CHAPTER THIRTEEN

BECOMING A WORLD POWER

WE HAVE NOT HAD A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT AMERICAN foreign policy to this point, because it had not yet established itself as a theme of consistent importance in American history. In fact, beginning with the successful conclusion of the War of 1812 and lasting through nearly the rest of the nineteenth century, the United States enjoyed a long respite from any major involvement in the affairs of the rest of the world. That respite made it possible for the nation to direct most of its energies toward internal tasks: healing the sectional disputes that had erupted in the Civil War, while consolidating and developing the sprawling expanses that it had now acquired and making it all into a proper nation-state.

That of course didn't mean that the nation was ever completely cut off from the larger world. The familiar term *isolationism* nearly always represents an exaggeration of something far subtler. No country as energetic as the United States was, in the spread of commerce and trade and in the relentless search for new markets for its manufactured goods and agricultural commodities, could ever be completely isolated, or want to be. No country that welcomed so many immigrants from such a diversity of lands could help but have an abundance of ties, both personal and political, to the countries and cultures in the larger world. No country whose intellectual and high-cultural life remained so closely attentive to (and, as Emerson would lament, dependent on) cultural activity of Great Britain and other European societies would ever be isolated. But it remained the case that, for the time being, the United States was not involved in foreign wars or other serious military distractions, and there were very few foreign-relations controversies roiling the waters of American life during those eight decades. In that sense, it was indeed an interlude of relative apartness.

I have called it a respite, but many at the time believed it to be America's natural and permanent state, as a continental republic insulated from the world's woes by the protective buffer of two large oceans and endowed with a lavish array of natural resources, enough to make it largely self-sufficient for the foreseeable future. Such a conception of America could be said to have roots going back to the idea of being a "city upon a hill," although in this instance serving not as a religious exemplar but as a republican one, a model and inspiration for the ennoblement of the rest of the world. It was further upheld by the tenor of George Washington's much-revered Farewell Address, particularly by its insistence that the United States avoid contracting any permanent alliances or other enduring entanglements in the affairs of other countries – particularly not in the quarrelsome countries of Western Europe. A certain disposition toward apartness seemed to be part of the American character and the American mission.

Perhaps the most memorable statement of that view was offered by James Monroe's brilliant secretary of state, and a future President, John Quincy Adams, in an address celebrating the Declaration of Independence, delivered to Congress on July 4, 1821. The speech was long, eloquent, and intellectually ambitious, offering what amounted to an argument for American history as the greatest of all carriers of enlightenment and liberty for all of humankind. And yet, after reading the entire text of the Declaration and offering a thoughtful explication of it, Adams concluded with an apologia and a warning, both of which are worth quoting at some length.

Adams understood that in embracing a national disposition toward aloofness, America could convey an impression of self-satisfied indifference to the rest of the world. So, to those who posed the question, What has America done for the benefit of mankind? Adams's answer was this:

> *America, with the same voice which spoke herself into existence as a nation, proclaimed to mankind the inextinguishable rights of human nature, and the only lawful foundations of government.... She has uniformly spoken among them, though often to heedless and often to disdainful ears, the language of equal liberty, equal justice, and equal rights.... She has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when the conflict has been for principles to which she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart.... Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.*

"She goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy." These were powerful words, adduced in the service of a compelling argument, one deep in the American grain as of 1821, and remaining so for many years to come. Adams could have chosen to build on those words and emphasize how difficult it is for any nation to remake the institutions of another. But instead, he chose to conclude with a warning that such endeavors would endanger the national soul of America herself:

> *She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself, beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force. The frontlet upon her brows would no longer beam with the ineffable splendor of freedom and independence; but in its stead would soon be substituted an imperial diadem, flashing in false and tarnished lustre the murky radiance of dominion and power. She might become the dictatress of the world: she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.*

Such words also came from deep in the American grain, echoing the earlier warnings of Anti-Federalists such as Patrick Henry about the moral dangers of a powerful consolidated government. Yet the tone of the speech as a whole was overwhelmingly celebratory. It articulated the long-standing and deep-seated American preference for republican movements and constitutional institutions around the world, and pride in the belief that history was moving in their direction, with America leading the way. While Adams argued that direct American involvement in such movements would be counterproductive, and risk the corruption of America's own institutions, he added that America would always be cheering such movements on from the sidelines and serving as a friendly example to be drawn upon and imitated by them.

Still, these words stood in an uncertain relationship with others that Adams would articulate two years later in his drafting of the Monroe Doctrine. That document declared that the United States would not accept any further European colonization of the western hemisphere but would instead regard itself as the dominant power in that sphere of influence. The two perspectives are not entirely contradictory, but there is certainly a tension between them. How would the United States assert its hegemony over the western hemisphere without ever "going abroad," likely in a southerly direction, to support republicanism and perhaps destroy a few monsters in the process? What was to ensure that the principle of noninterference and American hegemony would not be

interpreted as a right, and even an obligation, for the United States to intervene, if sufficiently provoked or encouraged? If so, how was that to be reconciled to America's founding principles?

Such questions would soon come to bedevil the American enterprise in the world. In any event, *respite* would turn out to be the right word after all. There had been an unusual and fortunate set of circumstances underwriting this period of apartness in the first century or so of the American nation's experience. There was a balance of power in post-Napoleonic Europe, during which time the British Navy, which was friendly to American interests, controlled the seas, thus postponing the need for the United States to have its own robust naval presence to support its large and growing maritime commerce around the world. Those conditions would not last forever, particularly as the growth of the American industrial economy would lead to more and more American shipping, both to export finished goods and import raw materials, and thus to more and more entanglement in the affairs of the rest of the world. A world-class U.S. naval force would eventually be needed, along with overseas acquisitions of harbors and coaling stations spanning the globe to support naval activity and protect far-flung American shipping.

Furthermore, the tensions beginning to be articulated in the 1820s would become posed more sharply as time went on. How would Adams's vision comport with the idea of America's Manifest Destiny, the belief that the nation was in some sense ordained by God to expand across the North American continent and bring democratic institutions to all the people and places therein? And what of Manifest Destiny itself, having reached its continental terminus? Was there any reason why the terms of that destiny had to stop at the water's edge? But if it did extend further, how would that be squared with Americans' traditions of republicanism, not to mention their view of themselves as the proud inheritors of the world's first great anticolonial revolution – the revolution whose public apologia was the Declaration of Independence? Was there a way for a nation to extend its influence in the world without such an action amounting to a form of imperialism?

The concept of imperialism was in the air, all around the world. Most of the major European nations, and a few minor ones, as well as Japan in the Far East, were frantically seeking out imperial acquisitions in Africa and Asia, driven by the desire for new sources of raw materials and new markets as well as the prestige and power associated with possession of an empire. Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain: all were actively involved. In all of them, imperial ideas had taken hold among elite leaders and intellec-

tuals, and all of them fiercely competed for the ever-diminishing number of available spaces on the map.

A few reflections on the words being used here. The word *imperial* and the *-ism* deriving from it ultimately come from the Latin term *imperium*, meaning "to command," as do the related words *empire* and *emperor*. As its Latin derivation implies, *imperial* describes something that existed and flourished long before the advent of the modern world. Empires, meaning political systems in which one central power, a country or people, exercised sovereign power over another country or people, or several of them, could be found everywhere in the ancient world, and the imperial concept reached a pinnacle in the empire of Rome itself.

It is common to distinguish imperialism from colonialism, on the basis that the latter word, which comes from the Latin word for farmer (*colonus*), involved a process of migration and permanent settlement, whereas imperialism involved the administration of power from afar. Thus Spanish colonization of Mexico and Peru was far more "imperial" in character than the British approach to the North American continent. This distinction is not always upheld in common usage, and the two concepts sometimes bleed into one another for good reasons. But nevertheless it is worth making the distinction for the sake of clarity. In very rough terms, *imperial* tends to refer to the activity of domination, while *colonial* tends to refer to the activity of settlement.

So imperialism was as old as human history, but it is also clear that its character and its potentialities had changed a great deal by the nineteenth century. One of the many factors that had undermined the Roman Empire was the sheer vastness of its extent, and the intrinsic difficulty of administering such a large imperium. But by the nineteenth century, owing to the multitude of technological breakthroughs in transportation and communications, this was less of a problem; it was far more feasible to maintain the central power's sovereignty over even very faraway and widely dispersed lands. Hence the growing interest in gaining political and economic control over parts of the world that had formerly been thought too remote from Europe.

Such practices placed the most advanced nations of the world on a collision course with liberal principles of inherent human equality and liberty, principles that were also on the rise in the civilized world. Some imperialists simply ignored those principles or declined to grant them universal status, often doing so by drawing on doctrines of "scientific" racism, which purported to ground their authority in Charles Darwin's notions of the "survival of the fittest," to argue for the inherent inferiority and incapacity of the "lesser" or "lower" races living in subordinate countries. "Superior" races were meant to rule, and other races were meant to follow; such was merely the way of nature itself.

But there was a different approach that seemed to reconcile these apparently opposed principles. It was the paternalistic concept of imperial rule as a "civilizing mission," in which a temporary period of political dependence or tutelage was deemed necessary in order to uplift backward or "uncivilized" societies to the point where they were capable of maintaining liberal institutions and self-government on their own. This approach was more palatable to Americans, because it was compatible with the idea that the Anglo-Saxon domination of the world might be generous rather than nakedly exploitative; it might even be intended for the world's good.

Such paternalism could even have religious dimensions, along with its political ones. So believed a Congregationalist minister named Josiah Strong, a proponent of the "Social Gospel," an influential strain of reformist Protestantism that emphasized the achievement of social justice through the active transformation of the world. Strong was particularly influential in pressing the view that the Anglo-Saxon peoples' superior character meant that they were "divinely commissioned" to "Christianize and civilize" the world. It should be added that Strong's understanding of "race" seemed to be more about culture than about biology, and he used the term "Anglo-Saxon" broadly to refer to all the English-speaking peoples of the world. It should also be added that he believed fervently that all "races" could be uplifted and brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. But he did believe that it was the peculiar responsibility of the Anglo-Saxons to be the "depositary" of the two great ideas of "civil liberty" and "a pure spiritual Christianity," and to carry those ideas forth into the larger world.

These ideas may have made imperial expansion more acceptable to the general public. But the driving force behind such expansion was a small but influential group of elite thinkers and public officials who came to believe, for a variety of reasons, that the acquisition of overseas possessions by the United States was a necessary next step in the national story. First and foremost among these was Alfred Thayer Mahan, a naval officer and strategic thinker whose 1890 geopolitical classic *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* made the case that the possession of a powerful navy was essential to national prosperity and great-power status in the modern world. His ideas were picked up by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, a committed expansionist who had already been advocating for a bigger navy, annexation of Hawaii, and the American domination of the Caribbean Sea. Other attentive readers were Theodore Roosevelt, then assistant secretary of the navy, who was working for naval expansion, and Indiana attorney Albert Beveridge of Indiana, whose soaring 1898 Senate campaign speech "The March of the Flag" expertly wove together all the elements – religious, strategic, humanitarian, commercial, national greatness – in the pro-imperial case:

Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours. We will establish trading posts throughout the world as distributing points for American products. We will cover the ocean with our merchant marine. We will build a navy to the measure of our greatness. Great colonies governing themselves, flying our flag and trading with us, will grow about our posts of trade.

It remained to be seen whether those "great colonies" would see it the same way.

Asia was always a particular target of expansionists, who ultimately had their eyes on the limitless markets of China and the rest of the Far East, and the first steps toward expansion occurred in that direction. First was the acquisition of Alaska from Russia, through the diplomatic efforts of William Seward, President Johnson's secretary of state (inherited from Lincoln). Seward had been working on persuading the British Columbians to join their territory to the United States and stumbled on the Russian possibility, which he seized on, as a bargain at $7.2 million. Many scoffed at the time, calling it "Seward's Folly," but it was a farsighted choice whose wisdom would soon become apparent.

Next came the islands of Samoa and Hawaii. The former readily accepted an American naval base in 1878, but the latter was a stickier problem. The Hawaiian islands had been a united kingdom since the 1790s but had acquired a substantial number of American settlers, some of them missionaries but many more of them planters involved in creating what became a thriving sugar-production trade. But tensions and resentments seethed among the native Hawaiians and the Americans and ethnic Asians who had come to the island for the sugar production, and the Hawaiians resisted American rule and American annexation. Finally, the newly elected President William McKinley, citing "Manifest Destiny," and noting the growing Japanese interest in taking over the islands for themselves, decided to annex Hawaii by a joint resolution of Congress in 1898.

These were small steps, but a much larger step came in Cuba, which was still a Spanish colony, although one that was rocked periodically by unsuccessful revolts against increasingly ruthless Spanish rule. The United States looked on with interest, partly because of the proximity and strategic importance of Cuba, partly because of extensive American commercial interests in Cuba, partly because of the longtime American interest in acquiring Cuba, but also because the cause of Cuban independence was one for which Americans felt instinctive sympathy. When an insurrection broke out on February 24, 1895, and the Spanish government sent in troops, who turned on the civilian popula-

tion in a brutal way – shooting and torturing rebels and herding all other inhabitants into the towns, which became disease- and starvation-ridden concentration camps – the American public was outraged.

Their curiosity was being fed by the intensive, even sensationalistic, coverage given to the atrocities in Cuba by the popular press of the time, particularly the dueling *New York Journal* and *New York World*, edited respectively by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. Locked in a battle for dominance, the two dailies seized on the Cuban events as a source of pure circulation gold, and their often lurid and attention-grabbing approach to stories, which came to be known as "yellow journalism," most certainly moved public opinion far and wide. The new printing technologies allowed for the publication of as many as six daily editions, and rural delivery of mail could bring one of those editions daily to even the most remote villages and farms across the land. So the broader reading public was thoroughly caught up in the ongoing Cuban crisis and understood it as a humanitarian outrage. That said, one should not exaggerate the influence of the yellow press outside of the New York area; it was not the most salient factor in moving public opinion. But it is no exaggeration to say that public opinion was inflamed and that humanitarian concern with the plight of the Cubans was the source of that inflammation. If there were ever a monster worth going abroad to destroy, this seemed to be one.

Public outrage can be hard for public officials to ignore. Democratic president Grover Cleveland managed to avoid being pushed into direct involvement, beyond a few efforts to protect American interests on the island. But when the Republican McKinley was elected in 1896, as we have already seen from his actions in Hawaii, the tenor of American foreign policy changed. McKinley had in fact run on a platform advocating for Cuban independence from Spain, as well as the construction of a canal connecting the Caribbean with the Pacific. He was in negotiations with the Spanish over the situation and had sent the American battleship *Maine* to Havana as an expression of concern for the safety of American lives and property. But the public was in a state of anti-Spanish fever, after disclosure by the *Journal* of a stolen letter, written by the Spanish ambassador, that had disparaged McKinley as a *politicastro*, a small-time political hack who cared only about public acclaim. The ambassador resigned immediately, but that did little to calm the storm. Then, at 9:40 P.M. on the night of February 15, 1898, without any warning, the *Maine* suddenly erupted with a massive explosion, which sent her to the bottom of Havana harbor with a loss of 260 men, two-thirds of her crew, and many of the survivors badly injured.

The response was immediate. Interventionists accused Spain of having blown up the ship and called for war. Readers of the yellow press, who had been

feeding on a diet of Spanish atrocity stories for weeks, knew right away that Spain had to be to blame. Responsibility for the blast was not clear at the time, and although a naval court of inquiry declared that a submarine mine was responsible, which would almost certainly have implicated the Spanish, more recent reviews of the evidence have suggested that the blast may have been caused by an internal explosion, ignited by a fire in the ship's coal bunker. We will almost certainly never know for sure, though looking at the matter with the 20/20 vision of retrospect, it seems highly unlikely that the Spanish government would have been so reckless as to perpetrate such an act, knowing that it would very likely bring American troops into Cuba.

In any event, McKinley now faced the heat of an inflamed American public opinion that wanted vengeance, as well as the outrage of detractors like Theodore Roosevelt, who called the sinking "an act of dirty treachery on the part of the Spaniards" and griped that McKinley "had no more backbone than a chocolate éclair." Yet McKinley prudently sought to avoid war, as did most of his supporters in the business community, and his caution brought down on him the wrath of much of the public, and a growing number of public officials, including Democrats who had in the past favored Cleveland's neutrality but were now reading the signs of the times. When McKinley submitted a restrained report on the *Maine* to Congress, he was excoriated for it by the Democrats, and his vice president, Garret Hobart, warned him that it was possible that Congress might declare war on its own, without his involvement, which would be a disastrous turn of events for the administration. He would very likely have no choice but to get out in front of the public passions or risk being bulldozed by them.

The Spanish sensed the perilous situation they were in and moved quickly to mollify the Americans, declaring a cease-fire in Cuba and then offering to the State Department a commitment to Cuban autonomy. But it was too late. By then the Cubans would settle for nothing less than full independence – and that was the one thing that the proud Spanish still could not bring themselves to grant, because it would have meant the collapse not merely of the current government but perhaps even of the monarchy, as punishment for the loss of the last remnant of their once-great American empire. Besides, McKinley had already given in to the pressure on him and had asked Congress for authority to use the armed forces "to secure a full and final termination of hostilities" in Cuba. On April 20, Congress recognized the independence of Cuba by joint resolution and authorized the use of the armed forces to drive out the Spanish, including in its measures an amendment by Senator Henry Teller that explicitly disclaimed any American designs upon Cuban territory. On April 22, McKinley announced a blockade of Cuba's northern coast and the southeastern port of Santiago. That was an act of war, and the Spanish promptly declared war in response.

The war itself was brief and one-sided, as disastrous for Spain as can be imagined. John Hay, who had once been Lincoln's personal secretary, and would serve McKinley as a distinguished secretary of state, called it "a splendid little war," a description whose aptness perhaps depends on one's point of view. But of the "little" there can be little doubt, because it lasted only 114 days. It marked the end of Spain's empire and the beginning of an American one. The latter of these two turned out to be a far more complicated matter than it appeared, going in.

The first action in the war took place not in Cuba but on the other side of the world, in the Spanish colony of the Philippine Islands. Before the conflict began, Theodore Roosevelt had used his position in the Department of the Navy to put on alert the Asiatic Squadron in Manila, under the command of Commodore George Dewey, and be ready to move on the Spanish base immediately if war came. Dewey was accordingly prepared, and when war came, he immediately steamed to Manila Bay and opened fire on the Spanish fleet, making five passes, starting at five thousand yards and closing with each pass, and when the smoke had cleared, all ten of the Spanish vessels had been sunk. Not a single American sailor had been killed. McKinley promptly dispatched eleven thousand troops to take Manila and hold the islands.

The second theater of operations was only a little more troublesome. While the U.S. Navy blockaded the harbor of Santiago, trapping the Spanish naval forces there, a contingent of American troops was landed nearby and managed to secure the commanding heights from which, to the west and south, it could easily bombard Santiago with siege guns. The Spanish Navy was pinned down and had no choice but to attempt to run the blockade. On July 3, their black-hulled ships, unfurled flags proudly flying, steamed out of the harbor and fled westward along the coast. They were pursued resolutely by five American battleships and two cruisers, which ran them down and destroyed every one of them. There was nothing left to do but admit defeat.

Soon there followed an armistice, specifying that Spain was to give up Cuba and that the United States should annex Puerto Rico and Guam and occupy Manila until the fate of the Philippines could be decided at a formal peace conference in Paris.

And so it was all over, just like that. It had indeed been splendid, if you weren't Spanish, and it had been short. It had produced a wave of American patriotic feeling that furthered reconciliation and healing between North and South, particularly since two of the principal generals involved in the war were Confederate veterans. And the results seemed utterly decisive. The United States was now elevated to the ranks of the certifiable world powers; Spain had lost that status, probably forever, through a war that became known to the Spanish for years thereafter simply as *El Desastre* (the Disaster). But the peace

to follow would present the United States with far greater difficulties than it had imagined. This war that had been won at so little military cost was going to lead to other problems, far more vexing and costly than any that it solved.

To begin with, there was the problem of the Philippines. With the Spanish leaving, a power vacuum would be left behind, and it suddenly fell to the Americans, as the victorious party, to take responsibility for ensuring that the Philippines had stable and humane governance. It was not clear how that was to be done in a way that was consistent with American principles. The territory could not be given back to Spain or to some other country. Nor were the people of the Philippines sufficiently unified or prepared to rule themselves. No thought had been given to the idea of the United States annexing them before the war, but the idea began to appeal to expansionists, as they realized that the Philippines could serve as a perfect gateway into the continent of Asia and the markets of the Far East. Yet anti-imperialists were vehemently opposed to any such move, believing that such a step would imperil American democracy, in precisely the ways that John Quincy Adams had darkly predicted. The stage was set for a great national debate.

The anti-imperialists were extremely varied in their background and philosophy. Most of the northern Democrats and reform-minded eastern Republicans joined the anti-imperial cause in opposing annexation. Both Andrew Carnegie and Samuel Gompers were opposed, as were writers like Mark Twain and William Dean Howells, the philosopher William James, and the social reformer Jane Addams. Their reasons for opposing annexation were also quite varied, involving a mixture of idealistic and less-than-admirable motives. There were idealistic motives, flowing from the ardent belief that the Constitution should always follow the flag, and that it violated the spirit and letter of the Declaration of Independence for Americans to rule "over" another people and deprive them of government by their consent.

There were also racial and ethnic prejudices entangled with idealistic motives. For example, in the argument that annexation could not possibly lead to statehood, given the alienness of the Philippines' racial and cultural makeup. Instead, an annexed Philippines would live in a state of permanent oppression, permanent second-class status, inhabiting an American *imperium* whose very existence would have corrupting effects on the national ethos. In the words of Senator George Frisbie Hoar of Massachusetts, the United States would be acquiring "subject and vassal states" in "barbarous archipelagoes" and "trampling, as we do it, on our own great character which recognizes alike the liberty and the dignity of individual manhood." And there were also worries, particularly among labor leaders, about competition from foreign workers; as Gompers said, putting the matter rather nakedly, "if the Philippines are annexed what

is to prevent the Chinese, the Negritos and the Malays coming to our country? How can we prevent the Chinese coolies from going to the Philippines and from there swarm into the United States and engulf our people and our civilization? ... Can we hope to close the flood-gates of immigration from the hordes of Chinese and the semi-savage races coming from what will then be part of our own country?"

McKinley was not deaf to the anti-imperialists' arguments and agonized over the choice but finally concluded that there was no alternative to annexation. He did not believe that the people of the Philippines could be left to their own devices; the result, he feared, would be years and years of chaos and bloodshed, and he was not willing to allow that. By process of elimination, he concluded that he was left with only one viable choice. As he put it, "there was nothing left for us to do but take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them."

The trouble was that an indigenous anti-Spanish insurrectionary movement, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, which had been fighting the Spanish before the Americans arrived, had already created a republican government, complete with a constitution, and saw itself as the rightful successor to Spanish colonial rule. Under more normal circumstances, the United States would have agreed. But the logic of annexation militated against that, and when it became clear that the United States was not only not going to withdraw but was intent upon establishing control over the islands, the tensions between the two antagonists erupted into all-out war – a war that turned out to be far longer and less splendid than the war against the Spanish. The hostilities began in earnest in February 1899 and did not end until spring 1902. The conflict was mostly conducted as guerilla warfare, ugly, cruel, and bloody and marked by many instances of torture and other atrocities, as well as many civilian deaths. It underscored the unexpectedly high price of imperial expansion: there would be forty-three hundred American lives lost in the three years it took to crush the revolt, exponentially more than had been required to defeat the Spanish.

Fortunately, McKinley made an excellent choice when he appointed Judge William Howard Taft as the civil governor of the Philippines, a position for which the ebullient and likable Taft had just the right touch. He insisted on treating the Filipinos as partners and as social equals and rejected the racial assumptions that had consigned them to second-order status. He worked to improve the lot of Filipino farmers, even visiting the Vatican in the hope of persuading Pope Leo XIII to free up ecclesiastical lands for their use. These efforts would make a significant difference in the political climate, and very quickly. For his own part, Taft genuinely loved the Filipino people and turned down a much coveted Supreme Court appointment out of a desire to stay with them a

little longer and finish his work. By 1917, Congress would pass the Jones Act, which affirmed the American intention to grant the Philippines eventual independence in the foreseeable future. That would finally happen on July 4, 1946.

The Philippines were not the only problem facing the newly imperial United States. The clear principles of the Founding were being fudged left and right, as in the case of Puerto Rico, ceded to the United States by Spain, where an indeterminate and intermediate status, somewhere between colonial dependency and fully incorporated statehood, would be settled on. And what of Cuba, the original cause for the war? American policy faced some of the same kinds of problems there too, as a temporary American military occupation government clashed with rebel forces that had opposed the Spanish. Eventually the island was pacified, and the Cubans were given their independence. But there would be a catch. When a Cuban constitution was drafted in 1900, the Platt Amendment to a military appropriations bill passed by Congress was devised to restrict the independence of the new government. Among other things, it forced the Cubans to acknowledge the United States' right to intervene in Cuba whenever it deemed necessary "for the preservation of Cuban independence" and "for the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty." In addition, Cuba had to promise that it would not conclude any treaty with a third power that would affect its independence and grant the United States the use of land for a naval base at Guantánamo Bay.

It is not hard to understand why the Cubans, after having fought a long war to free themselves of Spanish rule, deeply resented these impositions and would come to resent them more and more with passing years, even though the Platt Amendment was formally invoked only once, in 1906. Yet it is also not hard to understand why so many Americans, including most of the anti-imperialists, believed such measures to be necessary, given the chaotic state of postwar Cuba. Indeed, it was entirely plausible to argue that such measures should be extended to the whole Caribbean, which was filled with unstable and desperately poor countries, all seemingly in need of the steadying influence of a larger and more established neighbor.

When Theodore Roosevelt became president, he did just that. After stepping in to take charge of a parlous financial crisis in the Dominican Republic, which he reasoned was a responsibility incumbent upon the United States precisely because the Monroe Doctrine forbade European countries from doing it, he propounded this as a more general policy. Because of the chronic problems of the region, Roosevelt said, and its governments' proneness to "wrongdoing or impotence," the United States' adherence to the Monroe Doctrine would require it to exercise, "reluctantly," "an international police power." This became known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, presented

by Roosevelt in a message to Congress delivered in December 1904. The policy worked very well in the Dominican instance. But like the Platt Amendment, it would cause resentments that would taint U.S. relations with Latin America for years to come.

Still, on balance, the American entry onto the world stage had been relatively auspicious, and its imperial record would be relatively benign, particularly when compared to some of the enormities committed by its European counterparts in the pursuit of their much more extensive and exploitative imperial enterprises in Africa and Asia. A useful point of comparison would be the American approach to China, a part of the world in which the United States' interest was now greatly heightened by its new stake in the Philippines. China was in considerable disarray at this time, having suffered such decline since its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 that it had effectively lost its independence and become subject to the control of various outside governments. By the 1890s, the five great imperial powers (Russia, Japan, Great Britain, France, and Germany) had divided China into "spheres of influence," in which they enjoyed exclusive trading privileges and other forms of commercial exploitation. So weakened was China that there was even talk of carving up the country by partition among the great powers; and it was in the context of this foreign domination that the Boxer Rebellion, a failed antiforeign revolt by Chinese nativists, would erupt.

But in fall 1898, McKinley proposed the creation of an "open door" policy that would open the Chinese market to all trading nations, while recognizing the territorial integrity of China. Secretary of State John Hay worked tirelessly to advance the policy, and while it was never formally agreed to by the other powers, it became the basis of American policy in China for the next half-century. The policy was firmly in the American anti-imperial tradition, but it was not offered out of complete altruism. The United States wanted to be able to trade with Chinese cities and feared that a partition of China would likely end up cutting the United States out of China entirely. It was a far more generous position than that of the imperial nations, and the Chinese were appreciative of that fact. Yet it also had the effect of committing the United States to the preservation of China's territorial integrity, a commitment that would in turn influence U.S. relations with Japan in the years to come. It was yet another way that the American role in the larger world was becoming ever greater, sometimes almost despite itself.

There was always a divided heart in the American approach to imperial rule, which helps explain why most of the lands acquired in the Spanish–American War were soon devolved toward independent status. The great debate over the annexation of the Philippines went to a profound tension in the American

experience, one that would only increase as the American role in the world became greater and greater. How to observe what was wise and proper in John Quincy Adams's admonitions, but at the same time recognize that the growth of American wealth and power naturally begot responsibilities for the well-being of the rest of the world?

The answer, even if arrived at clumsily, and even if exasperatingly difficult to put into action, was well stated by Roosevelt's secretary of war, Elihu Root, when contemplating the problem of the Caribbean nations, in words that could apply just as well to the rest of the world: "We do not want to take them for ourselves. We do not want any foreign nations to take them for themselves. We want to help them." But helping them has always been a more complicated matter than it seems.