

A.P. U.S. HISTORY NOTES

Chapter 29: "The Path of Empire"

~ 1890 – 1899 ~

I. Imperialist Stirrings

1. From the end of the **Civil War** to the 1880s, the United States was very isolationist, but in the 1890s, due to rising exports, manufacturing capability, power, and wealth, it began to expand onto the world stage, using overseas markets to send its goods.
 - i. The “**yellow press**” of **Joseph Pulitzer** and **William Randolph Hearst** also influenced overseas expansion, as did missionaries inspired by Reverend **Josiah Strong**’s *Our Country: It’s Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*.
 - ii. People were interpreting **Darwin**’s theory of survival of the fittest to mean that the United States was the fittest and needed to take over other nations to improve them.
 - a. Such events already were happening, as Europeans carved up Africa and China at this time.
2. Captain **Alfred Thayer Mahan**’s 1890 book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, argued that every successful nation had a great navy, starting a naval race among the great powers.
3. **James G. Blaine** pushed his “**Big Sister**” policy, which sought better relations with Latin America, and in 1889, he presided over the first **Pan-American Conference**, held in Washington D.C.
4. However, in other diplomatic affairs, America and Germany almost went to war over the Samoan Islands (over which could build a naval base there), while Italy and America almost fought due to the lynching of 11 Italians in New Orleans, and the U.S. and Chile almost went to war after the deaths of two American sailors at **Valparaiso** in 1892.
 - i. The new aggressive mood was also shown by the U.S.-Canadian argument over seal hunting near the **Pribilof Islands** off the coast of Alaska.

II. Monroe’s Doctrine and the Venezuelan Squall

1. **British Guiana** and **Venezuela** had been disputing their border for many years, but when gold was discovered, the situation worsened.
 - i. Thus, the U.S., under President **Grover Cleveland**, sent a note written by Secretary of State **Richard Olney** to Britain informing them that the British actions were trespassing the **Monroe Doctrine** and that the U.S. controlled things in the Americas.
 - ii. The British replied four months later saying that the Monroe Doctrine didn’t exist.
2. Uproar resulted, and the two nations almost went to war, but after second thoughts by both sides, the issue was settled with the British getting most of the land that they had wanted in the beginning.
 - i. Britain didn’t want to fight because of the damage to its merchant trade that could result, as well as the vulnerability of Canada; plus, after the Dutch **Boers** of South Africa captured 600 British, Germany’s **Kaiser Wilhem** cabled his congratulations, sending British anger to Germany, not to America.
 - ii. The result was that the Monroe Doctrine was strengthened, the Latin American nations appreciated the U.S. effort to protect them, and Britain sought better relations with the U.S. afterwards, since it had many enemies in Europe.

- III. Spurning the Hawaiian Pear
 - 1. From the 1820s, when the first U.S. missionaries came, the United States had always liked the **Hawaiian Islands**.
 - i. Treaties signed in 1875 and 1887 guaranteed commercial trade and U.S. rights to priceless **Pearl Harbor**, while Hawaiian sugar was very profitable, but in 1890, the **McKinley Tariff** raised the prices on this sugar, raising its price.
 - ii. Americans felt that the best way to offset this was to annex Hawaii—a move opposed by its **Queen Liliuokalani**—but in 1893, desperate Americans revolted.
 - 2. They succeeded, and Hawaii seemed ready for annexation, but Grover Cleveland became president again, investigated the coup, found it to be wrong, and delayed the annexation of Hawaii until he basically left office.
 - i. Cleveland was bombarded for stopping “**Manifest Destiny**,” but his actions proved to be honorable for him and America.
- IV. Cubans Rise in Revolt
 - 1. In 1895, **Cuba** revolted against Spain, citing years of misrule, and the Cubans torched their sugar cane fields in hopes that such destruction would either make Spain leave or America interfere (the American tariff of 1894 had raised prices on it anyway).
 - i. Sure enough, America supported Cuba, and the situation worsened when Spanish **General Weyler** came to Cuba to crush the revolt and ended up putting many civilians into concentration camps that were terrible and killed many.
 - ii. The American public clamored for action, but Cleveland would do nothing.
- V. The Mystery of the *Maine* Explosion
 - 1. The yellow presses competed against each other to come up with more sensational stories, and Hearst even sent artist **Frederick Remington** to draw pictures of often-fictional atrocities
 - i. Example, he drew Spanish officials brutally stripping and searching an American woman, when in reality, Spanish women, not men, did such acts.
 - 2. Then, suddenly, on February 9, 1898, a letter written by Spanish minister to Washington, **Dupuy de Lôme**, which totally ridiculed president McKinley was published by Hearst.
 - 3. On February 15th of that year, the U.S. battleship *Maine* mysteriously exploded in Havana Harbor, killing 260 officers and men.
 - i. America was war-mad, and Spain was about to be crushed.
 - 4. Actually, what really happened was that an accidental explosion had basically blown up the ship—a similar conclusion to what Spanish investigators suggested—but America ignored them.
- VI. McKinley Unleashes the Dogs of War
 - 1. The American public wanted war, but McKinley privately didn't like war or the violence, since he had been a Civil War major; in addition, **Mark Hanna** and Wall Street didn't want war because it would upset business.
 - 2. However, on April 11, 1898, the President sent his war message to Congress anyway, since: war with Spain seemed inevitable, America had to defend Democracy, opposing a war could split the Republican Party and America.
 - 3. Congress also adopted the **Teller Amendment**, which proclaimed that when the U.S. had overthrown Spanish misrule, it would give the Cubans their freedom.
- VII. Dewey's May Day Victory at Manila
 - 1. On paper, at least, the Spanish had the advantage over the U.S., since it had more troops and a supposedly better army, as well as younger (less senile) generals.
 - 2. Navy Secretary **John D. Long** and his assistant secretary, **Theodore Roosevelt** had modernized the U.S. navy, making it sleek and sharp.

- i. On February 25, 1898, Roosevelt cabled Commodore **George Dewey**, commanding the **American Asiatic Squadron** at **Hong Kong**, and told him to take over the Philippines.
 - ii. Dewey did so brilliantly, completely taking over the islands from the Spanish.
- VIII. Unexpected Imperialistic Plums
 - 1. Dewey had naval control, but he could not storm the islands and its fortresses, so he had to wait for reinforcements, but meanwhile, other nations were moving their ships into Manila Harbor to protect their men.
 - i. The German navy defied American blockade regulations, and Dewey threatened the navy commander with war, but luckily, this episode blew over, due in part to the British assistance of America.
 - 2. Finally, on August 13, 1898, American troops arrived and captured Manila, collaborating with Filipino insurgents, led by **Emilio Aguinaldo**, to overthrow the Spanish rulers.
 - 3. On July 7, 1898, the U.S. annexed Hawaii (so that it could use the islands to support Dewey, supposedly), and Hawaii received full territorial status in 1900.
- IX. The Confused Invasion of Cuba
 - 1. The Spanish sent warships to Cuba, panicking Americans on the Eastern seaboard, and the fleet, commanded by **Admiral Cervera**, found refuge in Santiago harbor, Cuba.
 - i. Then, it was promptly blockaded by a better American force.
 - 2. American ground troops, led by fat General **William R. Shafter**, were ill-prepared for combat in the tropical environment (i.e. they had woolen long underwear).
 - 3. The "**Rough Riders**," a regiment of volunteers led by Theodore Roosevelt and Colonel **Leonard Wood**, rushed to Cuba and battled at El Caney San Juan Hill.
 - i. TR had lots of fun.
- X. Curtains for Spain in America
 - 1. Admiral Cervera was finally ordered to fight the American fleet, and his fleet was destroyed.
 - 2. On land, the American army, commanded by General **Nelson A. Miles**, met little resistance as they took over **Puerto Rico**.
 - 3. Soon afterwards, on August 12, 1898, Spain signed an armistice.
 - 4. Note that if the Spaniards had held out for a few more months, they might have won, for the American army was plagued with dysentery, typhoid, and yellow fever.
 - i. Finally, TR wrote a "round-robin" letter demanded that the U.S. government take the troops out before they all died.
- XI. McKinley Heeds Duty, Destiny, and Dollars
 - 1. In negotiations in Paris, America got **Guam** and Puerto Rico and freed Cuba, but the Philippines were a tough problem, since America couldn't honorably give it back to Spain after decades of misrule, but the U.S. couldn't just take it like an imperialistic nation.
 - 2. Finally, McKinley decided to keep the Philippines, even though they had been taken one day *after* the end of the war, but he did so because of popular public opinion, not to mention the urging of his wife, an invalid.
 - i. The U.S. paid \$20 million for the islands.
- XII. America's Course (Curse?) of Empire
 - 1. Upon the U.S. taking of the Philippines, uproar broke out, since until now, the United States had mostly acquired territory from the American continent, and even with Alaska, Hawaii, and the other scattered islands, there weren't many people living there.
 - 2. The **Anti-Imperialist League** sprang into being, firmly opposed to this new imperialism of America, and its members included **Mark Twain**, **William James**, **Samuel Gompers**, and **Andrew Carnegie**.

- i. Even the Filipinos wanted freedom, and denying that to them was un-American.
3. However, expansionists cried that the Philippines could become another Hong Kong.
 - i. British writer **Rudyard Kipling** wrote about “The White Man’s Burden,” urging America to keep the Philippines and “civilize them.”
4. In the Senate, the treaty almost was not passed, but finally, **William Jennings Bryan** argued for its passage, saying that the sooner the treaty was passed, the sooner the U.S. could get rid of the Philippines; the treaty passed by ONE VOTE.

XIII. Perplexities in Puerto Rico and Cuba

1. The Foraker Act of 1900 gave Puerto Ricans a limited degree of popular government, and in 1917, Congress granted Puerto Ricans full American citizenship.
 - i. U.S. help also transformed Puerto Rico and worked wonders in sanitation, transportation, beauty, and education.
2. In the *Insular Cases*, the Supreme Court barely ruled that the Constitution did not have full authority on how to deal with the islands (Cuba and Puerto Rico), essentially letting Congress do whatever it wanted with them.
3. America could not improve Cuba that much, other than getting rid of yellow fever with the help of General Leonard Wood and Dr. **Walter Reed**.
4. In 1902, the U.S. did indeed walk away from Cuba, but it also encouraged Cuba to write and pass the **Platt Amendment**, which became their constitution.
 - i. This said that the U.S. could intervene and restore order in case of anarchy, that the U.S. could trade freely with Cuba, and that the U.S. could get two bays for naval bases, notably **Guantanamo Bay**.

XIV. New Horizons in Two Hemispheres

1. The **Spanish-American War** lasted only 113 days and affirmed America’s presence as a world power.
2. However, America’s actions after the war made its German rival jealous and its Latin American neighbors suspicious.
3. Finally, one of the happiest results of the war was the closing of the bloody chasm between the U.S. North and South, which had been formed in the Civil War.
 - i. General **Joseph Wheeler** was given a command in Cuba.