

Introduction

- Roosevelt's enthusiasm for a more activist approach to foreign policy was not out of character with his own presidency. When he became president, the United States had already acquired Alaska, Hawaii and other island in the Pacific.
- Many Americans wanted more land, or at least great influence around the world.

Imperialism

- The policy in which stronger nations extend their economic, political or military control over weaker territories – was already a trend around the world.
- Not surprisingly, some have called the late 1800s that age of US Imperialism.
- The geographical expansion of the United States had continued from the time it declared independence throughout the Progressive Era. Certainly there is a possibility that the United States was influenced by the ways of Britain, France and Germany were seeking new colonies in Africa and the Middle East.
- Many Americans did not want their country to be left behind and agreed with the Europeans that the white race was destined to rule the world's people. Immigrants or the children of immigrants sometimes wanted the US to intervene in their old homelands to protect the rights of countrymen. Even so, a surprisingly diverse array of American did not want their country involved in anything beyond its borders.
- Expansion beyond North America was never without controversy, even as the US became involved around the globe.
- So why did some American continue to push for imperialism?
 - Global Competition
 - European nations had been establishing colonies for centuries
 - Africa had emerged as a prime target
 - Most Americans gradually warmed to the idea of expansion overseas
 - With a belief in manifest destiny, they already had pushed the SU border to the Pacific Ocean
 - Three factors fueled the new American imperialism
 - Desire for military strength
 - Thirst for new markets
 - Belief in cultural superiority
 - Desire for Military Strength
 - Other nations had global military presence
 - American leaders advised that the United State built up its own military strength
 - The US built nine steel-hulled cruisers between 1883 and 1890
 - This transformed the country into the world's third largest naval power
 - Thirst for New Markets
 - The US needed raw materials for its factories and new markets for its agricultural and manufactured goods
 - Imperialists viewed foreign trade as the solution to American over=production and the related problems of unemployment and economic depression
 - Belief in Cultural Superiority

- Some Americans combined the philosophy of Social Darwinism and racial superiority together
- Stating the US had a responsibility to spread Christianity and “civilization” to the world’s “inferior peoples”

Examples of America’s Continuing Expansion and Imperialism

- The United States Acquired Alaska
 - The US assumed ownership of the huge Russian territory known as Russian America or Alaska
 - The value of Alaska to the Russian company or government was never great. Tensions with native residents ran deep and the Russians exploited native Alaskans while Western disease took a heavy toll of the native population.
 - American settlers in the Washington Territory were learning about the rich fishing, whaling and fur trapping that was possible in Alaska. Secretary of State Seward envisioned its value and coordinated negotiations to purchase it from Russia.
 - The negotiators agreed on a price of \$7.2 million (for about 2 cents an acre, the US had acquired a land rich in timber, minerals and oil) and on October 18, 1867, the Russian flag was hauled down at Sitka and the Stars and Strips rose in its place.
 - Some people thought it was silly to buy what they called “Seward’s Ice Box” or “Seward’s Folly”, Congress even balked at appropriating the funds for the purchase.
 - After purchasing Alaska the US government was slow to do anything with it, but soon after gold was discovered in the late 1880s the population of Alaska expanded and President Taft signed legislation in 1912 giving Alaska full territorial status allowing the first elected legislature to meet in Juneau the following year.
- The United States Takes Hawaii
 - 1867 the US took the Midway Islands, no one lived on the island and the US annexed Hawaii next.
 - 1875 the US agreed to import Hawaiian sugar duty-free
 - US military and economic leaders already understood the value of the islands which was strategically located halfway between California and Japan, plus its harbors were perfect for American whaling vessels greatly increased Americans European merchants and US Navy officers.
 - By the 1880s, American economic power in Hawaii was overwhelming, but the islands remained independent.
 - In the same year the US took Midway and Hawaii they also took the Wake islands and agreed to divide Samoa with Germany.
 - The US was growing across the Pacific and so were the stations for the growing US Navy.
- The United States, Russia, Japan and China
 - Russia and Japan
 - All Russian expansion came to an abrupt halt in early 1904, however, Japan had emerged as a modern military and diplomatic power, was determined to stop Russia from acquiring influence in Manchuria and Korea.
 - The Japanese attacked Russia and destroyed their fleet, the US felt the war was far away and stayed neutral throughout the issue. A year later Japan destroyed another Russian fleet but nevertheless, no peace treaty emerged and Japanese resources were spent.
 - The Japanese government sent a secret message to Teddy Roosevelt asking if he would “directly and entirely of his own motion and initiative...invite the two belligerent to come together.” Roosevelt loved the idea of playing mediator and proposed arbitration to the Russian tsar.

- Russia agreed and the announcement of the peace conference won Roosevelt worldwide praise
- Japan too appreciated Roosevelt's efforts to mediate with Russian, but was not pleased by San Francisco's segregation of Japanese students.
 - California was the port of entry for immigrants from Japan and China. It was also the place where anti-Asian feeling ran the strongest. In October of 1906 the San Francisco School Board adopted a policy of racial segregation for Chinese, Korean and Japanese children. The Chinese government protest but was too weak to do more but Japan however, was angered at the insults and the idea of war arose.
 - Roosevelt tried to convince California to rescind the segregation order while encouraging the government of Japan to ignore the insult, but failed at doing both.
 - But in 1907 and 1908 Roosevelt successfully negotiated the Gentlemen's Agreement by which the US agreed not to pass any formal limit on Japanese immigration and the Japanese government agreed to limit the emigration of laborers to the US.
 - For Japan, it was important not to face anything as insulting as the Chinese Exclusion Act had been for the Chinese and at the same time Roosevelt had accomplished the goal of establishing a limit on Japanese immigration.
 - Additionally the Japan's threat of war allowed Roosevelt to ask Congress to appropriate funds to expand the US Navy and so he sent the Great White Fleet (16 new battleships painted gleaming white rather than navy grey) around the world with a dramatic stop in Tokyo.
- China
 - While he was president, Theodore Roosevelt had insisted that the long-standing Open Door Policy allowing the US and Britain free trade with China be continued in spite of Japan's desire to dominate all Asian markets.
 - President Taft had less lofty goals for America's role in the world and through he was wary of political ties, he strongly encouraged American investment wherever there was an opportunity, leading critics to call his policy dollar diplomacy.
 - Using private investment in other nations to promote American diplomatic goals and business interests.

Conclusion

- America moved more and more into global issues, issues that would drag the country into the First World War