



Empress Dowager Cixi (Tz'u Hsi) of China



W. McKinley



W. H. Taft

of 1844: Polk, called the "expansion L," ran against Henry Clay at form: was committed to "manifest and expansion promised to annex Texas as a e promised to acquire a could end sharing the territory with England



J. Polk



Cuban poet and journalist José Julián Martí

T. Roosevelt



# Lesson 15: "The American Empire" (1846 – Present CE)

Have you ever wondered?  
Grandpa's History Lessons that Matter

# *The American Empire (1846 – Present CE)*

## *Concept or Reality?*

### ***Introduction:***

*The concept of an American Empire was first popularized during the presidency of James K. Polk, 11<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, from 1845 to 1849. In 1845, newspaper editor John O’Sullivan coined the term “Manifest Destiny” to describe the ideology of continental expansionism. Though the term was new, the ideas underlying it were much older, dating back to the first colonial contact between Europeans and Native Americans. The ideology that became known as Manifest Destiny included a belief in the inherent superiority of white Americans, as well as the conviction that they were destined by God to conquer the territories of North America, from sea to shining sea.*

*In recent times the concept of American Imperialism has been revived by critics of the United States to refer to the American sphere of influence. In this sense, American imperialism comprises policies aimed at extending the political, economic, and cultural influence of the United States over areas beyond its boundaries. Depending on the commentator, it may include military conquest, gunboat diplomacy, unequal treaties, subsidization of preferred factions, economic penetration through private companies followed by intervention when those interests are threatened, or regime change.*

*From the North American continent that we know today, south to Latin America, west to the mid-Pacific and on to Asia, then halfway back to the middle East, this is the story of American Foreign Policy.*

***Question*** – *Can the United States be reasonably classified as an Empire, or is it a Democratic Republic with legally defined territories outside of its mainland, and profound political, economic and cultural influence around the world? And given the realities of technology and communications today, is there really a difference?*

***Answer*** – *Here is some history to think about. Lots of questions; I will leave the answers to you.*

# The U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone

## What it means to be a U.S. territory

Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam – it wasn't easy to know how to think about such places, or even what to call them. At the turn of the 20th century, when many were acquired (Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, American Samoa, Hawaii, Wake), their status was clear. They were, as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson unabashedly called them, "colonies".

That spirit of forthright imperialism didn't last. Within a decade or two, after passions had cooled, the c-word became taboo. "The word colony must not be used to express the relationship which exists between our government and its dependent peoples," an official admonished in 1914. Better to stick with a gentler term, used for them all: "territories".

Source: [How the US has hidden its empire](#) by Daniel Immerwahr, The Guardian, 15 Feb 2019

So what does it mean to be a territory, and what responsibilities does the federal government have to the people of U.S. territories?

There are five inhabited U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands. People of these territories (except some in American Samoa) are U.S. citizens, pay federal taxes such as Social Security and Medicare – but not federal income tax – and can freely travel within the U.S.

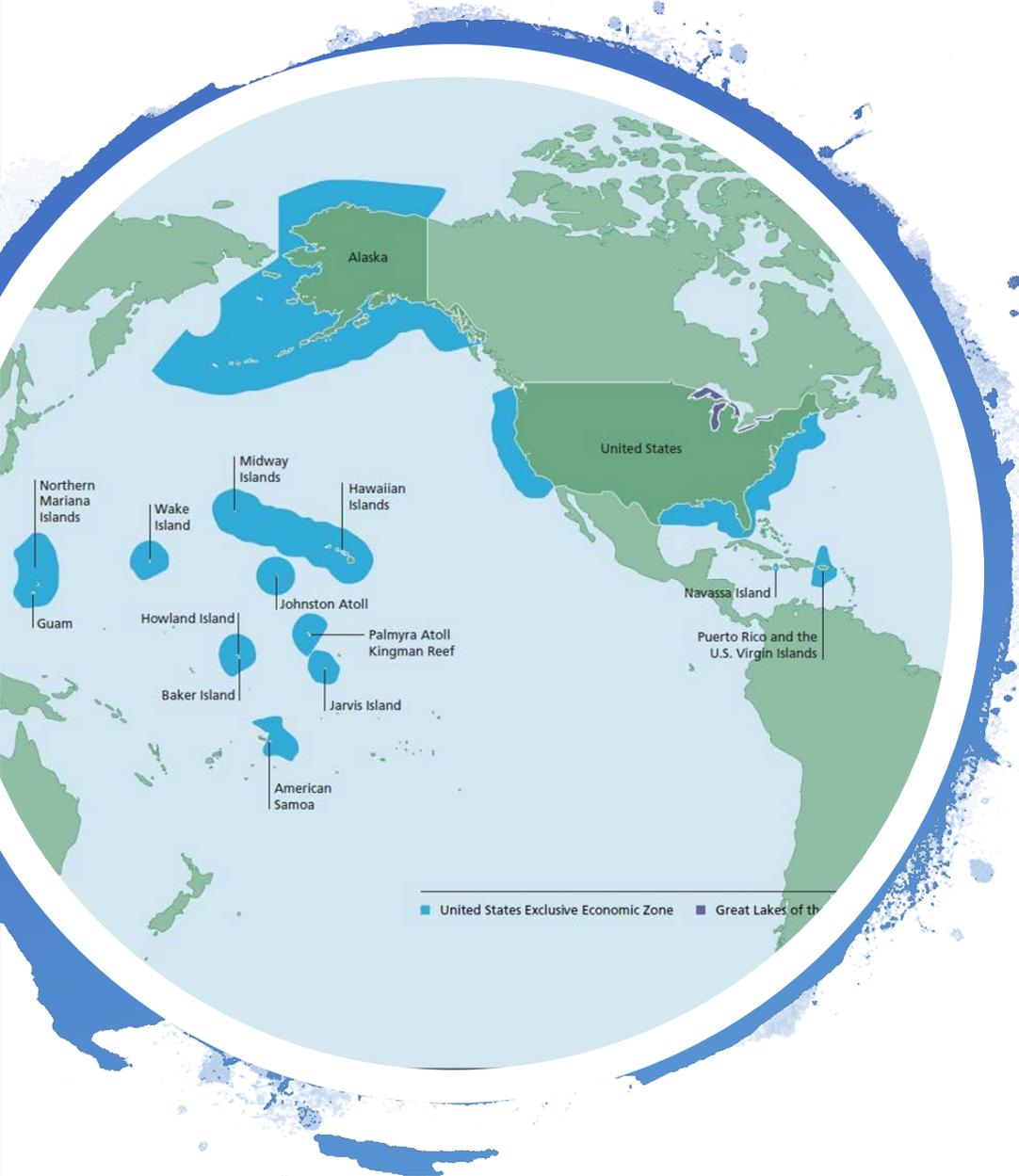
Much like states in the U.S., the territories also have their own governments and elect their own governors.

Unlike states, the territories do not have a vote in Congress. They each send a delegate to the House [who possesses all powers of a representative besides voting rights](#), like the ability to debate legislation or sit on committees.

The territories also send delegates to political conventions, such as those to nominate presidential candidates. However, the territories have no electoral votes in the presidential election.

The U.S. government has the same responsibilities toward citizens of U.S. territories as it does to other U.S. citizens.

Source: [What it means to be a U.S. territory](#), NPR's National Desk, October 13, 2017



# The American Empire (1846 – Present CE)

## Concept or Reality?

During his tenure, U.S. President James K. Polk oversaw the greatest territorial expansion of the United States to date. Ultimately, Polk's territorial expansionism, though aimed at national unity, wound up intensifying sectional conflict over expansion of slavery and further paving the road to civil war.

### "Manifest Destiny" and James K. Polk

Spain canceled a trade pact between Cuba and the United States. The imposition of more taxes and trade restrictions prodded Cubans to launch the Cuban War of Independence and Congress to declare war against Spain. Spain was defeated and ceded claims on Cuba, and sovereignty over Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

### Cuban Insurrection and the Spanish-American War

On November 18, the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty was signed with Panama, granting the U.S. exclusive and permanent possession of the Panama Canal Zone. The Panama Canal opened on August 15, 1914. Local oversight reverted to Panama on December 31, 1999, with the Panama Canal Authority in control.

### Teddy Roosevelt and the Panama Canal

The Great White Fleet, consisting of 14,000 sailors on 16 battleships and accompanying vessels, was sent around the world for fourteen months by President Roosevelt. The Great White Fleet was an important show of America's naval power to the rest of the world.

### Great White Fleet

1845 – 1849 CE      1867 CE      1895 – 1898 CE      1899 – 1900 CE      1903 – 1999 CE      1904 CE      1907 – 1909 CE

### Alaska "Seward's Folly"

Secretary of State William H. Seward agreed to purchase Alaska from Russia for 7.2 million dollars. Critics attacked Seward for the secrecy surrounding the deal, which came to be known as "Seward's folly." The discovery of gold in the late 1890s increased Alaska's value as a U.S. possession and boosted its population.

### Open Door Policy in China and the Boxer Rebellion

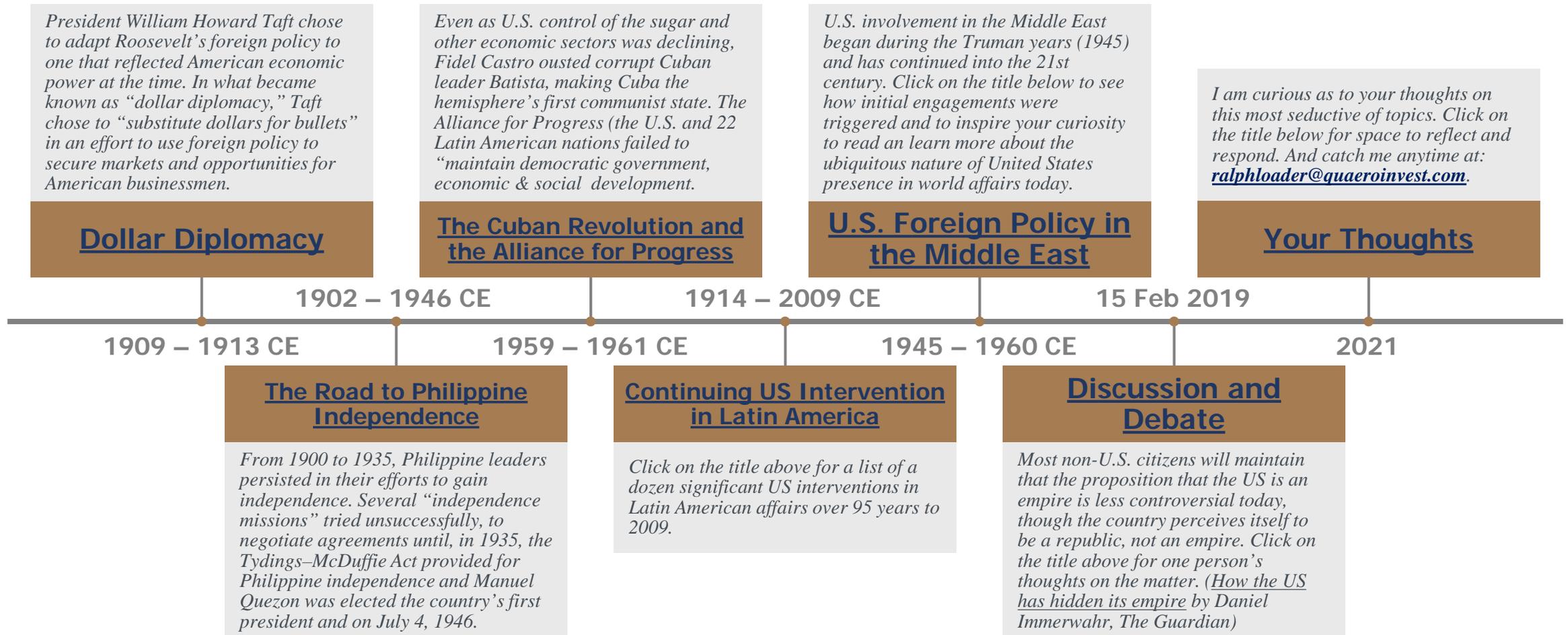
Aimed to secure international agreement to the U.S. policy of promoting equal opportunity for international trade and commerce in China. An anti-foreign movement in China, known as the Boxer Rebellion, began attacking foreign missionaries and Chinese converts to Christianity.

### Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine

The Roosevelt Corollary stated that the United States would intervene as a last resort to ensure that other nations in the Western Hemisphere fulfilled their obligations to international creditors and did not violate the rights of the United States or invite "foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations."

# The American Empire (1846 – Present CE)

## Concept or Reality?



# Appendix

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## *Action Links*

**MORE FUN, MORE FACTS  
ABOUT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT  
PEOPLE AND EVENTS  
OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE**

# “Manifest Destiny” Expansionism under James K. Polk, 11th President of the United States (1845 – 1849 CE)

During his tenure, U.S. President James K. Polk oversaw the greatest territorial expansion of the United States to date. Polk accomplished this through the annexation of Texas in 1845, the negotiation of the [Oregon Treaty](#) with Great Britain in 1846, and the conclusion of the Mexican-American War in 1848, which ended with the signing and ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848.

*Texas gained its independence from Mexico in 1836. Initially, the United States declined to incorporate it into the union, largely because northern political interests were against the addition of a new slave state. Polk, who had been elected on a platform of expansionism, campaigned for “re-annexation”, and Texas was admitted to the Union as the 28th state on December 29, 1845. Texas annexation was a trigger for the Mexican–American War (1846–1848) with Mexico, which had refused to recognize Texas’ independence or U.S. offers to annex the territory.*

*In his stand on Oregon, the President seemed to be risking war with Great Britain. Happily, neither he nor the British wanted a war. He offered to settle by extending the Canadian boundary, along the 49th parallel, from the Rockies to the Pacific. The British settled for the 49th parallel, except for the southern tip of Vancouver Island. The treaty was signed in 1846.*

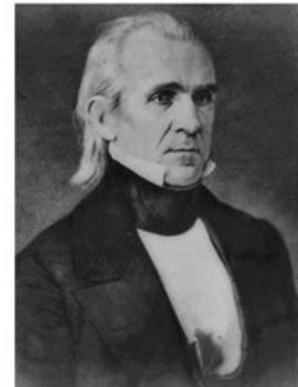
Together, the treaties with Mexico and Britain brought within the control of the United States the future states of Texas, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Washington, and Oregon, as well as portions of what would later become Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, Wyoming, and Montana.

Ultimately, Polk’s territorial expansionism, though aimed at national unity, wound up intensifying sectional conflict over expansion of slavery and further paving the road to civil war.

## Territories of Mexico lost to the United States



- Election of 1844:
- James K. Polk, called the “expansion president,” ran against Henry Clay
- Polk’s platform:
  1. Polk was committed to “manifest destiny” and expansion
  2. Polk promised to annex Texas as a new state
  3. Polk promised to acquire California
  4. Polk would end sharing the Oregon Territory with England



States and Territories of the United States of America  
November 10 1842 to March 3 1845

# Alaska "Seward's Folly" (1867 CE)

Under the aegis of explorer Vitus Jonassen Bering, Russia established a presence in [Alaska](#) in the early eighteenth century. Russia initially approached the United States about selling the territory during [President James Buchanan's](#) administration, but the Civil War stalled negotiations. Seward, secretary of state under presidents [Abraham Lincoln](#) and Andrew Johnson, supported American expansion and was eager to acquire Alaska. However, convincing skeptics that Alaska was an important addition to the United States was a challenge. On March 30, 1867, Secretary of State William H. Seward agreed to [purchase Alaska](#) from Russia for 7.2 million dollars. Critics attacked Seward for the secrecy surrounding the deal, which came to be known as "Seward's folly." The press mocked his willingness to spend so much on "Seward's icebox" and [Andrew Johnson's](#) "polar bear garden." Thanks to strong support by Senator [Charles Sumner](#) of Massachusetts, then chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, the [Senate approved the treaty](#) by a vote of 37-2 on April 9, 1867. Nonetheless, the appropriation of money needed to purchase Alaska was delayed by more than a year due to opposition in the House of Representatives. The House finally approved the appropriation on July 14, 1868, by a vote of 113-43.

The [discovery of gold](#) in the late 1890s increased Alaska's value as a U.S. possession and boosted its population. In 1912, the region was granted territorial status. During World War II, Japan invaded the Aleutian Islands of Agattu, Attu, and Kiska in 1942. Although the islands were [retaken by U.S. troops](#) within a year, the threat to Alaska prompted the construction of the [Alcan Highway](#) and an increased military presence in the region.

Alaskans approved statehood in 1946 and adopted a state constitution in 1955. On January 3, 1959, [President Eisenhower](#) announced Alaska's entrance into the Union as the 49th state.



Cheque to Russia  
for \$7.2 million

Secretary of State  
William H. Seward



Seward, Alaska  
1915



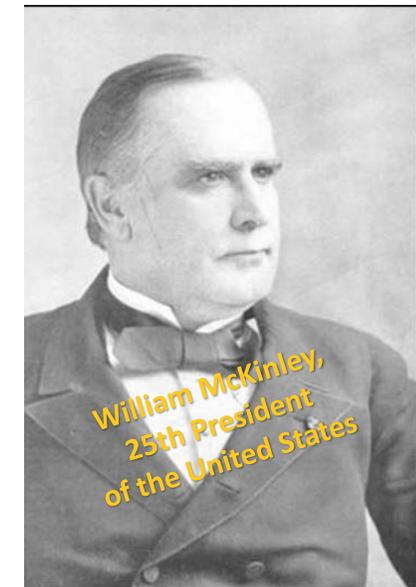
# Cuban Insurrection and the Spanish-American War (1895–1898 CE)

In 1894 Spain canceled a trade pact between Cuba and the United States. The imposition of more taxes and trade restrictions prodded the economically distressed Cubans in 1895 to launch the Cuban War of Independence, a resumption of the earlier struggle.

Poet and journalist [José Julián Martí](#), the ideological spokesman of the revolution, drew up plans for an invasion of Cuba while living in exile in [New York City](#). Martí was killed (and martyred) in battle about one month after initiation of the invasion on April 11, 1895, but insurrectionist forces persisted, employing sophisticated guerrilla tactics in leading the revolutionary army, until in 1898 . . .

. . . from the beginning of his administration, President McKinley was concerned about the Cuban insurrection. On April 20, Congress adopted a resolution declaring war against Spain. News of Spanish atrocities and tales of rebel bravery were splashed in the [yellow journalism](#) headlines of [William Randolph Hearst's](#) *New York Journal*, which beat the drums of war. When the USS *Maine* sank in Havana's harbour in February 1898 after a mysterious explosion, President McKinley attempted to prevent war and endeavored to persuade the Spanish government to adopt a conciliatory policy with the Cuban insurrectionists. The Spanish government yielded too late to restrain the popular demand in the United States for intervention, and the [Spanish-American War](#) ensued. The Spanish-American War of 1898 ended Spain's colonial empire in the Western Hemisphere and secured the position of the United States as a Pacific power. U.S. victory in the war produced a peace treaty that compelled the Spanish to relinquish claims on Cuba, and to cede sovereignty over Guam, and Puerto Rico. In June, 1898, Filipino rebels led by Emilio Aguinaldo proclaimed the independence of the Philippines; by mid-August, the rebels and U.S. troops had ousted the Spanish, but Aguinaldo's hopes for independence were dashed when the United States formally annexed the Philippines as part of its peace treaty with Spain. Whether or not to annex the Philippines was a particularly troubling concern at home, in the United States. Imperialists and strong navy advocates, like Teddy Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan, favored retaining the islands so that they wouldn't fall into the hands of European competitors. The Philippines also provided an excellent geographic position to aid the expansion of Far Eastern trade. However, anti-imperialists, like William Jennings Bryan, Mark Twain, and Andrew Carnegie, favored granting the Philippines their independence for a variety of different reasons, particularly that it conflicted with the founding principle of the consent of the governed.

The McKinley Administration also used the war as a pretext to annex the state of Hawaii which had sought annexation since 1893 when a group of Hawaii-based planters and businessmen led a coup against Queen Liliuokalani and established a new government. (Hawaii was admitted as the 50<sup>th</sup> U.S state on August 21, 1959). Thus, the war enabled the United States to establish its predominance in the Caribbean region and to pursue its strategic and economic interests in Asia.

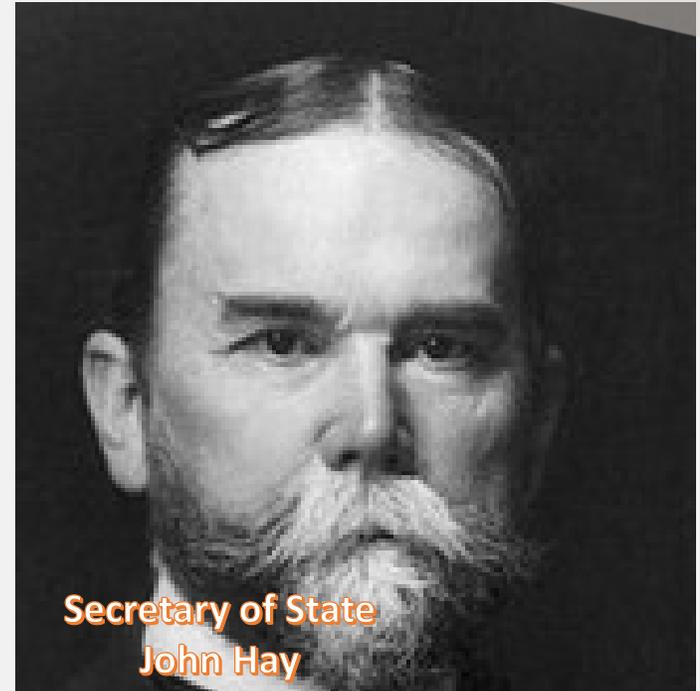


## Open Door Policy in China, and the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1900 CE)

Secretary of State John Hay first articulated the concept of the “Open Door” policy in China in a series of notes in 1899–1900. These Open Door Notes aimed to secure international agreement to the U.S. policy of promoting equal opportunity for international trade and commerce in China, and respect for China’s administrative and territorial integrity. Hay argued that establishing equal access to commerce would benefit American traders and the U.S. economy, and hoped that the Open Door would also prevent disputes between the powers operating in China. For the United States, which held relatively little political clout and no territory in China, the principle of non-discrimination in commercial activity was particularly important.

In 1900, an anti-foreign movement in China, known as the Boxer Rebellion, named for the martial artists that led the movement, began attacking foreign missionaries and Chinese converts to Christianity. With the backing of Empress Dowager Cixi (Tz’u Hsi) and the Imperial Army, the Boxer Rebellion turned into a violent conflict that claimed the lives of hundreds of foreign missionaries and thousands of Chinese nationals. From June to August, the Boxers besieged the foreign district of Beijing (then called Peking), China’s capital, until an international force that included American troops subdued the uprising. By the terms of the Boxer Protocol, which officially ended the rebellion in 1901, China agreed to pay more than \$330 million in reparations.

By the end of the 19th century, the Western powers and Japan had forced China’s ruling Qing dynasty to accept wide foreign control over the country’s economic affairs. In the Opium Wars (1839-42, 1856-60), popular rebellions and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), China had fought to resist the foreigners, but it lacked a modernized military and suffered millions of casualties.



Secretary of State  
John Hay



Empress Dowager Cixi  
(Tz’u Hsi)

# Linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans Teddy Roosevelt and the Panama Canal (1903 – 1999 CE)

The idea of creating a water passage across the isthmus of Panama to link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans dates back to at least the 1500s, when King Charles I of Spain tapped his regional governor to survey a route along the Chagres River. The realization of such a route across the mountainous, jungle terrain was deemed impossible at the time, although the idea remained tantalizing as a potential shortcut from Europe to eastern Asia.

France was ultimately the first country to attempt the task. Led by Count Ferdinand de Lesseps, the builder of the [Suez Canal](#) in Egypt. Incessant rains, landslides, yellow fever, malaria and ultimately lack of funding proved the demise of the project in 1888.

Following the deliberations of the U.S. Isthmian Canal Commission and a push from President Theodore Roosevelt, the U.S. purchased the French assets in the canal zone for \$40 million in 1902. When a proposed treaty over rights to build in what was then a Colombian territory was rejected, the U.S. threw its military weight behind a Panamanian independence movement, eventually negotiating a deal with the new government.

On November 6, 1903, the United States recognized the Republic of Panama, and on November 18 the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty was signed with Panama, granting the U.S. exclusive and permanent possession of the Panama Canal Zone. In exchange, Panama received \$10 million and an annuity of \$250,000 beginning nine years later. The treaty, negotiated by U.S. Secretary of State John Hay and French engineer Philippe-Jean Bunau-Varilla, was condemned by many Panamanians as an infringement on their country's new national sovereignty.

In October, President Woodrow Wilson operated a telegraph at the White House that triggered the explosion of Gamboa dike, flooding the final stretch of dry passageway at Culebra Cut. The Panama Canal officially opened on August 15, 1914, although the planned grand ceremony was downgraded due to the outbreak of WWI. Completed at a cost of more than \$350 million, it was the most expensive construction project in U.S. history to that point.

The transition to local oversight began with a 1977 treaty signed by U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Panama leader Omar Torrijos, with the Panama Canal Authority assuming full control on December 31, 1999.



# Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (1904 CE)

President Theodore Roosevelt's assertive approach to Latin America and the Caribbean has often been characterized as the "Big Stick," and his policy came to be known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the [Monroe Doctrine](#).

Although the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 was essentially passive (it asked that Europeans not increase their influence or recolonize any part of the Western Hemisphere), by the 20th century a more confident United States was willing to take on the role of regional policeman. In the early 1900s Roosevelt grew concerned that a crisis between Venezuela and its creditors could spark an invasion of that nation by European powers. The Roosevelt Corollary of December 1904 stated that the United States would intervene as a last resort to ensure that other nations in the Western Hemisphere fulfilled their obligations to international creditors, and did not violate the rights of the United States or invite "foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations." As the corollary worked out in practice, the United States increasingly used military force to restore internal stability to nations in the region. Roosevelt declared that the United States might "exercise international police power in 'flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence.'" Over the long term the corollary had little to do with relations between the Western Hemisphere and Europe, but it did serve as justification for U.S. intervention in [Cuba](#), [Nicaragua](#), [Haiti](#), and [the Dominican Republic](#).



President Theodore Roosevelt

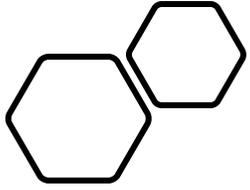
# Great White Fleet (December 16, 1907 to February 22, 1909 CE)

The Great White Fleet, consisting of 14,000 sailors on 16 battleships and accompanying vessels, was sent around the world for fourteen months by President Roosevelt. The fleet's journey started on December 16, 1907, and concluded on February 22, 1909.

Called the Great White Fleet because the ships were painted white instead of modern gray, the fleet covered 43,000 miles and made twenty port calls on six different continents. The fleet first deployed from Hampton Roads, Virginia, and sailed to Trinidad, British West Indies, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Mexico, and made port back in the United States at San Francisco. The Great White Fleet sailed again on July 7, 1908, and traveled to Hawaii, New Zealand, three ports in Australia, the Philippines, Japan, Ceylon, and Egypt. Learning that an earthquake had struck Sicily, the Great White Fleet sailed to help with the wreckage and recovery work. After their assistance, they traveled on to Naples, Italy, and from there to Gibraltar and on to Hampton Roads, Virginia, where the fleet's journey concluded.

The Great White Fleet was an important show of America's naval power to the rest of the world. It was also an important event in the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. Within two weeks of the fleet docking in Hampton Roads in February of 1909, Roosevelt left the presidency. The Great White Fleet's successful return and completion of its mission added luster to Roosevelt's presidential career.





# Dollar Diplomacy (1909–1913 CE)

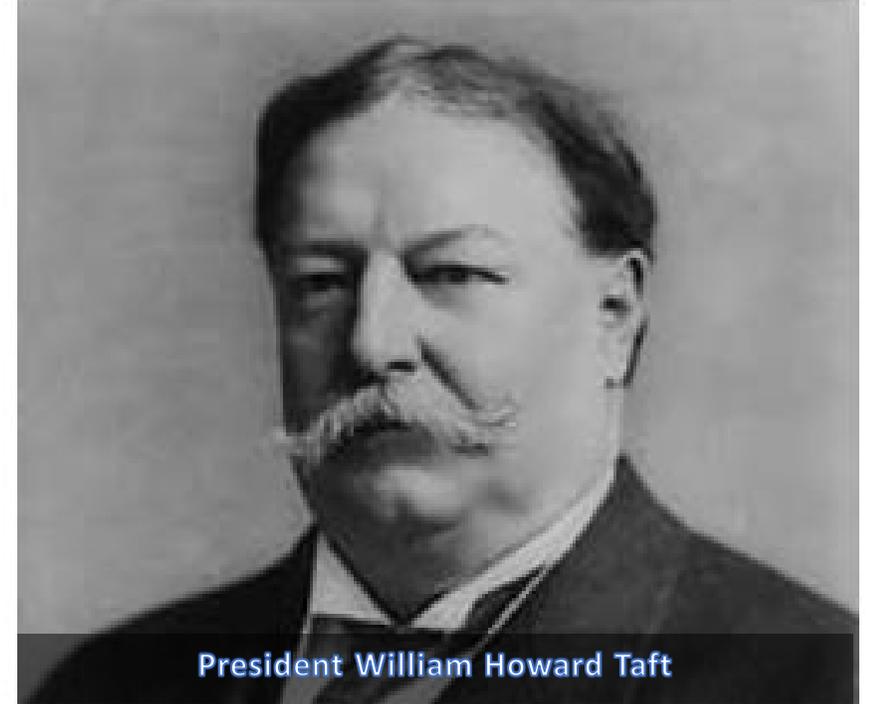
When William Howard Taft became president in 1909, he chose to adapt Roosevelt's foreign policy philosophy to one that reflected American economic power at the time. In what became known as "dollar diplomacy," Taft announced his decision to "substitute dollars for bullets" in an effort to use foreign policy to secure markets and opportunities for American businessmen. Not unlike Roosevelt's threat of force, Taft used the threat of American economic clout to coerce countries into agreements to benefit the United States.

Although William Howard Taft was Theodore Roosevelt's hand-picked successor to the presidency, he was less inclined to use Roosevelt's "big stick," choosing instead to use the economic might of the United States to influence foreign affairs.

Of key interest to Taft was the debt that several Central American nations still owed to various countries in Europe. Fearing that the debt holders might use the monies owed as leverage to use military intervention in the Western Hemisphere, Taft moved quickly to pay off these debts with U.S. dollars. Of course, this move made the Central American countries indebted to the United States, a situation that not all nations wanted. When a Central American nation resisted this arrangement, however, Taft responded with military force to achieve the objective. This occurred in Nicaragua when the country refused to accept American loans to pay off its debt to Great Britain. Taft sent a warship with marines to the region to pressure the government to agree. Similarly, when Mexico considered the idea of allowing a Japanese corporation to gain significant land and economic advantages in its country, Taft urged Congress to pass the Lodge Corollary, an addendum to the Roosevelt Corollary, stating that no foreign corporation—other than American ones—could obtain strategic lands in the Western Hemisphere.

In Asia, Taft's policies also followed those of Theodore Roosevelt. He attempted to bolster China's ability to withstand Japanese interference and thereby maintain a balance of power in the region. Initially, he experienced tremendous success in working with the Chinese government to further develop the railroad industry in that country through arranging international financing. However, efforts to expand the Open Door policy deeper into Manchuria met with resistance from Russia and Japan, exposing the limits of the American government's influence and knowledge about the intricacies of diplomacy. As a result, he reorganized the U.S. State Department to create geographical divisions (such as the Far East Division, the Latin American Division, etc.) in order to develop greater foreign policy expertise in each area.

Taft's policies, although not as based on military aggression as his predecessors, did create difficulties for the United States, both at the time and in the future. Central America's indebtedness would create economic concerns for decades to come, as well as foster nationalist movements in countries resentful of American's interference. In Asia, Taft's efforts to mediate between China and Japan served only to heighten tensions between Japan and the United States. Furthermore, it did not succeed in creating a balance of power, as Japan's reaction was to further consolidate its power and reach throughout the region.



President William Howard Taft



# The Road to Philippine Independence (1902 – 1946 CE)



Presidents Harry Truman and Manuel Roxas

In 1902, an American civil government took over administration of the Philippines, and the three-year Philippine insurrection was declared to be at an end. Scattered resistance, however, persisted for several years. More than 4,000 Americans perished suppressing the Philippines—more than 10 times the number killed in the Spanish-American War. More than 20,000 Filipino insurgents were killed, and an unknown number of civilians perished.

From 1900 to 1935, Philippine leaders persisted in their efforts to gain independence. Several “independence missions” tried unsuccessfully, to negotiate agreements until, in 1935, the Tydings–McDuffie Act provided for the drafting and guidelines of a Constitution, for a 10-year “transitional period” as the Commonwealth of the Philippines before the granting of Philippine independence. Manuel Quezon was elected the country’s first president and on July 4, 1946, full independence was granted to the Republic of the Philippines by the United States.

The treaty was signed by High Commissioner Paul V. McNutt as representative of the United States and President Manuel Roxas as representative of the Philippines, and it was signed by US President Harry Truman on August 14, 1946, after the US Senate gave its advice and consent on July 31, 1946 by ratification of the treaty.



## The Cuban Revolution (1959 CE) and the Alliance for Progress (1961 CE)

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By most social and economic indicators, [Cuba](#) by mid-century was among Latin America's most highly developed countries. However, in the postwar period it was afflicted with lacklustre [economic growth](#) and a corrupt political dictatorship set up in 1952 by the same Batista who earlier had helped put his [country](#) on a seemingly democratic path. It was also a country whose long history of economic and other dependence on the [United States](#) had fed nationalist resentment, although control of the sugar industry and other economic sectors by U.S. interests was gradually declining. While conditions for revolutionary change were thus present, the particular direction that Cuba took owed much to the [idiosyncratic](#) genius of [Fidel Castro](#), who, after ousting Batista at the beginning of 1959, proceeded by stages to turn the island into the hemisphere's first communist state, in close alliance with the [Soviet Union](#).

The Alliance for Progress was established by the United States and 22 Latin American countries in the Charter of Punta del Este (Uruguay) in August 1961. Objectives stated in the charter centred on the maintenance of democratic government and the achievement of economic and social development.

At the start of the program, it was estimated that \$20 billion of external capital would be needed during the first 10 years; about half was to be obtained from the United States and the rest from international lending agencies and from private sources.

Although the program could show some newly built schools, hospitals, and other physical plants, it failed in the judgment of most observers. Massive land reform was not achieved; population more than kept pace with gains in health and welfare. U.S. aid decreased over the years, and political tensions between the United States and Latin America increased. The program was dissolved in 1973 by the Organization of American States.



Castro

Kennedy



Venezuela's President  
Hugo Chavez



Argentina's dictator  
Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla



Soldiers brandish captured AK-47  
rifles in St. George, Grenada



Members of Fidel  
Castro's militia



Honduras President  
Manuel Zelaya

# The Continuing History of US Intervention in Latin America (1914 – 2009 CE)

U.S. Marines repeatedly intervene in Central America and the Caribbean throughout the first quarter of the 20th century, often to protect U.S. business interests in moments of political instability.

1914: U.S. troops occupy the Mexican port of Veracruz for seven months in an attempt to sway developments in the Mexican Revolution.

1954: Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz is overthrown in a CIA-backed coup.

1961: The U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion fails to overthrow Soviet-backed Cuban leader Fidel Castro but Washington continues to launch attempts to assassinate Castro and dislodge his government.

1964: Leftist President Joao Goulart of Brazil is overthrown in a U.S.-backed coup that installs a military government lasting until the 1980s.

1965: U.S. forces land in the Dominican Republic to intervene in a civil war.

1970s: Argentina, Chile and allied South American nations launch brutal campaign of repression and assassination aimed at perceived leftist threats, known as Operation Condor, often with U.S. support.

1980s: Reagan administration backs anti-Communist Contra forces against Nicaragua's Sandinista government and backs the Salvadoran government against leftist FMLN rebels.

1983: U.S. forces invade Caribbean island of Grenada after accusing the government of allying itself with Communist Cuba.

1989: U.S. invades Panama to oust strongman Manuel Noriega.

1994: A U.S.-led invasion of Haiti is launched to remove the military regime installed by a 1991 coup that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The invasion restores Aristide.

2002: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is ousted for two days before retaking power. He and his allies accuse the U.S. of tacit support for the coup attempt.

2009: Honduran President Manuel Zelaya overthrown by military. U.S. accused of worsening situation by insufficient condemnation of the coup.

# U.S. Policy in the Middle East Beginnings: 1945 to 1960 CE\*

Toward the end of 1914 the United States had little interest in Middle East oil or in any political designs on the region. Its overseas ambitions were focused south toward Latin America and the Caribbean, and west toward East Asia and the Pacific. When Britain offered to share the spoils of the defunct Ottoman Empire after World War I, President Woodrow Wilson declined. The United States' creeping involvement in the Middle East began later, during the Truman administration, and continued through the 21st century.

The following paragraphs summarize the beginnings (1945 to 1960) of the formation of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The footnoted source enlightens us further, to 2008.

## Truman Administration: 1945–1952

During World War II, American troops were stationed in Iran to help transfer military supplies to the Soviet Union and protect Iranian oil. British and Soviet troops were also stationed on Iranian soil. After the war, Russian leader Joseph Stalin withdrew his troops only after President Harry Truman protested their continued presence and threatened to boot them out.

While opposing Soviet influence in Iran, Truman solidified America's relationship with Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, and brought Turkey into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), making it clear to the Soviet Union that the Middle East would be a Cold War hot zone.

Truman accepted the 1947 United Nations partition plan of Palestine, granting 57 percent of the land to Israel and 43 percent to Palestine, and personally lobbied for its success. The plan lost support from U.N. member nations, especially as hostilities between Jews and Palestinians multiplied in 1948 and Arabs lost more land or fled. Truman recognized the State of Israel 11 minutes after its creation, on May 14, 1948.

## Eisenhower Administration: 1953–1960

Three major events defined Dwight Eisenhower's Middle East policy. In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered the CIA to depose Mohammed Mossadegh, the popular, elected leader of the Iranian parliament and an ardent nationalist who opposed British and American influence in Iran. The coup severely tarnished America's reputation among Iranians, who lost trust in American claims of protecting democracy.

In 1956, when Israel, Britain, and France attacked Egypt after Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal, a furious Eisenhower not only refused to join the hostilities, he ended the war.

Two years later, as nationalist forces roiled the Middle East and threatened to topple Lebanon's Christian-led government, Eisenhower ordered the first landing of U.S. troops in Beirut to protect the regime. The deployment, lasting just three months, ended a brief civil war in Lebanon.

\*Source: *U.S. Policy in the Middle East: 1945 to 2008*, by Pierre Tristam, <https://www.thoughtco.com/us-and-middle-east-since-1945-2353681>, Updated July 30, 2019



U.S. President Bill Clinton (C) stands between PLO leader Yasser Arafat (R) and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (L) as they shake hands at the White House in Washington D.C. on Sept. 13, 1993.



A [U.S. Marine](#) stands guard duty near a burning oil well in the [Rumaila oil field, Iraq](#), April 2003.



The Suez Canal is a man-made waterway connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea. It enables a more direct route for shipping between Europe and Asia, effectively allowing for passage from the North Atlantic to the Indian Ocean without having to circumnavigate the African continent. The waterway is vital for international trade and, as a result, has been at the center of conflict since it opened in 1869.

# *The American Empire (1846 – Present CE)*

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## *Concept or Reality?*

### ***Discussion:***

*The proposition that the US is an empire is less controversial today. The case can be made in a number of ways. The dispossession of Native Americans and relegation of many to reservations was pretty transparently imperialist. Then, in the 1840s, the US fought a war with Mexico and seized a third of it. Fifty years later, it fought a war with Spain and claimed the bulk of Spain's overseas territories.*

*Empire isn't just landgrabs, though. What do you call the subordination of African Americans? Starting in the interwar period, the celebrated US intellectual WEB Du Bois argued that black people in the US looked more like colonised subjects than like citizens. Many other black thinkers, including Malcolm X and the leaders of the Black Panthers, have agreed.*

*Or what about the spread of US economic power abroad? The US might not have physically conquered western Europe after the second world war, but that didn't stop the French from complaining of "coca-colonisation". Critics there felt swamped by US commerce. Today, with the world's business denominated in dollars, and McDonald's in more than 100 countries, you can see they might have had a point.*

*Then there are the military interventions. The years since the second world war have brought the US military to country after country. The big wars are well-known: Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan. But there has also been a constant stream of smaller engagements. Since 1945, US armed forces have been deployed abroad for conflicts or potential conflicts 211 times in 67 countries. Call it peacekeeping if you want, or call it imperialism. But clearly this is not a country that has kept its hands to itself.*

*Today, the US continues to hold overseas territory. Besides Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and a handful of minor outlying islands, the US maintains roughly 800 overseas military bases around the world.*

*None of this, however – not the large colonies, small islands, or military bases – has made much of a dent on the mainland mind. One of the truly distinctive features of the US's empire is how persistently ignored it has been. This is, it is worth emphasising, unique. The British weren't confused as to whether there was a British empire. They had a holiday, Empire Day, to celebrate it. France didn't forget that Algeria was French. It is only the US that has suffered from chronic confusion about its own borders.*

*The reason is not hard to guess. The country perceives itself to be a republic, not an empire. It was born in an anti-imperialist revolt and has fought empires ever since, from Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich and the Japanese empire to the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union. It even fights empires in its dreams. Star Wars, a saga that started with a rebellion against the Galactic Empire, is one of the highest-grossing film franchises of all time.*

# *The American Empire (1846 – Present CE)*

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*Concept or Reality?*

*Your Thoughts:*

*Question – Can the United States be reasonably classified as an Empire, or is it a Democratic Republic with legally defined territories outside of its mainland, and profound political, economic and cultural influence around the world? And given the realities of technology and communications today, is there really a difference?*

*Answer – What do you think?*