

## Imperialism

**FL SS.912.A.4.1** Analyze the major factors that drove United States imperialism.

**Vocabulary Builder:** **isolate** (AHY suh leyt) *v.* to set apart from others; **expand** (ik SPAND) *v.* to increase, grow, or enlarge; **ensure** (en SHOOR) *v.* to make sure; **disarray** (dis uh REY) *n.* disorder; confusion

---

For most of its early history, the United States had an isolationist foreign policy. In the late 1800s, the United States began to change its policy toward the rest of the world. Americans had seen European countries expand their influence through imperialism. Imperialism is when one country has political, military, and economic control over other nations. Some countries use imperialism to gain precious resources. The United States had plenty of resources. What the United States needed were markets for U.S. manufactured goods. U.S. leaders took steps to ensure American growth in international trade in this first era of a true “global economy.”

### Open Door Policy

By 1899, China was in political, economic, and military disarray. Because China was weak, European countries were able to divide China into spheres of influence. A sphere of influence is an area where a country has special access to ports and trade. Countries like Britain, France, Germany, and Russia each had their own sphere. These countries wanted spheres of influence because China had a huge population. This meant that there was a big market for imported goods. The United States was also interested in exporting its goods to China. But it did not have a sphere of influence. This threatened to limit U.S. trade with China. But the United States came up with a plan to get better access to Chinese trade, called the Open Door Policy. U.S. Secretary of State John Hay explained to European powers America’s Open Door Policy, which would give all countries equal trading rights in China. Hay stated that the United States wanted only to trade with China, not colonize the nation. The policy also urged all foreigners in China to obey Chinese law and honor fair competition in business. At first, European countries ignored the policy. But by 1900, European nations were following the agreement.

### Dollar Diplomacy

In addition to markets in East Asia, many Americans wanted influence in Latin America. As President, William Taft wanted to grow markets in Latin America. His strategy was called dollar diplomacy. Under this policy, Americans invested in Latin American banks and businesses. In exchange, President Taft promised investors that the federal government would step in if unrest in those countries threatened their investments.

**Check for Understanding** How did the Open Door Policy contribute to America’s growth as a world power?

## The United States Acquires Territories

**FL SS.912.A.4.2** Explain the motives of the United States acquisition of the territories.

**Vocabulary Builder:** **reform** (ri FORM) *n.* an improvement or change for the better

By the 1900s, the United States manufactured more goods than any single European country and was producing more goods than the American people could use. Manufacturing and agricultural industries began lobbying the government to find new foreign markets and keep foreign markets open for American products. The result was a race to find and acquire new territories.

The United States was becoming both a major economic and a military world power. America's new Open Door Policy in China required all people to follow Chinese law when in China. This policy helped extend U.S. influence in East Asia. The United States also gained influence over regions by annexing them. The Philippines and Hawaii were both annexed by the United States in the late 1800s. These new territories provided the United States both economic and military advantages.

U.S. INFLUENCE GROWS IN THE PACIFIC	
DATE	HAWAII
1800s	Americans build sugar cane plantations.
1887	American plantation owners convince the king of Hawaii to limit voting rights to only wealthy landowners. This constitutional amendment effectively makes white landowners the only people who can vote, even though they are a minority of the people in Hawaii.
1891	Queen Liliuokalani becomes the ruler of Hawaii and abolishes the constitution that had given white plantation owners voting rights.
1893	American planters overthrow the queen and seize power. They abolish, or end, the Hawaiian monarchy.
1898	The United States annexes Hawaii, making Hawaii an official U.S. territory.
THE PHILIPPINES	
1898	After victory in the Spanish American War, the United States purchases the Philippine Islands from Spain for \$20 million.
1901	William Howard Taft becomes governor of the Philippines and begins <u>reforms</u> . Congress passes the Jones Act in 1916, which promises future Philippine independence.

**Check for Understanding** How did the United States increase its influence over the Philippines and Hawaii?

## American Imperialism and the Spanish-American War

**FL SS.912.A.4.3** Examine causes, course, and consequences of the Spanish-American War.

**Vocabulary Builder:** **guerrilla** (ga RIL a) *adj.* method of warfare that uses quick surprise attacks or sabotage to harass a larger force; **inflamm** (in FLAYM) *v.* to excite an intense emotion, particularly anger

---

### Spanish-American War

At the end of the 19th century, Spanish-held territories included both Cuba and Puerto Rico. In 1895, Cubans launched a war for independence from Spain. Americans sympathized with the Cubans. The United States also wanted to protect its business interests in Cuba. Spain, with a larger army and greater resources than those of the Cuban forces, put down the rebellion. The Cuban rebels, however, did not give up. They turned to guerrilla tactics to harass the Spanish forces. The rebels also attacked passenger trains, public facilities, and other public and private property. In an attempt to end the rebellion, the Spanish general in Cuba forced Cubans into “reconcentration” camps. Many Cubans died in these camps from disease and malnutrition. The unrest in Cuba was endangering U.S. business interests. As a result, President McKinley sent the US battleship *Maine* to Havana harbor.

These events provided fuel for a rivalry between two American newspapers. Both papers tried to win readers with sensational stories. When the *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor, feature articles in these “yellow press” newspapers inflamed public opinion against Spain. After a naval investigation concluded that the *Maine* had been destroyed by a mine, both papers were quick to blame Spain and call for war. On April 11, 1898, President McKinley asked Congress for authority to fight Spain. Congress passed a joint war resolution which included the Teller Amendment, a promise that the United States would not keep Cuba as a territory.

While American troops were preparing to attack Spain in Cuba, General Dewey took the U.S. fleet to Manila harbor in the Philippines and destroyed the Spanish fleet. Following defeat of the Spanish in the Philippines, the United States proceeded to take the island of Guam. In Cuba, American troops defeated the Spanish at the battles for Kettle and San Juan hills. After a few more months of fighting, Spain surrendered. The peace treaty that ended the Spanish-American War granted Cuban independence. However, the United States passed laws saying it had a right to intervene in Cuba. Cuba was required to lease naval stations to the United States. The laws also prevented Cuba from signing treaties with other countries without American approval. The United States also retained possession of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico. As the twentieth century began, the United States was an imperial power.

**Check for Understanding** How did the Spanish-American War make the United States an imperial power?

## The Panama Canal

**FL SS.912.A.4.4** Analyze the economic, military, and security motivations of the United States to complete the Panama Canal as well as major obstacles involved in its construction.

**Vocabulary Builder:** **enhance** (in hanz) **v.** to improve or add to the desirable quality of something

---

One of the factors that motivated explorers even into the early nineteenth century was the search for a Northwest Passage, a mythical waterway linking the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. The Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804–1806) conclusively determined that no such passage existed. The only alternative to crossing the continent was a lengthy trek by ship around South America’s Cape Horn or a passage by ship to Panama with an approximately 50 mile passage by land to meet up with a ship on the Pacific Ocean side of Panama.

### Economic, Military, and Security Motivations for a Canal

The economic motivations for a canal were clear. The sea route was both lengthy and dangerous. A canal across the Isthmus of Panama would cut travel from New York to San Francisco by half to two-thirds. Shipping produce and people would be both faster and cheaper. In addition, the military would be able to move ships more quickly between the Atlantic and the Pacific. When the Spanish-American War began in 1898, it took the battleship *USS Oregon* 71 days to travel from San Francisco to Florida. A sea route through Central America would enhance the navy’s ability to protect America’s shores.

### Obstacles

The French began building a canal through Panama in the 1880s. They became bogged down by disease and technical difficulties. They were trying to push through a sea level canal to avoid the need for locks. In 1902, Congress authorized the purchase of the New Panama Canal Company’s rights and equipment if Colombia, the nation controlling Panama, would grant permission to the United States. In 1903, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt purchased the route for the canal in Panama, but the United States could not reach an agreement with Colombia. People in Panama who wanted to break away from Colombia saw their opportunity. Panama declared its independence. U.S. ships prevented Colombian troops from landing in Panama, and it became an independent country. The new country immediately granted the United States control over the “Canal Zone.” In exchange, the United States paid Panama \$10 million and an annual rent of \$250,000.

A second obstacle to construction of the canal was disease. Both malaria and yellow fever had killed French workers by the thousands. By the time the United States was beginning work on the canal, scientists had discovered the link between mosquitoes and diseases. Before the United States began construction of the canal, proper housing and sanitation were prepared for the workers. Dormitories and offices were equipped with screens to keep out mosquitoes. Other steps were taken to control mosquitoes, including draining off pooled water, spraying oil on the surface of water that could not be drained, mowing brush and grass near villages, and providing sufficient quinine to treat and prevent malaria.

Abandoning the French plan for a sea level canal, U.S. engineers settled on a system of dams and locks to take ships between the two oceans. A railroad was built to haul in men and construction materials and to haul out the tons of dirt dug and blasted out of the way. Newly designed heavy equipment such as steam-powered cranes and pneumatic power drills, rock crushers and cement mixers were used in the canal’s construction. The work was completed in 1914. The new route from the east to the west coast was some 8000 nautical miles shorter.

**Check for Understanding** Describe the importance of the Panama Canal and America’s role in its development.