

Introduction

After the Civil War, the government limited its dealings with European countries for two reasons. One, it did not trust them because during the Civil War, both Great Britain and France had supported the Confederacy. Two, the United States was busy building industries and settling land between the Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean. After the United States settled the land between the oceans, however, the government began to expand its interests to the countries and territories in Latin American and the Pacific Ocean. Many Americans believed in **manifest destiny**, a doctrine that pushed them to acquire all the land on the continent. This new attitude would lead the United States to become a world power.



The Civil War ends.

Reasons the United States Wanted Colonies

Imperialism

The first Americans to take an interest in expanding the United States to other countries and territories were people who had a strong belief in **nationalism**. Because of their extreme loyalty and devotion to the United States, they wanted to increase their country's power in the world. They felt that other countries should be taught to live as Americans lived. This meant establishing *colonies*. A region or country that is controlled by another country is called a **colony**.

Many Americans, however, did not want to control or rule other territories and their people. These Americans appreciated their own past. The United States had once been a colony of England and had to fight for its own independence.

By 1895, however, the reasons for practicing **imperialism**—the policy of extending one's rule over other countries by establishing colonies—began to change. European countries were quickly turning many undeveloped countries into their colonies. The United States decided that if it was to be competitive in world markets, it too would need to establish colonies.

New Markets

American farmers and businesses were producing more goods than Americans could buy. This surplus of goods, particularly in cotton, wheat, tobacco, and machinery, was made possible by the settlement of farms in the West. Labor-saving machines invented during the Industrial Revolution also helped build the surplus. Farmers and businessmen needed new markets in which to sell their surplus goods. New markets throughout the world would mean increased wealth for American producers of goods.

Natural Resources

The United States was rich in natural resources such as good soil, oil, and iron ore. However, some businessmen realized that this abundance of resources would one day run out. They saw imperialism as a way to guarantee enough resources, or **raw materials**, for the future of their industries and guaranteed markets to sell American-made goods.



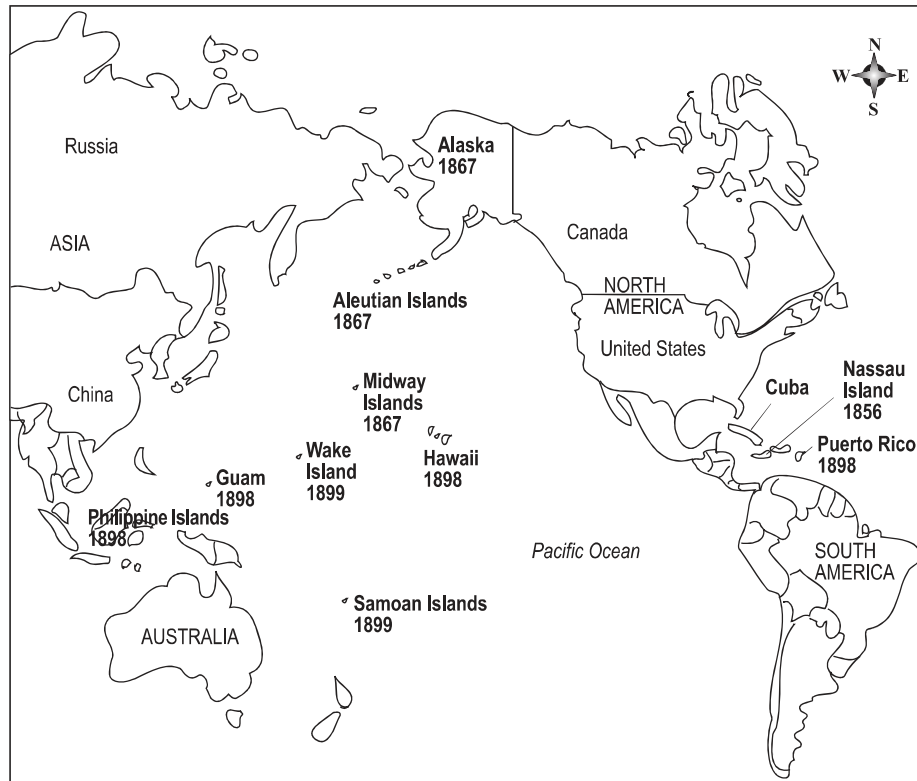
The United States was rich in natural resources such as good soil for farming.

The United States Gains Colonies

A commitment to manifest destiny, imperialism, and the need for new markets motivated the United States to expand into new territories. As early as the 1850s, attempts were made to acquire land outside the United States. Several times Americans tried, but failed, to buy Cuba and Hawaii for naval bases. Ultimately, some new territories were acquired through negotiations. Other new territories were acquired as the result of war.

Alaska

Alaska became the first colony of the United States in 1867. United States Secretary of State *William Seward* negotiated a deal to purchase Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million. Secretary Seward thought Alaska offered valuable resources and would be an important military base. Some people thought Alaska was frozen, worthless land. They made fun of Seward's purchase and called Alaska **Seward's Folly** and "Seward's Icebox." Public opinion changed, however, when gold and oil were discovered in Alaska in 1897. Alaska was a United States territory for almost 100 years. It became the nation's 49th state in 1959.



United States Territorial Expansion to 1900 with Dates of Acquisitions

Hawaiian Islands

By the late 1700s, American ships frequently crossed the Pacific Ocean. They made stops in the Hawaiian Islands for fresh food and water on trips to and from China. Later, American missionaries and businessmen settled there. In 1887 the United States government established a naval base at **Pearl Harbor**.



President Grover Cleveland

By 1891 American businessmen in Hawaii wanted to overthrow the Hawaiian government. And in 1893, the American minister raised the United States flag and its military enforced its rule. Many Americans saw this as a misuse of the military, and President *Grover Cleveland* lowered the flag and returned power to Hawaii's queen. However, the next President, *William McKinley*, made Hawaii a United States possession, or colony, in 1898.



President William McKinley

That year all Hawaiians were made United States citizens. Sixty-one years later in 1959, Hawaii became the 50th state to join the Union. (Hawaii and Alaska were admitted in the same year, Alaska in January and Hawaii in August.)

Samoa

The islands of Samoa, also in the Pacific Ocean, were another stopover for American ships. These islands also came under United States control. In 1893, the United States and Samoan chiefs signed an agreement allowing the United States to use the harbor at Pago Pago for fueling stations for their steam-powered ships. Germany and Great Britain also wanted the Samoan Islands. To avoid a war, diplomats met and divided the islands. Some of the Samoan Islands became a United States colony called American Samoa.

Cuba and the Spanish-American War

Cuba is an island in the Gulf of Mexico only 90 miles south of Florida. Although Cuba was a Spanish colony, Spain allowed Americans to do business there. By 1890 American firms had invested over \$50 million in Cuban sugar. The Spanish treated Cubans poorly. Cubans worked for low wages. In response to the poor treatment and low wages, the Cubans **revolted** many times against Spanish rule. In 1895 the Cubans declared their independence from Spain. The Spanish put down the revolt by placing many Cubans in concentrations camps, where many innocent people died of disease and starvation. The Spanish tortured the Cuban rebels they captured.

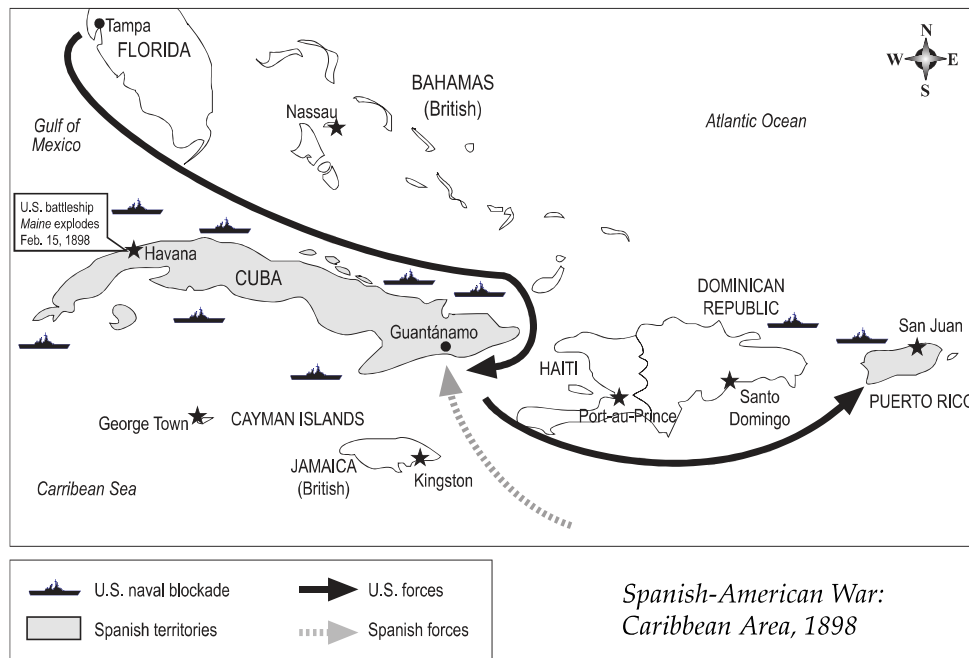
When American newspapers published stories about Spain's cruelty to the Cubans, American readers began to sympathize with the Cubans. The stories also caused American businesses to worry about their investments in Cuba. They wanted their property protected from destruction by the fighting between Cubans and the Spanish. President McKinley sent a battleship, the *USS Maine*, to Cuba to protect property of Americans. On February 15, 1898, the *Maine* was destroyed by an explosion. No one was sure what caused the blast; however the Spanish were blamed for it. The American press demanded war with Spain, and the slogan "Remember the *Maine*" became popular.

At first, President McKinley did not want to go to war with Spain. But finally, on April 11, 1898, he asked Congress to declare war. This war was called the *Spanish-American War*. The United States and Spain fought battles in Cuba and in the Philippine Islands, another Spanish colony in the Pacific Ocean.

It took the United States only four months to defeat the Spanish in the Spanish-American War. More American soldiers died from disease in American training camps than in battle. After this war, other nations perceived the United States as a world power.

The United States Colonial Policy

At the war's end, Cuba gained its independence from Spain. Also, the United States gained new territories from Spain. These included Puerto Rico, an island in the Atlantic Ocean, the Philippine Islands and Guam, both in the Pacific Ocean. The American government had to develop a **colonial policy** to govern these territories. That is, it had to decide how to treat its new colonies and the citizens of those new lands.



After the Spanish-American War, the United States became Cuba's protector. The United States Army helped Cuba recover from the war, building schools and roads. The American government told Cuba to establish a democratic government, but problems soon developed.

Many Cubans did not like having the United States Army in Cuba. They wanted to have a free and independent country. But there were American-owned businesses and property in Cuba, and the United States government wanted to make sure American interests were safe. Cuba was not granted complete independence until 1934. Since then, Cuba has experienced many political problems. (Since 1959, it has had a Communist government ruled by Fidel Castro.)

Current Status of American Colonies

The end of the 19th century saw the United States gain many new lands that became colonies. Some, like Guam and American Samoa, maintained their status as possessions. Some gained independence, like the Philippines in 1946. Puerto Rico is still a territory. The people living there are citizens of the United States but get to control their own government. Some territories (Alaska and Hawaii) ultimately became states.

Summary

After the United States settled the continental United States, the country began to look beyond its boundaries and expand its interests. It wanted to colonize other countries and territories in the Caribbean, South America, and the Pacific. These colonies would be markets for the surplus of goods farmers and businesses were producing and provide raw materials for American businesses.

The defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American War (1898) made the United States a world power. It gained new territories from Spain that it used for markets and military bases. The United States has since granted independence to many of these colonies.