**Learning Objective:**

Explain the effects of the Spanish-American War.

**Thematic Focus:**

*Diplomatic, economic, cultural, and military interactions between empires, nations, and peoples shape the development of America and America’s increasingly important role in the world.*

1. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, new U.S. territorial ambitions and acquisitions in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific accompanied heightened public debates over America’s role in the world.
2. The American victory in the Spanish–American War led to the U.S. acquisition of island territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific, an increase in involvement in Asia, and the suppression of a nationalist movement in the Philippines.
   1. Causes of the Spanish-American War
      1. The Cuban revolt against Spain, which began in 1895, cost American business over $100 million per year.
      2. The battleship *Maine* was sunk mysteriously in Havana harbor.
      3. A circulation battle between the yellow journalism newspapers of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst aroused public support for a war to liberate Cuba from Spanish control and avenge the sinking of the *Maine*.
      4. The De Lome letter was written by a Spanish minister in Washington, whereby he personally criticized President McKinley in insulting terms.
      5. At the outset of the Spanish-American War, this note claimed that the U.S. had no intention of taking political control of Cuba. Once peace was restored, Cuba would be free to run itself.
   2. Conduct of the War
      1. The U.S. achieved a quick and decisive victory over Spanish forces in the Philippines. George Dewey destroyed the Spanish Pacific fleet at Manila Bay and captured the city.
      2. In the Caribbean, the U.S. destroyed the Spanish fleet at Santiago and captured the city after the Rough Riders stormed San Juan Hill.
   3. U.S. Territorial Acquisitions
      1. As a result of the Spanish-American War, Spain relinquished control of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States.
      2. The U.S. resolved to seek a naval base in the Pacific to protect its interests. The opportunity to annex the Philippines after the war with Spain was in part motivated by the desire to protect America’s trade and future potential in Asia.
   4. Philippines War
      1. Filipino nationalists under Emilio Aguinaldo rebelled against the United States in 1899 after learning that the Philippines would not be given independence.
      2. The Anti-Imperialism League opposed annexation, arguing that it violated America’s long-established commitment to the principles of self-determination and anti-colonialism.
      3. Supporters of annexation argued that America had a moral responsibility to civilize the islands. They also pointed out that the Philippines could become a valuable trading partner.
   5. Cuba as a Protectorate
3. By establishing a protectorate over Cuba, the United States began implementing an imperialist foreign policy.
4. Cuba was not to enter into any agreements with foreign powers that would endanger its independence.
5. The U.S. could intervene in Cuban affairs if necessary to maintain and efficient, independent government.
6. Cuba was required to lease Guantanamo Bay to the U.S. as a naval and coaling station.
   1. Insular Cases
7. One question concerned the constitutional rights of the Filipino people—did the provisions of the U.S. Constitution apply to whatever territories fell under U.S. control? William Jennings Bryan and anti-imperialists argued in the affirmative, while leading imperialists argued in the negative.
8. A series of court cases known as the insular (island) cases established that constitutional rights were not automatically extended to the territorial possessions of the United States.
   1. Theodore Roosevelt’s Big Stick Diplomacy
      1. Great Britain and France had previously failed in their efforts to build a canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The U.S. considered European interest in building a canal in Panama to be a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. The Senate failed to ratify a treaty with Colombia whereby the U.S. would pay Colombia a sum of $10 million then pay annual rent as well. Roosevelt encouraged Panama’s independence from Colombia so the U.S. could negotiate a better deal with Panama. All parties negotiated a treaty to build the Panama Canal.
      2. President Theodore Roosevelt worried that the Dominican Republic and other Latin American nations would default on debts owed to European banks. These defaults could then provoke European military intervention. Roosevelt issued the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine to forestall European intervention. The Roosevelt Corollary expanded America’s role in Central America and the Caribbean. The Roosevelt Corollary claimed America’s right to assume the role of an “international police power,” brandishing the “big stick” when necessary. Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson enforced the Roosevelt Corollary by sending American troops to Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Haiti.
   2. China
      1. Japan’s easy victory over China in 1895 signaled to the U.S. and other nations trading in Asia that China’s weakness might result in its colonization by industrial powers and then subsequently the closing of the China market.
      2. In the late 1890s, Russia, Japan, Great Britain, France, and Germany had all established “spheres of influence” in China, meaning that they could dominate trade and investment within their sphere and shut out competitors.
      3. Secretary of State John Hay proposed a concept of an “open door,” by which all nations would have equal trading privileges in China. Although he knew he could not force the Europeans to leave China, Secretary of State John Hay was determined to protect American missionaries and commercial interests.
      4. The Open Door policy underscored America’s commitment to free trade and opposition to obstacles that thwarted international commerce. Its primary intention was to protect American commercial interests in China.
      5. By 1900, nationalism and xenophobia were on the rise in China. A secret society of Chinese nationalists known as Boxers attacked foreign settlements and murdered dozens of Christian missionaries. To protect American lives and property, U.S. troops participated in an international force that quickly crushed the rebellion, further weakening the Chinese government.
   3. Japan
      1. Roosevelt negotiated a secret treaty with Japan and Russia to end the Russo-Japanese War, a war which Japan was winning. Although both Japan and Russia agreed to the Treaty of Portsmouth, Japanese nationalists blamed the United States for not giving their country all that they believed they deserved from Russia.
      2. A major cause of friction between Japan and the United States concerned the laws of California, which discriminated against Japanese Americans. In 1908, President Roosevelt arranged a compromise by means of an informal understanding, or “gentlemen’s agreement.” The Japanese government secretly agreed to restrict the emigration of Japanese workers to the United States in return for Roosevelt persuading California to repeal its discriminatory laws, such as requirements that Japanese children attend segregated schools.
      3. Roosevelt sent the “Great White Fleet” around the world, especially Japan, to showcase America’s naval might.
      4. In the Root-Takahira Agreement, the U.S. and Japan pledged mutual respect for each nation’s Pacific possessions and support for the Open Door policy in China.
   4. Taft and Dollar Diplomacy
      1. President Taft believed he could use economic investments to bolster American foreign policy and lead to greater stability in the region. Taft used Dollar Diplomacy when refinancing the foreign debt of Nicaragua. Taft’s attempt to use Dollar Diplomacy in Asia and Latin America achieved very little success.
   5. Wilson’s Foreign Policy
      1. President Wilson denounced imperialism and Dollar Diplomacy, advocating the advancement of democratic capitalist governments throughout the world.
      2. A Mexican Revolution occurred in 1910, and then that government was overthrown in 1913. President Taft placed 10,000 U.S. soldiers on the border to ensure American safety. Woodrow Wilson urged the military leader to hold a democratic election, but he refused. In 1914, nine U.S. sailors were confronted in Tampico and led to a Mexican base at gunpoint. Wilson invaded Mexico with troops at Vera Cruz where they occupied the port city for 6 months. A second invasion occurred in 1916 and probably would have amounted to a full-scale war had WWI not intervened.
      3. Mexican rebel leader Pancho Villa, hoping to destabilize the government, led raids across the U.S.-Mexican border and murdered several people in Texas and New Mexico. In 1916 President Wilson ordered an “expeditionary force” under General John Pershing to pursue Villa into Northern Mexico, but failed to capture him. The Mexican President protested the American presence in Mexico, but the growing possibility of U.S. entry into World War I ultimately caused Wilson to withdraw the remaining troops.