

Imperialism is generally defined as a nation's extension of power, authority, or influence by direct or indirect territorial acquisition over the political or economic life of other areas. In relation to US history, their imperialism began near the end of the 19th century when the Spanish-American War ended in 1898. As the United States became more involved in imperialism, their actions reflect the theme of developing an American identity because events that occurred emphasized true American ideals and the people's perspective of what it means to be an American. However, US's actions did not necessarily represent the statement "We the People" because the US government did not consider about what a country's natives would think when reestablishing the acquired territories back from a state of collapse due to the wars that were fought on those territories.

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During the period of US imperialism, the nation's actions such as its participation in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War helped the US developed an identity true to the American ideologies of independence and equality. In 1898, the US declared war against the Spanish as a result of the Battleship Maine's explosion. Before declaring war, President William McKinley wanted to ease tension between US and Spain. However, the yellow press led by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer took every opportunity to arouse public sentiments with the exhortation to "Remember the Maine", which was an action that was supported by senators and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt. What the press did illustrates the aspect of independence that Americans have believed in since its foundation with the Declaration of Independence. In other words, because the strong feelings for Cuban independence evoked led to the same emotions that as those of the Revolutionary War, this event indicated independence as an aspect of the American identity. Moreover, after declaring war on Spain, the US passed the Teller Amendment, which stated that the US had no intention of taking over any part of Cuba. This further emphasizes how the US embodied independence as a crucial component to their identity as an American as it illustrates how the US planned to allow self-sovereignty for the Cubans. Moving on to the Philippine-American War, the event known as the Balangiga Massacre helped depict another American ideal: equality. In August of 1901, the US troops landed on the island of Samar and proceeded to forcibly occupy some of the local huts and moved all male residents, eighteen years and above, into open wooden cages unsuitable for lodging. On September 28, 1901, after the townspeople decided to rebel and attack American soldiers, General Jacob F. Smith decided to "kill and burn...anybody capable of

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carrying arms including boys over ten years old.” In the end, however, this massacre exemplifies that the US cares about how equal treatment for those they encounter in other countries as the general was court-martialed and forced to retire due to the mistreatment and killing of the native Filipinos.

In addition to representing true American ideals, the same wars also represented the people’s definition of what it means to be an American. In the Spanish-American War, an important aspect that caused US’s intervention was the people’s desire for US to intercept the conflict. Apart from the yellow press emphasizing the public to “Remember the Maine”, focus was also placed on people’s humanitarian appeal. Under the Spanish, Cubans were gathered in “reconcentration areas” and there was no adequate provision for shelter, food, sanitation, or medical care in those *reconcentrados*. Because this humanitarian appeal was felt throughout the entire United States, this highlights that humane treatment for people became an aspect to the American identity just like the traditional American sympathy for a group of colonial people struggling for independence. In addition to people’s sympathy for colonial people, economic incentives that came with the independence of nations like Cuba also portray what it means to be an American. The Cuban conflict was detrimental to the government’s and people’s investments because battles led to the destruction of sugarcane and sugar mills, which valued at \$100 million annually in the US trade with Cuban ports. This depicted the importance of the natural resources trade as one of the US’s main purpose for occupying countries like Cuba is so that more trade can be established and thus more wealth and power for the US. In other words, since American citizens also showed concerns for maintaining economic advantages with Cuba, this represented that personal participation in the American economy was also another aspect of what it means to be an American. Lastly, after the Philippine-American War, President McKinley’s Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation portrayed a self-righteous ideology (essentially Richard Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden”) that was used to justify the US’s actions throughout the Philippine’s colonial period. Although this ideal is no longer an ideal that is followed by Americans today, it certainly represented what people thought of as part of the American identity as many pro-imperialists agreed with what President McKinley had stated.

Finally, despite reflecting the theme of establishing an American identity, what US did with the countries during its imperialism period did not emphasize the phrase “We the People”

when restoring acquired territories back from a state of disrepair due to the battles fought. For example, after the Treaty of Paris has been signed between the US and Spain, the US never removed officials who had served under Spain and Cubans protested this. In fact, the Cubans who protested against this were imprisoned or exiled, which illustrates the failure of embodying the phrase "We the People" since their protests were overpowered by the US despite the right of protest as stated in the Bill of Rights. Additionally, when Cuba wrote its own constitution, the US forced the country to adopt the Platt Amendment which add several provisions that essentially gave US more power over Cuba. As a result of this, Cubans again protested through a march and the US still did not listen to the protests, which goes against the phrase "We the People" and the democratic ideals that come with it. Lastly, in the country of Puerto Rico, the US established the Foraker Act which stopped military rule and created a civil government. However, this civil government was not entirely democratic because the act also gave the US president the power to appoint Puerto Rico's governor and members of the upper house of its legislature. Despite being allowed to vote for members of the lower house of its legislature, the phrase "We the People" was also not accomplished because not all of the power is left in the hands of local Puerto Ricans. In other words, since Puerto Ricans could not use the full potential of their vote, the phrase "We the People" was not truly achieved.

In conclusion, US's actions during its imperialism portray the theme of developing an American identity because events such as the Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War emphasized true American ideals. For instance, the government and the people's actions during these wars illustrated that they value independence and equality with the same weight as the Founding Fathers of the United States. In addition, actions committed in those same wars also represented the American people's belief on what it means to be an American, which further builds upon the establishment of an American identity. However, the actions that were committed did not necessarily reflect the theme "We the People" since the US government did not consider the natives' perspective when reconstructing acquired territories from a broken state due to the battles fought.