

ALASKA



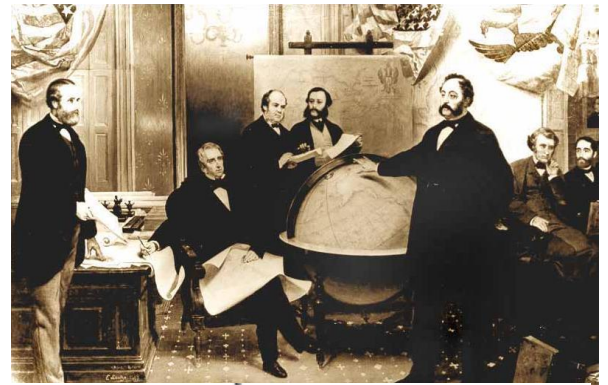
Background:

Seward Purchases Alaska

In 1867, Secretary of State William Seward bought Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million (less than 2 cents an acre!) Journalists scoffed at the purchase and referred to Alaska as “Seward’s Folly” and “Seward’s Icebox.” They wondered why the US would want a vast tundra of snow and ice 1,000 miles north of its border. But Seward’s purchase almost doubled the country’s size, and the “icebox” turned out to be rich in timber, oil, and other natural resources. Alaska also greatly expanded America’s reach across the Pacific. Scholars today see Seward’s purchase as a key milestone on America’s road to power.

Opposing Point of View: Why we should NOT have purchased Alaska

“Already, so it was said, we were burdened with territory we had no population to fill. The Indians within the present boundaries of the republic strained our power to govern aboriginal peoples. Could it be that we would now, with open eyes, seek to add to our difficulties by increasing the number of such peoples under our national care? The purchase price was small; the annual charges for administration, civil and military, would be yet greater, and continuing. The territory included in the proposed cession [Alaska] was not contiguous to the national domain [did not touch the rest of the US]. It lay away at an inconvenient and a dangerous distance. The treaty had been secretly prepared, and signed and foisted upon the country at one o’clock in the morning. It was a dark deed done in the night.... [Alaska] contained nothing of value but furbearing animals, and these had been hunted until they were nearly extinct. Except for the Aleutian Islands and a narrow strip of land extending along the southern coast the country would be not worth taking as a gift...” - Horace Greeley the *New York Tribune*



PHILIPPINES

Background:

The US backed the Filipinos in their fight for independence from Spain during the Spanish American War. After defeating the Spanish, America was given control of the Philippines in the Treaty of Paris. When the US refused to give the Philippines independence, Filipinos lead by Emilio Aguinaldo. Greatly outnumbered, the Filipinos launched a guerilla war against the US. The American military response was brutal: villages were burned, crops destroyed, suspected insurgents tortured and shot, and civilians gathered into overcrowded concentration camps. The US put down the insurgency and the Philippines did not become an independent nation until after WWII.

In favor of US control of the Philippines

"I wish you to kill and burn, the more you kill and burn the better you will please me" – order by US General Jacob Smith to American soldiers in the Philippines

"Let us all be frank. WE DO NOT WANT THE FILIPINOS. WE DO WANT THE PHILIPPINES. All of our troubles in this annexation matter have been caused by the presence in the Philippine Islands of the Filipinos... The more of them killed the better. It seems harsh. But they must yield before the superior race." – San Francisco *Argonaut*, 1902



1899. Uncle Sam (representing the United States), gets entangled with rope around a tree labeled "Imperialism" while trying to subdue a bucking colt labeled "Philippines" while a figure representing Spain walks off over the horizon. Reference to the United States taking control of the Philippines from Spain at end of the Spanish American War and the subsequent Philippine-American War.

In favor of independence for the Philippines

"There is the case of the Philippines. I have tried hard, and yet I cannot for the life of me comprehend how we got into that mess. Perhaps we could not have avoided it — perhaps it was inevitable that we should come to be fighting the natives of those islands — but I cannot understand it, and have never been able to get at the bottom of the origin of our antagonism to the natives. I thought we should act as their protector — not try to get them under our heel. We were to relieve them from Spanish tyranny to enable them to set up a government of their own, and we were to stand by and see that it got a fair trial. It was not to be a government according to our ideas, but a government that represented the feeling of the majority of the Filipinos, a government according to Filipino ideas. That would have been a worthy mission for the United States. But now — why, we have got into a mess, a quagmire from which each fresh step renders the difficulty of extrication immensely greater. I'm sure I wish I could see what we were getting out of it, and all it means to us as a nation."

– Mark Twain 1900



PUERTO RICO



Background:

Puerto Rico was granted an autonomous government by Spain in 1897. When the Spanish American War broke out a year later, the US invaded Puerto Rico and took over the island. As a result of winning the war, Spain gave Puerto Rico (along with Guam and the Philippines) to the US. After two years of military rule over Puerto Rico, the US passed the Foraker Act, which established a civil government in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico essentially became a colony of the US until 1947 when it became a commonwealth.

Legal Foundation for US control over Puerto Rico

1900 Foraker Act: created civil government in Puerto Rico;

Insular Cases: Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Ricans did not possess the same rights as US citizens

1917 Jones Act: Woodrow Wilson granted Puerto Ricans greater citizenship and more control over Puerto Rico, but not the same rights as Americans.

Against US control of Puerto Rico:

"In my opinion, Congress has no existence and can exercise no authority outside of the Constitution. Still less is it true that Congress can deal with new territories just as other nations have done or may do with their new territories. ...Monarchical and despotic governments, unrestrained by written constitutions, may do with newly acquired territories what this government may not do consistently with our [laws]...The idea that this country may acquire territories anywhere upon the earth, by conquest or treaty, and hold them as mere colonies or provinces, – the people inhabiting them to enjoy only such rights as Congress chooses to accord to them, – is wholly inconsistent with the spirit and genius, as well as with the words, of the Constitution." – Supreme Court Justice Harlan

CUBA

Background:

Like Puerto Ricans, Cubans expected to gain their independence after the Spanish American War. In the **Teller Amendment**, the US promised it would not annex Cuba. Although the Treaty of Paris granted Cubans independence, the US Army did not withdraw from Cuba when the Spanish American War ended. Before the US Army left, they forced Cuba to add to its constitution the **Platt Amendment**. The amendment restricted the rights of the newly independent Cuba and effectively brought Cuba within the US sphere of influence. Cuba could not negotiate treaties without American approval, the US was guaranteed naval bases in Cuba and had the "right to intervene" to preserve order in Cuba.



Background: In the early 1890s, American planters in Hawaii faced two crises. First, a new U.S. tariff imposed a tax on previously duty-free Hawaiian sugar. Fearing decreasing sales and profits, the American planters moved to annex Hawaii. However, Queen Liliuokalani resented the increasing power of white planters and abolished the constitution that had given political power to the white minority. With the help of U.S. officials, American planters responded forcefully by overthrowing the queen. John Stevens, the U.S. minister to Hawaii, ordered U.S. Marines to help rebels seize power. The new government, led by wealthy planter Sanford B. Dole, asked President Harrison to annex Hawaii into the United States. Despite the protests of Hawaiians supporting the Queen, in 1898 after the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Congress proclaimed Hawaii an official U.S. territory.



HAWAII

In Favor of Independence of Hawaii

"Now to avoid any collision of armed forces, and



perhaps the loss of life, I do this under protest and impelled by said force yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representatives and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the Constitutional Sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.

- Queen Lili'uokalani to Sanford B. Dole, Jan 17, 1893."

In Favor of US Control of Hawaii:

It would be a folly to build the Nicaragua Canal should any country other than the United States secure possession of Hawaii. If England were permitted to get a foothold in the islands, she would practically control both ends of the canal and be a standing menace.

-Mr. Caffrey, Democrat from LA

The Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it."

-John Stevens, Minister to Hawaii



PANAMA

Background:

In 1878 the French began to dig a canal across the Isthmus of Panama, which was then part of Colombia. Tropical disease and engineering problems halted construction on the canal, but a French business (New Panama Canal Company) still held the rights to the project. Roosevelt agreed to pay \$40 million for the rights, and he began to negotiate with Colombia for control of the land. He offered \$10 million for a fifty-mile strip across the isthmus. Colombia refused.

"We were dealing with a government of irresponsible bandits," Roosevelt stormed. "I was prepared to . . . at once occupy the Isthmus anyhow, and proceed to dig the canal. But I deemed it likely that there would be a revolution in Panama soon."

Teddy was right. The chief engineer of the New Panama Canal Company organized a local revolt. Roosevelt immediately sent the battleship *Nashville* and a detachment of marines to Panama to support the new government. The rebels gladly accepted Roosevelt's \$10 million offer, and they gave the United States complete control of a ten-mile wide canal zone.

Roosevelt ordered army engineers to start digging. Thousands of workers sweated in the malarial heat. They tore up jungles and cut down mountains. Insects thrived in muddy, stagnant pools. "Mosquitoes get so thick you get a mouthful with every breath," a worker complained. The mosquitoes also carried yellow fever, and many fell victim to the deadly. Nine years later the canal was finally completed.

Opposition to the Canal

Some Americans did not approve of Roosevelt's behavior. "There was much accusation about my having acted in an 'unconstitutional' manner," Teddy shrugged. "I took the isthmus, started the canal, and then left Congress -- not to debate the canal, but to debate me. . . . While the debate goes on, the canal does too; and they are welcome to debate me as long as they wish, provided that we can go on with the canal."

