



U.S. Department of State

On December 2, 1823, United States President James Monroe declared in his State of the Union address that the “American continents . . . are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.” The idea—that the Americas, including North and South America and the Caribbean, were a sphere of influence for the United States—would become known as the Monroe Doctrine. The United States at that time did not have the ability to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, but no new European colonies were established in the Americas in the 1800s. This was in part because the traditional powers in the region, Portugal and Spain, were considerably weaker than they had been in the past.

The United States also made several plans and attempts to gain control of Caribbean and Central American land. Before the Civil War, southern politicians wanted to annex new land in the Americas to add as pro-slavery states. In 1849, for example, Democratic politician John Louis O'Sullivan supported the efforts of adventurer Narciso López to sail to Cuba and seize control of the government with the goal to annex Cuba to the United States. Similarly, in 1856, American lawyer, adventurer and revolutionary William Walker overthrew the leadership of Nicaragua and pushed for the United States to annex the country.

By the late 1800s, the United States developed an industrial economy and business leaders began to look outside the country's borders for new goods markets. The same industry allowed the United States government to manufacture multiple steam-powered, ironclad battleships for a powerful navy. Naval officer and historian Alfred T. Mahan influenced U.S. foreign policy by incorporating these ideas into his 1890 book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*. The book argued that controlling the oceans to protect trade was the key to the success of past empires such as the British Empire. Mahan further recommended that the United States expand and establish military bases in the Caribbean, Hawai'i, and the Philippine Islands. These bases would support a navy to protect U.S. merchant ships and grow the economy.

When the Cuban War for Independence began in 1895, President Grover Cleveland declared that the United States would be neutral. News of the war and the suffering of the Cuban people at the hands of the Spanish army angered many in the United States. Many urged the government to support the Cubans. On February 28, 1896, the United States Senate voted overwhelmingly to recognize the Cuban movement for independence. On December 7, President Cleveland declared that the United States might take military action if the war continued. A new president, William McKinley, was inaugurated on March 4, 1897, and faced pressure to act on Cuba. Not everyone urging the United States to go to war against Spain did so for the same reasons. Some in the United States were sympathetic to the Cuban people and their goal of independence. Some wanted to send humanitarian aid. Others wanted Cuba with its sugar and tobacco production to be a new colony of the United States. When the U.S. battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor in February 1898, war seemed certain even though it was not clear that the Spanish were responsible.

Opening Position:

- Wants ports and coaling stations in the Caribbean and Pacific Ocean so commercial ships can transport goods to worldwide markets.
- Wants favorable terms to access sugar and tobacco from Cuba.
- Wants Spain to have no colonies in the Caribbean.

Questions to Consider:

- How should the United States balance commercial interests with promoting democracy in Cuba and the Philippines?

What can the United States negotiate with?

Remember that you don't have to offer these right away in a negotiation.

- Offer U.S. Treasury loans at a reduced interest rate to compensate Spain for the loss of her colonies.
- Purchase Spain's colonies for \$3 million.
- Reassure Spain if it sells its colonies to the United States that it will be able to retain 10% of current investments in Cuban sugar and rubber production from Philippine plantations.
- If Spain does not agree to the above, sweeten the deal by promising to convince the U.S. tire and sugar refinement industry to buy exclusively from Cuban and Philippine plantations.