**Purchase of Alaska   
1867**  
Russia offered to sell Alaska to the United States in 1859, believing the United States would off-set the designs of Russia’s greatest rival in the Pacific, Great Britain. The looming U.S. Civil War delayed the sale, but after the war, Secretary of State [William Seward](https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/seward-william-henry) quickly took up a renewed Russian offer and on March 30, 1867, agreed to a proposal from Russian Minister in Washington, Edouard de Stoeckl, to purchase Alaska for $7.2 million. The Senate approved the treaty of purchase on April 9; President Andrew Johnson signed the treaty on May 28, and Alaska was formally transferred to the United States on October 18, 1867. This purchase ended Russia’s presence in North America and ensured U.S. access to the Pacific northern rim.

For three decades after its purchase the United States paid little attention to Alaska, which was governed under military, naval, or Treasury rule or, at times, no visible rule at all. Seeking a way to impose U.S. mining laws, the United States constituted a civil government in 1884. Skeptics had dubbed the purchase of Alaska “Seward’s Folly,” but the former Secretary of State was vindicated when a major gold deposit was discovered in the Yukon in 1896, and Alaska became the gateway to the Klondike gold fields. The strategic importance of Alaska was finally recognized in World War II. Alaska became a state on January 3, 1959.

**US Takes Hawaii**

**1893**

AS trade with Asia grew during the 1800’s, Americans began seeking ports where they could refuel and resuplly while crossing the Pacific Ocean. Hawaii had one of the finest harbors in the South Pacific. American ships often stopped there to rest and take on supplies.

In 1819 missionaries from America arrived in Hawaii and settlers found that sugarcane grew well in Hawaii’s climate and soil. By the mid-1800’s, businessmen had established many plantations on the islands.

A severe economic recession struck Hawaii in 1872. Americans worried that the crisis might encourage Hawaiians to turn to the British or French for help instead of us. We allowed them to temporarily not pay taxes on Hawaiian sugar coming to the US, but we also insisted that Hawaii grant the U.S. exclusive rights to a naval base at Pearl Harbor.

The treaty led to a boom in the Hawaiian sugar and eventually Hawaiian farmers decided they wanted to officially become part of the United States. The Queen of Hawaii did not like the influence of American settlers and tried to reassert her authority as the rightful leader of the island. In response, a group of planters tried to overthrow the queen. They were helped by US marines and eventually forced the queen to step down.

Five years later, the United States annexed Hawaii as a new state.

**Foraker Act**

**1900**

Less than month is all it took for the U.S. to take over Puerto Rico. A treaty would be signed with Spain giving up the island along with others, such as Guam. Native residents were thrilled to see the Spanish go. One of their biggest problems with Spain was that they wanted independent control.

The idea of self-government was a dream to Puerto Ricans under U.S. control, just as it had been under Spain. The U.S. imposed military governments at first. In 1900, that stopped, but the U.S. didn't just walk away; Puerto Rico was vital for economic success. The U.S. wanted to control the island's economy and its trade with other nations. This would ensure viability of the American economy.

Enter the Foraker Act of 1900. This legislative piece created a local government for Puerto Ricans, giving them what they wanted. Well, sort of. There would be a governor of the island who would be guided and directed by a two-part legislative branch, just like the U.S. Congress. This executive would have all of the power. Puerto Ricans were to be citizens of Puerto Rico, too, not of the U.S. Additionally, certain voters would elect a Resident Commissioner that was allowed into the U.S. House of Representatives, though he or she had no voting or speaking power.

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Sounds great to Puerto Rico and its people, right? After all, they did want to control their own country. Yet there was a catch to this set up: The U.S. would appoint the governor and one of the chambers of the legislature. The other chamber was to be elected by the people. There would also be a Supreme Court on Puerto Rico. Essentially, a good part of the new government would be controlled indirectly by the U.S., whose interests were going to be protected. So, while Puerto Rico would have a new government, the citizens only partially controlled it.

Platt Amendment

1901

In 1901, the United States forced Cuba to add the Platt Amendment to its constitution, which was written by Senator Orville Platt and overruled and replaced the Teller Amendment. According to the amendment, 'Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the protection of Cuban independence', as well as 'the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty.' The amendment made Cuba a **protectorate** of the U.S., denied Cuba's right to sign any treaty with a third power and allowed the United States to oversee the Cuban government's finances. Finally, the amendment ceded the U.S. land for a military base at **Guantanamo Bay**.

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**Philippine – American War**

**1898**

This was America's first true colonial war as a world power. After defeating Spain in Cuba and in the Philippines in 1898, the U.S. purchased the Philippines, Puerto Rico and several other islands from the Spanish. However, the Filipinos had been fighting a bloody revolution against Spain since 1896, and had no intention of becoming a colony of another imperialist power. In February of 1899, fighting broke out between the occupying American Army and the Filipino forces.

Approximately 126,000 American soldiers were sent to the Philippines to fight the insurgency. More than 4,300 American soldiers died, either from combat or disease, as did an estimated 50,000-200,000 Filpinos. To fight the Filipinos, the U.S. military adopted many of the same policies that America had condemned Spain for. Reconcentration camps were established to separate Filipino guerrillas from civilian Filipinos. The first u.S. civilian governor of the islands, William Howard Taft, tried to win over the Filipinos by improving education, transportation and health care. Railroads and bridges were built. Public schools were set up and new health-care policies virtually eliminated diseases such as cholera and small pox. These reforms slowly reduced Filipino hostility.

On July 4, 1902 the U.S. declared the war over. Eventually the U.S. allowed the Filipinos a greater role in governing their own country. Finally, in 1946, the United States granted independence to the Philippines.

**Open Door Notes**

Imagine a crowd of desperate shoppers sitting outside of a toy store on Black Friday, just before it opens. Imagine them jostling and shoving each other for a front-of-the-line position. What is the best way to calm down this greedy and restless behavior? Most definitely, it is to open the door to all! This Black Friday scenario is not unlike the situation in China during the late 1800s and early 1900s. At the time, all European countries were eager to establish control over this heavily populated country full of rich markets.

**The Open Door Policy** was an American solution to the maneuvering among all countries to secure China. It basically said the best way to avoid a conflict over China was to keep it an open market for all. Just like the example of the toy store, the Open Door Policy was put in effect to keep China's 'door' open to trade from all countries.

During the age of Imperialism, one country that all empire-building powers wanted to control was China. During the late 19th century, the Chinese government was in a fragile state, and different countries had designated spheres of influence inside of China. **Spheres of influence** are areas of economic and political control.

Among the Europeans, Japanese and Americans, there was intense competition to exert control over China - countries that were literally carving the nation into pieces. Great Britain, for example, controlled the city of Hong Kong. It was kind of like the classic childhood game, King of the Hill, in which the players compete to see who can remain atop some 'hill' the longest. During the Age of Imperialism, it seemed as if nearly every country was competing to be top dog in China.

In 1899, **John Hay**, the Secretary of State under President McKinley, proposed an Open Door Policy towards China for all countries. In what would later be called the 'Open Door Note,' he wrote to each country. The**'Open Door Note'** was a message arguing for Hay's Open Door Policy. Under this policy, no country would gain dominance in China, and economic trade would be free and open to all parties. The Chinese government would be free to regulate trade and create tariffs without giving any special advantage to any one government.

**Panama Canal**

Theodore Roosevelt believed in a strong global military presence. He insisted that displaying American power to the world would make nations think twice about fighting us. This policy was more evident in the Caribbean. Roosevelt believed that having a canal through Central America was vital to American power in the world, it would save time and money for military and commercial shipping.

The U.S. decided Panama, owned by Columbia, would be the best location for the canal. We offered Colombia $10 million and a yearly rent of $25,000 for the right to build a canal and to control a strip of land on either side of it. Colombia refused the offer because they feared the price was too low and that America would eventually just take Panama away from them.

Citizens of Panama wanted to canal anyway and the United States encouraged them to stage an uprising against Columbia and declare their independence. The United States sent military ships to the area to prevent the Colombians from interfering. On November 3, 1903 the U.S. recognized Panama’s independence and the canal began to be built.

Protesters in the U.S. and throughout Latin America condemned Roosevelt’s actions as unjustifiable aggression. The president disagreed arguing the building of the canal was necessary to advance the needs of the world.

**Roosevelt Corollary**

Convinced that all of Latin America was vulnerable to European attack, President Roosevelt dusted off the Monroe Doctrine and added his own corollary. While the Monroe Doctrine blocked further expansion of Europe in the Western Hemisphere, the Roosevelt Corollary went one step further. Should any Latin American nation engage in "**CHRONIC WRONGDOING**," a phrase that included large debts or civil unrest, the United States military would intervene. Europe was to remain across the Atlantic, while America would police the Western Hemisphere. The first opportunity to enforce this new policy came in 1905, when the **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC** was in jeopardy of invasion by European debt collectors. The United States invaded the island nation, seized its customs houses, and ruled the Dominican Republic as a protectorate until the situation was stablilized.

The effects of the new policy were enormous. Teddy Roosevelt had a motto: "**SPEAK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BIG STICK**." To Roosevelt, the big stick was the new American navy. By remaining firm in resolve and possessing the naval might to back its interests, the United States could simultaneously defend its territory and avoid war. Latin Americans did not look upon the corollary favorably. They resented U.S. involvement as **YANKEE IMPERIALISM**, and animosity against their large neighbor to the North grew dramatically. By the end of the 20th century, the United States would send troops of invasion to Latin America over 35 times, establishing an undisputed sphere of influence throughout the hemisphere.