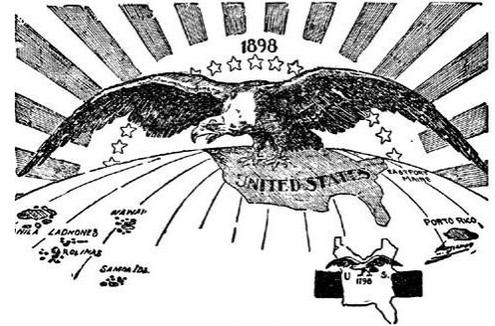


## VUS.9 - American Imperialism and World War I

Many twenty-first century American foreign policy issues have their origins in America's emergence as a world power at the end of the nineteenth century. America's eventual intervention (involvement) in World War I ensured its role as a world power for the remainder of the twentieth century. The growing role of the United States in international trade displayed the American urge to build, innovate, and explore new markets. In short, American businessmen believed they could make huge profits and bring the nation economic prosperity through international trade.

Washington's Farewell Address (1796) set precedent for the United States to pursue a policy of isolationism. Isolationism was the policy of avoiding involvement in world affairs. Although in the Monroe Doctrine (1823) the United States had declared itself the protector of the entire western hemisphere, isolationism continued to form the basis of American foreign policy throughout most of the nineteenth century. However, as the United States industrialized during the second half of the 1800s, businessmen and politicians increasingly looked longingly towards foreign markets as a potential source of American corporate profits. The desire to gain this untapped wealth led the United States to expand its influence in the world during the late nineteenth century. Some historians have called this period the age of American imperialism, because during this period the United States gained control over Hawaii, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Imperialism is the act of one nation gaining political or economic control over other countries.



Ten thousand miles from tip to tip.—Philadelphia Press.

American businessmen with the help of American politicians tried to gain access (entrance) to foreign markets in several ways. During the presidency of William McKinley, Secretary of State John Hay proposed the Open Door Policy. This policy wanted to give all nations equal trading rights in China. Its goal was to open to American businessmen the Chinese market from which they had previously been excluded. It also urged all foreigners in China to obey Chinese law and observe practices of fair competition. President William Howard Taft expanded upon the Open Door Policy by advocating (calling for) Dollar Diplomacy. Through Dollar Diplomacy President Taft aimed to encourage American investment in Latin America (South and Central America). Not only did Taft urge American banks and businesses to invest in Latin America, but also promised that the United States military would intervene (step in), if local unrest threatened their investments. Partially as a result of these two policies, growth in international trade occurred from the late 1800s to World War I. This period was the first era of a true “global economy.”



While both the Open Door Policy and Dollar Diplomacy were American attempts to engage in economic imperialism, the United States also embarked upon a limited policy of political imperialism. In the early 1890s the United States marines helped American sugar planters depose (overthrow) the Hawaiian monarch Queen Liliuokalani. In 1898 Congress agreed to annex Hawaii or add it to United States territory. Next, the Spanish-American War was the 1898 war between Spain and the United States, which the United States won. As a result of the Spanish-American War, the United States annexed both the Philippines and Puerto Rico. It also asserted (declared) its right to intervene (become militarily involved) in Cuban affairs. The United States continued its policy of political imperialism under President Theodore Roosevelt. First,

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the United States encouraged Panama's independence from Colombia. Then it negotiated a treaty with Panama to build the Panama Canal. Since this canal provided a short cut between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, it benefited both the American navy and American trade. Thereby, the Panama Canal furthered not only political imperialism but also economic imperialism.

The United States truly embarked upon (started) an internationalist foreign policy, when it entered World War I in 1917. Internationalism is a foreign policy based on heavy involvement in world affairs. The United States has generally followed an internationalist foreign policy from World War I to the present. While American entry into World War I ensured Allied victory, the failure to conclude a lasting peace left a bitter legacy (lasting mark or feeling).

World War I began in Europe in 1914, when Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire (Central Powers) went to war with Great Britain, France, and Russia (the Allies). For three years the United States remained neutral, and a strong isolationist sentiment existed among Americans not to get involved in this European war. The



decision to enter the war resulted from continuing German submarine warfare against American merchant shipping, which violated the principle of freedom of the seas, and American cultural and historical ties to Great Britain. As president, Woodrow Wilson said the United States wanted to “make the world safe for democracy.” America’s military resources of soldiers and war materials tipped the balance of World War I and led to Germany’s defeat in 1918. In addition, the “Great Migration” of African-Americans to Northern cities in search of jobs had begun during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This African-American migration north to escape poverty and discrimination in the South

speeded up during World War I, when the enlistment of thousands of white males in the U.S. Army opened up jobs for blacks.

In 1918 President Wilson issued the Fourteen Points. The Fourteen Points were Wilson’s statement of plans for peace after World War I, including plans to eliminate the causes of war. The key ideas of the Fourteen Points included the principles of national self-determination, freedom of the seas, and a League of Nations. National self-determination meant each national group should be in charge of its own destiny. For example, Polish people should live under a Polish government, if that was what they wanted. Freedom of the seas meant all nations’ ships would be able to sail in international waters without threat of attack by another country’s ships. The League of Nations would be an organization of nations established at the end of World War I to maintain world stability and peace.

The Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, recognized these three principles. However, it also included the mandate system, which violated the idea of national self-determination. Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, a mandate was a region administered by another country until it was judged ready for independence. The Versailles Treaty divided the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) into mandates, lands to be supervised or governed by the Allies under the direction of the League of Nations. France received Syria, and Britain received Palestine and Iraq. The Treaty of Versailles also provided for the punishment of Germany. Against the wishes of President Wilson, Great Britain and France had insisted that the treaty hold Germany responsible for the war. Finally, the Treaty of Versailles redrew national boundaries in Europe, which created many new nations including Finland,

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Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland. In short, the Treaty of Versailles recognized the principle of national self-determination in Europe, but not in the Middle East, Africa, or Asia.

After President Wilson negotiated the Treaty of Versailles, he sent it to the United States Senate for ratification (approval). Under the Constitution, President is the nation's chief diplomat with the sole power to make treaties. However, the Senate must approve all treaties by a two-thirds vote in order for them to become law. The Republicans, who controlled the United States Senate after the 1918 congressional elections, questioned the wisdom of the Treaty of Versailles. They particularly raised objections to United States foreign policy decisions being made by an international organization, like League of Nations, rather than by American leaders. After a long debate, Senate failed to approve the Versailles Treaty. Senate rejection of the Treaty of Versailles after World War I meant the United States did not join League of Nations and demonstrated the historical influence of isolationism on American foreign policy.



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### VUS.9 Narrative Questions – Imperialism and WWI

1. Why did American businessmen want to expand international trade?
2. What is Isolationism?
3. Why do some Historians call this period the age of American Imperialism?
4. What is Imperialism?
5. What was the Open Door Policy?
6. Who proposed the Open Door Policy?
7. Who proposed Dollar Diplomacy?
8. What was Dollar Diplomacy?
9. How would the Military be a part of Dollar Diplomacy?
10. What was the result of the Open Door Policy and Dollar Diplomacy?
11. What type of economy developed during this time period?
12. What did the Marines help sugar planters in Hawaii do?
13. What was the result of the Marines' actions?
14. What were the results of the Spanish-American War?
15. Why did America want Panama to gain independence from Columbia?
16. America's actions in Hawaii, during the Spanish-American War, and with Panama were examples of \_\_\_\_\_ imperialism.
17. List the Central Powers and the Allies during WWI.

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18. After WWI started, American attempted to remain \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Why did America enter the war, and what was President Wilson's quote about their purpose for entering the war?
20. How did America entering the war affect the result of the war?
21. What was the Great Migration?
22. What was the purpose of the fourteen points?
23. What treaty ended WWI?
24. What was the Mandate System under the treaty?
25. Which countries wanted to hold Germany responsible for the war?
26. What was the Senate's reaction to the Treaty of Versailles?
27. Create a timeline of SEVEN events from this narrative. Include both the date and a description of the event.