
The Economic Factors Contributing to American Imperialism of 19th Century

What economic and intellectual factors promoted US imperialism in the late nineteenth century?

In the Late nineteenth century the American industry was booming and the country was expanding and becoming more urbanized. Many American leaders pushed for United States imperialism for various economic, political and intellectual factors including expansion, defense and Social Darwinism.

Due to drastic urban growth throughout the late nineteenth manufacturing in the United States was at an all-time high and by 1894 America was the leading manufacturer in the world. (Armstrong, 2004 p. 167) Industrial leaders feared that America would soon produce more than it could consume and started pushing for an aggressive American foreign policy abroad. Additionally, some businessmen perceived that in the future American industries would need dependent states to provide raw material that could not be found in America, such as petroleum products and rubber.

Military power and the ability to protect its expanding empire was a growing concern during American imperialism. In 1887 American and Hawaii made deal allowing America to import sugar from Hawaii duty-free; the increase in stimulation of the sugar trade gave sugar planters in Hawaii economic and political power that they used to ratify a new constitution that limited the king's powers and gave the planters more power. (Ibid, p. 183) In 1891 the king died and was replaced by his sister, Queen Liliuokalani; in 1893, pro American sugar planters, along with American marines, overthrew the Queen, declared Hawaii a Republic and requested that Hawaii be annexed into the United States. (Ibid) The takeover of Hawaii served economical purposes due to the sugar trade and a desire to increase involvement and establish trading with China, while serving military strategy because future bases located in Hawaii would anchor America's strategic position in the Pacific.

Some supporters of imperialism used the concept of Social Darwinism to influence increased American influence abroad. Many supporters of Social Darwinism believed that the Anglo-Saxon race was the superior race of the planet and wanted to spread their racial superiority because they believed it was their duty so civilize what they deemed the inferior races. (Love, 2004. P. 156) Additionally during this time period American missionaries traveled around trying to Christianize regions. The effects of Social Darwinism can be seen from the actions of the

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Spanish American war; America initially argued that they were only at war for Cuba's benefit, but was ceded the Philippines by the Spanish at the end of the war.

United States imperialism in the late nineteenth century was needed due to recent urban expansion causing a surplus of goods that American's needed a foreign buyer for as well as a foreign supplier for materials that could not be obtained in the United States. Additionally, America wanted to protect its assets by expanding its military might to overseas bases that would serve as a central strategic position in the Pacific. The concept of Social Darwinism further influence United States imperialism by wanting to spread the Anglo-Saxon agenda to races dubbed as inferior.

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