



and exploited. Electricity powered more and more of the country. The efficiency of agriculture, mining, textile manufacture, and steel production dramatically improved, creating new wealth across the country. **Infrastructure** networks multiplied throughout the land led by another wave of railway construction moving raw materials, finished goods and even consumers across all regions of the United States. New business models and financial vehicles accelerated the already dizzying pace of expansion. Terms like **vertical and horizontal integration** began to appear and monopolies, trusts and corporations became powerful archetypes of business organization. Money, legislation, and land from state and federal governments lubricated the entire process and iconic businessmen such as Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie, and Mellon arose as commanding figures in American society.

Such expansion must necessarily be accompanied by some dislocation. Rapid urbanization created poor living conditions in areas of many US cities. Workers toiled under poor working conditions, long hours, low wages and no job security. In response, workers began to organize into unions large and small, local and national. With this organization came conflict with those whose profits depended on the status quo. Strikes, demonstrations and riots dotted this period in all major industries from mining, to railways to the steel industry. New political alternatives such as socialism, Marxism and anarchism surfaced in response to worker exploitation.

It is against this backdrop of rapid economic and social change that the United States embarked on an increasingly expansionist foreign policy both within the Americas and around the world. Although this expansion coincided with another wave of European imperialism and shared many motives and elements with it, it was also distinct in its manifestation. It is to this expansion that we now turn.

**Infrastructure** is those sectors of the economy that assist in the production and distribution of raw materials, labor and goods. Infrastructure includes such things as railroads, telegraphs, roadways, canals, and shipping.

**Vertical integration** exists when a number of steps in the production of a single product are owned or controlled by a single company.

**Horizontal integration** exists when a single company owns or controls a number of firms in the same stage of production of a single product.

### Discussion point

Canada and Latin American countries were developing resource-based economies during this period. How did the Long Depression affect this development? How did these effects compare with those in the United States?

## Ideological reasons for US expansion

### Monroe Doctrine

By the 1820s, the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas had been replaced by nascent, and largely unstable independent states—states, the legitimacy of which, the United States unilaterally recognized in 1822. The Monroe Doctrine, however, was a product of the situation in Europe as much as it was reflective of the situation in Latin America. In the years following the Congress of Vienna, which rebuilt Europe following the Napoleonic Wars, Russia emerged as a dominant continental force, a European power with definite interests on the North American continent. Ideologically, much of the system set up at Vienna and after was designed to disempower nationalist independence movements of the very kind that were so recently triumphant in Latin America. In such a situation it was easy to conceive of situations in which European powers might feel the need to intervene in the western hemisphere.

### Presidents of the United States, 1880–1929

President	Political Party	Years
Rutherford B. Hayes	Republican	1877–81
James Garfield	Republican	1881
Chester Arthur	Republican	1881–85
Grover Cleveland	Democratic	1885–89
Benjamin Harrison	Republican	1889–93
Grover Cleveland	Democratic	1893–97
William McKinley	Republican	1897–1901
Theodore Roosevelt	Republican	1901–09
William Taft	Republican	1909–13
Woodrow Wilson	Democratic	1913–21
Warren Harding	Republican	1921–23
Calvin Coolidge	Republican	1923–29
Herbert Hoover	Republican	1929–33



### 3 • The emergence of the Americas in global affairs, 1880–1929

With this in mind, President Monroe with his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, sent a note to congress outlining what would later become known as the Monroe Doctrine. This doctrine would raise its head throughout the rest of the century, in Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba. Early in the 20th century, President Theodore Roosevelt would expand on the doctrine in what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary. He added to the essentially defensive nature of Monroe's original idea the view that the United States had the right to intervene to manage the independent states of the western hemisphere.

## Manifest destiny in the post-Reconstruction period

First coined in the 1840s as a justification for the **annexation** of Texas, "Manifest Destiny" came to mean different things to different people throughout the rest of the 19th Century. At its simplest it was the belief that it was the inevitable mission of the United States to expand beyond its 1840s boundaries and to eventually stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The popularizer of the phrase, John L. Sullivan, took as its evidence the population growth to that point (1845) and used terms like "natural law" and "natural flow of events" and "the spontaneous working of principles." It fit well with other emerging, often equally as malleable ideas, such as American Exceptionalism and Continentalism. With such a broad concept it is not hard to understand that it could be molded to any number of specific worldviews—geographic, racial, economic, religious, practical, or social Darwinian. Although the convulsions of the civil war meant that notions of Manifest Destiny were consumed with more pressing internal issues, it would again emerge in the post-Reconstruction period when the US began again to look beyond its borders.

## Expansion as moral duty

We can see two broad impulses to US expansion that developed in the last half of the 19th century. The first has sometimes been broadly characterized as a moral justification and motive for an expanded hegemony of the United States. From 1859, this argument drew increasing energy from the spread of Darwin's powerful ideas. Although Charles Darwin had really only discussed the evolution by means of natural selection of animals in his *Origin of Species* (1859), it did not take long for thinkers from all over Europe and North America to apply this concept to all manner of social constructions, from business to human society, in which the United States saw itself taking a leadership role. Emblematic of the growing popularity of a Darwinian approach to social issues was the growing influence of the British philosopher Herbert Spencer. Spencer, who coined the phrase "survival of the fittest", conceived of society as evolving from a state of undifferentiated homogeneity to one of highly differentiated heterogeneity as exemplified in the modern industrial state driven by relatively unfettered individualism. This became a notion popular with the growing class of US industrialists who sponsored Spencer's tour of the United States in 1882. Spencer

### Discussion point

What interests might France, Russia and Great Britain have in Latin America? How realistic were the fears of the United States?

**Annexation** is the process of attaching territory to an existing country, nation or state that it had not hitherto belonged.

### Discussion point

While the Monroe Doctrine might have initially been defensive in nature for the United States, how would it have been perceived by the newly independent countries of Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela?

### Discussion point

Darwin's idea referred primarily to biological development. How have these ideas been modified to fit other aspects of society?



seemed to hold out a philosophical if not scientific justification for the continued growth of the United States' industrial economy and therefore the United States itself.

The ideas of Spencer and Darwin and later Francis Galton—the father of the eugenics movement—spread around the world. As Jürgen Buchenau has pointed out, Latin American leaders who read these philosophers developed a view of society as evolving from simple to complex, following the European model. Buchenau goes on to argue that this is reflected in the massive amounts of European migration to Latin America at the end of the 19th century. This migration was encouraged by these leaders to increase the influence of European values and institutions on their “evolving” countries.

In Canada, one of Spencer's chief advocates was historian and journalist Goldwin Smith. Spencer's ideas led Smith to the conclusion that the new country of Canada was not economically developed enough to be viable in the context of the late 19th century. To Smith the only logical solution was to join Canada and the United States.

The ideas of Spencer and Darwin found a supporter in the writings of US historian John Fiske. Fiske's writings and lectures in the 1880s emphasized the evolutionary superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race as evidenced in its population growth, geographic influence and economic strength. He envisioned a day when the world would resemble the United States in institutions, language and religion. Although he stopped short of calling for anything like a crusade of annexation and military expansion, he certainly helped develop an intellectual foundation for US expansion as “natural.”

Fiske's position was given a more racial and religious tone by the clergyman Josiah Strong. In his book *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* he posited the Anglo-Saxon race, especially as it had developed in the United States, as destined to dominate the globe. In many ways he saw such domination by what he believed to be a superior race as a duty. According to Strong, the combination of liberal democracy and Christianity as expressed in the United States was the chief means by which the world would progress and the vehicle of this progress was to be imperialist expansion—US expansion.

John Burgess, a political scientist from Columbia University argued in *Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law* (1890) that it was the Teutonic races that had the greatest innate ability to create the modern nation-state and those who resisted the progress toward such states were justly subjugated. Among the most notable of Burgess's students was one who would have the power to act directly on the foreign policy implications of Burgess's ideas—Theodore Roosevelt.

Of course these sentiments were not confined to the United States. European powers were busy parceling out portions of Africa and other territories throughout this period and they too looked to racist theories for justification. Notions of the superiority of the “white races” and its attendant responsibilities appear in the arguments of German, French and British imperialists throughout this period. Perhaps one of the

### Discussion point



How “Christian” was the United States at the end of the 19th century?

What other religious traditions existed in the US during this period?

### Discussion point



How valid is the concept of “race”?

Does it have a basis in biology? How has the term “race” been used throughout the 19th and 20th centuries? How is the term “race” used in society today?



### 3 • The emergence of the Americas in global affairs, 1880–1929

most famous of these justifications came not in a scholarly work, but rather a popular poem by Rudyard Kipling that leant its title to many published in 1899 and directed at the Philippines annexation debate, "The White Man's Burden" expressed what many had been arguing in various forms for the previous two decades.

## Expansion as practical necessity

While vague notions of duty, destiny and race may have inspired the imperial visions of some in the United States, others were more practical in their outlook. This realist approach to US expansion took as its starting point the rapid population, economic, and geographic expansion of the United States in the last half of the century and then looked to what it would take to protect this and ensure further growth. Such concerns naturally revolved around military and economic might.

Foremost among these "realists" was Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan was the president of the United States Naval War College whose lectures, magazine articles and books such as *Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660–1783* (1890), popularized the thesis that it was maritime trade and the tools of this trade, ships both merchant and military, that brought national greatness. To Mahan, it further meant secure supplies of coal for these ships be readily available at ports around the world. It also meant control of any advantageous waterways, natural and man-made. In this he was primarily looking to any future canal cutting across the Isthmus of Panama and islands that could potentially protect the approaches to this future waterway. Mahan's thesis found avid readers around the world, perhaps most notably in Berlin. His book was a major influence on Kaiser Wilhelm's decision to embark on a major naval building program that would have such far-reaching consequences. Closer to home his work also found an audience in the likes of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge.

## Economic reasons for expansion

There was a growing economic imperative to national expansion at the end of the 19th century. But even those who saw in expansion a more divine or moral mission, men such as the Protestant clergyman and author Josiah Strong, saw the expansion of the Anglo-Saxon race as inextricably linked to the expansion of its institutions and economic system.

We have already discussed the context of domestic economic expansion in the 1880s. The leaders of this expansion also sought markets beyond North America. Despite the fact that a great deal of European capital was still flowing into the United States, US oil and

*Take up the White Man's burden,  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child.*

From "The White Man's Burden,"  
Rudyard Kipling, 1899.

## Activity

### Social Darwinism in action

So influential were the ideas of Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton that many of their ideas found their way into legislation and the press throughout the Americas. Examples included eugenics legislation in Canada and immigration policies throughout the region. Conduct some research and complete the following chart.

Country	Social Darwinian idea	Example
Uruguay		
Argentina		
Brazil		
Canada		
United States		



steel companies sought new markets and resources around the globe, and in so doing came into competition with other economic powers such as the Great Britain and Germany. Other US companies such as Dupont, Colt and Singer also explored foreign markets with their manufactured goods. The depression that hit the world after 1873 meant that businesses, regardless of nationality, had to work that much harder to maintain profits. The move to the **gold standard** by most industrializing powers by the 1870s also placed downward pressure on prices until new gold deposits were discovered at the end of the century. On the other hand, the convertibility that the gold standard provided greased the wheels of international trade by making most currencies easily exchangeable through convertibility into gold. Although the United States had a massive domestic market, importing far less than it consumed domestically, there was a growing sense that by the 1890s, the United States economy was destined to produce more than could be consumed by existing markets, domestic and foreign, and thus these markets had to expand.

Another depression gripped the United States in 1893, bringing with it a sense of social and economic dislocation the solution to which seemed to some the expansion of the United States itself. The Historian Richard Hofstadter contends that the depression affected the country like never before. The depression was radicalizing the working class and this seemed to pose a dangerous threat to what the middle class perceived as the established economic order. Having stretched the republic from sea to sea, there appeared no obvious opportunities to funnel this discontent into North American expansion, as had been the case in the past. Despite the depression, the flow of immigrants continued unabated, as did the growth of urban centers. To Hofstadter, one of the prime expressions of this mood was national self-assertion and aggression.

## Political reasons for expansion

In some cases of US foreign expansion in the second half of the 19th century, policy and official action seemed hard-pressed to keep pace with the actions of its citizens and officials abroad. In the case of the Samoan Islands, US merchant ships had used the island increasingly as a coaling station for Pacific trade, a trade that had quickened since the transcontinental railroad opened up the Pacific coast to the goods of the US interior. The strategic importance of the islands was not lost on the US navy, which contemplated a naval base at Pago Pago in the 1870s. Despite Congress's rejection of a formal treaty with Samoa at that time, US commercial interests continued and by the end of the decade a treaty established a formal relationship between the Samoans and the United States. Britain and Germany also recognizing the importance of the islands were not

The **gold standard** is a monetary policy in which currency is readily convertible to gold. The gold standard requires that a country's supply of currency be tied to its supply of gold.

## Activity

### Data analysis

#### United States Economic Expansion, 1865–1898

Wheat	256%
Corn	222%
Sugar	460%
Coal	800%
Steel Rails	523%

**Source:** Kennedy, Paul. 1988. *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. London: Fontana Press p. 312.

Research economic growth in two other countries in the region. How do these numbers compare to those in the United States? What are some reasons for the differences? Who was consuming these goods? Were they exported or consumed within the country? What are the implications for export versus import-reliant economies?



### 3 • The emergence of the Americas in global affairs, 1880–1929

about to allow the US a free hand and after some tense encounters agreed to a three-way **protectorate** over the islands. The threat posed by Germany and Britain elicited a great deal of posturing and bellicose rhetoric from politicians and newspapers across the country. By 1899, this arrangement became a two-way split of the islands between Germany and the United States.

Just as the Samoan Islands were an important mid-ocean link between the United States and the South Pacific, the Hawaiian Islands grew into an important way station in the growing China trade. Missionaries, merchants, and sailors settled in the islands throughout the mid century. As the non-native population increased, stories of the islands' commercial potential reached the United States and sugar plantations soon followed providing some evidence for Strong's claim in 1885 that "commerce follows the missionary." And then followed the military. To the growing US navy, Pearl Harbor in the islands seemed to provide an easily defended natural harbor from which it could protect US trade interests.

Hawaii's sugar trade with the United States provided at once a reason and a method by which the US could exert more influence on the islands. In 1875, the United States dropped all tariffs on Hawaiian sugar and guaranteed against any third party influence in its affairs, thus making the Hawaiian Islands a protectorate of the US in all but name. By 1887, the US navy had the use of Pearl Harbor.

The US commercial presence in the islands grew steadily. Fruit and sugar plantations made up the bulk of these enterprises with the United States as their sole destination. When a representative from Ohio named William McKinley introduced a tariff bill that was passed into law in 1890, Hawaiian sugar interests fell through the cracks. While the McKinley Tariff as it became known drastically increased the tariffs on foreign-produced goods it also paid subsidies to US sugar producers. All at once Hawaiian sugar was subject to the tariffs, but ineligible for the subsidy.

Fearing economic ruin, US citizens in the islands took matters into their own hands and overthrew the young Hawaiian queen Liliuokalani early in 1893. Those involved immediately petitioned

A **protectorate** is a territory that is nominally independent but under the official military and diplomatic protection of another country.

#### Discussion point



#### What is a protectorate?

- How does it differ from a colony?
- For the protectorate?
- For the protecting country?
- What were the benefits of this situation for the Hawaiians?
- What were the benefits for the United States?

#### Activity

##### To expand or not

For each of the following groups, write a paragraph taking and defending a position on the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands in 1893.

- Josiah Strong
- Alfred Mahan
- A San Francisco merchant
- A US naval officer
- A US clergyman
- The British Ambassador to the United States
- A US sugar producer



the United States government for annexation—to bring them within the McKinley Tariff wall. The request caught the government and the voting public in the US by surprise. Now they had to confront the reality of the theories of Strong, Burgess, Fiske and Mahan. Did the US really want to be an imperial power?

The immediate answer to this question was ... not right now. The new president, Cleveland, may have been moderately in favor of annexation; he was enough of a politician to understand that the people of the United States and the politicians that represented them, and upon whom he would depend to pass legislation, were split on the issue. He sent a fact-finding mission to the islands and found that the so-called “revolution” was engineered by US business interests in the islands and had little native support. Nevertheless, the provisional government put in place would not be dissuaded and Cleveland was in the unenviable position of having to depose the revolutionaries with force or to find some sort of intermediate status for Hawaii. He chose the latter. It proved only a temporary reprieve for the anti-annexationists. By the time William McKinley had taken office as President of the United States in 1897 the global context had changed considerably and by joint resolution of Congress the US annexed Hawaii in 1898.

## Venezuela

The Monroe Doctrine would again emerge as a vital US policy in the mid 1890s when a boundary dispute re-erupted between Great Britain and Venezuela. Gold had been discovered in the border region between Venezuela and British Guiana and this raised the stakes considerably. The relative merits of the gold standard and the free coinage of silver had been building as an important issue, both with politicians and the public for some years. Cleveland and other supporters of the gold standard saw in this discovery a possible source of new gold that could take out some of the fight of the free silver agitators.

Cleveland, on the whole a conservative when it came to matters of foreign policy, was torn between those in Congress, state legislatures and the press who called for a strong response to what was perceived as high-handed British interference in the US sphere of influence and his own beliefs on foreign policy. After studying the somewhat limited information available to him, Cleveland came to the conclusion that the former was indeed the case and advocated for arbitration of the dispute by a third party sending a note saying as much to the British Foreign Ministry. In a letter drafted by his aggressive Secretary of State, Richard Olney, Cleveland reasserted the Monroe Doctrine as he interpreted it applying to the Venezuelan situation. The note also made veiled threats of more aggressive action should the British not heed the US demand for arbitration. The reply from Lord Salisbury was straightforward. Britain would not submit the matter to arbitration and the Monroe Doctrine did not apply nor was it a recognized element of international law.

### Discussion point



How had the international situation changed between 1893 and 1898?

What significant foreign events may have affected US foreign policy toward Hawaii? How might these have affected the United States' attitude toward imperial expansion?



### 3 • The emergence of the Americas in global affairs, 1880–1929

When Cleveland's response to the British rebuff came before Congress in December 1895, its bellicose tone and language startled the British and energized **jingoists** in Congress and the press. After a period of negotiation, the US and Britain agreed on an arbitration treaty and eventually the terms of the arbitration itself. On the surface, the aggressive sabre-rattling of Cleveland and Olney seemed to bear fruit. He had reclaimed for himself and the Democratic Party the status of defender of US interests from their Republican Party critics such as Theodore Roosevelt. Further, the Monroe Doctrine seemed to be alive and well as the century drew to a close.

**Jingoism** is an expression of extreme nationalist or parochial sentiment. It can also manifest itself in an aggressive foreign policy.

## Activity

### The gold standard

Research the issue of the gold standard at the end of the 19th century.

- 1 How was coinage minted in the United States prior to the 1890s?
- 2 Describe how the gold standard worked in the international economic system of the 1890s.
- 3 Which countries in the world benefited from the gold standard? Which countries were put at a disadvantage by the gold standard? Why was this?
- 4 What are the advantages and disadvantages of a country adopting the gold standard as a basis for its monetary system?
- 5 How was this issue resolved in the United States?

Read the following excerpt from a speech by William Jennings Bryan delivered in 1896. Bryan was the Democratic presidential nominee and a supporter of the free coinage of silver.

We say to you that you have made the definition of a business man too limited in its application. The man who is employed for wages is as much a business man as his employer; the attorney in a country town is as much a business man as the corporation counsel in a great metropolis; the merchant at the cross-roads store is as much a business man as the merchant of New York; the farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day—who begins in the spring and toils all summer—and who by the application of brain and muscle to the natural resources of the country creates wealth, is as much a business man as the man who goes upon the board of trade and bets upon the price of grain; the miners who go down a thousand feet into the earth, or climb two thousand feet upon the cliffs, and bring forth from their hiding places the precious metals to

be poured into the channels of trade are as much business men as the few financial magnates who, in a back room, corner the money of the world. We come to speak for this broader class of business men.

It is the issue of 1776 over again. Our ancestors, when but three millions in number, had the courage to declare their political independence of every other nation; shall we, their descendants, when we have grown to seventy millions, declare that we are less independent than our forefathers? No, my friends, that will never be the verdict of our people. Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bimetallism is good, but that we cannot have it until other nations help us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we will restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States has it. If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

## Questions

- 1 Bryan supports bimetallism as being advantageous to the majority of US workers. To what degree do you agree with him? How does the gold standard help or hurt the working classes?
- 2 What does this speech tell us about political divisions in the United States at the turn of the century?
- 3 Draft a response to Bryan from the perspective of a supporter of the gold standard.



**Activity****To war?**

War over the Venezuelan boundary dispute seemed a definite possibility in December 1895. Evaluate the case for and against war in both Great Britain and the United States. To what degree do you think that war was a real possibility throughout this crisis?

**Activity****The Venezuelan Response**

In groups, brainstorm possible responses of the Venezuelan government to the British and US positions on the border dispute. Discuss possible outcomes for each response. Use the following chart to help.

Response	Possible US reaction	Possible British reaction

**Discussion point**

There is some evidence that the British did not initially take the Venezuelan boundary dispute as seriously as the United States did. Why might this have been the case? What other colonial issues were occupying British attention in the mid 1890s?

**The Spanish–American War**

The Spanish–American War started as a revolution by Cuban nationalists on behalf of a population oppressed by a colonial power. Indeed it was not the first time the Cubans had tried to shake off their Spanish overlords. In the 1870s, Cuban revolutionaries had waged a ten-year struggle for independence. Although there was considerable sympathy in the United States for the plight of the revolutionaries, and not a small amount of provocation from Spain, the US government remained neutral.

In 1895, the Cubans rose up against the Spanish colonial administration, which seemed just as determined to retain the island colony as they had been two decades earlier. The most influential Cuban nationalist in 1895 was the poet and writer José Martí. Martí called for an insurrection and in February of that year Cuban guerrillas began attacking government installations and troops. In response, General Valeriano Weyler led some 150,000 Spanish troops across the Atlantic to quell the rising. What ensued was a war, the ferocity of which startled many. As in many such wars, civilians bore much of the suffering. In order to deprive the guerrillas of food and support, Weyler ordered rural populations into camps without adequate food or sanitation and in which thousands died.

The United States took a keen interest in this war for a number of reasons. The US had invested some \$50 million in Cuba and the revolution was threatening this investment and damaging business interests. But this was not enough to explain the growing popular outrage at the Spanish actions in Cuba. By 1895, there were an

**Discussion point**

What role do civilians play in guerilla wars? How does this differ from their role in conventional wars? How have occupying powers tried to defeat guerrilla forces during the 20th century?