

# The Structure of American Expansionism at the Turn of the Century

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The Objects of Policy: Continentalism, *Hemispherism*, Globalism

## 1

In the bitter struggle between expansionists and anti-imperialists in America following the Spanish-American War, the expansionists often insisted that they were only continuing the tradition of expansionism that had characterized American foreign policy ever since the foundation of the Union. The anti-imperialists indignantly rejected this line of argument. In their view there lay an impassable gulf between traditional expansionism and the new imperialism. The earlier form of expansion had involved only the North American continent and only contiguous territory, completely or partially uninhabited, intended for cultivation and settlement by Americans, to be incorporated into the Union states, each on equal terms with the others. This kind of expansionism was usually called continentalism. It was also what was meant by the celebrated term Manifest Destiny. The manifest destiny doctrine had gained many adherents during the 1830's and 1840's. Its message was that it was the clear and inevitable lot of the United States to absorb all of North America. Manifest destiny also came to refer not least to the annexation of land suitable for a system of slavery. This expansionism, largely championed by adherents of the Democratic Party, was regarded with distrust in the northeastern states, as a threat to the balance of power in the Union. By following the doctrine of continental manifest destiny the United States acquired Texas, Oregon, and the southwestern regions including California.

Years ago Charles A. Beard stressed that American expansionism during the nineteenth century comprised too quite different types of land acquisition, represented by two wholly separate groups and based on different conceptions of national interest. One was continentalism, striving for annexation of neighboring territories which

could be settled and cultivated. This was an agrarian expansion, inaugurated under Jefferson, pursued by the Democrats during the whole of the nineteenth century. The other form of expansionism was overseas annexation. It developed as a parallel movement to the industrialization of America, aiming not at acquisition of land for cultivation, but at acquisition of naval bases and coaling stations, island trade centers and spheres of control. The goal was new markets for trade and investment.

This dualistic view of American expansion is clearly oversimplified. The agrarian expansionism at the end of the nineteenth century also had commercial aims. But it is quite clear that manifest destiny expansionism or continentalism was basically of an agrarian nature. When, after 1898 and above all in the presidential election campaign of 1900, the political parties disagreed on foreign policy, the Democrats mainly adopted the well-tryed continentalist point of view. They declared in favor of this type of expansion, but rejected the new type that the McKinley administration had introduced and which they described as imperialism. The Democratic presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan, summed up their attitude quite clearly in his letter of acceptance: "The Democratic Party does not oppose expansion when expansion enlarges the area of the republic and incorporates land which can be settled by American citizens, or adds to our population people who are willing to become citizens and are capable of discharging their duties as such."

However, neither Bryan nor the rest of the Democrats, nor most of the other anti-imperialists, opposed acquisition of naval bases and coaling stations for the benefit of American foreign trade. They all agreed that the United States ought to obtain these facilities in the Philippines. But they strongly objected to annexation of the entire group of islands. For Bryan and many of those who shared his views, this was a question of ideology, and they denied that the Constitution permitted American rule over any people "without the consent of the governed." The *New York World* put the situation more bluntly: "The flag raised by Rear-Admiral Dewey in Manila is there to stay. There is no occasion for hysterics to assure this fact. . . . But Manila is not the Philippines. Its possession and retention fortunately do not impose upon us the government and care of 1,400 islands, with their seven millions of barbarians. We have the juice of the orange without the rind and pulp." The same tone was heard in many quarters, as in *The American Grocer*: "It is not neces-

sary in order to secure commerce to own territory, for nations buy, as do individuals, in the cheapest market; but it is necessary to have coaling and naval stations the world over."

The truth is that the division of opinion among Americans at the turn of the century was not quite as Beard saw it. Indeed the situation was complex. Neither the World nor the Grocer nor Bryan saw the problem of expansion from the point of view of the Constitution, or ideology. They represented what can be called informalism, since their goal was sometimes designated "the informal empire." The consistent informalists often joined the genuine anti-imperialists in criticizing the new expansionism. They protested on practical and rational, not ideological grounds. Informalists often advocated a dynamic commercial-economic expansionism, but their analysis of the problem led them to the conclusion that the usual imperialistic type of territorial expansion was obsolete and produced more disadvantages than advantages. Their idea was that more efficient results could be achieved by economic control of an informal empire than by old-fashioned empire-building or indeed any form of expensive and politically troublesome territorial annexation. History proved them right and the rapid collapse of American territorial imperialism can to some extent be attributed to the fact that their views gained ground.

## 2

Another outlook of the time was what might be called hemispherism, which also had a long history in American politics. The term is used here to denote a form of expansionism which can best be described as continentalism plus the Caribbean Sea. It came to the fore under Seward and Grant. As late as 1895, Henry Cabot Lodge, soon to be one of the foremost advocates of imperialism, expressed the idea of hemispherism when he said "From Rio Grande to the Arctic Ocean there should be but one flag and one country." He did not consider expansion further to the south desirable — neither the people nor the land would be "desirable additions to the United States." At the same time he was anxious to have one of the islands in the Caribbean as a naval base and thought it would be necessary for the United States to acquire Cuba after the Isthmian Canal was built. Lodge also wanted to see Hawaii under American control, partly to protect the projected canal, also "for the sake of our commercial supremacy in the Pacific."

Andrew Carnegie, the financial backer of the anti-imperialist movement, was in favor of acquiring not only Canada, but also Puerto Rico and Cuba, if the inhabitants of the islands agreed. Nor was the thought of such a development foreign to other leading anti-imperialists, such as George F. Hoar and Carl Schurz. It should be pointed out that hemispherists also accepted the annexation of Hawaii. The arguments they used were partly the same as those brought out in connection with the Caribbean islands. As far as Cuba was concerned, the situation was complicated by the fact that Congress had pledged itself, through the Teller Resolution, to respect the independence of the island. But many Americans, and primarily the genuine imperialists of course, considered that this promise to Cuba had been hasty in the extreme. Thus Albert J. Beveridge proclaimed that "Cuba is a mere extension of our Atlantic coast-line, commanding the ocean entrances to the Mississippi and the Isthmian Canal." Even a man such as Richard Olney, Secretary of State in Cleveland's second administration, was a hemispherist. He considered American expansion in the Caribbean Sea, with annexation of Cuba, a proper and desirable policy, while he sharply criticized expansion in the Pacific, in particular acquisition of the Philippines. Like many others he can be described as an informalist on hemispherist territory.

### 3

A third position at the turn of the century was globalism, properly a genuine, conscious imperialism, unrestrained by anything other than practical considerations in either geographical location and extent of the expansion area or the way in which the annexed regions were to be governed. The term does not in itself imply a desire for world supremacy or establishment of American colonies all over the world. The majority of men that could be described as globalists did not see the building of an empire as an end in itself and had no particular interest in a colonial empire of the British type. They were primarily interested in territorial expansion as a means of acquiring strategic bases which could safeguard America's position as a great power and supply the country with markets for raw materials, American products and investment. A more extreme form of expansionist dreams naturally existed, as when Josiah Strong predicted in 1885 that the American branch of the Anglo-Saxon race would "move down upon Mexico, down upon Central

and South America, out upon the islands of the sea, over upon Africa and beyond." But in general "the new imperialism" had a different outlook.

In an article called "Expansion not Imperialism," published in the pro-expansionist journal *Outlook* and probably written by its editor Lyman Abbot, the difference between a continentalist and an expansionist — what is here called a globalist — was said to be that whereas the latter "believes that American ideas and institutions are good for the whole world," the former thinks that they are only suitable for the North American continent. According to the *Outlook*, this did not mean that the latter was an imperialist and the former a democrat, but that the expansionist was a more radical, optimistic, enthusiastic democrat.

Globalists usually denied that there was any fundamental difference between the traditional American form of expansionism and the new form. During the presidential election campaign of 1900, Theodore Roosevelt often defended the new expansion when speaking in the West and South by arguing that the Republicans were only completing what the Democrats had started under Jefferson and Jackson, that the annexation of Louisiana was in principle no different from the acquisition of the Philippines. The young Beveridge, perhaps the most enthusiastic apostle of imperialism, made a celebrated speech in the autumn of 1898, which has gone down in history under the title, "The March of the Flag." He said, among other things: "And now, obeying the same voice that Jefferson heard and obeyed, that Seward heard and obeyed, William McKinley plants the flag over the islands of the seas, outposts of commerce, citadels of national security, and the march of the flag goes on!" He refuted the argument that American expansion should be restricted to contiguous territory as in former times: "Distance and oceans are no arguments.... Steam joins us; electricity joins us — the very elements are in league with our destiny. Cuba not contiguous! Hawaii and the Philippines not contiguous! Our navy will make them contiguous. Dewey and Sampson and Schley have made them contiguous, and American speed, American guns, American heart and brain and nerve will keep them contiguous forever. . . ."

The globalists enthusiastically supported the policy of annexation after the Spanish-American War. Many widely varying types of motive were produced in favor of expansion, but the American consul-general in Shanghai, John Goodnow, went to the heart of

the matter and spoke for many globalists when he declared before the peace treaty had been signed: "We should hold the Philippine islands, the Caroline islands and the Ladrone islands, also Cuba and Porto Rico. It does not matter whether we call them war indemnity or what. We need them in our business."

For many globalists navalism was an important motive, and the influence of Captain Alfred T. Mahan should not be underestimated, particularly his influence on the little group of determined expansionists who were his faithful disciples and who through the posts they held could affect the course of decision-making and of foreign policy: John Hay, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge among others. Another of the most active globalists was Whitelaw Reid, editor of the New York Tribune, friend of both John Hay and McKinley and appointed by the President to the Peace Commission in Paris. Reid also rejected the arguments of the continentalists: "Can a nation with safety set such limits to its development? When a tree stops growing, our foresters tell us, it is ripe for the ax."

#### 4

The controversy over expansionism did not only concern and in a way did not primarily concern the geographical extent of expansion. What was more essential was the nature of annexations, the relation the new areas were to have with the United States. The problem of government organization gave rise to a passionate debate, and the fight between anti-imperialists and expansionists largely revolved around this aspect of the question. The old manifest destiny expansionism—that is continentalism—had not really produced this problem, since there it was a matter of contiguous territory, intended for settlement by Americans and gradual absorption into the Union. Integration and incorporation were self-evident goals.

Constitutional arguments were one of the anti-imperialists' favorite weapons and played a prominent part in attempts to prevent ratification of the peace treaty with Spain. Senator West of Missouri introduced a resolution which declared that the Constitution of the United States did not empower the federal Government to acquire areas to be retained and ruled as colonies: "all territory acquired by the government, except such small amount as may be necessary for coaling stations, must be acquired and governed with the purpose of ultimately organizing such territory into States suitable for admission into the Union."

Nor did genuine globalists have problems over where they stood on this issue. Convinced expansionists, imperialists, naturally realized that expansion on any scale implied that new areas became colonies, that inhabitants in no way automatically became American citizens, that the Constitution did not automatically extend to all territory where the American flag was flown.

Even so, there were complications here too. The great majority of expansionists must have held a position somewhere in the middle, between the integrationists and the colonialists. Many of them disliked the word "colony" and emphasized humanitarian reasons for annexation, but could not at the same time conceive of accepting the consequences that incorporation would bring. They usually spoke vaguely of "the greatest possible degree of self-government" or "self-government as soon as the people concerned have shown that they are mature enough and as far as their capacity permits." Such phrases were also used by the colonialists. The difference was that for the convinced imperialists it was a question of practical solutions, where the important thing was to ensure a free hand. The motto of the anti-imperialists, and during the 1900 Presidential election campaign of the entire Democratic party, was that "The Constitution follows the Flag." The debate was very confused, the lack of logic which marked many of the arguments was shown quite plainly when many newspapers and individuals that earlier had accepted the administration's expansion policy and praised the McKinley regime for the annexation of Puerto Rico and the Philippines also spoke up in favor of extension of the Constitution to all territory belonging to the United States. The problem came to a head when a bill was introduced in the spring of 1900 proposing a tariff between Puerto Rico and the United States. In the violent fight that followed, a large part of the Republican press went over to the opposition. The tariff nonetheless was put through, and the question of the Constitution and the Flag was settled by the Supreme Court in the well-known Insular Cases of 1901 in which a divided Court established that annexed areas "belonged to but were not a part of the United States."

One of the individuals who fought for a colonial system was, not unexpectedly, Whitelaw Reid of the *Tribune*. He stated that "We have ample constitutional power to acquire and govern new territory absolutely at will, according to our sense of right and duty, whether as dependencies, as colonies, or as a protectorate." His arguments were to the point: if Americans could not hold the

Philippines as a colony, then they could not hold the islands at all. It was, of course, unthinkable that they should open their doors to "Chinese or half-breed or what not" who would compete with American labor. They had to have the right to establish tariffs, otherwise the protectionist system would break down. Anyone contemplating letting these people into the Senate and the House of Representatives would be "the most imbecile of all the offspring of time." If there was any risk that the American people would be unable to restrain themselves from so acting, then it would be better to ask some civilized nation "with more common sense and less sentimentality and gush" to take over the newly acquired territories.

Reid made this speech shortly after the treaty with Spain had received the consent of the Senate, following a long and intense debate. Like the other imperialists such as Roosevelt, Beveridge and Lodge, Reid rejected the constitutional arguments put forward by the anti-imperialists, and described them as "a crazy extension of the doctrine." "The rule of liberty, that all just government derives its authority from the consent of the governed, applies only to those who are capable of self-government," claimed Beveridge.

Different people's interpretations of constitutional law usually concur with their attitudes toward expansionism. The theoretical side of the matter was ambiguous. Precedents pointed in different directions. So everyone could find points in support of an opinion. The attitude of the colonialists at its simplest was that territories could be acquired by the federal government for "any purpose which may seem desirable," and that Congress had the full right to legislate for these new areas, e.g., as far as taxes and tariffs were concerned, even if the territories had not been incorporated and were therefore not covered by the Constitution.

Motives: National Interest, *Duty*, Destiny

1

American expansion displays an extremely rich flora of motives, more or less central, often combined or interwoven. By motive is meant here both perception and evaluation. One main group of motives can be distinguished, in which all the arguments deal with some aspect of National Interest. These motives are mainly of an economic-commercial nature, or concerned with international politics or strategy. The other main group comprises all the motives



that do not fall into these categories. Their common factor is that they are usually either veiled in moral and idealistic terms, or are based on a perception of reality colored by deterministic ideas about human development. *Duty* and *destiny* are key-words in this sphere, and the arguments range from cultural and religious to racial considerations.

Commercial expansion covered a motive generally recognized as attractive. The depression that had afflicted the United States during the 1890's had left deep scars. Both in the farming districts and in industry, general opinion was that the crisis had been the result of overcapacity and over-production and that the only hope lay in new markets for American products and capital—in expansion. This conviction was as rooted in the agrarian South and West as in the industrial Northeast and became a theme in almost all that was said and written on the subject of expansion. This interest in foreign markets was nothing new. It had existed before the Civil War and steadily increased after 1865. The *Commercial and Financial Journal* expressed it succinctly in 1885: the time was at hand when America's large surplus production "must be employed in extending American interests in other countries—or not at all." But it was the panic of 1893 and the consequent financial crisis that gave currency to these ideas.

"The output of factories working at full capacity is much greater than the domestic market can possibly consume, and it seems to be conceded that every year we shall be confronted with an increasing surplus of manufactured goods for sale in foreign markets if American operatives and artisans are to be kept employed the year round," wrote Frederic Emory in the spring of 1898 in an analysis of America's foreign trade. The problem was equally serious for farmers and in his *March of the Flag* speech Beveridge pounded it out: "Today we are raising more than we can consume. Today, we are making more than we can use. Today our industrial society is congested; there are more workers than there is work; there is more capital than there is investment." And the self-evident solution to all these problems was said to be the acquisition of new markets and for many this meant territorial expansion, at least to the extent that was necessary for maintaining control over the new markets.

Despite the lyrical descriptions by men such as Beveridge of the natural resources of the Philippines, the commercial interest in the islands was based on quite a different aspect, their presumed usefulness as a gateway into the enormous Chinese market. Dewey's

victory at Manila was significant in the context of activities of the European powers in China, more and more disturbing for American interests. In an article with the eloquent title "Expansion Unavoidable" published in Harper's Weekly in 1900, R. Van Bergen argued that territorial expansion was essential if America was to compete in the Chinese market. Without a nearby base, they would be helpless.

Charles Denby, United States minister to China until 1898, had worked hard to further American commercial and manufacturing interests there. After his return home, he stressed the importance of the Chinese market and helped build an opinion for commitment in the Far East. He combined crass economic points of view with idealistic arguments, in a way that was characteristic of the expansionist debate. Sometimes the combination of missionary zeal and profit interest produced bizarre effects: "Fancy what would happen to the cotton trade if every Chinese wore a shirt: well, the missionaries are teaching them to wear shirts." Denby described the missionary as "the forerunner of commerce." The hopes roused by the thought of the opportunities offered by the Chinese market were wildly exaggerated. Hay's Open Door policy was greeted with enthusiasm. His actions were in no way as significant as they were made out to be, but served to heighten feeling that China—and the Asian market as a whole—was a necessary and worthwhile venture. Quite unrealistic expectations about the possibility of exporting cotton textiles to China, produced a strong wave of expansionism in the Southern states. And this was where the Philippines became important: "With the Philippines as a three-quarter way house, forming a superb trading station, the bulk of this trade should come to this country."

All sorts of apostles appeared. The influential economic writer Charles A. Conant considered commercial expansion necessary for the survival of the USA. What he thought important was not so much markets for surplus production or markets for raw materials, as markets for investment of America's excess of capital. According to Conant, America was in the same situation as the other highly-developed, industrial countries; hence the rivalry between them; inexorable and unavoidable conflicts would follow, as a result of tensions and antagonisms of world politics. In 1900 Conant published a collection of essays on this theme, under the title of "the United States in the Orient."

A speech made by Chauncey Depew at the Republican Party Convention in 1900 provided a typical example of arguments used

by commercial-economic expansionists. Depew posed the question of why there was war in South Africa, why the walls of Peking were being stormed, why troops were on the march in Asia and Africa, and why armies from foreign countries and empires were to be found there? He supplied the answer: because production in civilized countries was greater than the countries could consume and because this overproduction led to stagnation and poverty. "The American people now produce \$ 2,000,000,000 worth more than they can consume, and we have met the emergency, and by the statesmanship of William McKinley, and by the valor of Roosevelt and his associates, we have our market in Cuba, we have our market in Puerto Rico, we have our market in the Philippines, we have our market in Hawaii, and we stand in the presence of 800,000,000 of people, with the Pacific as an American lake and the American artisans producing better and cheaper goods than any country in the world." A financier, Depew primarily had industrial overproduction in mind, but in these years there was an equally important agrarian expansionism. However, the group of agrarians that dominated the Democratic party, the farm businessmen, wanted a free global marketplace for American products, and they did not consider that this required annexation of areas to be governed as colonies.

## 2

Economic-commercial motives were often combined with arguments concerning the politics of power. Rivalry between the great powers was often looked upon as nothing more or less than pure economic competition. Conant announced in an article in *Forum* in July 1900 that the goal of the nation's leaders must to an ever-greater extent be to gain and retain markets and areas for investment. The necessity of military and naval strength became obvious when it was a question of "seeking and holding exclusive markets on the one hand, and of increasing national competing power in free markets on the other." This was vital. The *Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin* made almost the same claim, referring to China. "No political qualms about the dangers of territorial expansion" could save the country from possibly having to defend with violence its rights and its opportunities on, say, the Chinese market. And in his analysis of America's foreign trade in the spring of 1898, Frederic Emory stated that isolationism must be left to the

past. The United States had to accept the consequence of having become "a competitor in the world-wide struggle for trade."

Starting from such premises, the step to a policy of expansion with annexation of new territory to achieve control of markets, was naturally not long. Captain Alfred T. Mahan, advocate of navalism and mentor of Roosevelt and Lodge, summed up his view of the question in a couple of sentences in January 1900: "Sea power, as a national interest, commercial and military, rests not upon fleets only, but also upon local territorial bases in distant commercial regions. It rests upon them most securely when they are extensive, and when they have a numerous population bound to the sovereign country by those ties of interest which rest upon the beneficence of the ruler; of which beneficence power to protect is not the least factor."

Another source from which the intellectual side of expansionism drew support was the theories of the historian Frederick Jackson Turner and the economist Brooks Adams. When developing his frontier thesis Turner emphasized that America was standing on the threshold of a new area, now that the last frontier had disappeared and there was no more free land. This did not mean, he pointed out, that "these energies of expansion" had disappeared, only that they had to seek new outlets: "The demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue." The eccentric Brooks Adams also influenced the expansionists, not least his friends Roosevelt and Lodge. In his book, *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, which attracted a great deal of attention, he developed the theory that only by absolute economic supremacy could America save itself from disintegration and decay. In Adams' vision this meant American control of Asia.

In all this the navy loomed large. Mahan, Lodge, Roosevelt, Brooks Adams, and their sympathizers such as Senators William E. Chandler of New Hampshire and William P. Frye of Maine, saw the development of commercial and military—above all naval—power as facets of the same plan of action. Mahan had for years preached the necessity of a strong navy to protect interests in the Caribbean and Pacific, not least for support and protection of trading interests, and this implied territorial expansion, mainly in the form of naval bases and coaling stations, occasionally on a greater scale, all to ensure positions and markets. A canal joining the

Atlantic with the Pacific had long been considered vital for commercial expansion. Annexation of Hawaii, Samoa, Puerto Rico, Cuba, was sometimes described as being necessary for protection of the canal. For expansionists of this type it was self-evident that the United States must leave the old isolationist policy and claim a rightful place among the other actors on the stage of world politics. Power and prestige were the key words. America was a great power and must act as one. It had to be clear that the USA was "a nation that knows its rights and dare maintain them—a nation that has come to stay, with an empire of its own in the China Sea," wrote Reid in 1900. There was no way back, for "our Continental Republic has stretched its wings over the West Indies and the East. It is a fact and not a theory."

America's new position brought new responsibilities, which could not be shirked. Olney, admittedly critical of some aspects of McKinley's policy, claimed that the American people were gradually realizing that earlier foreign policy had been "suitable to our infancy," but was unworthy of a nation which had reached maturity and strength and which had become "one of the foremost Powers of the earth and should play a commensurate part in its affairs." The same note was struck in many quarters. Charles Emory Smith, Postmaster General and onetime minister to Russia, said in a speech of October 1898 that "We have a new position in the great family of nations. We have stepped out upon the great stage of the world's action, and have become one of the great powers. We have advanced from continental domain to world-wide influence. We have risen to a new conception of our natural possibilities and our national greatness." Clinging to the old policy would be acting like a man who "would reject the railway and travel by the stage-coach," as Henry Watterson, editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal, put in in an interview.

This feeling for America's new strength, of her having come of age as a great power, was often combined with an awareness of the deep and revolutionary changes taking place in the international power game. As early as 1895, Lodge had preached that the password of the age was consolidation, not only with regard to capital and labor but on an international level. The day of the small nation was gone, the great powers were extending their rule over an increasingly great proportion of the people and countries of the world. Ever greater sections of the earth were being shared out in order to insure the future development of the great powers. One of the

biggest changes was the shifting of the focal point from the Atlantic to the Pacific and the increasing importance of Asian markets. Watterson predicted in a homely but pointed figure of speech that the time would come when "the Pacific, and not the Atlantic, may become the washbasin of the universe."

### 3

Motives lying behind expansionism related to commercial opportunities, power and prestige, can all be placed in one category under the rubric of national interest. Of those that fall outside this category the most important might be described as idealistic. Robert E. Osgood has distinguished motives and ends in a similar way, under the headings of national self-interest and national ideals, in a penetrating analysis of the entire history of American foreign policy. But two important points must be made here. Firstly, it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between the two types. There are motives which, though formulated in idealistic terms, come within the sphere of self-interest. Secondly, and more important, the complex of motives that lies outside the national interest sphere comprises not only idealistic arguments but also the type of motive which refers to a development following laws that cannot be influenced or hindered. Such arguments usually refer to "the logic of events," "events, evolutionary or providential," "the march of events," "destiny" and such like.

The *New York Sun* had said in the early 1890's when president Cleveland halted the annexation of Hawaii: "The policy of annexation is the policy of destiny; and destiny always arrives." Shortly after the battle of Manila, McKinley said to his secretary: "We need Hawaii just as much and a great deal more than we did California. It is manifest destiny." This "new manifest destiny" was invoked by many expansionists, such as Congressman Gibson when in June 1898 he spoke in favor of annexation of Hawaii, just before the resolution was put to the vote. "Manifest destiny says, 'Take them in,' The American people say 'Take them,'" he remarked. The doctrine of inevitability came to be one of the cornerstones of expansion. Particularly when defending annexation of the Philippines it took the form of what Albert Weinberg has called moral determinism: "the will of God," "responsibilities forced upon us by destiny," "Providence," "duty determined by destiny," "the finger of God."

This group of ideas was characterized by a shifting between destiny, right and duty: the stronger nation has a moral duty to

intervene to help the weaker. The stronger has a right to intervene, because his higher development has given him insight into what is best and what is needed to solve a problem. With the addition of contemporary racial ideas and Social-Darwinist arguments, the next contention was that not only duty and right existed but laws dictated by God or Nature which ordained the future. The key words were not power and prestige, but *duty* and destiny, with emphasis on duty, while the ideas of destiny colored the perception of reality. The categories into which motives fell can be used to differentiate between cultural imperialism, religious imperialism, and racial imperialism, often interlaced.

There was one motive which recurred more frequently than any other, and which appeared in practically all the expansionist talk, whatever the source. This was the humanitarian tasks said to be facing Americans in the new territories, the moral demands that lay behind the intervention against Spain and which continued to guide the policies of the United States. These purely idealistic, moral arguments dominated the debate, often alone, but on many occasions combined with one or more other motives. Thomas J. Hudson was convinced that America had gone to war for "purely humanitarian principles," "in a spirit of purest altruism — without reward or hope of reward." The enthusiastically expansionist Governor Wolcott in Colorado put it to the Republican Party Convention in 1900: "The spirit of justice and liberty prompts us in our determination to give the dusky races of the Philippines the blessings of good government and republican institutions." Subsequent variations were innumerable, but there was always the declaration that the policy of the United States on the territories surrendered by Spain was dictated by high moral motives, a duty to humanity that they had no right to evade. The anti-imperialists denied that this in itself praiseworthy feeling of moral responsibility necessitated converting the new territories into colonies, but many of those who claimed to be opposed to annexation also explained that they faced an imperative duty. The moral motive for expansion sounded in McKinley's letter of acceptance in 1900: "Every effort has been directed to their peace and prosperity, their advancement and well-being, not for our aggrandizement nor for the pride of might, nor for trade and commerce, nor for exploitation, but for humanity and civilization, and for the protection of the vast majority of the population who welcome our sovereignty against the designing minority." The American Grocer showed the same touching concern

when it wrote that the mission of the United States might be to break the moral and physical fetters which bound the eight or ten million natives of the Philippines, and possibly this could not be accomplished without retention of the islands.

Even if many people felt these moral considerations to be genuine and convincing, it is obvious that they were based on or closely allied to ideas about different kinds of superiority, variations on the theme of the white man's burden. Sometimes ideas of cultural, religious, and racial imperialism were clearly expressed. American men of religion, mainly from the Protestant churches, morally justified territorial expansion. They did not restrict themselves to idealistic alibis for annexations, but were a force within the expansionist movement, standing with navalists and businessmen. Organized Christianity had also helped rouse the warlike mood that preceded the war with Spain. What is striking here is that the missionary zeal of which they spoke so much often ignored or concealed that the natives had been Christian for many a long year. They were Catholics, however, and it was no coincidence that Catholic churchmen in the United States were less responsive to expansionist enthusiasm than their Protestant colleagues.

A book by Robert E. Speer, *Missions and Modern History*, provides many examples of arguments put forward by Protestant leaders. Speer was secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church. While the Social Darwinists considered all evolution the result of unshakable laws, Speer preached the will of God. It was God's intention that Christian nations should subjugate the world, in order to liberate the peoples of the world. Christian states had the right to intervene in non-Christian countries, for religious and humanitarian reasons. In general Speer equated Christian countries and civilized countries and consequently his arguments and opinions were close to those of the cultural imperialists. He claimed it the duty of civilized nations to maintain law and order, including protection of investments. He hastened to add, however, that only moral reasons could justify the exercise of power by the Western world.

All sorts of clerics echoed these arguments. The Reverend Dr. MacArthur of Calvary Baptist Church celebrated Dewey's victory at Manila with a sermon full of religious-humanitarian enthusiasm and quoted in the *New York Tribune*: "The Philippine Islands. . . should be made the garden of the universe. . . We will fill them with school houses and missionaries." In an article in *The National*



Magazine, Thomas J. Hudson stated as a maxim of Christian ethics, the duty of every Christian nation to do what it could for the promotion of Christian civilization throughout the world. Nor did he have doubts regarding the means. Christ himself had seen that Christian civilization "could not be successfully engrafted upon human society by means less drastic than the sword." Less aggressive was the theory that the Americans were God's chosen people: "We imagine that God has called us to the rulership of the world. He sends us, as He sent His well-beloved son, to serve the world and thus to rule the world," said the President of Ohio Wesleyan University in a speech in September 1899.

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As pointed out, the dividing line between these "religious expansionists" and those individuals who argued in terms of culture and civilization was fluid. A magnificent specimen of this combination of religious and humanitarian idealism, of nationalism and a feeling of power, is to be found in a speech made by Senator John M. Thurston of Nebraska on May 25 1899: "God reigns; and in the sunshine of His guidance we go marching on—on under a flag, that symbolizes the highest aspirations of the human race. Washington made it the flag of independence; Lincoln made it the flag of liberty; McKinley has made it the flag of man's humanity for man—until today, on land and sea, the wide world round, serenely uplifted towards empyrean blue—kissed by the sun of day, wooed by the stars of night, feared by tyrants, beloved by mankind—it tranquilly floats, the unconquered flag of the greatest nation of the earth."

Cultural and racial imperialism often went together. The transfer from one to the other was frequently undetectable, since the concept of race was usually vague and indistinguishable from civilization, culture, nation. Sometimes it was a question of a feeling that the Anglo-Saxon culture was superior, morally, sometimes a racial philosophy comprising a masterrace mentality. That the Anglo-Saxons were a superior race was an opinion generally held; sometimes the Teutonic race was included. This racialist thinking was most evident in relation to colored people where the idea of race combined easily with ideas on culture and civilization. Both imperialists and anti-imperialists agreed, and indeed one of the most common anti-imperialist arguments was that there was a great

risk in annexation of lower, barbaric races. When the imperialist Chauncey Depew declared that there was no question of incorporating "the alien races, and civilized, semi-civilized, barbarous and savage peoples of these islands [the Philippines] into our body politic," he was following the same line as his bitterly anti-imperialist colleague, Senator George F. Hoar from Massachusetts, although they drew totally different conclusions from this starting point. Congressman Champ Clark in a speech opposing the annexation of Hawaii in June 1898 used the existence of Chinese people in the islands as an argument against annexation: "How can we endure our shame when a Chinese Senator from Hawaii with his pigtail hanging down his back, with his pagan joss in his hand, shall rise from his curule chair and in pigeon English proceed to chop logic with George Frisbie Hoar or Henry Cabot Lodge? O tempora! O mores!"

Moral reasons recur. The arguments are similar to those used by cultural imperialists. In an article in *Forum*, Conant declared that the cause of modern social progress had been committed to the Anglo-Saxons by the historical evolution of events. If this task were refused, the world would sink back into darkness and barbarism: "It is a mission of the highest altruism, in which commercial and economic forces play a part only because economic efficiency is the fruit of freedom, and the people of the highest moral ideas are those capable of doing the most in the world." The same thought was expressed more brutally in the *Detroit Tribune*, that it was best for mankind when countries and territories were in the hands of those who could best rule: "and as a rule, those can best govern who are capable of conquering. That is the reason that conquest is moral enough for all practical purposes."

Professor Theodore Marburg of Harvard defended the expansion and conquests of the Anglo-Saxon race on the ground that the race was superior in qualities that contributed to human advance. He sought a moral justification: "Man's express duty is the uplifting of man. . . . The duty to uplift and elevate himself and his fellows thus becomes an end in itself and a justification of . . . life." But it is interesting to see the next stage of his argument: the nation that blocks the way of progress must expect to be pushed aside "by more powerful and vigorous blood." With these words he came close to the racial ideas which often appeared in connection with American expansionism. As early as 1885, Strong had in his well-known book applied the ideas of social darwinism to the coming American

expansion. "The time is coming when the pressure of population on the means of subsistence will be felt here as it is now felt in Europe and Asia." There would be a decisive battle between the races, for which the Anglo-Saxon had been trained: "the mighty centrifugal tendency, inherent in this stock and strengthened in the United States, will assert itself. Then this race of unequaled energy . . . having developed peculiarly aggressive traits calculated to impress its institutions upon mankind, will spread itself over the earth." In the same year John Fiske discussed similar ideas in an essay with the eloquent title, *Manifest Destiny*. A few years later these ideas received political application, and at the same time the blessing of science by John W. Burgess, professor at Columbia and a pioneer in the field of political science. Burgess, whose work had a considerable influence, claimed that the laws of evolution would inexorably result in a world ruled by the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races, since they enjoyed superior abilities in building and governing states. This superiority also meant that they had a duty to lead and rule the world.

Theodore Roosevelt had studied under Burgess at Columbia, and his ideas on the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race showed a close resemblance to those of his teacher. Both men used the term race rather vaguely, equating it with nation or culture. Compared to that of many of his contemporaries Roosevelt's racism was reasonably moderate. He often expressed the opinion, that inferior peoples were not permanently or inherently inferior, but had the chance of reaching a higher level of development. Together with Henry Cabot Lodge and other imperialists he nonetheless believed in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and its inevitable victory over inferior or degenerate races. The war against Spain was often put in this context. The great past of the Spanish people was acknowledged, but they were seen as a nation that had ceased to make progress. The Spaniards were a people on the decline, while the new age belonged to the young, virile, dynamic American nation—and the Anglo-Saxon race.

These ideas were expounded with clarity by Thomas J. Hudson in his essay on "Evolution and the Spanish-American War." The war was in the natural order of the development of civilization. Natural law governed: "War is just as essential a factor in the evolution of civilization as it is in organic evolution," and for the same reasons: every step taken forwards and upwards has been made possible by "the slaughter of the unfit, thus making room for the

existence and development of the higher orders." Every step forward in civilization had been the result of war. Another scholar, H. H. Powers, an erstwhile professor of economics at Stanford University, saw the evolution of the world as a Darwinian struggle for power between races and nations. He considered the defeat and routing of inferior, less efficient forms by more efficient, superior ones to be a law of nature, as immovable as the law of gravity: there was as little reason to moralize over the one as over the other. It was a matter of adapting as wisely as possible to conditions nobody could change. In his usual way Beveridge went to the point as far as this motive was concerned. On January 9, 1900, he made a speech on the Philippines in the Senate which attracted a good deal of attention and took the form of a catalog of imperialism, an inventory of conceivable motives for expansion. His address was delivered with such brilliance that, as Mr. Dooley ironically remarked, you could almost waltz to it: "God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish systems where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer among savages and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this, the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race he has marked the American people as his chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to men."

## 5

Shortly after Manila Bay another expansion doctrine appeared: that, in general, when a nation intervenes to overthrow oppression it takes upon itself responsibility for the people it liberates. This theme recurred and was used by Roosevelt who described it as partly "an axiom of international law," partly "an axiom of morals." And the application of the theory followed the customary pattern. The islands could not be returned to Spain. Nor could they be left to their own devices. That would result in chaos, barbarism, anarchy. The great powers of the Old World would also immediately start pressing their interests.

In his celebrated interview with a delegation of Methodist clergymen in 1899, President McKinley explained how, after praying to God for enlightenment and guidance, he had suddenly realized how the Philippine problem must be solved and been shown how annexation was the only way open to him: "... and it came to me this way ... 1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; 2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany, our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; 3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and 4) that there was nothing left for us to do but take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could for them, as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died." As Ernest May has pointed out, McKinley's story of how he reached his decision is a concoction, a pleasing little tale, that did not fail to impress his audience. But at the same time the President gave an accurate summary of arguments used most often by the administration to influence public opinion and ensure ratification of the treaty with Spain, and which also constituted the main defence against attacks by the anti-imperialists. Expansionists of all shades used the argument that, quite apart from the question of national interest, the USA had a moral duty to remain in the Philippines. The strength of this argument was illustrated by the fact that anti-imperialists had great difficulty getting around it. Even Bryan was forced to consider a temporary American control of the islands, until "a stable form of government" could be established, and then continued American protection against external interference.

### *Catalysts*

The verbose arguments of the expansionists have been shown to contain groups of motives. A feature of most of them was that there is no logical connection between their perception of reality and the recommendation of an imperialistic foreign policy. Even the anti-imperialists were in favor of commercial expansion, could accept naval bases and coaling stations for the benefit of trade and shipping, were convinced of the superiority of American civilization and the Anglo-Saxon race. Since even the globalists often made such exten-

sive use of moral terms and categories, one gets the impression that in many respects the two sides had common values, or at least professed to have. Still, these people with such similar beliefs had diametrically opposed, or at least varied, opinions on expansionism. This was partly because they often used the same words and phrases, even when their goals were widely separate. There are other explanations.

Active, aware, enthusiastic expansionists often shared a dream of action, expressed in impatient, frustrated energy, in eager, newly awakened hopes for the future, in an intense desire to test their strength in a fight. Typical was the attitude of Roosevelt, put in words in a speech at the Republican National Convention at Philadelphia in June 1900: "Is America a weakling, to shrink from the world work that must be done by the world powers? No. The young giant of the West stands on a continent that clasps the crest of an ocean in either hand. Our nation, glorious in youth and strength, looks into the future with fearless and eager eyes and rejoices as a strong man to run a race." There can be no doubt that he was expressing "the spirit of expansionism," the emotional foundation of expansion at this time. It was newly awakened, emotionally charged, borne up by dreams of future triumph and greatness, filled with assurance of the nation's ever-growing strength, a surplus energy seeking new tasks. Roosevelt appealed not to reason but to emotion. The speech was received with a roof-raising ovation, and was described by a member of the audience as a masterly demonstration of "spiritual, grammatical and physical virility."

This desire for action sprang partly from the young America's feeling of strength. The Chicago Times-Herald declared in July 1898: "We also want Puerto Rico . . . . The spirit of national development has seized the people. We want Hawaii now. Fortunately we will not have to fight for it; we will annex it next week. We may want the Carolines, the Ladrones, the Pelew, and the Mariana groups. If we do, we will take them." At the same time the Denver *News* stated that "'The American people are overwhelmingly in favor of holding every foot of ground over which the flag is raised. The instinct is rooted in them, and it is a sound and good instinct."

But another important factor that lay behind this impatient longing for action was the increasing population pressure in the United States. As Richard Hofstadter has pointed out, aggressive expansionism was giving vent to a feeling of frustration. The last frontier had closed, economic depression and immigration had

given rise to a feeling of diminished opportunities, while the changing structure of society created unrest and uncertainty which could all too easily be transformed into aggression. Franklin H. Giddings, a professor at Columbia wrote in 1899 in the *Political Science Quarterly* that the American people constituted "the most stupendous reservoir of seething energy to be found on any continent... If, by any mistaken policy, it is denied an outlet, it may discharge itself in anarchistic, socialistic, and other destructive modes that are likely to work incalculable mischief." Impatience was growing as a consequence of changes in American society, where "opportunity for adventure and daring enterprise" was rapidly disappearing. Americans were "liable to an outbreak of warlike spirit."

Warlike mentality was partly the product of the development of society, and of the current situation in the country. A similar idea was put forward in the *Banker's Magazine* during the autumn of 1898, suggesting that the new American foreign policy was beyond control. It was an instinctive reaction in the growing population, hitherto used to elbow room, but which was finding that the country was getting crowded. According to Giddings the situation in Cuba had given the American people "the first apparently decent excuse for fighting" since the Civil War. The country's move toward expansionism was perfectly natural; "at this stage in the development of the United States, territorial expansion is as certain as the advent of spring after winter."