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# AMERICA REFORMED



Progressives and Progressivisms  
1890s-1920s

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Building the Panama Canal (1906). Source: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-96773

Vino del mar, a Panamá,  
a trabajar en la selva y a construir el Canal.  
Le pagaron en plata  
al hombre blanco le pagaron en oro  
y la fiebre amarilla se llevó el alma de todos.

Mi abuelito fue un hombre, Antillano,  
y vivió y murió en Panamá.

Hombre Antillano, quiero reconocer tu  
voluntad de hierro, tu sacrificio.  
Diste la vida para construir un camino  
que uniese a los océanos  
dentra del corazón de Panamá.

El tiempo ha transcurrido  
pero la discriminación continúa;  
debemos trabajar juntos hasta encontrarle  
una cura.

Hombre Antillano, vino del Caribe y encontró  
una casa y un nuevo comienzo en Panamá.  
Mi abuelito fue un hombre, Antillano,  
y vivió y murió en Panamá.

He came from the sea, to Panama  
to work in the jungle and to build a Canal.  
They paid you in silver  
and paid the white man in gold  
and the yellow fever took the souls of all.

My grandfather was a West Indian man,  
and he lived and died in Panama.

West Indian man, I want to recognize your  
iron will, your sacrifice.  
You gave your life to build a road  
that united the oceans  
through the heart of Panama.

Time has passed  
but discrimination continues;  
we have to work together to find  
a cure.

West Indian man, came from the Caribbean and found  
a home and a new beginning in Panama.  
My grandfather was a West Indian man,  
and he lived and died in Panama.\*

*Hombre Antillano* by Rubén Blades

In 1914, the first ships passed through the Panama Canal. Opening the canal enhanced the American quest to become the leading economic power in the world. The transcontinental railroad lines had opened overland transport from coast to coast. How to move goods quickly by sea had remained a problem. Now the canal united the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Because the United States also controlled the strip of land along either side of the canal, the so-called Panama Canal Zone, 1914 also culminated almost two decades of the country's efforts to control the Caribbean and perhaps even establish hegemony over economic trade and development from the Canadian border to the tip of Central America and throughout the surrounding waters. Controlling the canal also gave U.S. naval ships unfettered and quick passage between the two coasts and out onto the oceans. But uniting the two oceans also meant, as Rubén Blades put it in his song to his grandfather, expropriating other peoples' lands and exploiting them for the benefit of U.S. development.

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## Bringing Democracy to the World

We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race,  
trustee, under God, of the civilization of the world.

—SENATOR ALBERT BEVERIDGE, 1900

BEFORE THE END of the nineteenth century, the United States did not have a foreign policy as we would think of it today. Since the time of President Jefferson, the United States had eschewed "entangling" foreign alliances, practicing isolationism rather than foreign affairs. There was tariff policy, but that was developed domestically, not in conjunction with other countries. There were occasional foreign spats through the nineteenth century, including, of course, the War of 1812. Treaties were signed with other countries as the need developed. There had been "incidents" to which the United States had had to respond, as when groups of Americans tried to invade Canada or when several Italian immigrants were lynched in New Orleans in 1891 and there had been a brief severing of diplomatic relations with Italy. The famous "54°40' or fight" sloganeering of the 1844 presidential campaign over the northern border of the United States had ended in a peaceful treaty agreement with England. President Monroe in 1823 had promulgated the "Monroe Doctrine" that warned European powers to refrain from any further ventures into the Western Hemisphere, and conflicts over the southern borders had produced the 1848 war with Mexico. The acquisition of the lower pieces of Arizona and New Mexico with the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 completed the continental United States. That same year, the U.S. Navy, under the command of Admiral Matthew Perry, sailed into Tokyo Bay on a mission to "open" Japan to foreign trade. Since the 1840s, the United States had declared that it had a "special relationship" with the Hawai'ian Islands, a situation developed from the settlement there of white businessmen.

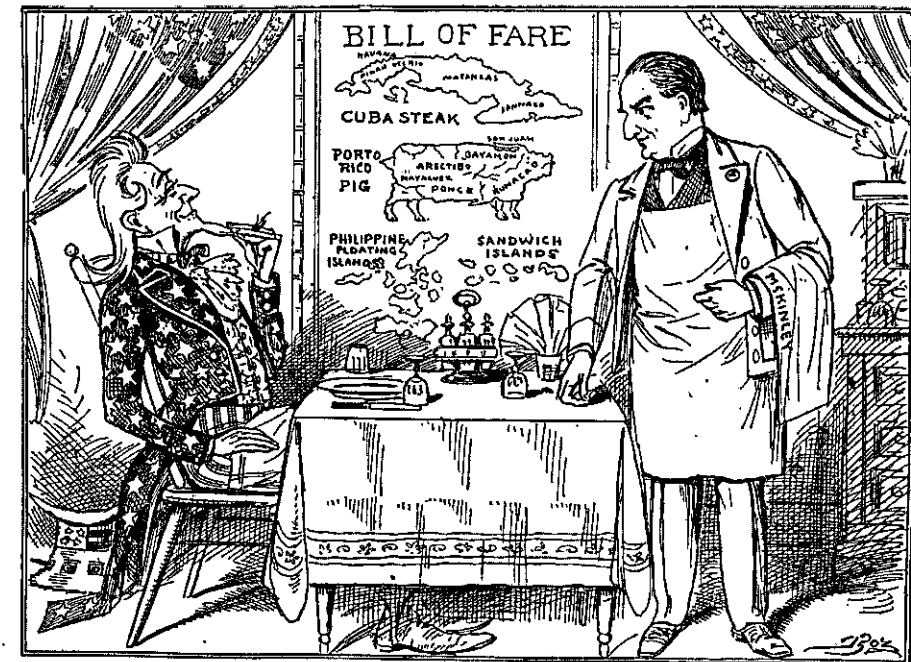
Yet, there was no official foreign policy apparatus inside the State Department. Foreign affairs were largely those incidents to which the United States responded on a need-to basis. In fact, the distinction that nineteenth-century Americans had made between foreign and domestic affairs, and how they thought of foreign affairs, was institutionalized in different cabinet positions: secretary of state, secretary of war, and secretary of the navy. Besides, Americans had been so busy pushing West and building the country that there seemed no need to pay much attention to the rest of the world. Economic growth, however, demanded constant expansion and as the western United States became settled and "civilized," the doctrine of "manifest destiny" that had been formulated to justify conquest of the continental territory offered the possibility of justifying foreign expansion. Bringing democracy to the world became the justification for economic expansion. As white Americans had justified seizing Indian territories to "civilize" these people, they now justified expanding democracy as their motive for colonizing other groups.

In the Progressive Era, strategic foreign expansion and the policy to carry it out were driven by a combination of perceived economic needs, ideas of cultural and racial superiority, and progressive ideas about reforming the world. None of these can be separated from each other, because in every area where the United States moved out into the world, these three elements intertwined.<sup>1</sup> Whether they approved or not of specific foreign policy developments, progressives had to come to terms with the new role America was playing in the world. For some of them, this meant justifying imperialism as a "progressive" movement; for other progressives, it meant recognizing how the United States was now part of a larger world in which the ideas of progressivism ought to be applied internationally.

### MOVING THE BOUNDARIES

From 1898 to 1914, the United States engaged in an imperial endeavor outside its continental boundaries. Beginning with the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, the United States had looked upon the Caribbean basin as its own preserve. The western islands of the Caribbean were close to the eastern coast of the United States. Mexico bordered the United States and railroads had linked the two countries by the end of the century. The tiny nations of Central America were only a short distance from the southern United States by boat. The United

1. For overviews and interpretations of the development of U.S. foreign policy, see Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: The United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989); *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963; new edition, 1998); and "The 'Lion in the Path': The U.S. Emergence as a World Power," *Political Science Quarterly*, 101:5 (1986): 705-09 for analysis of foreign policy development by the late nineteenth century. See also, Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Robert L. Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900* (New York: Crowell, 1975); Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); and Robert E. Hannigan, *The New World Power: American Foreign Policy, 1898-1917* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

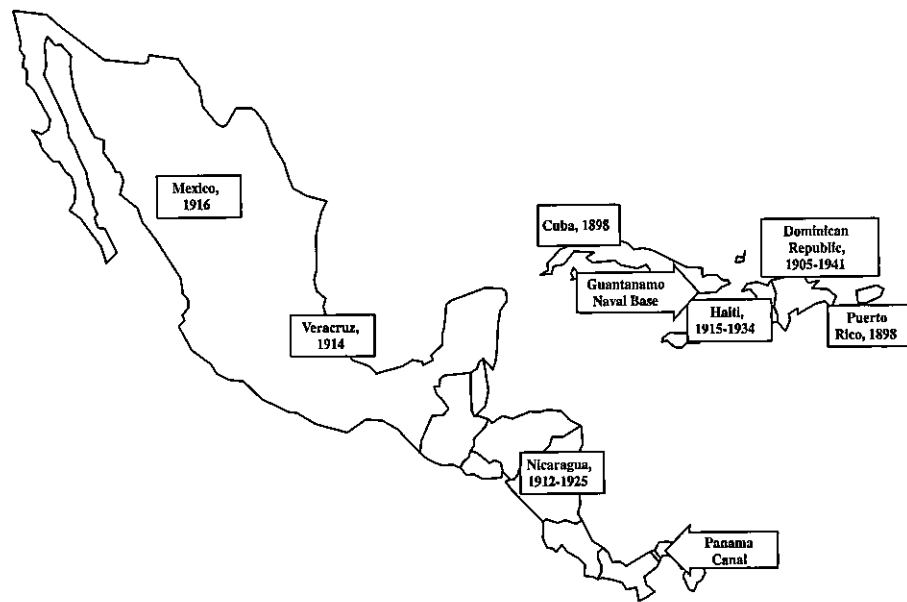


WELL, I HARDLY KNOW WHICH TO TAKE FIRST!

McKinley Gobbles It Up: Cuba Steak, Porto Rico Pig, Philippine Floating Islands (1898)  
Source: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-55890

States coveted the natural resources of the entire area: from sugar and tropical fruits to oil and coal. A stable Caribbean region would make it possible to exploit these resources for American production and would assure easy access to much of South America for goods produced in the United States. Roadblocks to U.S. desires, however, were European control of many Caribbean islands and indigenous revolutions there. Opportunity for change came with the insurrection of Cubans against Spanish rule in 1898. Using the explosion aboard the U.S. warship, *The Maine*, in Havana Harbor as a pretext for entering the insurrection on the side of the Cubans, a combination of U.S. military and Cuban insurgency defeated the Spaniards within a few months. Having won the "splendid little war,"<sup>2</sup> declared in support of the Cuban people's right to democratic freedom, the United States now had to construct a peace. Annexation was clearly out of the question, so the United States neatly finessed the question with the 1901 Platt Amendment to the peace treaty. With the amendment,

2. I am going to avoid using any name for this war. American historians comfortably called it the Spanish-American war for decades, but this designation has been challenged because it does not recognize that the United States also practiced war against the peoples it colonized. At its most expansive, it has lately been referred to as the Spanish-American-Filipino-Cuban-Puerto Rican War.



Caribbean Incursions, 1898–1941

Cuba agreed to accept limitations to its diplomatic and financial relations with other countries, gave the United States the right to intervene in its affairs when necessary to preserve order on the island, and leased Guantánamo to the United States for a naval base. Puerto Rico came in the bargain: the autonomous government that had been established by its citizens' rebellion against Spain was abolished, the island was thereafter declared a U.S. territory, and its residents were granted U.S. citizenship in 1917. Spaniards living on the island, on the other hand, had been granted immediate citizenship, a reflection of the racial thinking that was in vogue during the Progressive Era.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this consolidation of U.S. interests in Cuba and Puerto Rico, the Caribbean basin remained unstable. Unrest in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Mexico, for example, threatened U.S. interests. Across the following years, the United States sent troops into these areas to restore order. At times the United States even took control of a country's assets, as was the case with the Dominican Republic in 1905: from 1916 to 1922, the Department of the Navy actually governed that country. The building of the Panama Canal was the crowning jewel in dominating the Caribbean and securing the area for American commerce.<sup>4</sup>

3. The lease to Guantánamo was renewed in 1934 and can only be abrogated with the consent of both countries. Thus, the United States maintains its presence on Cuban soil to this day. For Puerto Rico, see Michael González-Cruz, "The U.S. Invasion of Puerto Rico: Occupation and Resistance to the Colonial State, 1898 to the Present," *Latin American Perspectives*, 25 (September 1998): 7–26.

4. Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 174, and Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877–1919* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 174.

On the Pacific side of the country, American sugar plantation owners who had settled in Hawai'i pressured Congress to annex the islands permanently to the United States in order to guarantee economic stability for business interests. In 1893, these businessmen—aided by a landing force of U.S. sailors and marines—seized control of the islands from Queen Lili'uokalani. Congress was reluctant to annex the islands and inclined toward heeding the petitions for independence submitted to it by the Hawai'ian Patriotic Leagues (one male, one female). In the wake of other events in 1898, however, President McKinley succeeding in securing passage of legislation permanently annexing them. Two years later, Hawai'i was declared a territory of the United States. Unlike the rhetoric that would surround the coming conquest of the Philippines, the reasons for annexing Hawai'i were bluntly economic: "We need Hawaii just as much and a great deal more than we did California. It is manifest destiny," President McKinley declared.<sup>5</sup>

Before he resigned his position as assistant secretary of the Navy to be commissioned in the military and bring his "Rough Riders" to Cuba, Theodore Roosevelt launched an initiative to seize the Philippines from Spain. U.S. commercial ships needed ports in Pacific islands where they could refuel for their long journeys across that ocean. Annexing Hawai'i was a stepping-stone across the Pacific.<sup>6</sup> If Spain could be ousted from its possessions in that part of the world, a piecemeal approach to secure commerce in the Pacific would no longer be necessary. Admiral George Dewey, commander of the Pacific Fleet, quickly defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay. The United States took control of the Philippines, and along with them secured the other Spanish possession of Guam, an island located between Hawai'i and the Philippines. The Philippines were officially annexed to the United States in 1899. Ideas about race were prominent in arguments about this act of imperialism. Filipinos were declared ignorant, barbaric, degenerate, and semicivilized people whose seven-year rebellion against American occupation was "proof" that they were incapable of self-government. Mark Twain, always the satirist but this time with an edge of despair, wrote of the Philippines:

Extending the Blessings of Civilization to our Brother who Sits in Darkness has been a good trade and has paid well. . . . But the "Blessings of Civilization" ("JUSTICE, CHRISTIANITY, EDUCATION. . . and so on") are just an outside cover. . . . The real contents (the "Actual Thing") of Western civilization are the poverty of New York slums and the slaughter in South Africa and the Philippines, where "Civilization" was being resisted. . . . Is there no salvation for us but to adopt Civilization and lift ourselves down to its level?<sup>7</sup>

5. Copies of the 556-page petitions with more than 21,000 signatures of native Hawai'ians are preserved at the National Archives and Records Administration, in Records of the U.S. Senate, Record Group 46. McKinley quoted in Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 150.

6. The United States occupied the uninhabited Midway Islands in 1867; it negotiated a treaty with Germany in 1899 to occupy half of the Samoan islands, including the port of Pago Pago, which is now called American Samoa.

7. Mark Twain, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," *The North American Review* (February 1901), quoted in Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 156.

The ultimate target of Pacific expansion was Asia. Despite the obvious cynicism of the old adage penned by nineteenth-century French author Alphonse Karr, "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" ("the more things change, the more they stay the same"), when it comes to China the adage holds a certain truth. At the turn to the twentieth century, China was viewed as an enormous marketplace, just as it is today. But European powers already controlled large portions of China, and Japan was moving in as well. To confront the China "problem," U.S. Secretary of State John Hay proposed to these various powers the "Open Door Policy" under which all nations would have a right to free trade with China. Although no one replied affirmatively to this initiative, Hay simply declared that his proposal had been accepted. In the wake of a nationalist uprising in China—the so-called Boxer Rebellion—and fearing Russian encroachment into China, President McKinley in 1900 sent 55,000 U.S. troops into China to help quell the rebellion. From that point, the United States became inextricably bound up in Asian affairs. When President Roosevelt brokered the peace to the Russo-Japanese War (for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize), he further altered the political and economic landscape of Asia. The following year a treaty between the United States and Japan gave the latter a free hand in Korea in exchange for the former's control of the Philippines.<sup>8</sup>

The final frontier of U.S. foreign policy in the early years of the century was a detente of sorts with England. Despite ongoing friction between the United States and England since the revolutionary era, now leading politicians and businessmen in both countries were speaking of a common political, cultural, and economic heritage that made the two countries natural allies. England had been the predominant world power, controlling an empire that stretched across every continent. But its resources were stretched thin trying to maintain the empire, and the United States was looking to overtake it as the world's economic powerhouse. As the two countries were being drawn closer together economically, their individual foreign actions influenced one another. When Secretary of State Hay informed the British of U.S. intentions to go to war against Spain, England replied that it would be "guided [on Cuban issues] by the wishes of the President."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the United States maintained a neutral stance during the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa (1899–1902), even though much popular opinion sided with the Boers as defenders of their liberty against British economic imperialism. What else could the United States do? If it criticized British policy in South Africa, it would leave itself wide open for criticism of its policies in the Caribbean and Pacific.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Britain and the United States were in the process of signing treaties of agreement and noninterference in each other's affairs. In the 1901 Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, for instance, Britain acknowledged the rights of the United States to build the Panama Canal. In return, the United States agreed to provide equal access to the canal for ships of all nations. When the Taft admin-

8. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism*, 180–81.

9. Thomas Paterson, "United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War," *The History Teacher*, 29 (May 1996): 341–61, quote from 344.

10. Richard B. Mulanax, *The Boer War in American Politics and Diplomacy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994).

istration mandated lower tolls for U.S. ships, England vigorously protested that this violated the treaty. The Wilson government had to deal with this protest and convinced Congress to repeal this legislation. But U.S. relations with England were not just over the canal and that particular treaty. Wilson believed it imperative to satisfy England on this issue because England was unhappy with U.S. involvement in Mexican affairs that had begun in the Taft administration. Repeal of exemptions for American ships, Wilson hoped, would solidify Anglo-American relations.<sup>11</sup>

## EXPANSIONISM AND PROGRESSIVISM

This imperial expansionism was driven by a combination (and some might say a perversion) of progressive ideas. Imperialism was an extension of the movement to order and regulate society, economics, and government. The mission of civilization that had rationalized treatment of Native Americans now was internationalized and applied to people throughout the world. Regulation of other societies, many Americans now believed, would make the world more orderly for Americans. The urge to foster everlasting opportunity and progress for the American people and for American capitalism underlay all foreign policy development. Historians have at times tried to disentangle the various elements of progressivism from one another in domestic as well as foreign developments.<sup>12</sup> In the end, the development and implementation of foreign policy up to and including World War I exposes how American ideas of capitalism and democracy were becoming inextricably linked in the minds of so many people. The progressive urge to save capitalism by lessening its worst aspects would now be put into play around the world. Not all progressives agreed with this linkage, nor with expansionism. But behind this new imperialism lay many of their ideas.

### 1. Order, Regulation, and the World Economy

By 1900, the United States dominated the world market in production of items ranging from petroleum and agricultural machinery to sewing machines and cameras. Its foreign investments rose dramatically from \$700 million in 1897 to \$2.5 billion in 1908; and again to \$3.5 billion by 1914. By 1913, U.S. businesses controlled 78 percent of the silver, lead, and copper mines in Mexico, as well as 58 percent of its oil production. Total U.S. investment in Mexico alone was approaching \$1 billion.<sup>13</sup>

American interests in this new international marketplace needed protection from the vicissitudes of laissez-faire policies in the same way that regulation

11. Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: The New Freedom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), 304–12, gives an extensive accounting of the canal toll issue.

12. See Daniel Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History*, 10 (December 1982): 113–32, for an excellent discussion of why not to try to discern one element of "progressivism" in any of the era's reform movements.

13. LaFeber, "The 'Lion in the Path,'" 711, and Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 285.

and order had been needed for domestic production and markets. The 1912 Progressive Party platform had declared it "imperative to the welfare of our people that we enlarge and extend our foreign commerce." This statement was meant to bolster the platform's plank for two new battleships a year—hence the disillusionment of some of the women at the convention—and clearly signified that leading progressive men intended to use military power to regulate foreign relations. Theodore Roosevelt railed against President Taft for not intervening in Mexico to protect U.S. oil interests there. When Mexican revolutionaries overthrew the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and threatened American interests there, progressive followers of Roosevelt's New Nationalism called for massive intervention in order to "defend property and order against revolutionary chaos." When U.S. ships invaded the port of Veracruz in 1914, these progressive imperialists thought the action was insufficient. They rejoiced when Wilson finally sent the army into Mexico in 1916 under General "Black Jack" Pershing. Herbert Croly's 1909 book, *The Promise of American Life*, encapsulated why these progressives believed in the need to order and regulate the world:

The American nation, just in so far as it believes in its nationality and is ready to become more of a nation, must assume a more definite and a more responsible place in the international system. . . . In all probability no American international system will ever be established without the forcible pacification of one or more centers of disorder. . . . The United States has already made an effective beginning in this great work both by the pacification of Cuba and by the attempt to introduce a little order into the affairs of the turbulent Central American countries.

Croly's additional remark that the work had also been helped along by having a strong dictator in Mexico would presage the progressive support for U.S. intervention policies that would stabilize governments and economies in the Caribbean across the coming years.<sup>14</sup> In the same way, President Wilson would be able to draw many progressives into supporting U.S. entry into World War I, that "European" conflict. Patriotic nationalism demanded international interventionism to secure an orderly world and to defeat any forces that threatened to disrupt this order.

Ordering world affairs cannot be separated out from economic interests, of course. Because so many progressives had connected economic prosperity to progress on the domestic scene, it made sense to some of them to practice it internationally. While in office, President Taft consciously practiced "Dollar Diplomacy": if something on the international scene benefitted U.S. economic interests, his administration pursued it. The expansion of state-centered power as an aspect of progressive ideas about a domestic political economy, thus, was brought into foreign policy. New Nationalist Republicans, following Roosevelt's lead, envisioned this as bringing order and stability to the world of property and

14. See Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 42–43; and William Leuchtenberg, "Progressivism and Imperialism: The Progressive Movement and American Foreign Policy, 1898–1916," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 39 (December 1952): 483–504. Croly quoted 501–02, from Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), 209, 302–03.

economics. Other progressives, however, remained so focused on specific social problems that they paid little attention to foreign developments outside their area of interest. Right up to the moment that war erupted in August 1914, progressives working on housing reform, urban planning, workmen's compensation, etc., were traveling in Europe. They thought more about being "citizens of the progressive world" than about international expansionism. In their minds, social politics overshadowed nationalist politics, and it is probably true that these progressives did not have "an economic understanding of the path to war deep enough." When war broke out they were genuinely surprised and hard-pressed to understand why it had happened.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Expansion as Progress

Seeing expansion as an aspect of ordering and regulating the United States only partially accounts for the foreign policy pursued during the Progressive Era. Progress was becoming defined also as pushing American ideas and American values out into the world.

### *Moralism*

An element of moral superiority underlying Progressive Era foreign policy sometimes coincided with, sometimes fought against, involvement in other countries' affairs. Assessments that Woodrow Wilson and William Jennings Bryan believed themselves to be "missionaries of democracy," or that both Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson were "Christian moralists," are correct. And, as with most missionaries, these men believed in their own righteousness. It has been said of Wilson and Bryan that they were "inspired by the confidence that they knew better how to promote the peace and well being of other countries than did the leaders of those countries themselves." Such language had already been used in 1904 when Roosevelt promulgated his Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, claiming for the United States the right to exercise international police power to end chronic unrest or wrongdoing in the Western Hemisphere. Roosevelt had couched his so-called Roosevelt Corollary in moralistic terms:

All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship. If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. . . . It is a mere truism to say that every nation, whether in America or anywhere else, which desires to maintain its freedom, its independence, must ultimately realize that the right of such independence can not be separated from the responsibility of making good use of it.

15. Cyrus Veaser, *Dollar Diplomacy and America's Rise to Global Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Dawley, *Changing the World*, 102–03; and Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 268–75, quotes, 268 and 275. See also, Emily S. Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

In making the case for this interventionism, Roosevelt was referring to the United States as helping Cuba to become a "just and stable civilization" through the Platt Amendment.<sup>16</sup>

Wilson also spoke in moralistic terms when dealing with Mexico. When revolutionaries seized the Mexican government in 1913, he refused to follow the traditional practice of recognizing whatever government was in place. For Wilson, it was an immoral government, installed through revolution and violence. Despite pleas of railroad and oil interests that recognition and non-interference would protect U.S. economic interests in Mexico, he withheld recognition for all of 1913 and into 1914 while trying to force the Mexican government to hold new elections. Wilson did not believe that Mexicans were incapable of better self-government, as some of those Americans with economic interests in Mexico believed. "When properly directed," he said, "there is no people not fitted for self-government." Yet he justified his interference in Mexican affairs by saying that "I do not hold that the Mexican people are at present as capable of self-government as other people—ours for example." Secure in his own moral righteousness, Wilson believed it was his duty to bring better government to Mexico. When a minor incident involving an American warship gave Wilson the excuse to order U.S. marines and sailors to occupy the port city of Veracruz, he was so certain of his position's morality that he was surprised when the Mexicans seemed to forget their internecine quarrels and turned on the American invaders.<sup>17</sup> On a sliding scale of one to ten as to how negative were the ideas of progressive moralism—ten being the most negative—Wilson's can probably be judged at about a three. His deep roots in Protestantism—his father was a minister—had imbued him with a messianic sensibility. This does not excuse his paternalistic moralism toward other groups of people, but the genesis of such moralism was in social gospel progressivism. As the religious-based morality of the social gospel had preached attaining the Kingdom of God on earth for the United States, Wilson now sought to bring the Kingdom of God to the entire world.<sup>18</sup>

### *Mission of Civilization*

Other progressives turned foreign policy into a mission to civilize other people by conquering them, such as had been the idea behind "civilizing" the Native Americans. As with Native Americans, the idea of civilizing them generally meant taking their land and occupying them more for U.S. benefit than for their own. The sardonic Mark Twain had a quip for this tendency also: "There must be two Americas: one that sets the captive free and one that takes a once-captive's new freedom away from him."<sup>19</sup>

16. Dawley, *Changing the World*, 79; Link, *The New Freedom*, 278; President Theodore Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress," December 6, 1904.

17. Link, *The New Freedom*, 394.

18. See John Morton Blum, *Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956) and Malcolm D. Magee, "Above the Mountains of the Earth: The American Presbyterian Roots of Woodrow Wilson's Foreign Policy" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 2004).

19. Twain quoted in Dawley, *Changing the World*, 18.

The first articulation of this policy came with the occupation of the Philippines after the "splendid little war" ended in 1898. Senator Albert Beveridge was a fervent progressive whose causes included the abolition of child labor, the eight-hour day for labor, and government regulation of corporations. Beveridge also ardently supported annexing the Philippines, providing instructive example of how an arch-progressive could also promote imperialism by drawing upon the former crusades to justify the latter through an amalgam of racist ideology, ideas about the greatness of American democracy, and economic progress. As soon as Spain surrendered in 1898, Congress debated whether to occupy or to leave the Philippines. Beveridge immediately opted for occupation: "The opposition tells us that we ought not to rule a people without their consent. I answer, the rule of liberty, that all just governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed, applies only to those who are capable of self-government," he declared in a public speech. Two years later, in the midst of the Filipino uprising against the occupation, Beveridge again compared the Filipino people to children not capable of self-government, but now he went a bit further: "They are not capable of self-government. How could they be? They are not of a self-governing race. They are Orientals, Malays . . ." His racial thinking, messianic belief in American democracy, and the ideas of progress all came tumbling out in this speech:

Mr. President, this question is . . . elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-administration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. . . . And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America . . . We are trustees of the world's progress.

The average American may not have heard Beveridge's speeches, but a concrete vision was presented to the visitors to the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. The exhibit dedicated to the Philippines there was intended to show that Filipinos were not yet ready for self-government.<sup>20</sup>

Populist crusader Bryan challenged Beveridge's ideas of a divine mission of civilization in his speech to the Democratic Convention of 1900. "If true Christianity consists of carrying out in our daily lives the teachings of Christ," he declared, "who will say that we are commanded to civilize with dynamite and proselyte with the sword?"<sup>21</sup> Yet, Bryan's entire speech shows that he was most concerned that imperialism would benefit big business and would impose intolerable military burdens on farmers and workers to maintain an empire. After several upheavals in the Caribbean, Bryan, as secretary of state

20. Leuchtenberg, "Progressivism and Imperialism," 484 for first Beveridge quote. Beveridge speech from *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., 704-12. See also, George F. Becker, "Conditions Requisite to Our Success in the Philippine Islands," address delivered before the American Geographical Society, February 20, 1901, *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* (1901): 112-23 for similar ideas; and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 227 for discussion of the 1904 Fair.

21. William Jennings Bryan, *Speeches* (New York, 1909).

under Wilson, even gave up his anti-imperialist stance. He supported intervention in Latin American countries in order to be a benevolent tutor in the arts of self-government to backward people.<sup>22</sup> Other progressives responded less enthusiastically to imperialist conquest and intervention, but many of them shared the common belief that other groups of people were not yet ready to assume responsibility for their own progress, let alone contribute to the progress of the world.

The Panama-Pacific International Exhibition, held in 1915 in San Francisco to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal, clearly represented the idea of expansion as progress. The locations of three major exhibitions held in the United States from 1876 to 1915 metaphorically celebrated the expansion of the continental United States: from Philadelphia to Chicago to San Francisco, the United States was complete from coast to coast.<sup>23</sup> The San Francisco Exhibition, held in a city on the rim of the Pacific, also celebrated the U.S. extension out into the world. The 1915 Exhibition transformed the 1893 Exposition's "Court of Honor" into the "Court of the Universe" on which western, but particularly American, progress was displayed. In other regards, the layout remained the same as before so that the hierarchy of civilization was clear to everyone attending. One of the main entrances to the exhibition led along the Avenue of Progress, where the visitor could admire the "Palaces" of Mining and Metallurgy, Machinery, and Varied Industries. Another main entrance led into the "Court of the Universe" surrounded by the Agriculture, Liberal Arts, Manufactures, and Transportation "Palaces." The Panama Building was relegated to a small distant pavilion on a street named Cortez Way. Whether intentional or not, locating the Panama Building on a street named for a sixteenth-century European conqueror fittingly captured the American sense of western progress over lesser peoples.

#### "Americanizing" White Manhood

The connection of Americanism to racial ideals was quickly applied to foreign policy. It is easy to imagine that first in line to articulate this idea was Theodore Roosevelt. When the Filipinos revolted against occupation, Roosevelt urged a vigorous response to the conflict in a speech to a men's club in Chicago:

We cannot avoid the responsibilities that confront us in Hawaii, Cuba, Porto [sic] Rico, and the Philippines. . . . I preach to you, then, my countrymen, that our country calls not for the life of ease but for the life of strenuous endeavor. The twentieth century looms before us big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contexts where men must win at hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world.

Vigor, courage, strenuous work were the attributes of American manhood in Roosevelt's eyes. He and other like-minded Americans also compared this vigorous manhood against that of the men of the new colonies. Social geographer George Becker likened Filipinos to adolescents: "Any close observer finds among them a lack of the sense of responsibility and an absence of settled

22. See also, Dawley, *Changing the World*, 80–81.

23. The 1904 St. Louis Fair celebrated the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase.

principles of action not dissimilar to those with which we are familiar among American boys in their teens."<sup>24</sup>

Unlike Roosevelt, Becker was not an admirer of war. He and others who considered themselves progressives, however, justified imperialism by thinking about benevolent progress as brought to the world by the United States. This caused them, either consciously or unconsciously, to construct a mental image of occupied peoples as lesser human beings. The fact that the Cubans themselves had not only rebelled against Spain but had played a significant role in the success of their insurrection was all but ignored by the press and leading political figures at the time. American will and willingness to fight and die were celebrated as the cause of victory and the reason for America's growing dominance in the world. The press portrayed the Cuban rebels sympathetically. They were courageous men revolting against the despicable Spaniards, but the American military was depicted as rushing to their rescue. Most accounts at the time would also neglect to mention how many of the U.S. military in Cuba were African Americans and Native Americans. Four black units of the regular army were among the first troops readied for the Cuban campaign. Rather ironically, these were units that had been used in the west to subdue Native Americans.<sup>25</sup> But Roosevelt's flamboyance and gift for self-promotion—he was even given the honorific thereafter of "Colonel" after his 1898 exploits—attracted the American press in Cuba to report on his exploits more than those of the regular army.

Roosevelt had also had a hand in trying to build a "white" army, by which is meant not just skin color but ideals of white manhood. In his personal account of his exploits he explained how he had filled the Rough Riders with men from the West and Southwest, those who came from the areas of the country "most recently won over to white civilization." Following his theory of "hybridity" he mixed in with them men from other European backgrounds and some mixed-blood Indians. He refused to admit any Asian or African American volunteers to the Rough Riders. Moreover, the "honor" of American manhood was invoked to justify war in 1898, just as it would be in 1914 when Wilson intervened in Mexico. Senator Beveridge even argued that it was government's purpose to "manufacture manhood." Empire was the new frontier that could build character among (white) American men.<sup>26</sup>

24. Speech of Theodore Roosevelt to Chicago, 1899, printed in Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Company, 1903); and Becker, "Conditions Requisite to Our Success in the Philippine Islands," 116. But see also, Chapter 12 of this book for the different perspective of an American woman living in Mexico at the time.

25. Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., "Black Americans and the Quest for Empire, 1898–1903," *Journal of Southern History*, 38 (November 1972), 547. Thanks to Dawn Ottevaere for pointing me to this essay.

26. For invaluable insight into the aspect of manhood and Cuba and the Philippines, see Kristen L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 22–23, quoted in Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 27–28. See also, Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). For Cubans, see Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Albert Beveridge, *The Young Man and the World* (New York: Appleton, 1905), 338.