



CHICAGO JOURNALS



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Source: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 3 (Jun., 1978), pp. 644-668

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#) on behalf of the [American Historical Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1861842>

Accessed: 24/08/2011 21:35

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AHR Forum
American Imperialism:
The Worst Chapter in Almost Any Book

JAMES A. FIELD, JR.

A FEW MONTHS AGO the mail brought a copy of a new textbook on American diplomatic history. Feeling some obligation to the publisher, I gave it the standard check and read through the chapter on the 1880s and 1890s—"The New American Spirit." Like so many such chapters, it failed the test. Disappointed again, I crossed the hall to ask a learned colleague what he thought was predictably the worst chapter in any general history of American foreign relations. "The worst?" he asked, and then answered without a pause, "The one on the end of the nineteenth century."

This "worst chapter" may be summarized somewhat as follows:

The publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* gave rise to some new American mutations called John Fiske, Josiah Strong, Alfred T. Mahan, and Brooks Adams. Unlike their ancestors, they were all racists and wanted battleships and naval bases. At the same time the American churches, desirous of saving souls, demanded political control of "native peoples." In the closing years of the century American farmers began to ship more wheat and cattle to "Europe and other places." Standard Oil and other companies were investing overseas. An "avalanche" of books, articles, editorials, and speeches consequently descended upon the American people, sending it into the "psychic crisis" of the 1890s and turning the country to "populism and jingoism." The result of all of this was the arrival of a Samoan chief in search of a treaty, a riot in a Valparaiso saloon, a revolution in Hawaii, and a naval development program that bore fruit in a new secret weapon, a twenty-inch gun, which was test-fired in the direction of Whitehall in 1895. The "logical outcome" of this new spirit (described in the next chapter) was "The War with Spain" and the annexation of the Philippines as part of a policy of "insular imperialism" aimed at the markets of China.

This curious narrative, which in mildly variant forms appears to have gained wide acceptance, represents the product of some fifty years of histori-

cal construction by a number of architects and builders. Surprisingly, the foundations still reflect the handiwork of Julius W. Pratt (although John A. Hobson and Charles A. Beard have crept back into the cellar); the eclectic superstructure derives from the efforts of, among others, Richard Hofstadter, William A. Williams, Walter LaFeber, and Thomas J. McCormick. Although the mansion was originally designed to house the 1880s and 1890s, the carpenters in recent years have added wings that extend backward in time to provide lodging for William H. Seward and forward to house Vietnam. The result of this architectural agglomeration is an inverted Whig interpretation of history, differing from its predecessor primarily in that now the children of darkness triumph over the children of light. But there remains the same insistence on seeing the past through the prism of the present, the same perceptions of false continuities and imputations of sin, and the same tendentious impact on generalization and abridgment.¹ Works of this genre have a certain utility, no doubt, for classroom discussion of how and how not to write history, but they also raise serious questions. How should we grapple with this segment of our past? How escape the conventional formulations so uncritically and tediously passed from article to article, book to book, and text to text?

MUCH OF THE LITERATURE ON THE 1890s suffers from a number of common failings. First, the approach is too rational. Chance (or the unexpected), which plays so important a part in the life of the individual, seems unacceptable in the life of the nation: these authors simply will not remember the *Maine*. Events must have their antecedent philosophers and strategists and must also, apparently, flow logically from previous intentions. Since the United States did entangle itself in Asia in 1898, these requirements have led to a backward approach to history and to the transformation of a record of almost total lack of accomplishment—in the search for naval bases, in Hawaiian annexation, in the construction of Chinese railroads, and in reviving the merchant marine, reforming the consular service, or revising the tariff—into evidence of an overwhelming wave of imperialism.² Second, the picture is too unitary. The use of such terms as “America,” “American,” and “United States” to describe both public and private doings imposes a deceptive

¹ Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Baltimore, 1936); Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston, 1955); William A. Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland, 1959); and *The Roots of the Modern American Empire* (New York, 1969); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1963); and Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893–1901* (Chicago, 1967). Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London, 1931), 1–7, 11, 15, 21–26, 87–89, 110–12, *passim*. For a convenient brief analysis of the literature on American imperialism, see Göran Rystad, *Ambiguous Imperialism* (Lund, Sweden, 1975), 12–18.

² Equally, this backward approach to history has led to much emphasis on unimportant and unsuccessful figures (Perry McD. Collins, General James H. Wilson, Wharton Barker, and the like) and to a corresponding neglect of far more effective entrepreneurial frontiersmen (Cyrus W. Field, Henry Meiggs, Charles J. Harrah, William R. Grace, James A. Scrymser, Minor W. Keith, John Hays Hammond) who were active in areas little affected by the events of 1898.

solidity upon a very mixed bag of phenomena, confuses the governmental and private sectors, underplays the many overseas Americans who showed small interest in government support and none in territorial expansion, and obscures regional variation. Mapping late nineteenth-century American activity abroad produces a whole variety of overlays—economic, strategic, cultural, philanthropic, entrepreneurial—that are by no means geographically coincident. Third, the treatment is excessively ethnocentric. Everything that happens is attributed to the purposeful action of the United States, and the philosophers and strategists must all be American. But while the America of the 1890s possessed a large and influential package of skills and resources, both its strengths and its aims were limited. Indeed, with the recent history of the big influence of small allies available to reinforce that of the Cuban junta and the Hawaiian Annexation Club, it could perhaps be argued that the United States has been as much or more the used as it has the user, and that much of its involvement in the outer world has come in response to Macedonian cries.³ Fourth, the discussion takes small account of time, distance, costs, or technological feasibility. Words do duty for things and presumed intentions for actual capabilities. Finally, the wrong questions are often asked. In the case of Hawaii, for example, the interesting problem is surely not why it was annexed in 1898, but rather why so “natural” a development was so long delayed. The answer is that ruling circles in the United States did not much want to annex Hawaii, unless, perhaps, to pre-empt annexation by others; contrariwise, influential folk in the islands ardently desired to annex the United States but, with only a small and feeble country at their disposal, had to wait for special circumstances before they could manage it.⁴

MOVING FROM THE GENERAL TO THE PARTICULAR, a brief look at various aspects of the treatments of “American imperialism”—ideological, bureaucratic, semantic, geographical, and technological—may help to separate what is useful from what is not. The presumed necessity for events to follow logically from what preceded, the importance scholars give to words, and the happy fact that quotations to support almost any argument can be rummaged out of the grab-bag of the past have led many historians to fall in love with ideology. Hence, the chapters on “The New American Spirit” and, hence, the emphasis on Darwin and on something called “Social Darwinism.” From the *Origin of Species*, it is suggested, came a mental climate that spawned oppressive capitalists at home and promoters of oppressive imperialism abroad. But there are problems here. The kind of activist government required for imperial ventures appears to have had small appeal for capitalists, and few seem to have busied

³ Acts 16: 9–24. The modern reader of this text, observing how Paul became aware of the cry out of Macedonia and what befell him when he answered it, will sense ambiguities which seem to have eluded our missionary-minded forefathers.

⁴ Thomas A. Bailey, “The United States and Hawaii during the Spanish-American War,” *AHR*, 96 (1931), 552–60; Merze Tate, *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom* (New Haven, 1963), and *Hawaii: Reciprocity or Annexation* (East Lansing, Mich., 1968); and William A. Russ, Jr., *The Hawaiian Revolution* (Selinsgrove, Pa., 1959), and *The Hawaiian Republic* (Selinsgrove, Pa., 1961).

themselves in the cause. The standard ideologists who are alleged to have infected the American people with the disease of Darwinist expansionism were few in number and of doubtful leverage, and the standard quotations from their works are selective and unrepresentative. One should not, it would seem, quote Fiske, Strong, Mahan, Adams, and the rest without having read their works.

Strong's main concerns in the 1880s, for instance, were clearly focused on the country's internal problems. As a high-minded Social Gospeller he worried mightily about Mormonism, Catholicism, drink, and tobacco; and his single chapter on the outer world appears to have been designed to emphasize what was at stake at home. There was, in any case, nothing new in 1885 about his ideas on the triumph of Anglo-Saxondom, Christianity, and civil liberty that would postulate "a new American spirit"; similar sentiments had been voiced in the 1840s by Hollis Read, another missionary author.⁵ Fiske's general attitude was strongly antimilitary, and his recipe for the world's future, far from being one of conquest, was essentially that of world federalism, another old American idea with roots reaching back to the eighteenth century.⁶

With Mahan the case is somewhat different: invariably invoked, he is seldom quoted, doubtless because his thought was focused on hemispheric defense—"America is our sphere"—and helpful quotations about transpacific expansion are hard to find.⁷ It may, indeed, be time for a collective rereading

⁵ Josiah Strong, *Our Country*, ed. Jurgen Herbst (Cambridge, Mass., 1963); Dorothea R. Muller, "Josiah Strong and American Nationalism," *JAH*, 53 (1968): 487-503; Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (New York, 1963), 239-46; and Hollis Read, *The Hand of God in History* (Hartford, 1849). Strong's much-quoted vision of the Anglo-Saxons of North America pressing down upon the southern continent appears to have been merely the conventional wisdom of the day: projecting the historic growth rates of the English- and Spanish-speaking populations of the New World into the twentieth century, the *Britannica* had recently foreseen for the latter a future confined to the hill country, like the Welsh. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed., 1: 716-17.

⁶ John Fiske, *American Political Ideas Viewed from the Standpoint of Universal History* (New York, 1885), 101-52, and *The Destiny of Man Viewed in the Light of His Origin* (Boston, 1884); Merk, *Manifest Destiny*, 239; and Milton Berman, *John Fiske: The Evolution of a Popularizer* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 138-40. For some early expressions of the federal idea, see the sources cited in James A. Field, Jr., *America and the Mediterranean World* (Princeton, 1969), 13-15, 23-24.

⁷ Robert Seager II and Doris D. Maguire, eds., *Letters and Papers of Alfred Thayer Mahan* (hereafter Mahan, *Letters and Papers*), 3 vols. (Annapolis, 1975), 2: 443, *passim*; and Alfred T. Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power* (Boston, 1897), 261, 265, and *The Problem of Asia* (Boston, 1900), 7-8. This hemispheric emphasis was lasting: Mahan's war college lectures of the late 1880s, only slightly revised for later publication, focus on isthmus and Caribbean, and consider the Hawaiian Islands in reference to the West Coast. Mahan, *Naval Strategy* (Boston, 1911), *passim*. But historians have not scrupled to invent what they have failed to discover, and one may marvel at the words that have been put into the captain's mouth. Philip S. Foner has stated that in an article in *Harper's Monthly* in October 1897, Mahan called for "expansion of American economic activity in Latin America and Asia," urged aggressive moves into the markets of the Far East, and saw "a clear connection between the Caribbean and the vast market of China. . . , the coaling and cable station system in the Ladrões and Samoa, the Philippines . . ."; "Why the United States Went to War with Spain in 1898," *Science and Society*, 32 (1968): 57-58. This simply is not true. Mahan's article, "Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea," discussed what the title promised and nothing more; reprinted in Mahan, *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 271-314. For perhaps the best extended discussion of Mahan's influence, see William E. Livezey, *Mahan on Sea Power* (Norman, Okla., 1947). But see, *per contra*, Peter Karsten, "The Nature of 'Influence': Roosevelt, Mahan, and the Concept of Sea Power," *American Quarterly*, 23 (1971): 585-600. And, for negative evidence, see John D. Long, *The New American Navy* (New York, 1903); and Harry Thurston Peck, *Twenty Years of the Republic, 1885-1905* (New York, 1906).

of Mahan's pre-1898 writings, although how many will wish to work at length through what Admiral Castex described as a style "particulièrement abstraite et soporifique" is open to question. But such an exercise would find little "imperialism." The feeling that the United States should begin to look outward, "righteously but not with feeble scrupulosity," is matched by the finding that it was disinclined to do so: if, in fact, imperialism was spreading "like wildfire," Mahan did not know it. There is little stress on the expansion of the merchant marine and no concern for projection of power outside the hemisphere. Sea control, it is clearly stated, will never again be as important as during the eighteenth-century wars for empire. Emphasis is given the "aggressive restlessness" of the Europeans, as evidenced in overseas competition, and its implications for the Monroe Doctrine; the danger of possible collision with Britain, Spain, or Germany is raised; some concern is evinced about the awakening Orient. If there is a focus, it is on the strategic importance of the isthmus, and on the consequent need for protective offshore bases and a smallish but efficient navy, competent to defend against the detachments a European power might send against the United States. But the general effect is cloudy, and certainly no clear "imperialistic" plan emerges: reviewing *The Interest of America in Sea Power*, the British army officer George Sydenham Clarke, a great admirer of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, found it "extremely difficult to extract a definite meaning from his pages."⁸

It seems possible that one reason for the perdurability of these authors in treatments of this period is their use of the terms "Anglo-Saxon" and "race," in the context of what the twentieth century has done to words like these. But in 1885 there was nothing either very novel or very naughty in this usage. The term "Anglo-Saxon" as an umbrella word for British and Americans was some forty years old. The word "race," as any dictionary will show, can be used in either a biological or a cultural sense, and few contemporaries would have thought that references to the "French race," the "Spanish race," or the "Anglo-Saxon" or "English-speaking" race had anything to do with the vexed question of whether the biological races of mankind numbered five as suggested by Johann Blumenbach, eleven as argued by Charles Pickering, or four as proposed by Thomas Huxley.⁹ If talk of the achievements of the "Anglo-Saxon race" seems nowadays a little out of style, they could hardly have been overlooked in the 1880s. In extent of imperial sway no country equalled Great Britain, and in territorial growth none the United States. The Industrial Revolution, commenced in England, had leapt the Atlantic to produce a still greater economic expansion. On the scales of civil liberty and representative democracy none could match the British and Americans. Nor had any other societies deployed so many missionaries and mechanics to carry the gift of salvation, whether by conversion or modernization, to those who dwelt in darkness.

⁸ Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power*, *passim*, and *Interest of America in Sea Power*, *passim*, and *Letters and Papers*, *passim*; James A. Field, Jr., "Alfred Thayer Mahan Speaks for Himself," *Naval War College Review*, 29 (1976): 47–60; and Clarke, "Captain Mahan's Counsels to the United States," *Nineteenth Century*, 43 (1898): 292–300.

⁹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed., 2: 112–13.

On the question of the "Anglo-Saxon race," these authors—though often confusing in their usage—were anything but racist in the anthropological sense. "I use the term," Strong wrote, "somewhat broadly to include all English-speaking peoples." In his approval of the "commingling of races" that was taking place in America, he was at one with the American editor of the *Riverside Natural History* who, in this same *annus mirabilis* of 1885, argued the superiority of mixed stocks, with Darwin and with Mahan (who was very clear on the mixed origins of both British and Americans and who came to include the Japanese within the "European family"). Even Brooks Adams, who fussed a good deal about the international Jewish banking community, thought the survival of civilizations dependent upon the infusion of "barbarian blood."¹⁰

Since contemporaries, like later historians, may well have read selectively, one should perhaps test the assertions that these authors were influential. Josiah Strong's *Our Country* sold a good many copies over the years, but the book got short shrift from the establishment press and no one has yet named a policy maker influenced by Strong's ideas.¹¹ John Fiske's histories decorated everyone's library shelves, but *American Political Ideas*, which contained his piece on "'Manifest Destiny,'" was not one of his fastest sellers, and the allegation that he delivered this chapter as a speech to a receptive president and cabinet rests on a misreading of the evidence.¹² Brooks Adams published nothing on American foreign policy until the summer of 1898.¹³ Captain Mahan no doubt deserves some credit for the increased popularity of navies and the arguments for battleships, but his principal effort to influence policy misfired badly: throughout his life he remained convinced that his annexationist article on Hawaii had brought about his transfer by the Cleveland administration from writing and lecturing at the Naval War College to a greatly undesired tour of sea duty.¹⁴

¹⁰ Strong, *Our Country*, xxi, 202, 210–11; John S. Kingsley, ed., *The Riverside Natural History* (Boston, 1885), 6: 471–72; Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (New York, 1888), 142; Mahan, *Problem of Asia*, 147–48, 193; Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (New York, 1898), xi, 362–65, 383; and Arthur Beringause, *Brooks Adams* (New York, 1955), 119, 122, 141–42, 178–79. Howard Mumford Jones has some sensible comments on nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxonism (as does Mr. Dooley, whom he quotes); Jones, *The Age of Energy* (New York, 1973), 200–11. On the "racism" of Theodore Roosevelt, see Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore, 1956), 26–34. The rhetoric of Fiske and Strong is not our rhetoric, no doubt, but toploftiness is not imperialism. Given the world of the 1880s, there seems nothing very tendentious in their formulations. The basic idea, indeed, would shortly prove persuasive to Frenchmen; see Edmond Demolins, *A quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons* (Paris, 1897).

¹¹ Muller's work should, one would think have settled this question once and for all; "Josiah Strong and American Nationalism," 487–503. Also see Merk, *Manifest Destiny*, 236–37.

¹² Compare John Spencer Clarke, *The Life and Letters of John Fiske*, 2 (Boston, 1917): 166–69, 172; with Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in America* (Philadelphia, 1944), 177–78; and Berman, *John Fiske*, 134–35, 141–42.

¹³ For a list of his writings, see Thornton Anderson, *Brooks Adams, Conscientious Conservative* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1951), 229–31. Foner has stated that Adams's *Law of Civilization and Decay* argued the health of imperialism and "advocated American control of the Western hemisphere and economic dominance of Asia"; "Why the United States Went to War," 45. It does not. The book starts with the ancient world and ends with nineteenth-century Britain; its subject is "the origin, rise and despotism of the gold-bug"; the United States is barely mentioned. See, in default of the work itself, Anderson, *Brooks Adams*, 50–72; Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 117–28; and Ernest Samuels, *Henry Adams, The Major Phase* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 127–30.

¹⁴ Mahan, *Letters and Papers*, 2: 138, 3: 299.

If the claimed impact of the so-called "imperialist" tracts on either the American people or important figures in government tends to dissolve on inspection, one would still presume that the publicists themselves, if they were in fact concerned with empire, would have turned excitedly to work as the Cuban crisis deepened. Alas, the picture is far otherwise. In the spring of 1898 John Fiske, preoccupied with the preparation of lectures on science and religion, was distressed by the possibility of war.¹⁵ Josiah Strong, like the good reformer he was, was busy founding the League for Social Service.¹⁶ Brooks Adams left Washington for his home in Quincy in August 1897, sailed for Europe in September, and did not return until spring; early in 1898, as war seemed imminent, he wrote his brother Henry, "I am in despair to have this silly business forced on us, where we can gain neither glory nor profit."¹⁷ Ten weeks after the navy had begun a precautionary redeployment, six weeks after the publication of the De Lôme letter, five weeks after the sinking of the *Maine*, and four weeks after the *Oregon* had been started east, the secretary of the navy appointed Captain Mahan the United States representative at a Florentine celebration in honor of Vespucci and Toscanelli, and on March 26, 1898 America's best-known strategic thinker sailed for Naples.¹⁸ Theodore Roosevelt's old racist teacher, John W. Burgess, prostrated by the events of 1898, turned out to be antiwar, anti-imperialist, and anti-Roosevelt. The greatest of the Social Darwinists, William Graham Sumner, thought the upshot of the war disastrous—*The Conquest of the United States by Spain*.¹⁹

Yet, whatever the facts about these much-quoted intellectuals, it might still be possible that the 1890s were years of burgeoning sentiment for imperialism

¹⁵ Clarke, *John Fiske*, 2: 472–73; and Berman, *Fiske*, 251–52. In December 1897 Fiske wrote an historical introduction for a book by his son-in-law on the Cuban insurrection. Although Anglo-Saxon attitudes pervaded the discussion of the "absolute despotism" of the Spanish Empire and the "Satanic" Inquisition, a strong sympathy for the Cuban cause led to the argument that "for the sake of Cuba's best interests, it is to be hoped that she will win her independence without receiving from any quarter, and especially from the United States, any such favors as might hereafter put her in a position of tutelage. . . ." Grover Flint, *Marching with Gomez* (Boston, 1898), xv, xxvii.

¹⁶ Muller, "Josiah Strong and American Nationalism," 485–503; and *Dictionary of American Biography*, 18: 150–51.

¹⁷ Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, 161–62; and Frederic Cople Jaher, *Doubters and Dissenters* (New York, 1964), 173. In these circumstances the elevation of Brooks Adams, whose expansionist efforts were unknown to the generation of Julius W. Pratt, to the rank of principal pre-1898 imperialist, is surely one of the most remarkable developments in recent historical writing. William A. Williams has described him as "something of the chairman of an informal policy-planning staff for the executive department in the years from 1896 to 1908," and Walter LaFeber has stated that Adams, along with Mahan, "exerted more direct influence on policy makers than did any of the other intellectuals," and that "throughout 1897 and early 1898 Adams" saw great opportunities in the coming war with Spain, entertained such important people as Cushman Davis, Lodge, and Mahan at dinners in Washington, and was hailed as a prophet by leading figures of the McKinley administration. Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review*, 24 (1955): 387; Williams, *America in a Changing World* (New York, 1978), 38; and LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 80, 84–85. Foner has added that Henry Adams "worked actively in Washington in favor of intervention in Cuba"; "Why the United States Went to War," 45. But Henry was abroad from April 1897 to November 1898 and learned of the loss of the *Maine* while boating on the Nile; Samuels, *Henry Adams*, 185, 589.

¹⁸ Mahan, *Letters and Papers*, 2: 543, 548.

¹⁹ Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898*, 11; and Sumner, *Conquest of the United States* (Boston, 1899).

and concern for the China market. If so, one would suppose this could be documented by a bureaucratic analysis and by lists of people who really mattered—presidents, secretaries of state or navy, senior military officers, Wall Street giants—who were energetic in the cause. The task has not been easy, notwithstanding the recent boom for Benjamin Harrison and his secretary of the navy, Benjamin F. Tracy, and their very ineffective efforts to gain a naval base on Hispaniola.²⁰ Faced with a foot-dragging Senate, and lacking both suitable movers and shakers and evidence in party platforms and presidential messages, the convention has been to fall back on Fiske and Strong, on the *Omaha Bee*, on the social thought of Harry Thurston Peck, and on the improbable (or at least highly irrational) desire of farmers for a China market to absorb the surplus. In place of identifiably influential persons or pressure groups, there has developed a usage which suggests the virtue of semantic analysis. Persuasion is attempted by incantation: by the use of reiterated statements that “the imperialists” did this and “the imperialists” did that, that “imperialism spread like wildfire,” and that under the prodding of the remarkably faceless “imperialists” the American people went island-grabbing.²¹ What generally escapes notice is that, when the anti-imperialists come on stage, there is no problem at all in producing a formidable roster of distinguished citizens—Carl Schurz, E. L. Godkin, William Vaughan Moody, David Starr Jordan, Andrew Carnegie (who briefly thought of personally purchasing and liberating the Philippines but who, regrettably for the exceptionalism of American history, failed to act on this impulse), Mark Twain, William Jennings Bryan—the list goes on and on.²²

With semantic analysis, in addition to the question of the unidentified “imperialists,” other problems appear. It may be proper to speak figuratively of a unitary “American people” after the sinking of the *Maine*, but, given the politics of 1892 and 1896, earlier unqualified use of the phrase seems questionable. A similar problem of precision arises in relation to that naughty minor-

²⁰ Walter R. Herrick, *The American Naval Revolution* (Baton Rouge, La., 1966); and B. F. Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy: Father of the Modern American Fighting Navy* (Hamden, Conn., 1973). For a useful list of influential individuals who did not want war in 1898, see Wayne S. Cole, *An Interpretive History of American Foreign Relations* (Homewood, Ill., 1968), 268–69.

²¹ See, for example, Herrick, *Naval Revolution*, 24, 60, 69, 84–87, 90, 103–07, 196, 220. On the “imperialism” of one of the few identified “imperialists,” Henry Cabot Lodge, see John A. S. Grenville and George B. Young, *Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy* (New Haven, 1966), 201–38. In general this literature appears to depend heavily upon code-words (“imperialism,” “new empire,” “commercial empire,” “hegemony,” “commercial hegemony of the world,” etc.) whose effects seem more emotive than heuristic. For an attractively written example; see Ernest N. Paolino, *The Foundations of American Empire: William Henry Seward and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1973). Paolino has argued that plans for the rationalization of the world’s coinage and the stringing of the international telegraph were intended to bring about (but how?) American “world commercial hegemony”; see, in particular, pages 6, 14, and 25. LaFeber’s extensive repetition of the title phrase—*New Empire*—appears to have persuaded many that the concept existed in its own right long before Brooks Adams published his own book with that title in 1902.

²² For a representative treatment, see the chapter on “Empire Beyond the Seas” in John M. Blum *et al.*, *The National Experience* (3d ed.; New York, 1973), 491–506. The terms “imperialist,” “imperialists,” and “imperialism” appear twenty-one times and eight pre-1898 “imperialists” are named (Strong, Burgess, Fiske, and Mahan constitute half of the contingent); the corresponding terms “anti-imperialist,” “anti-imperialists,” and “anti-imperialism” are used four times and nineteen individuals are identified.

ity of "Americans in Hawaii" who were busily conspiring for annexation. For one thing not all were: the most strongly nativist prime minister of the latter years of the Hawaiian kingdom, Walter M. Gibson, had grown up in New York and New Jersey, and the biggest sugar grower, Claus Spreckels, came to oppose annexation. For another, some of these "Americans" had been born and raised in the islands. Is nationality inalienable? Was Albert Gallatin always a Swiss and Andrew Carnegie always a Scot? Was Spreckels a German or an American or a Hawaiian? Despite the obvious goodheartedness of those who inveigh against the Hawaiian annexationists as against the apostles of Anglo-Saxonism, their own usage seems curiously racist.

Another context in which it is useful to remember that words are not things, and to look through the word to the phenomenon for which it stands, is in discussion of navies and naval bases. The creation of the new American navy in the last two decades of the century was an event of undoubted importance, which might, at first glance, seem to provide bureaucratic evidence for an expansionist policy. But navies can be designed for various purposes: there is no necessary connection between naval building and commercial expansion or colonization, and battleships do not equate with empire.²³ The military characteristics of a naval force—the capabilities designed into it—should give some indication of its intended missions; and the reiterated statements of the secretaries to the effect that the New Navy was purely defensive, intended only "as a police force for the preservation of order and never for aggression," are substantiated by the instrument that they created.²⁴

Given the limitations of American industry, reinforced as they were by American naval tradition, the first phase of naval revival perforce involved the construction of that "fleet of swift cruisers to prey on the enemy's commerce" desired by Mahan. Here the remoteness of the United States from important European trade routes and from such centers of interest as the River Plate, Valparaíso, and Honolulu strongly affected ship characteristics and by 1890 had brought about the design of cruisers of remarkable coal capacity and endurance. Such ships would seem to have been ideally suited for distant ventures; but, once domestic sources of armor and of castings for gun barrels became available, the emphasis switched to the completion of heavily armed monitors for harbor defense and to construction of "sea-going coastline battleships," restricted in range by congressional enactment and in draft by the hydrography of gulf ports, to contest the control of North American waters. Still further expression of these defensive concerns developed during the 1890s in the authorization of a score of short-range torpedo boats and in the recommendation of 1897—based on the argument that "the traditional policy

²³ Leaving aside the European great powers, eight nations (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Turkey) had acquired battleships by 1893, while the United States still had none. At least on paper China and Spain were clearly superior in cruiser strength as well. None of these countries showed much sign of expansionist or imperialist policy. *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1893.

²⁴ See, for example, *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1893, 1897, and the excerpt from Cleveland's annual message of December 1885 quoted by the secretary of the navy in 1893 and 1896.

of our Navy has been a defensive one"—that future units of this type be designed to use the new oil fuel available only at home.²⁵

In the early years of the building program the emphasis on commerce raiding and defense of home waters had left the ancient mission of maintaining a presence on such distant stations as the China coast and the River Plate to the wooden ships of the Old Navy. But, as these decayed beyond repair or were washed or blown ashore, replacements became necessary. Over a period of ten years, beginning in 1885, authorization was secured for a number of new gunboats for this service; and, since coaling stations in these far-off regions existed neither in fact nor in contemplation, the specifications for four of the class of 1895 called for "full sail power." Finally, it may be noted, the New Navy was not, as seems sometimes assumed, the product of a presumably expansionist Republican Party: by 1896 the two Cleveland administrations had gained authorization for half again as much tonnage as had those of Arthur and Harrison.²⁶

Related to the naval building question is "the search for bases." Unquestionably, the coming of steam raised serious problems of range and endurance for the world's navies, but solutions to the coal problem varied as widely as the intended employment of the forces to be coaled. A rented site for a coal pile at Yokohama, Honolulu, or Pago Pago was one thing; a defended position like Gibraltar, Aden, or Hong Kong was quite another. When considering the meaning of such terms as "base" and "coaling station," it is well to be as precise as possible, and precision in chronology is also desirable. One should not, for example, use the "magnificent naval base at Pearl Harbor" as evidence of vigorous transpacific expansionism twenty years before anyone dredged the mouth of the Pearl River.²⁷ And, if the search for

²⁵ On commerce raiders, see Mahan, *Letters and Papers*, 1: 593. Mahan emphasized the importance of defense against blockade and bombardment; *Influence of Sea Power*, 83–87. So did Theodore Roosevelt in his review of the book; *Atlantic*, October 1890. Also see *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1893, 1896; and George T. Davis, *A Navy Second to None* (New York, 1940), 34–35, 86–100. Admiral David D. Porter had urged the need for torpedo boats in 1887; their importance was emphasized by the secretary in 1889 and 1892. On the question of oil fuel, see *Report of the Bureau of Steam Engineering*, 1897. Shortly after completion of his term as secretary, Hilary A. Herbert noted that battleship design had been predicated on the assumption of employment close to home, pressed the need for torpedo boats, emphasized the vulnerability of coastal cities and coastal shipping, and pointed to the possibility of collision with Great Britain, with Spain over Cuba, or with Japan over the Hawaiian Islands; "A Plea for the Navy," *Forum*, 24 (1897): 1–15.

²⁶ *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1891, 1895, 1896; and Davis, *Navy Second to None*, 25–27. For a convenient listing of naval units with dimensions, armament, coal capacity, and dates of authorization and commissioning, see the *Report* for 1897. Mahan's concern about the state of the navy had led him to support Cleveland in 1884; *Letters and Papers*, 1: 574, 592, 624. The first Cleveland administration negotiated the contracts which created the domestic gun and armor-forging capacity. It seems hardly necessary to debate the proposition that so costly, continuing, and bipartisan a creation as the New Navy was the product of the status anxiety of junior officers; see Lloyd C. Gardner, Walter F. LaFeber, and Thomas J. McCormick, *Creation of the American Empire* (Chicago, 1973), 206–07.

²⁷ LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 141, *passim*. Herrick has American ships (and even Captain Togo in *HIJMS Naniwa*) entering Pearl Harbor in the years before the War with Spain; *American Naval Revolution*, 105, 168, 199–200, 221. But the limiting depth at the mouth of the Pearl River was two fathoms, the House rejected an appropriation for dredging in 1897, funds did not become available until 1908, and the first major ship entered only in 1911. See Willis E. Snowbarger, "The Development of Pearl Harbor" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1950).

bases is to be taken as an index of outward-looking aspiration, it may be well to recognize that the real proliferation of overseas naval facilities came in the 1840s and 1850s, in the period of maritime greatness, when the United States had resident navy agents or naval storekeepers in London, Marseilles, Spezia, Porto Praya, Buenos Aires, St. Thomas, Rio de Janeiro, Lima, Valparaiso, Honolulu, Macao, and Shanghai.²⁸ Once again, perhaps, the wrong questions are at issue. Is not more to be learned about established national policy by asking not what proposals were made for the acquisition of coaling stations in the Caribbean or elsewhere, but rather why so little came of them? Why were the possibilities dangled at various times by Portuguese, Danes, Liberians, Peruvians, and Koreans not accepted? Why was so little done before the War with Spain to turn such available sites as Pearl Harbor and Pago Pago to strategic advantage? Why, indeed, was Pacific base development so slow after 1898?

Allied to the semantic question is the cartographic one: just as words are not things, a map is not the country it represents. In the late nineteenth century, the map was the same color from sea to shining sea, but the United States was, as it had always been, an Atlantic nation: on a Mercator world it belonged functionally at the left and not in the center. The frontier may have shaped the American character, but, whatever the history of the West Coast fur trade and of the California clippers, the United States remained an eastward-facing country. Despite the recorded aspirations of Pacific railway promoters and the later assertions of historians, the Far East was not a farther West. Aspiration was less substantial than geographic and economic reality.

For this assertion some evidence may be adduced. The *Empress of China* and a number of other American merchantmen had reached Canton by way of the Cape of Good Hope before Robert Gray arrived in the *Columbia* from the West Coast. American naval ships operated in the Indian Ocean long before the first one entered the Pacific. The sequence of commercial treaty negotiations with nonwestern societies proceeded eastward, from the Barbary powers to Turkey and thence to Muscat and Siam. Edmund Roberts went out by way of the Cape of Good Hope, and so did Caleb Cushing and Matthew C. Perry and Robert W. Shufeldt. The missionary effort indubitably had profound impact in Hawaii, but its first target had been India and its greatest efforts, until late in the century, were devoted to India and the Near East.²⁹ The big export-import trade was Atlantic in orientation, the product of the eastern concentration of population, wealth, and industry and of the receptivity of

²⁸ For navy agents, see the annual *Navy Register* for the 1840s and 1850s. Equally, one should not automatically equate the "New Navy" of the 1890s with a big navy: the total personnel strength of 1897 (11,985) was only 7 percent greater than that of 1845 (11,189), although the U.S. population had more than tripled. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, 1960), 7, 736-37.

²⁹ James A. Field, Jr., "Near East Notes and Far East Queries," in John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 25-26, 31-38; and Clifton J. Phillips, *America and the Pagan World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

European markets to the torrent of agricultural exports that developed in the 1880s. Tenuously connected by rail with the eastern metropolis, the mountain and Pacific states contained in 1890 less than 5 percent of the nation's population. Of the 5 percent of total exports that emanated from the Pacific coast, a considerable portion consisted of grain bound eastward to Europe.³⁰ Strategically, the same was true: Europe, the traditional enemy, lay to the eastward, and European island bases watched the eastern seaboard; in the 1880s, with memories of the French in Mexico still green, the subdivision of Africa drew fresh attention to European capabilities, while the British occupation of Egypt and the presence of Ferdinand De Lesseps in Panama emphasized what attractive nuisances isthmuses could become. The existence of a perceived threat to the Atlantic coastline was evident in the Endicott Board's report on fortifications, the design and deployment of the New Navy, and the concern for Caribbean base facilities.³¹

In the Pacific and eastern Asia, by contrast, the position of the United States was marginal. Captain David Porter's early inspired admission of the inhabitants of Nukahiva to the "great American family" had been permitted to lapse, as had Perry's initiatives regarding Port Lloyd and Formosa. Against the annexation of archipelagos commenced by the French in 1842, the British in 1874, the Japanese in 1876, and the Germans in 1884, the United States could show only uninhabited and undredged Midway, some claims to guano islands, paper base rights at an unusable Pearl Harbor, and a share in the tripartite administration of Samoa. In China, it is true, the 1880s saw the missionary movement enter a period of remarkable growth, but in commercial matters the American position was weakening. China trade as a percentage of total foreign commerce had been declining since the 1840s, as trade with Europe grew and as Forbeses and Delanos, reacting to the lack of Asiatic investment opportunity, shifted their assets and energies from the treaty ports to western railroads. In commercial and political geography, moreover, the United States had suffered a considerable setback with the opening of the Suez Canal. Prior to 1869, when the route to the Far East was by way of the Cape of Good Hope, New York and Liverpool had been roughly equidistant from China, but now the Europeans were closer by the length of the Atlantic crossing. Although this situation provided southern textile exporters and their

³⁰ *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 7, 12, 537, 543; and John G. B. Hutchins, *The American Maritime Industries and Public Policy, 1789-1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), 373-75. The government statistician Joseph Nimmo, Jr. commented in 1883 on the signal failure of the transcontinental railroad to generate Asiatic trade. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), 187.

³¹ Davis, *Navy Second to None*, 23-31; Russell Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York, 1967), 284; and Walter Millis, *Arms and Men* (New York, 1956), 151, 159, 167. For concern about European economic and political ambitions in the Western Hemisphere, see David M. Pletcher, *The Awkward Years: American Foreign Relations under Garfield and Arthur* (Columbia, Mo., 1962), 129-34, *passim*. As early as 1880 Mahan had predicted that the prospect of an isthmian canal would require "a very large Navy . . . [or] we may as well shut up about the Monroe doctrine at once"; *Letters and Papers*, 1: 482. Ten years later he pinned his hopes for "the motive, if any there be, which will give the United States a navy" upon the isthmus; *Influence of Sea Power*, 88.

representatives in Congress with strong arguments for an isthmian canal, such a facility would be long in coming. For the balance of the nineteenth century European pressures on the Far East grew steadily, but until the Battle of Manila Bay American pressures did not.³²

THE ATLANTIC ORIENTATION OF THE UNITED STATES was quite naturally reflected in the distribution of American-owned merchant shipping, whether of domestic or foreign registry. Of the former there was of course not much, and the postwar failure to restore the country's maritime greatness went far to justify Mahan's pessimism about "The United States Looking Outward," and his original choice of title for his article of 1890, "The United States Asleep." In the Atlantic, nevertheless, efforts at subsidized shipping lines had brought modest results in the establishment of continuous scheduled services with gulf and Caribbean ports and intermittent service with Brazil. "White-washed" iron and steel steamship tonnage—American-owned but under foreign registry—was also concentrated in the Atlantic. On the West Coast success was more limited. There, in 1865, the Pacific Mail Steamship Line had been granted a subsidy for monthly service to the Far East. The company's ships, which originally sailed via Hawaii, were soon shifted to the shorter and more economical northern route, with the result that in 1867 the North Pacific Transportation Company received a subsidy for a one-ship service between San Francisco and Honolulu. Such exiguous connections with the islands and the Orient seemed all the traffic would justify. Both lines found greater profit and employed more ships on coastal runs between Panama, Mazatlan, San Francisco, and Puget Sound.³³

If, indeed, an expanding merchant marine is seen as an index of imperialistic tendencies, these were far less evident in the United States than elsewhere in the Pacific basin. In the Hawaiian Kingdom, of such small interest to American shipping interests, a period of insular expansionism brought the founding in 1881 of J. D. Spreckels's Oceanic Line, connecting Honolulu with San Francisco and reaching southwest to the Antipodes. The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad in 1885 was quickly followed by the establishment of subsidized steamship service between Vancouver and Hong Kong. But the truly important developments in Pacific shipping were those of the "insular imperialists" of Japan. In 1890 the 94,000-ton total of Japanese steam

³² Field, "Near East Notes," 34–38; *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 550–53; Arthur M. Johnson and Barry E. Supple, *Boston Capitalists and Western Railroads* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967); Tyler Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia* (New York, 1922), 579–82, 586; and Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific* (New York, 1967), 71–76, 80–81.

³³ Mahan, *Letters and Papers*, 2:28–29; Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia*, 584–85; and Hutchins, *Maritime Industries*, 424, 437, 482–516, 528–35. The superior attractions of the North Atlantic were strikingly demonstrated, even after the War with Spain had brought presumed Pacific opportunity, in the creation by J. P. Morgan of the International Mercantile Marine Co., the world's largest privately owned fleet, which in 1902 controlled 136 ships totalling more than a million gross tons, all in the Atlantic; Hutchins, *Maritime Industries*, 538–39.

tonnage was less than half that which the United States employed in international trade, but with the commencement of state subsidies in that year the Japanese merchant marine entered a period of explosive growth. By 1896 service had been established with China, the East Indies, Australia, San Francisco, and Seattle, and by 1900 the 543,000 tons of Japanese-flag steam tonnage totalled more than half again that of the United States. The contrast between this achievement and the difficulties that beset the McKinley administration in finding ships to carry troops to the Philippines (as indeed the contrast in end-of-the-century transpacific population movements) may serve as an indication of which Pacific power was outward-looking.³⁴

The United States Navy in the 1890s was equally an East Coast Atlantic-oriented institution. In the outward-looking antebellum days, when American merchant shipping covered the globe, the navy had maintained six overseas cruising stations—Mediterranean, Pacific, West Indies, South Atlantic, East Indies, and African—to which the bulk of its active units was assigned. With the end of the Civil War this traditional practice was resumed, “irreflectively,” as Mahan later wrote, and by 1872 the Asiatic Squadron, successor to the old East Indies Squadron, had been brought up to a strength of eleven ships, more than a quarter of the total deployed on distant stations.³⁵ But this return to the ancient ways—also reflected in the concern of Secretary of State William M. Evarts and Secretary of the Navy Richard W. Thompson for foreign markets, in naval interest in the Amazon and Congo basins, Zanzibar, and Korea, and in Secretary of the Navy William E. Chandler’s call of 1883 for coaling stations everywhere—ended with the 1880s. The last years of the century witnessed an initial compartmentalization of the world in terms of naval power as the rivalries of the industrialized nations, the range limitations that accompanied the shift to steam, and the logistical and material requirements of modern warships brought a retirement of the world’s navies upon their home bases.

This development, most strikingly epitomized in the Royal Navy’s redeployment of 1904–05, had become apparent in the distribution of the United States fleet well before the War with Spain. With the shift to coal and the focus on the European threat, talk of markets and bases gave way in the reports of the secretaries to emphasis on foreign building programs and concern for the safety of the hemisphere. Since the coming of steam had given a new predictability to the movements of ships and squadrons, there also followed the first efforts at rational war planning. At the infant Naval War College the focus was on “what is necessary for a state of war,” and early

³⁴ *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 3 (Cambridge, 1959): 200; Hutchins, *Maritime Industries*, 504, 515, 575; *Report of the Admiral of Navy, 1887*; Charles C. McLeod and Adam W. Kirkaldy, *The Trade, Commerce, and Shipping of the Empire* (New York, 1924), app. E; and Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Frontier in Hawaii, 1868–1898* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953).

³⁵ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *From Sail to Steam* (Boston, 1907), 196; and Charles C. Chadbourn III, “Sailors and Diplomats: U.S. Naval Operations in China, 1865–1877” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1976).

sessions concentrated on the study of Atlantic trade routes in preparation for efficient commerce raiding. In 1890 Captain Mahan was called to Washington to draw up contingency plans for hostilities with Great Britain or Spain; the possibility of a German takeover of Dutch possessions in the Western Hemisphere also excited concern. Starting in 1894, as the new battleships began to come into commission, the war college's annual problems focused on the defense of the Atlantic Coast, its lectures and war games emphasized the strategic geography of gulf and Caribbean, and its studies of international law dealt with such matters as the defense of the Hawaiian Kingdom against foreign aggression and the maintenance of the neutrality of an isthmian canal.³⁶

Together with the new technology, these concerns governed the deployment of the New Navy. Despite the continuing problems of the China coast, the west coast of Latin America, the Bering Sea seal fisheries, Samoa, and Hawaii, the new steel ships were assigned in the first instance to the North Atlantic Squadron. The first modern warship to serve on the West Coast, the small cruiser *Charleston*, joined the Pacific Squadron only in 1890, and the show of force that followed the Chilean crisis was provided by units drawn from the Atlantic. Not until 1892, by which time eight protected cruisers had been commissioned, did the first new ship, the 900-ton gunboat *Petrel*, join the Asiatic Squadron. By 1897 the North Atlantic Squadron contained by far the largest concentration of available force. Compared with four first- and second-rates in the eastern Pacific and two in the Asiatic Squadron, the North Atlantic had ten; and, since these included five of the six battleships and both armored cruisers, the disproportion in fighting strength was far greater than the mere number of ships suggests.³⁷

The limited forces assigned to the Pacific and Asiatic Squadrons hardly seem indicative of a forward policy. Such a policy, in any event, would not have been easy. The coming of steam had made the geography of coal and of coaling stations a question of prime strategic interest. The developed coal mines of the United States were in the East, and hopes of Alaskan coal deposits to ease the West Coast naval problem had not been fulfilled. Indeed, throughout the Pacific basin the supply of coal was effectively a British monopoly. The needs of the Hawaiian islands had traditionally been filled by

³⁶ Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power* (New York, 1940), 491–92. The *Reports of the Secretary of the Navy* in the years from 1877 to 1887 stressed trade expansion, overseas bases, and the problem of the merchant marine; after 1889 the emphasis shifted to the defense of coastal cities. Mahan, *Letters and Papers*, 1: 444; for his 1890 “Contingency Plan of Operations in Case of War with Great Britain” and his comments on a plan of 1895 (after the first battleships had been commissioned), see *ibid.*, 3: 559–76, 2: 425–28; and for his assessment of the German threat, see *ibid.*, 2: 27, 37–38, and *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 15, 294–95. On naval war planning in the 1890s, see Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (Newport, R.I., 1977), 88–96. For visual evidence of the central strategic concerns, see the painting by Rufus Zogbaum, which shows the war college class of 1894 gaming the defense of an East Coast harbor (apparently Narragansett Bay) before a large wall chart of the Gulf and Caribbean; *Harper's Weekly*, 39 (1895): 149.

³⁷ *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1890, 1892, 1897; and Robert E. Johnson, *Thence Round Cape Horn* (Annapolis, Md., 1963), 142, 145–48.

sailing ship from England, and the important new regional sources, Vancouver Island and New South Wales, were also British. American base facilities to mitigate the magnificent distances of the Pacific were lacking, and few seemed to care. The capabilities of West Coast navy yards were limited; the Hawaiian request for annexation had been rejected; and Pearl Harbor and Pago Pago remained undeveloped. The Asiatic Squadron was, in fact, an eastward projection of an Atlantic-facing country, and one greatly attenuated by distance. For materiel it depended on the New York Navy Yard, and its units traditionally proceeded to their duty stations by way of the Mediterranean and Suez, a passage extraordinarily vulnerable to European interference. With the German seizure of Tsingtao in 1897, the Asiatic Squadron became the only naval force in the Far East without a local base of its own.³⁸ The consequences of being so far out at the end of the line can be seen in Dewey's coal and ammunition problems and in the fact that when war came he not only had to destroy a fleet but also had to capture a harbor. These problems had been visible long before the war; they were reflected in the limited nature of the force that was maintained in Asiatic waters for the protection of American interests. In 1898 the Asiatic Squadron was outgunned by British, Russian, German, and Japanese forces in the area. Against a dozen major Japanese units, the United States boasted two—hardly an armament with which to go adventuring so far from home.³⁹

BUT WHERE DOES ALL THIS LEAVE US? If we rule out the conventional wisdom about Darwin, the psychic crisis of imperialism, the New Navy, and the Pacific highway to Asia, what remains? What was, in fact, the nature of American relations with the outer world between the end of Reconstruction and the War with Spain?

Generally, it may be said, these relations were far more individual than governmental. As the wounds of war healed, an extraordinarily energetic society deployed its representatives abroad in a wide variety of roles: explorers, tourists, art collectors, philanthropists, missionaries, synarchists, railroad promoters, and mining engineers. Although much of this activity was sufficiently traditional, its scale and impact were increasing as a result of the remarkable economic development of these years, itself evidenced externally in three important and interconnected ways: the growth of North Atlantic

³⁸ Hutchins, *Maritime Industries*, 372. For a description of the navy's first attempt to ship American coal to Honolulu, see *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1891, 1896. As late as 1913 coal was still a problem in the Pacific; O. J. Clinard, *Japan's Influence on American Naval Power, 1897-1917* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1947), 110. On bases, see Herrick, *Naval Revolution*, 164; and Seward W. Livermore, "American Naval-Base Policy in the Far East, 1850-1914," *Pacific Historical Review*, 13 (1944): 113-35. Mahan's own career reflected this traditional eastward deployment: although he served in both the Asiatic and Pacific Squadrons, he seems never to have crossed the Pacific or visited the Hawaiian Islands.

³⁹ *Report of the Secretary of the Navy*, 1897; Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia*, 615; Marder, *Anatomy of British Sea Power*, 304n; *Jane's Fighting Ships*, 1898 (London, 1898); and Herbert, "Plea for the Navy," 1-15.

trade and the progressive integration of the North Atlantic economic community; the spillover of American enterprise into Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean; and the beginnings of direct investment abroad. From these developments, Asia (especially China) was largely excluded: except for the skills of synarchists—half-missionary and half-mercenary in motivation—and the export of Christian truth, it was primarily a source of imports, not a market, and only the missionary effort grew significantly in the years before 1898.⁴⁰

But, it may be objected, there were all those naval and diplomatic incidents of the 1880s and 1890s. Did these not constitute the preseason warm-up for imperialism and the projection of national power? Here two points may be noted. First, most of these incidents, like the greater part of the naval modernization program, took place in the administrations of the anti-imperialistic Cleveland, the same president who resisted the treaty provision for base rights at Pearl Harbor, refused to participate in the Berlin agreement on the Congo, withdrew the Hawaiian treaty of annexation, and declined to intervene in China or in Turkey on behalf of the Armenians. The Harrison administration did, it is true, conclude the Samoan treaty of 1889, mount an unsuccessful search for Caribbean bases, and support Hawaiian efforts at annexation; but its liveliest accomplishment was to preside over the consequences of the riot in the True Blue Saloon, and few have suggested that the United States contemplated the annexation of Chile. By contrast, the first Cleveland administration handled the first years of the Samoan fuss and carried out the Panama landings of 1885; the second managed the Brazilian intervention, the Corinto business, and the Venezuela boundary affair. Second, since most American naval interventions occurred in the Western Hemisphere and involved a real or presumed European presence, it would seem reasonable to see them as reflecting the same Monroeist (and Mahanist) strategy that governed the design and deployment of the New Navy. The importance of the Brazil trade, which greatly exceeded that with China, may be conceded, but Valparaiso, Corinto, and Caracas were hardly regions of any very impressive “new empire” economic interest at the time.

All this having been said, it is nevertheless still possible to find a persuasive linkage among economic activity, accelerating diplomacy, and naval demonstrations. To do this one must move again beyond economics and ideology to the generally neglected area of technological capabilities and consider, along with the consequences of steam propulsion, the revolution in communications that occurred with the coming of ocean cables. As these progressively joined

⁴⁰ For useful information on overseas activities in the 1880s, see Milton Plesur, *America's Outward Thrust* (DeKalb, Ill., 1971). Also see Merle Curti and Kendall Birr, *Prelude to Point Four* (Madison, Wisc., 1954); and Mira Wilkins, *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970). For a valuable and much neglected regional treatment, see J. Fred Rippy, *Latin America and the Industrial Age* (New York, 1944). On synarchy, see John K. Fairbank, “Synarchy under the Treaties,” in his *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago, 1957), 204–31; and James A. Field, Jr., “Transnationalism and the New Tribe,” *International Organization*, 25 (1971): 353–72. On the growth of missions, see Field, “Near East Notes,” 34–38; and, on the diplomatic response to missionary expansion, see Marilyn Blatt Young, “American Expansionism, 1870–1900: The Far East,” in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past* (New York, 1969), 186, 190–91.

together the already existing regional telegraph nets, those in the Western world who possessed the requisite skills and inclinations found it possible to administer modernity, public or private, at previously unheard-of distances. Without this development, it seems proper to suggest, the world would not have witnessed the late nineteenth-century growth of multinational enterprise, the particular kind of reactive and competitive European imperialism that marked the 1880s and 1890s, or the rash of international crises of the closing years of the century.⁴¹

Despite the traditional prominence of the name of Cyrus Field, this wiring of the world was, like so much of nineteenth-century history, primarily a British accomplishment. The principal inventions were British, gutta percha for cable insulation was a British imperial monopoly, in techniques of cable manufacture the British were far in the lead, and only in Britain was investment capital available on the required scale. Logically enough, then, the progress of long-range communications reflected the image of the world held by those looking outward from London. The Dover-Calais cable of 1851 was soon followed by other links to Europe. The Crimean War brought the extension of the overland telegraph, first to Balaclava and then to Constantinople. In 1865 Bombay and the Indian telegraph system was connected with that of Europe. In 1866 the Atlantic cable joined the European and North American telegraph nets. In 1870 an all-British cable route to India was opened, and in the next year Japan and the China coast were tied in, both by landline across Siberia and by cable via India, Singapore, and Saigon.

By the early 1870s, then, much of the world had been linked. When everything was working well, a telegram could be sent (albeit by way of London and at great expense) from San Francisco to Tokyo. But there were as yet no connections with interior China, with Africa south of Egypt, or with Latin America south of the Caribbean; and no cable yet spanned the Pacific. Not unnaturally, given their predominance in communications technology and international trade, it was the British who took the first great steps to link up the southern continents, with cables from Portugal to Brazil in 1874, and down the East African coast to Durban in 1879.⁴² But, while the British were progressively tying together what seemed important to them, one American looking outward from New York was connecting up the Western Hemisphere. So now, if we need an "imperialist," or at least an individual who worked purposefully and effectively with Wall Street backing to increase his countrymen's capabilities abroad, we can have one. He is curiously absent from books on the "new empire," but he did exist. His name was James A. Scrymser.

Scrymser, in 1865, organized the International Ocean Telegraph Company. Two years later, armed with franchises from Congress and Spain and with

⁴¹ For the history of ocean cables, see Charles Bright, *Submarine Telegraphs: Their History, Construction, and Working* (London, 1898); F. J. Brown, *The Cable and Wireless Communications of the World* (London, 1927); G. R. M. Garratt, *One Hundred Years of Submarine Cables* (London, 1950); George A. Schreiner, *Cables and Wireless and Their Role in the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Boston, 1924); and Leslie B. Tribollet, *The International Aspects of Electrical Communications in the Pacific Area* (Baltimore, 1929).

⁴² Bright, *Submarine Telegraphs*; Brown, *Cable Communications*, 3-23; and Garratt, *Submarine Cables*, 2-30.

support from Secretary of State William H. Seward, he entered the Caribbean with a line from Florida to Havana. But further accomplishments in this area were frustrated by British competition and corporate infighting and there followed a change in aim. In 1878–79 Scrymser established, with financial backing from J. P. Morgan and other leaders of the New York financial community, the Mexican Telegraph Company and the Central and South American Telegraph Company and directed his efforts southward toward the west coast of South America. Mexico City was linked with Galveston in March 1881; by October 1882, the line had reached Lima with stops at various Central American way stations; in 1883 a Brazilian connection was established; in 1890 the cable was extended to Valparaíso, and in the next year the purchase of a trans-Andean telegraph line gave access to Argentina. The result of Scrymser's work was to make possible rapid communication between the United States and South America without having to route messages through London and Lisbon and with consequent greater speed, greater security, and diminished cost.⁴³

Since the British were a nation of shopkeepers and the business of America was business, the purpose of the international cable net was to facilitate the work of the world and its geography reflected existing economic interest. But, as duplicate cables were laid on major routes, word-saving business codes were developed, and costs went down, the new technology took on its own creative role. With their lines eastward to Hong Kong and Shanghai, and across the South Atlantic to Brazil, the British enhanced their regional economic positions. In the Western Hemisphere the pattern of the American economic spillover largely replicated that of the telecommunications network. Increasingly, the successors of William Wheelwright and Henry Meiggs found themselves under the control of the home office—as was soon shown by the transfer of control of the Grace enterprises from Lima to New York in the 1880s and the appearance of two Grace brothers as members of Scrymser's board of directors. In the transatlantic context, where earlier attempts by American manufacturers to establish plants in Great Britain had failed, the years after 1866 brought routine success; as London became more and more the hub of world cable communications, firms such as Singer and Eastman Kodak increasingly entrusted the administration of Eastern Hemisphere business to their British branches.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Personal Reminiscences of James A. Scrymser in Times of Peace and War* (n.p., 1915), 67–82; All-America Cables, Inc., *A Half-Century of Cable Service to the Three Americas, 1878–1928* (New York, 1928), 13–23; *New York Times*, Sept. 21 and 27, 1883; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 18 (New York, 1891): 314–15; and *Dictionary of American Biography*, 16: 521. The attractiveness of Scrymser's venture, as compared to contemporary Chinese promotional schemes, may be seen in the ease with which he gained financial backing and in his weighty board of directors, which included, in addition to J. P. Morgan, such worthies as John E. Alexandre (steamships), William R. and Michael P. Grace (South American trade and finance), Henry L. Higginson (banking), Charles Lanier (banking, railroads), and Richard W. Thompson (secretary of the navy, French Panama Canal Company).

⁴⁴ David Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing* (New York, 1967), 835–45; All-America Cables, *Half-Century of Cable Service*, 96, 102; and Wilkins, *Emergence of Multinational Enterprise*, 30, 41, 44, 61, 114–15, 175–76.

In the Pacific the story was very different: there another history of non-accomplishment further emphasized the marginal nature of American interest. The Collins overland telegraph project had been killed off by the Atlantic cable. In 1870 Admiral David D. Porter urged a Pacific cable, a recommendation repeated by the Congress in 1873 and subsequently by Presidents Grant, Hayes, Cleveland, and Harrison, but to no avail. In Australia interest began to be evident in 1877 and in Canada soon after; in 1894 British imperial concern brought an abortive attempt to annex Necker Island in the Hawaiian chain as a relay station for a cable between Vancouver and the Antipodes. But, despite these signs of British interest and though the Hawaiians granted franchises in 1891 and 1895, though the navy made a hydrographic survey for a Hawaiian cable in 1891–92, though the Hawaiian commissioners urged action in 1893, and though Scrymser organized a Pacific Cable Company in 1896, nothing was done. By 1898 there were twelve active North Atlantic cables, nine of them duplex, and Scrymser had doubled up his South American lines five years before, but no action had yet been taken to span the Pacific.⁴⁵

Although economic interests had shaped the ocean cable network, the blessings of rapid communications transcended the economic sphere. Capabilities are often as determining as intentions—as Mahan once observed, “‘Can,’ as well as ‘will,’ plays a large part in the decisions of life”—and the capability that now existed could be employed in various ways. The new speed of communication, combined with technological advances in printing and papermaking, gave rise to a revolution in journalism and ushered in the great age of the war correspondent, a profession in which such Americans as Januarius Aloysius MacGahan and Richard Harding Davis early attained high place. In countries afflicted with high literacy rates there developed an attentive audience for latter nineteenth-century theatrics—the Crimea, the Nile quest, the Bulgarian Horrors, the Armenian massacres, the sinking of the *Maine*—whose response in times of crisis constituted a new burden for their governments. Compared to the consequences of modern technology and universal education, the contributions of Charles Darwin to jingoism appear small.⁴⁶

There were also more direct consequences for the foreign offices of the world. When information previously transmitted in intermittent chunks could move in a steady flow, and when dispatches that once took weeks or months in transit could now arrive in hours, a wholly new tempo of diplomatic activity

⁴⁵ Tribolet, *Electrical Communications*, 157–79; *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 3: 411, 473–74; R. S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, 1874–93* (Honolulu, 1967), *passim*; Russ, *Hawaiian Republic*, 248–79; Garratt, *Submarine Cables*, 31; All-America Cables, *Half-Century of Cable Service*, 24.

⁴⁶ Mahan, *Interest of America in Sea Power*, 160; John W. Oliver, *History of American Technology* (New York, 1956), 445–48; and F. L. Bullard, *Famous War Correspondents* (Boston, 1914). This “new journalism” was but the latest (if also perhaps the greatest) of a series of advances in the influence of communications technology. In 1873 Congressman James A. Garfield had commented on the new impact of telegraph and press on the daily formulation of “all-pervading” public opinion; Leonard D. White, *The Republicans* (New York, 1958), 15. Similar developments had taken place in the years before the Mexican War; Merk, *Manifest Destiny*, 56–57.

developed. The apparent virtue of the quick response, as a means of increasing pressure on the French to withdraw from Mexico, led Seward to run up an enormous cable bill. In the *Virginus* affair of 1873, Scrymser's line to Havana and the pre-existing connections by way of London with Madrid and Mediterranean ports gave Hamilton Fish the country's first experience in "crisis management" and permitted the speedy recall of the European Squadron. From this time on the lives of secretaries of state would never be quite the same, and March 7, 1867, the date of appointment of the department's first telegrapher, may perhaps be taken as the date of origin of the "new paradigm" of diplomacy that developed as the century wore on.⁴⁷

A final important consequence of the extension of ocean cables was the increased speed of naval movements. The revolution in propulsion that had imposed upon navies new base requirements and new limitations of range had also enabled them to steam upwind and in calm. Now, as consuls and ministers could cable for help and governments could cable orders, a wholly new speed of response developed. In 1861 the European Squadron did not reach New York until two and a half months after the firing on Fort Sumter. When summoned back in 1873 at the time of the *Virginus* crisis, it was home in five weeks; and from this time to the Boxer Rebellion a series of unprecedentedly quick arrivals of outside military forces hastened the course of history. The strategic significance of the submarine telegraph was early appreciated: by the late 1870s the Admiralty had cable communication with all important British overseas naval stations; in 1890, in his contingency plan for war with Britain, Captain Mahan called for an immediate cutting of the Halifax-Bermuda cable.⁴⁸ The importance of Scrymser's contribution to American capabilities in these matters can be seen in a comparison of the dilatory course of surface-mail diplomacy and the freedom of local initiative that marked the Samoan and Hawaiian questions with the rapid reaction to events in Panama, Chile, Brazil, and Nicaragua and the degree of central control maintained over these demonstrations.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Compared to same or next-day delivery by cable, late-nineteenth-century surface mail transit time for State Department dispatches was on the order of ten days to three weeks for Western Europe, three to four weeks for Russia, a month to six weeks for Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, and upwards of six weeks for East Asia. Department of State, Instructions and Despatches, *passim*. Seward's dispatch of November 23, 1866, which cost \$13,000 and took two days to decipher, was the wonder of the Parisian diplomatic corps. Beckles Willson, *American Ambassadors to France, 1777-1927* (London, 1928), 287; and John Bigelow, *Retrospections of an Active Life*, 3 (New York, 1909): 609-15, 622. Fish had made brief use of the cable in the Cuban incident of 1866; in the *Virginus* affair its employment was central. French E. Chadwick, *The Relations of the United States and Spain: Diplomacy* (New York, 1909), 294-97, 317-48; Graham H. Stuart, *The Department of State* (New York, 1949), 145; and Robert L. Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900* (New York, 1975).

⁴⁸ Field, *Mediterranean World*, 305, 333-34; and Arthur Hezlet, *The Electron and Seapower* (London, 1975), 9. The first instance of continuous governmental control of a distant operation was the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882, when a British cable ship grappled the line from Malta and set up in business offshore. See Hezlet, *Electron and Seapower*, 18-19; Bright, *Submarine Telegraphs*, 174; and Mahan, *Letters and Papers*, 3: 562. Even more than the fuel question, the problems of communications technology tend to be slighted by naval historians: the anatomists of sea power concentrate on bone and muscle to the neglect of the alimentary and nervous systems.

⁴⁹ Scrymser quoted appreciative letters from naval officers for services during the Valparaiso crisis; *Pacific Cable: Private vs. Government Ownership* (New York, 1900), 9-10. But if his cable facilitated the solution, his company was part of the problem. The company called for naval protection during the Guatemala troubles

The responses of the United States government to these events in Latin America were, one may say, defensive in nature, comporting with the fears expressed by Secretary of the Navy Tracy of "the aggressive policy of foreign nations" and of the political threat posed by "the establishment of complete commercial supremacy by a European power in any state in the Western Hemisphere." They were part of intended American policy in a way in which the island conquests of 1898 were not. But when events in Cuba wrenched American policy into a new path, the new technology proved of governing importance in the conduct of what an accomplished army officer subsequently described as a war of "coal and cables." Starting in January 1898, cabled despatches were employed to accomplish a preliminary redeployment of the navy. Cable connections with the Far East (by way of London) carried the orders to Dewey to concentrate his force, keep full of coal, and proceed against the Philippines. A new cable from Hong Kong to Manila forewarned Admiral Montojo and permitted him to gather his ships in shoal water, but no cable yet reached Guam, where the garrison was taken by surprise.⁵⁰

Energetically carrying out his orders, Dewey dispensed with the Spanish squadron and captured the harbor he had to have. In the American press the cabled reports of the battle produced a victory so famous that the politicians could hardly disown it, while the fact, made possible by these same cables' annihilation of distance, that Manila Bay preceded the Cuban landings by six weeks and the Battle of Santiago by two months, worked powerfully to focus public attention on the Far East. Now, at last, an "avalanche" of speeches, editorials, articles, and books did descend upon the American people. "Imperialism," we may say, was the product of Dewey's victory.⁵¹

It should be emphasized, however, that results had little to do with intentions. Faced with the problem of how to employ the Asiatic Squadron in the event of war with Spain, the naval planners had given no automatic priority to the Philippines. Among the possibilities considered in the year before the outbreak of hostilities was the withdrawal of these units westward to join in an attack on the Canaries. Even after Manila became the settled

of 1885 and exacerbated Chilean hostility in 1891. Scrymser, *Personal Reminiscences*, 83-84; Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Gunboat Diplomacy and the Old Navy, 1877-1889* (Westport, Conn., 1973), 171, 175; and *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1891*. Lord Salisbury once suggested that Britain, Germany, and the United States might find it worthwhile to guarantee the interest on a cable to Samoa so as to keep that situation under tighter control. G. H. Ryden, *The Foreign Policy of the United States in Relation to Samoa* (New Haven, 1933), 448. It seems possible that Frelinghuysen's ignorance of the capabilities of the world cable and telegraph network contributed to the failure of the 1882 Trescott mission to Chile. Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865-1900* (New York, 1976), 97-98; and Pletcher, *Awkward Years*, 91-92.

⁵⁰ *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1891, 1892*; George O. Squier, "The Influence of Submarine Cables upon Military and Naval Supremacy," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 26 (1900): 599; French E. Chadwick, *The Relations of the United States and Spain: The Spanish-American War*, 2 vols. (New York, 1911), 1: 3-5; and Tribolet, *Electrical Communications*, 155, 245.

⁵¹ Richard W. Leopold, *The Growth of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1962), 150-52, 180-83; and Walter Millis, *The Martial Spirit* (Boston, 1931), 174-77, 195-99. Since naval officers are often grouped with the "imperialists," it may be worth noting that Dewey never recommended retention of the Philippines. A practical man, he wondered why, if colonies were indeed desired, the United States did not look to such handy locations as Mexico or Central America. Ronald Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire* (Baton Rouge, La., 1974), 83-91, 98-99; and Richard S. West, Jr., *Admirals of American Empire* (Indianapolis, 1948), 276.

objective, the aim was merely to gain leverage to pry Spain out of Cuba and to acquire security for the payment of an indemnity. The role reversal that found the Spanish giving up the islands and the United States doing the paying had occurred to none: in the words of the distinguished naval officer who wrote the history of the war, "Perhaps none were more surprised to find a great archipelago at their command than were the gentlemen composing the administration in Washington."⁵²

Lamenting the "Great Aberration," Samuel Flagg Bemis once echoed McKinley's observation that, if only "old Dewey" had sailed along home after the battle, it would have saved much subsequent complication. It is in many ways an appealing thought, but to have done so would have been to abandon a war that had barely begun and to forego that "inducement" to Spain to leave Cuba that had been the object of the move against the Philippines. Yet, while departure was unthinkable, to remain was impossible without support from home. As Dewey swung around the anchor in Manila Bay, his ammunition depleted, his communications dependent upon British goodwill, and with an hourly diminishing coal supply, McKinley ordered forth a collier, a cruiser, two monitors, and some army troops.⁵³ This effort at reinforcement underlined once again the marginal American position in the Pacific. The eastward transfer of army forces for the campaign in Cuba had reduced the strength of the Department of California to 25 officers and 418 men and had stripped the Pacific Coast of arms and ammunition. The *Oregon* had been sent east and the cruiser *Charleston*, laid up at Mare Island, had yet to be reactivated. To obtain the twenty merchant ships required for the summer's troop movements, it proved necessary to threaten seizure of some and to transfer others from the Atlantic and from foreign flags. The logistics of the transpacific effort depended upon the enthusiastic unneutrality of the Hawaiian Republic.⁵⁴ But,

⁵² Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire*, 32–36, and *Professors of War*, 89–94; Grenville and Young, *Politics, Strategy, and Diplomacy*, 267–96; H. G. Rickover, *How the Battleship Maine was Destroyed* (Washington, 1976), 10–13; Chadwick, *Spanish-American War*, 1: 90–91, 154, 208, 2: 472–73; and Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia*, 615–16, 618. Mahan later wrote that the aim of the war had been "to enforce the departure" of Spain from Cuba, commented on the surprising fact that trouble in Cuba had led onward to Asia, noted that the expansionist vision had never reached beyond Hawaii, observed that the Philippines had never previously risen above his "mental horizon," and attributed the outcome to the will of God. "The War on the Sea and Its Lessons, I: How the Motive of the War Gave Direction to its Earlier Movements," *McClure's Magazine*, 12 (1898): 110–18, *Problem of Asia*, 7, 11, and *Letters and Papers*, 2: 566, 579–80, 619. To the financial writer Charles A. Conant it seemed that traditional issues had suddenly been "tinged with a strange, new light by the flash of Dewey's guns in the Bay of Manila"; *The United States in the Orient* (Boston, 1900), 226.

⁵³ Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (New York, 1936), 467. Dewey's victory gave rise to novel and difficult problems in the areas of coal and communications. Since the Spanish refused him use of the Manila-Hong Kong cable, his telegraphic dispatches to Washington had first to travel by ship to Hong Kong. The need to fuel McCulloch for the round trip (since coal for warlike use was contraband and only on condition of immediately heading homeward could any of his ships have coaled in neutral ports) was in part responsible for the delayed transmission of his action report. Prior to 1898 the British had worried about the vulnerability of their worldwide cable system; since transmission by a neutral of belligerent dispatches raised serious problems of international law, the Americans (and doubtless others) had worried about British control of the world cable network. Learning of Dewey's isolation, Scrymser at once offered to lay a new cable between Hong Kong and Manila with financing by J. P. Morgan, but the proposal was refused by London. The British at Hong Kong did, however, accept Dewey's dispatches under the fiction that the traffic was nonmilitary; it is interesting to speculate on his position had they refused to bend the rules. The five-day minimum reply time imposed by the need to communicate by ship with the Asiatic mainland complicated dealings with Aguinaldo and von Diederichs and made the situation in Manila Bay

once the troops did reach the Philippines, they stayed; and the problems of administering so distant a dependency brought forth the single preplanned insular annexation of the period, as Wake Island was taken as a landing station for the now-imperative American Pacific cable.

RETURNING FINALLY TO THE "WORST CHAPTER," we may conclude that much of it is wrong and most of it irrelevant to "imperialism" and the events of 1898.⁵⁵ The New Navy was a defensive answer to European developments; its deployment reflected a shrunken rather than an enlarged strategic perimeter. The "search for bases" was a response to the strategic problems of isthmus, Caribbean, and eastern Pacific. Neither missionary work nor burgeoning exports nor the beginnings of foreign investment called for the extension of political control. The ideologists, so selectively quoted by posterity, were of negligible importance. What Americans, whether travellers or missionaries or businessmen, wanted of the outer world was the freedom to pursue happiness, to do their thing, to operate insofar as possible unhindered by arbitrary power or obsolete ideas.⁵⁶ Proud of their own self-determined independence, they

(as in Samoa and Hawaii) one where central control was diminished and events tended to take charge. Elbert J. Benton, *International Law and Diplomacy of the Spanish-American War* (Baltimore, 1909), 190-91, 212-13; Chadwick, *Spanish-American War*, 1: 212, 2: 363, 423, 425, 441; "Danger to Submarine Cables in Case of War," *Scientific American Supplement*, May 1, 1897, p. 17798; "The Neutral Use of Cables," *ibid.*, March 5, 1898, pp. 18489-90; Scrymser, *Pacific Cable*, 2-8, and *Personal Reminiscences*, 93-100; Department of State, Instructions, Great Britain, May 22, June 6, 1898, and Despatches, Great Britain, May 11, 24, June 1, 7, 1898; and William R. Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909* (Austin, Texas, 1958), 35, 43, 45-46.

⁵⁴ Chadwick, *Spanish-American War*, 2: 369; W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, 1, (Boston, 1928): 69; U.S. Naval History Division, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (Washington, 1959-), 2: 82; James A. Huston, *The Sineus of War: Army Logistics, 1775-1953* (Washington, 1966), 286; and Clinard, *Japan's Influence*, 16-17.

⁵⁵ It sometimes seems as difficult to discover the "very heart of contemporary revisionism" as it is to elucidate the message of Mahan. If it is that after 1898 American policy makers sought to preserve a "long-term option" in China, one can hardly argue: that is what sensible policy makers try to do. But if, regarding the War with Spain, the "central question" turns on the contention that the acquisition of the Philippines was "the product of a conscious, pragmatic effort to provide . . . integrated, protectible trade routes across the Pacific," the policy seems irrational, the argument dubious, and the evidence lacking. Thomas J. McCormick, "American Expansion in China," *AHR*, 75 (1970): 1394-96. What is an "integrated" trade route? Why across the Pacific? The American import-export community was in the East, and the China trade was an Atlantic trade. The route westward from New York was shorter, and faster for passengers (like Commodore Dewey, going out to his new command) and mail. But for freight it involved 3,000 miles of high-cost railroad carriage followed by the transit of an ocean where shipping was scarce and coal much more expensive than on the Atlantic-Suez route. As to whether this route was "protectible," the question is, against whom? Nobody ever solved the problem of the defense of the Philippines. In the early years they seemed vulnerable to German attack; as late as 1911 Mahan conceded to Japan the capability of bagging the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii and landing on the West Coast before the battle fleet could reach the scene of action. Clinard, *Japan's Influence*, 36-40; and Mahan, *Letters and Papers*, 3: 384-85. For an interesting visual aid, which may have encouraged latter-day geopolitical misconception, see the schematic map of "Geography and American Sea Power, 1898-1922," in Harold and Margaret Sprout, *Toward a New Order of Sea Power* (Princeton, 1940), 22 (reprinted in E. M. Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* [Princeton, 1943], 428). "Sea Power" appears in the form of enormous arrows projecting from the East and West Coasts, from the isthmus, and from the Hawaiian Islands, with those in the Pacific much the largest. Yet for most of the period in question the entrance to Pearl Harbor was not dredged, the Panama Canal was not completed, and the battle fleet was in the Atlantic.

⁵⁶ On this same phenomenon in a more recent context, see Samuel P. Huntington, "Transnational Organizations in World Politics," *World Politics*, 25 (1972-73): 333-68.

were sympathetic to similar desires on the part of Samoan chiefs, Korean kings, Egyptian khedives, Armenian Christians, Brazilians, Venezuelans, and Chinese. Most of all, because they were nearest and most visible and noisiest, it was the Cubans who engaged this sympathy.

Such traditional aims and attitudes had little to do with any "new American spirit," or with Asiatic markets, or with "insular imperialism." The western Pacific acquisitions, which opened a new era of American history, were in one sense the product of the new technological developments; in another, they can be seen as historical "accidents." If the British had kept the Philippines after the Seven Years' War, the War with Spain would have been confined to the Atlantic. If the Filipinos had been happy under Spanish rule (or if the Asiatic Squadron had been sent against the Canaries), this rule might well have continued. If Spain had either pacified or given up Cuba, there would have been no war; perhaps, indeed, war might have been averted had the *Maine* not been sent to Havana.⁵⁷ If this was indeed the case (and unless a conspiracy theory is at once developed on the basis of Lodge's prediction of "an explosion any day in Cuba"), the identity of the ship sent is perhaps the ultimate historical accident. A sunken *Texas*, say, would have contributed little to the torchlight parades of chanting patriots.

If there had been no war, the process of the "Americanization of the world," which so commended itself to the British reformer and journalist W. T. Stead (and which so exasperated other Englishmen), would no doubt have continued.⁵⁸ American heiresses would have continued to marry British milords; missionaries and student volunteers would have persisted in their work for China; engineers, promoters, and salesmen would have pressed on with their activities; multinational corporations would have continued to expand; Carnegie libraries would have gone on proliferating throughout the English-speaking world. But in political terms the outward thrust would, in all probability, have conformed to the relaxed anticipations of "Jingo Jim" Blaine, the strategic parameters of the "imperialistic" Mahan, and the proposals of the Republican platform of 1896: a suitable measure of control over the impending isthmian canal, over protective Caribbean naval bases, and over the Hawaiian islands. In the circumstances of the time, such a defensive policy seems quite reasonable.

⁵⁷ "Apparently as the result of an accident in Havana Harbor, the path of destiny has been opened for us in the East"; Conant, *United States in the Orient*, 63.

⁵⁸ W. T. Stead, *The Americanization of the World; or, The Trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1902); and R. H. Heindel, *The American Impact on Great Britain, 1898-1914* (Philadelphia, 1940), 138-70, *passim*.