

Primary Sources: U.S. Intervention in Panama

It is trusted that enlightened statesmanship on [Columbia's] part will see that the early prosecution of [a canal] will largely inure to the benefit, not only of their own citizens and those of the United States, but of the commerce of the civilized world. It is not doubted that should the work be undertaken under the protective auspices [support] of the United States.

—President Rutherford B. Hayes, State of the Union Address, December 1879

We were dealing with a government of irresponsible bandits . . . I was prepared to . . . at once occupy the Isthmus anyhow, and proceed to dig the canal. But I deemed it likely that there would be a revolution in Panama soon.

—President Theodore Roosevelt, on the Colombian government and building the canal

Accordingly, I took the isthmus, started the canal, and then left Congress not to debate the canal, but to debate me . . . but while the debate goes on, the canal does too; and they are welcome to debate me as long as they wish, provided that we can go on with the canal.

—President Theodore Roosevelt, 1911

As it stands now as soon as the Senate votes we shall have a treaty . . . vastly advantageous to the United States, and we must confess, with what face we can muster, not so advantageous to Panama . . . You and I know too well how many points there are in this treaty to which a Panamanian patriot could object.

—Secretary of State John Hay, writing about the treaty to secure the Panama Canal Zone, 1903

Primary Sources: U.S. Intervention in Mexico

But I earnestly hope that war is not now in question. I believe I speak for the American people when I say that we do not desire to control in any degree the affairs of our sister Republic. Our feeling for the people of Mexico is one of deep and genuine friendship.

—President Woodrow Wilson, Address to Congress, 1914

I urgently recommend that American troops be given authority to pursue into Mexican Territory hostile Mexican bandits who raid American territory. So long as the border is a shelter for them they will continue to harass our ranches and towns to our chagrin.

—Major General Frederick Funston, U.S. Army,
commanding the Southern Department, 1916

*¡Pobre México! Tan lejos de Dios, y tan cerca de los Estados Unidos.
Poor Mexico! So far from God and so close to the United States.*

—attributed to Porfirio Díaz, president of Mexico

It is very humiliating that the flag of the Stars and Bars continues to wave over the port of Vera Cruz.

—Alvaro Obregon, in a telegraph to Francisco “Pancho” Villa suggesting that they request Mexico’s president to institute immediate measures to persuade the U.S. to evacuate

I accept with enthusiasm your patriotic idea that we should all together approach the President of the Republic to ask how to take up the matter of the departure of the American forces which are in Vera Cruz; for it is really humiliating and shameful for our beloved country that invading forces still remain in Vera Cruz when there exists no justification for it.

—Francisco “Pancho” Villa, in response to Obregon’s suggestion that they request Mexico’s president to persuade the U.S. to evacuate

Primary Sources: U.S. Intervention in Puerto Rico

The highest considerations of justice and good faith demand that we should not disappoint the confident expectation of sharing in our prosperity with which the people of Puerto Rico so gladly transferred their allegiance to the United States, and that we should treat the interests of these people as our own.

—Secretary of War Elihu Root, 1900

[Puerto Rico's] relative geographical position, their climate, their distance from our shores . . . tend to increase the consideration and make more complex the solution of their future government . . . But these responsibilities are ours, taken of our own motion, and our plain duty with reference to these people must not be shirked, but met and disposed of honestly, patriotically, in the spirit of justice between man and man.

—North Carolina Representative George H. White, 1900

[Puerto Ricans] are a law-abiding people, kind and hospitable. We must not forget how the American army was received. The houses were opened to them; the people said: "We are glad to have you here, you are our redeemers." But instead of that . . . the occupation has been a perfect failure. We have suffered everything. No liberty, no rights, absolutely no protection, not even the right to travel. We can not travel today because we can not get passports. We are Mr. Nobody from Nowhere. We have no political status, no civil rights. That can not go on very long.

—Dr. Jose Henna, a disillusioned Puerto Rican advocate of American intervention to free Puerto Rico from Spain, explaining life for Puerto Ricans under U.S. rule, 1900

[Because of U.S. colonialism] the Puerto Rican became a man without a country. Can any man conceive of a more tyrannical form of government?

—Democratic Congressman, 1900

Primary Sources: U.S. Intervention in the Philippines

It is as a base for commercial operations that the [Philippine] islands seem to possess the greatest importance. They occupy a favored location, not with reference to one part of any particular country of the Orient [East Asia], but to all parts.

—Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Frank A. Vanderlip, 1898

The expansion of a civilized nation has invariably meant the growth of the area in which peace is normal throughout the world. The same will be true of the Philippines . . . as it is, [the United States] will keep the islands and will establish therein a stable and orderly government, so that one more fair spot of the world's surface shall have been snatched from the forces of darkness. Fundamentally the cause of expansion is the cause of peace.

—Former Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, 1899

Finally, it should be the earnest and paramount aim of the military administration to win the confidence, respect, and affection of the inhabitants of the Philippines by assuring them in every possible way that full measure of individual rights and liberties which is the heritage of a free people . . . and by proving to them that the mission of the United States is one of the benevolent assimilation [compassionate integration].

—President William McKinley's "Benevolent Assimilation" Proclamation, 1898

We are now openly engaged in crushing out the sacredest thing in this great human world—the attempt of a people long enslaved to attain to the possession of itself, to organize its laws and government, to be free to follow its internal destinies according to its own ideals . . . We are destroying the lives of these islanders by the thousand, their villages and their cities . . . But these destructions are the smallest part of our sins. We are destroying down to the root every germ of a healthy national life in these unfortunate people, and we are surely helping to destroy for one generation at least their faith in God and man.

—Journalist William James, 1899

I prefer a country run like hell by Filipinos to a country run like heaven by Americans. Because, however bad a Filipino government might be, we can always change it.

—Manuel L. Quezon, Filipino patriot and president of the Philippines

Primary Sources: U.S. Intervention in Hawaii

The Hawaiian pear is fully ripe and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it.

—John L. Stevens, U.S. Minister to Hawaii, in a dispatch to Secretary of State John W. Foster, February 1893

So long . . . as the United States maintains any claim to ascendancy [dominance] in these islands, it is safe to assume that there will be no interference from any other quarter. If that claim should be withdrawn, it is exceedingly doubtful whether Japan would withhold her hand any longer from the “Hawaiian Pear.”

—Honolulu Daily Bulletin, March 1893

[Americans] must now begin to look outward . . . The growing production of the country demands it. An increasing volume of public sentiment demands it.

—Alfred T. Mahan, U.S. naval officer, navy strategist, and historian, 1890

I, Liliuokalani . . . Queen, do hereby solemnly protest against any and all acts done against myself and the constitutional government of the Hawaiian Kingdom, by certain persons claiming to have established a provisional government of and for this Kingdom . . .

Now, to avoid any collision of armed forces and perhaps the loss of life, I do, under this protest and impelled by said force, yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representative and reinstate me and the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.

—Queen Liliuokalani, Protest of the Queen, January 1893

The provisional government owes its existence to an armed invasion by the United States . . . By an act of war . . . a substantial wrong has thus been done.

—President Grover Cleveland, message to Congress, December 1893

[In 1893, the Queen] yielded her authority by . . . abdicating the throne . . . the crown lands became like other lands, the property of the sovereignty, and on the annexation of the islands, passed to the United States as part of the public domain.

—Decision on the legality of the annexation of Hawaii, by the U.S. Claims Court, *Liliuokalani v. The United States*, May 16, 1910

Primary Sources: U.S. Intervention in China

The present situation is becoming daily more difficult. The various Powers cast upon us looks of tiger-like voracity [appetite], hustling each other to be first to seize our innermost territories.

—Chinese Empress Dowager Tsu His, prior to the Boxer Rebellion

Act in concurrence with other powers so as to protect all American interests.

—President William McKinley's order to the American military commander in China during the Boxer Rebellion

Opening China to trade cannot fail to result in a remarkable transformation of the [Chinese] empire in a few decades . . . [making it] a leading member of the family of progressive nations.

—Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Frank A. Vanderlip, 1898

The policy of the government of the United States . . . [will] bring about permanent peace and safety to China . . . and safeguard for the world the principle of equal and impartial trade with all parts of the Chinese Empire.

—Secretary of State John Hay, 1899

Today we are the poorest and weakest nation in the world and occupy the lowest position in international affairs. Other men are the carving knives and serving dishes; we are the fish and the meat.

—Sun Yat-sen, leader of China in the early 1900s

The government of the United States is earnestly desirous of promoting the most extended and intimate trade relationships between this country and the Chinese Republic . . . Our interests are those of the open door, a door of friendship and mutual advantage. This is the only door we care to enter.

—President Woodrow Wilson, 1913