

American Imperialism

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Abstract

This study examines the multidimensional nature of American imperialism, tracking its development from the late 1800s to the present. By researching significant historical events such as the Spanish-American War, Hawaii's annexation, and the Philippine-American War, the book sheds light on the ideological, economic, and strategic factors motivating US expansionism. The examination digs into the effects of American imperialism on both colonial regions and the United States, emphasizing the intricate interplay of power, culture, and resistance. Furthermore, the research examines contemporary expressions of American imperialism, specifically military intervention, economic supremacy, and cultural hegemony. The study emphasizes imperialism's long-term impact on global geopolitics and American identity through a careful examination of primary materials and scholarly interpretations.

Introduction

To start with, imperialism first conveys the same sense of an empire, the underlying meanings of these two terms differ. The Latin word "imperium," which meaning "sovereignty or rule," is the source of the English word "empire," which in Roman culture denoted the creation of laws and the carrying out of those laws. This suggests that the state has the authority to enact laws inside its borders. Imperium, which means "rule over extensive, far away territories, far bigger than the original homeland land of rulers," was created when the state's boundaries expanded from imperium. This viewpoint explains that empire is "maintained and expanded," whereas imperialism is about "processes." As a result, the 19th century saw the word "imperialism" used to the expansionist strategies promoted by French and Britain. Thus, the term "imperialism" describes the direct annexation of a region or the equivalent form of rule through economic or political power. Although the phrases imperialism and colonialism are sometimes used synonymously or with similar meanings, they aren't identical in any way. Imperialism is the term used to describe the affluent and powerful controlling the weak, sometimes without the use of direct authority. However, the practice of gaining and preserving the assets and territories via conquest is referred regarded as colonialism.

Imperialism mostly describes the interactions between states in which certain states gain greater economic, diplomatic, and political clout while others do not have a comparatively stronger position in these domains. As a result, the stronger states extend their sway over those that are less powerful in both politics and economy. Therefore, the term "imperialism" describes the dominance and subordination that greater governments have over weaker states. In his book "Culture and Imperialism," renowned academic Edward Said makes the case that imperialism is the action or mindset of a powerful, dominant center over a far-off region. The dominated nation is affected in social, political, cultural, and ideological ways even though it may not be directly under dominion. Therefore, the term imperialism describes an unequal relationship in which the dominating power may have direct or indirect authority or influence. America is not the only country that practices imperialism.

The causes behind American imperialistic goals are identified by Thomas Weisskopf in his article "Theories of American Imperialism: A Critical Evaluation." According to him, national security and economic prosperity are the two main reasons why the US seeks imperialistic influence abroad. The US has always faced possible adversaries around the globe to protect its economic and national interests. The justification of US military engagements and diplomacy access worldwide is based on economic and national security considerations. Actually, American macroeconomic interests abroad are furthered by its national security concerns. Even though a lot of American academics believe that there are other paths to success than imperialism, economic considerations may continue to drive imperialist actions and push the US into more imperialist tactics in order to further its own goals.

American imperialism began in the latter part of the nineteenth century, after the country had grown economically powerful but was unable to project that might militarily abroad. The British possessed a five times larger army and a ten times larger navy than the US, and their military might was comparable to that of the US. In actuality, for ideological reasons, the US was initially hesitant to increase its influence abroad. The American way of thinking had a different viewpoint. American moralists believed that the US shouldn't get involved in the internal affairs of other countries and that it was unfair to violate the concept of consent. The younger generation, on the other hand, thought that the US had a duty to increase its influence and fulfill the task of improving global society. Once more, expansionist sentiment in American policy circles was triggered by the European drive in the latter part of the nineteenth century to seize roughly 10 million square kilometers of land across Africa and Asia.

There are 4 schools of philosophy that have influenced America's pursuit of empire. Henry Cabot Lodge, one of the founders of the first school of thought, asserted that "the United States needs to grow to compete." Another school of thinking holds that Carl Schurz served as one of the main proponents of the idea that America should develop into a force for peace. Josiah Strong's thesis that "America should spread Anglo-Saxon civilization" forms the basis of the third school of thinking. The founder of the 4th school of thinking, Alfred Mahan, declared that "the US has to develop into an immense Sea power." The four different schools of thought all center on the idea of expansion. Today's illustration of imperialist power is the US. It keeps massive military arsenals and around 400 military outposts spread out across the world in an attempt to gain global dominance. The US uses military showmanship to force weaker and smaller nations to adopt the US worldview and understand the world via their eyes. The US considers itself to be a global policeman or leader, having the right and authority to send troops into other countries at any time to defend its interests. The goal of dominant imperialist powers is to instill terror in all other nations. As was previously noted, superpower mentality and imperialistic influence result in unequal relationships between states. Johan Galtung has emphasized this element in his framework of structural imperialism. Additionally, he talks on the persistence of inequality that separates the world's core areas from its periphery.

History of American Imperialism

About the end of the 1800s, the idea of American imperialism began to take shape. The goal of the United States was to extend its influence over other nations and regions on the economic, social, and political fronts. This was achieved over a time of land conquest and hostilities. The toppling of the Hawaiian Kingdom & its queen, Liliuokalani, was one of the earliest acts of American imperialism. In 1893, American businessmen had Queen sign the "Bayonet Constitution" before staging a coup and assuming

control of the kingdom. After Liliuokalani was put under house arrest, the Hawaiian Islands were annexed by the United States in the summer of 1898.

In April of 1898, the war between the United States and Spain broke out. There were various reasons why the US and Spain went to war. One, there were increasing uprisings against Spanish rule in Cuba. Public uproar against the Spanish was sustained by yellow journalism. America declared war on the Spanish after the USS Maine, a Navy vessel based off the coast of Cuba, exploded up in February 1898. The Philippines and Cuba, two former Spanish territories, saw heavy fighting during the conflict. The United States emerged victorious from the conflict, which lasted only four months. America consequently acquired control of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico. An anti-foreign and anti-imperialist rebellion known as the Boxer Rebellion of 1899 occurred in China and lasted until 1901.

The Boxers were insurgents who were against the impact that outsiders were having on their nation. The uprising was an attempt to expel outsiders, including diplomats, businesspeople, and missionaries. The Chinese government was initially uninterested, but eventually they began to back the rebels. With 20,000 soldiers, the United States spearheaded an Eight-Nation Alliance that invaded China and put an end to the uprising. China was made to pay reparations, open up to Western trade, and split into areas of influence. After the Spanish-American War, the population of the Philippines thought they would get independence.

After the Spanish-American War, the population of the Philippines thought they would get independence. But America chose to establish a colony on the islands by annexing them. The Filipinos immediately declared war on America, furious that they had sided with the US in the fight against the Spanish. Emilio Aguinaldo, the revolutionary leader, spearheaded the Filipino people's revolt that started with the Battle of Manila in 1899.

The Philippine-American War ended in American triumph in 1902 and lasted until then. But the Moro insurgents and others would fight for years, and it would take until 1935 for the Philippines to be officially acknowledged as a Commonwealth. In 1946, independence was finally fully acknowledged. The US published the Platt Amendment in 1901, and both the US and Cuba signed it. It declared unequivocally that the US will defend Cuba from outside invasions and challenges to its independence. The United States was granted an installation in Cuba to supervise this defense. Cuba's autonomy and liberty were constrained by this pact, which also restricted Cuba's ability to negotiate and form agreements with other nations. The Roosevelt Corollary of 1904, named for President Theodore Roosevelt, was included to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823.

The Corollary was intended to reassure Europe that America will defend not just itself but also any other nations that would need to be intervened in. There were numerous nations all throughout the world that opposed this action, despite the fact that many Americans did. Specifically, the Corollary was not well received by Latin American nations, who felt that it granted the US an excessive amount of global military influence. This Corollary helped the United States gain notoriety as a global "police" power. In 1904, Theodore Roosevelt made arrangements for the United States to assume control of the Panama Canal project. In order to provide a commercial corridor, the canal passed through Panama to link the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The 51-mile canal was a labor-intensive, risky, and extremely complex undertaking that finally opened in August 1914, ten years later.

Motivation for National Imperialism

A multitude of interpretations can be made on the postwar American imperial pattern. Based on some of

the various justifications for imperialism mentioned in the preceding section, every act of imperialism corresponds with a number of different interpretations. Therefore, it is difficult to attribute all of the explanations for imperialism to a single source, let alone the primary one. In any case, it is likely that a number of distinct causes have influenced American imperialism; the most that can be expected from a comparative analysis of these opposing theories is a determination of which are tenable and which ones are not. One must first establish an interest in imperialism then show that the balance of power is capable of ensuring one's interest in imperialism is going to be expressed by government policy in order to establish the plausibility of an imperialist motivation. To demonstrate a national interest, one need merely demonstrate that no class opposing imperialist action possesses the necessary ability to stop it. It is vital to show that the ability to fund imperialist initiatives belongs to the classes with a curiosity in anything. There's something believable in rationalizing US imperialism in the name of national security. Throughout the postwar era, American politicians have not refrained from characterizing China or the Soviet Union as hostile powers and from defending military bases and interventions around the globe on the grounds that they are required to defend the country against enemy assault. However, it is hard to imagine how any logical analysis grounded in national security concerns could account for the numerous instances of US intervention that have occurred in small and/or far-off nations like Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, etc., none of which appear to be a threat to US security, regardless of their potential allies. Furthermore, it is implausible that American economic domination over a large number of nations with limited economic or military capabilities could be necessary for national security reasons. To blame irrationality for such a consistent pattern of conduct is to throw much too much weight on a thin reed. Obviously, an irrational calculus may lead to overblown ideas of what is necessary for American national security. Although it's certain that a national security purpose contributes to American imperialism in some way, it cannot by any means be considered the main driver. There has been much debate over the likelihood that American imperialism was driven by a desire to advance macroeconomic prosperity on a national level.

Alternative theories of American Imperialism

In order to clarify the American experience, a wide range of competing theories of imperialism are being put forth; over time, these views have sparked heated debates. The mainstream wisdom on American imperialism has been increasingly contested by advocates of ideas of American imperialism since the war in Vietnam escalated and a radical movement reappeared in the United States 10 years ago. Theorists have counterattacked the radical theorists in response to this challenge. The word is infamously ambiguous. Since so many writers have employed it in so many various contexts for many diverse reasons, it is necessary for anyone planning to talk about the topic to define the term precisely. It is helpful to distinguish between Marxist & non-Marxist definitions at the outset among a variety of other definitions. Marxists view imperialism as a phase of capitalism that coincides with the expansion of monopolistic businesses in industrialized capitalist countries and the capitalist mode of production's cross-border expansion into formerly non-capitalist regions. Although there is disagreement among Marxists over the specific traits of the imperial stage of capitalism, imperialism is generally understood to refer to a specific stage of capitalism's evolution. According to this conception, there can be no true reciprocity between imperialism and capitalism where there is imperialism, capitalism inevitably follows. Although the effects of imperialism can be debated and studied, the capitalist method of production is unavoidably the source of imperialism.

Major Reasons for American Imperialism

American imperialism in the late 19th and beginning of 20th centuries was driven by a number of significant factors that shaped American foreign policy and shaped the country's place in the world. The legacy of this era continues to impact discussions regarding U.S. foreign policy and international relations. American imperialism was motivated by a number of main factors, mostly in the late 19th and beginning of 20th centuries:

Economic Interests: The pursuit of economic expansion was a major driving force behind American imperialism. American companies were interested in acquiring foreign regions rich in resources such as sugar, mineral deposits, oil, and agricultural products as a means of expanding their market reach for their investments and goods. The United States' industrial expansion was reinforced and economic gains were derived from control over these resources.

Strategic Objectives and Military Growth: American imperialism was greatly influenced by geopolitical factors. In particular in the Pacific and Caribbean, the desire for strategically located military outposts and coaling facilities to maintain naval force was essential for defending commerce routes and projecting influence. The strategic necessity was strengthened by Alfred Thayer Mahan's endorsement of naval might as a factor in determining worldwide supremacy.

Cultural and Ideological Factors: The idea of extending democracy and civilization, together with the idea of American exceptionalism, were utilized as ideological justifications for imperialism. It was widely held that American economic principles, political structures, and morals were superior to those of other countries and ought to be introduced there, frequently via colonial influence or rule.

Defense and National Security: Preserving national security served as just another justification for American imperialism. The defense of American interests and stability in areas vital to US security, such the Pacific and Caribbean, were considered to need the annexation of lands and the construction of military installations.

Humanitarian and Ethical Arguments: Some supporters of imperialism contended that US involvement would benefit less developed areas by bringing modernization, infrastructural development, and better government. This paternalistic viewpoint was frequently invoked to defend interventions in regions thought to be unstable or to lack competent governance.

Social Darwinists and Racial Darwinists: During this time, imperialist policies were impacted by these beliefs. The idea that white people are superior to other races and that developed countries should use colonial power or influence to elevate and civilize "subordinate" races was widely held.

Competition from European Powers: The ambition to challenge and exert influence over European colonial powers was another motivating factor for American imperialism. In part, the goal of extending American influence in areas where European powers actually cultivated interests and preventing European colonization in the Pacific was the driving force for the gaining of overseas territories like the Philippines and Hawaii.

American imperialism before world-war II

Prior to World War II, Latin America and the Pacific were the main areas of American economic, military, and political dominance. This was known as American imperialism. Here are a few crucial elements:

The Open Door Policy with China: The US government supported the Open Door Policy with China, opposing limited spheres of influence and advocating for equal economic privileges for all countries. The goals of this strategy were to keep China out of the hands of any one foreign power and to guarantee US

access to Chinese markets.

Great Neighbor Strategy: During President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, the United States implemented the Good Neighbor Policy in the 1930s with the goal of fostering collaboration and non-intervention with Latin American nations. This was a departure from previous military actions.

Economic Expansion: American companies began to grow into Latin American nations in the late 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, especially in sectors like sugar, fruit, and mining. Oftentimes, this growth resulted in economic supremacy and occasionally, political meddling to safeguard American interests.

Military Operations: To defend American investments and maintain political stability that served American interests, the United States launched military interventions in a number of Latin American and Caribbean nations. Interventions in Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic are a few examples.

Monroe Principle: The Monroe Doctrine, which was established in 1823, stated that any further attempts by European countries to annex land or meddle in the affairs of state in North or South America could be considered acts of aggression and would need American participation. The United States' participation in Latin America was justified under this theory.

Annexation of Territories: During the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States gained control of territories that were not part of the continental mainland, including Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, by diplomatic or military conquest. With these purchases, the US began to exercise more direct imperial rule. Prior to World War II, American imperialism was characterized by a complex combination of commercial objectives, military interventions, particularly diplomatic policies aimed at increasing American power and defending American economic interests, especially in Latin America as well as the Pacific region.

American Imperialism after World War II

Following World War II, American imperialism changed from that of the late 19th to the early 20th centuries. During this time, American imperialism was more defined by economic domination, the dissemination of ideological influence, and geopolitical impact than by outright territorial growth and military interventions especially in the setting of the Cold War. Here are a few crucial elements:

Geopolitical Impact: The US and the Soviet Union were the two superpowers that came out of World War II. Through alliances (like NATO and SEATO), economic assistance (like the Marshall Plan), and military operations (like foreign bases), it significantly influenced world geopolitics.

Economic Dominance: Following World War II, American economic strength significantly increased. By providing significant financial assistance for the reconstruction of war-torn Western Europe, the Marshall Plan promoted economic reliance and power. Additionally, American firms went global, gaining economic hegemony in a number of areas.

Military Bases and Alliances: With a focus on Europe, Asia, and the region around it, the United States built a network of military bases and alliances all over the world. From an American perspective, this network served to showcase military might, thwart Soviet influence, and uphold international stability. The goal of the Cold War containment strategy was to stop communism from spreading, which frequently served as justification for US operations and assistance in backing anti-communist governments across the globe. The United States' participation in wars like the Vietnam War and the Korean War was impacted by this approach.

Cultural and Ideology Influence: Through the media, entertainment, schooling, and development assistance initiatives, American society, values, and ideology have been disseminated around the world. Individual liberties, capitalism, and democracy were among the American principles that were supported by this soft power approach.

Operations and System Changes: During the Cold War, the US did militarily intervene in a number of nations to defend American interests and affect political results, though not as frequently as it did in the early 20th century. Interventions in Vietnam, Korea, and Central America are a few examples.

International Groups: The US was a key player in the creation of the World Bank, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), all of which increased American economic and political clout on a worldwide scale.

Thus, military alliances, economic supremacy, ideological sway, and sporadic military interventions all served to uphold global hegemony, restrain communism, and advance American interests and values globally. These elements collectively constituted American imperialism following World War II.

American Imperialism and Cold war

During the Cold War, American imperialism was closely linked to geopolitical plans to restrain communism and increase American power around the world. George F. Kennan's containment strategy, which was put into practice by the US, aimed to stop communism from spreading. In order to oppose Soviet influence and promote anti-communist regimes across the globe, this strategy gave rise to military alliances like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Throughout the Cold War, the United States launched multiple military operations to topple communist movements or governments thought to be allied with the Soviet Union. The Vietnam War (1955–1975), the Korean War (1950–1953), and the conflicts in Latin America (e.g., Cuba, Nicaragua) are examples. The United States frequently fought proxy wars in which superpower assistance for rival factions fueled local conflicts, as opposed to directly confronting the Soviet Union. Conflicts like the Vietnam War, in which the United States supported South Vietnam and the Soviet Union and China supported North Vietnam, demonstrated this. The US employed financial support as a weapon to sway political decisions and advance capitalist systems that suited its interests. The Marshall Plan (1948) promoted economic stability and progress with the dual goals of rebuilding Western Europe and halting the rise of communism. American cultural exports, including consumer goods, music, and movies, were crucial in spreading American ideals and lifestyles around the world. Soft power played a significant role in influencing attitudes and beliefs that supported capitalism and democracy. With a focus on Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, the US built a network of military bases and partnerships across the globe. These relationships served to project power, thwart aggression, and uphold stability in strategically important areas, in conjunction with forward military deployments. The United States frequently backed authoritarian governments during the Cold War in opposition to communist movements or systems, regardless of whether these governments lacked democracy or violated human rights. Support for the governments in Chile, Iran, and several Latin American nations are a few examples. In order to restrain communism and establish American dominance on the international scene, American imperialism throughout the Cold War era was typified by an assortment of military actions economic aid, cultural impact, and strategic alliances. During this time, American foreign policy was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union rivalry, which shaped international relations and world geopolitics for many years.

American Imperialism and Today's World

Though it takes a different shape than the explicit territorial acquisition and outright military actions of the past, American imperialism nevertheless has an impact on the world today. The US continues to be a major geopolitical force and worldwide superpower. It upholds a global network of strategic alliances and military alliances, like NATO, that influence international politics & security dynamics. International commerce, flows of capital, and financial institutions are all significantly shaped by the economic might of the United States. Multinational firms with headquarters in the United States have significant sway over global marketplaces and frequently establish standards and conventions across a range of industries. American culture continues to dominate international markets and influence cultural trends. This includes music, film, technology, and consumer goods. This cultural influence upholds the principles of capitalism, consumerism, and individualism and strengthens American soft power. The United States keeps a military presence around the world through its overseas bases and deployments, even though direct military actions may be less common than in the past. Although they are frequently justified in terms of humanitarian aid or counterterrorism, military interventions still take place.

In order to advance freedoms, human rights, and ethical governance around the world, the United States frequently engages in diplomatic outreach, provides financial assistance, or supports civil society organizations. The intellectual and moral defenses of American interventions in the past are still present in this agenda. Particularly in fields like technological advancement, biotechnology, and aerospace, the United States leads the world in technical innovation. The United States' influence and capacities in fields like safety and exploration of space are bolstered by its technical superiority. In the modern world, American imperialism is likewise criticized and challenged. Some claim that US foreign policy is hegemonic or interventionist, undermining national sovereignty and sustaining inequality around the world. The influence of American culture and economy on regional customs and identities is also a subject of criticism.

Global events are shaped by the intricate interactions of financial, military, cultural, and intellectual variables that constitute American imperial power in the modern era. The United States continues to be a dominant factor in determining the international framework and the course of global developments, even though the strategies and explanations have changed.

Conclusion

After World War II, while European imperialism faded and withdrew, American imperialism emerged in its modern form. The world was split into two main blocks during the Cold War. The Soviet Union led the communist world, while the United States ruled the capitalist one. Each of the superpowers maintained an imperialist sphere of influence and ruled their respective territories. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States emerged as the lone imperial power and has continued to exert influence globally. Despite existential difficulties, American imperialism is able to sustain its dominance because it is a stronger military and economic force than any other, and it is also likely to contain or restrict any other state that aims to gain a similar level of political, military, or economic influence.

The system of dominance known as imperialism has persisted for centuries and is here to stay. It's likely to take on a different form than it has in the past. The present framework of international politics is favorable to imperialism since dominance has a balancing effect and can be seen positively. The logic of power allows stronger governments to compel weaker states to comply. Additionally, lesser governments or peripheral nations are split up to advance the interests of the center or the imperial power. As mentioned,

there is a relationship between the strong and the weak. It will continue until the periphery's position becomes stronger and the center's authority dwindles or shrinks. The US, on the other hand, will remain in charge until a state or a coalition of states really challenges its economic and military might.

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