, especially on the West Coast, where California business interests had close ties with the planters in Hawaii. In 1897, a new President entered the White House. William McKinley's administration favored annexation, and in 1898, after the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Congress proclaimed Hawaii an official U.S. territory.

 **Checkpoint** How did American planters react to Queen Liliuokalani's actions when she gained power?

Vocabulary Builder

successor—(suhk SEHS uhr) *n.* person or thing that succeeds, or follows, another

SECTION 1 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nea-0504

Comprehension

- 1. Terms and People** For each person listed below, write a sentence explaining his or her significance to American imperialism.
 - Alfred T. Mahan
 - Frederick J. Turner
 - Matthew Perry
 - Queen Liliuokalani

- 2. NoteTaking Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas** Use your concept web to answer the Section Focus Question: How and why did the United States take a more active role in world affairs?

Writing About History

- 3. Quick Write: Choose a Topic** To write a narrative essay, start by choosing a topic. Suppose that you want to write a narrative from the perspective of the American imperialist Alfred T. Mahan. Make a list of topics that interest you, such as the construction of new battleships for the United States Navy or an account of a U.S. exploration for unclaimed territory in the Pacific Ocean. You may want to do research in books and on the Internet before you decide on a topic.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Evaluate Information** Which of the motives for American imperialism do you think was the most important? Why?
- 5. Compare Points of View** How did public opinion about the purchase of Alaska in 1867 differ from the view of historians today?
- 6. Make Decisions** If you had been President in 1894, would you have supported or opposed the annexation of Hawaii? Give reasons for your answer.