

US relations with Hawaii, the Philippines and the Pacific

The USA's acquisition of the Philippines in 1898, the growth of its trade in the Far East, and its internal expansion to the Pacific coast led the country to focus increasingly on the Pacific region in the late 19th century. One of the USA's major acquisitions was Hawaii. The British explorer Captain James Cook was the first European to land there, in the 18th century. American missionaries followed in the 19th century, as did US businessmen.

By the 1860s, such businessmen dominated the economy and the country had become an economic satellite of the United States. US citizens took over key roles in the islands, excluding anyone else from positions of importance. There were protests in 1889 by the indigenous people against this unofficial takeover by the USA. The islands were annexed in 1898; Hawaii became a US territory in 1900 and a state in 1959 – the 50th state of the USA. Economic takeover was followed by political takeover, as America argued that it knew what was best for the Hawaiians.

• SANFORD DOLE
FRUIT COMPANY BUY 100%
OVER HAWAII w/ MERCH
U.S. MARINES.
• QUEEN LILUOKALANI
FOUGHT BACK AGAINST
US WIFEDOM

Another US acquisition in the Pacific included Midway Island in 1867. No one lived there but it had potential as a naval base, and the Americans wanted to lay claim to it before anyone else did. They acquired Samoa, Guam and Wake Island for similar reasons.

The United States and the Philippines

Events in the Philippines followed a similar course to those in Cuba (see pages 76–80). There was a revolt against Spanish colonial rule by the late 1890s, led by Emilio Aguinaldo. After the sinking of the USS *Maine* (see page 77), assistant secretary of the navy Theodore Roosevelt ordered the US Far Eastern Fleet to the Philippines. It destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila in 1898, and US marines were landed to take over the islands.

Spain eventually withdrew from the Philippines. US military forces did not co-operate with the Filipinos and ensured that Aguinaldo played no part in the final victory over the Spanish and the peace settlement, which handed all the islands over to the United States. President McKinley ordered that the Philippines be transferred to US ownership. The USA did not think the Filipinos were capable of self-government, and viewed them in a similar way to the Native Americans.

Note:

The Philippines proved of limited commercial value to the USA in the long run. However, US possession of Philippines aroused hostility from Japan, which also had ambitions in the area. The Japanese were looking for raw materials, new markets and colonies, and they resented American presence in the region.

CONFLICT w/ JAPAN

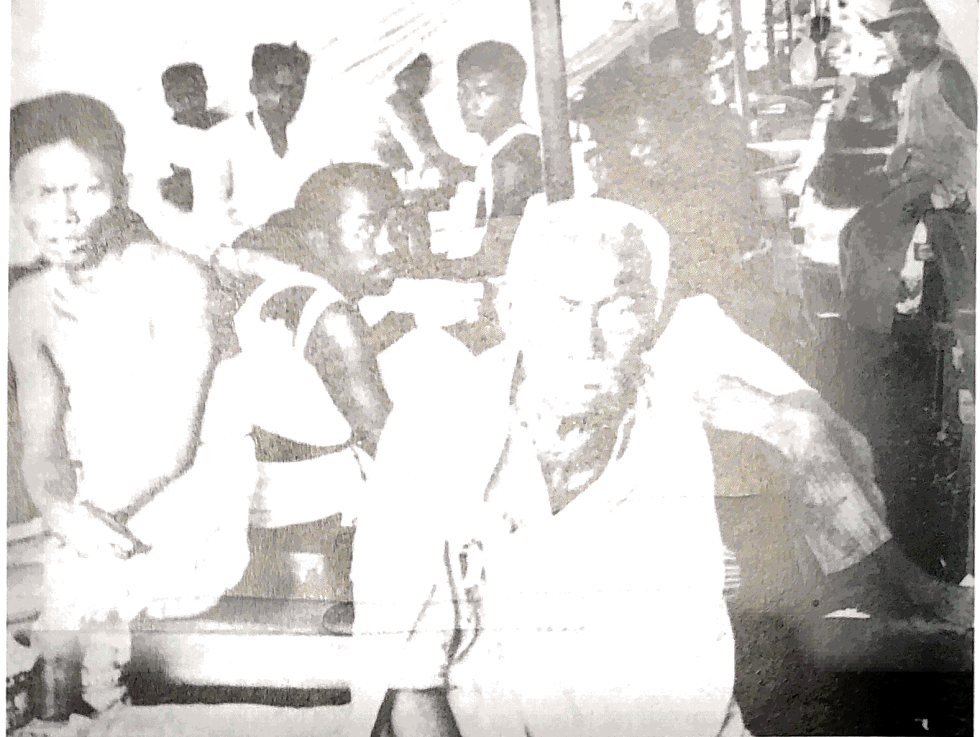


Figure 3.7 Injured Filipinos in a makeshift hospital during the American-Philippine War



benevolent assimilation

Describes the process of taking over a country in a way that brings some benefits for its inhabitants, thus reducing opposition to the occupation.

The United States' long-term policy towards the Philippines was one of **benevolent assimilation**: its stated plan was to bring the benefits of good and stable government. Aguinaldo and many Filipinos did not agree with this approach. Aguinaldo was proclaimed president of an independent republic, to the fury of the Americans. In 1899, war broke out between the United States and those it had come to 'free' from Spain. During the three-year conflict, both sides committed atrocities, but US tactics particularly affected Filipino civilians. The USA suffered 10,000 casualties, but there were more than 250,000 Filipino casualties.

President Wilson was a believer in self-determination and he disliked the aggressive imperialism that the US acquisition of the Philippines represented. Between 1913 and 1916, he did all he could to increase the participation of Filipinos in their own government. He pushed Congress for the Jones Act, which gave substantial autonomy to the Philippines. In 1934, Congress and President Franklin D. Roosevelt put through the Tydings-McDuffie Act, which promised full independence for the Philippines in 1946. In 1935, Manuel Quezon became the first president of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. Independence followed after the liberation of the Philippines from Japanese occupation in 1945.

WHY DID WAR BREAK OUT B/W THE US & THE PHILIPPINES?

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS?

The United States, like most of the major powers of the period, does not emerge with great credit from its 'imperial' phase. Indigenous populations were often badly treated and exploited. Simple greed was cloaked by claims of high ideals, and attempts to impose the values of one nation on another often proved both disruptive and dangerous.

