

The United States in an Age of Global Integration, 1865-1897

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Two interrelated processes of integration conditioned the development of the United States in the late-nineteenth century. The first was the integration of the West and South into a Union that had been transformed by the American Civil War. The second was the ongoing integration of the world economy. Both were products of broader globalization in this period, and both were uneven and contested. Americans did not call the shots about the nature, pace and extent of this globalization, though politicians sought whenever they could to harness them towards their own ends. The U.S. economy quintupled in size as the population of the United States rapidly expanded, especially in the trans-Mississippi region, where the dispossession of Native Americans and the construction of transcontinental railroads attracted new settlers and integrated new lands into the world economy. In this the United States was not exceptional. Rather, in its demographic dynamics, new commercial routes, and reliance on European capital for development it resembled other settler colonies of the nineteenth century.

The integrative processes at the heart of this chapter - surging global migration, new communication and transportation links, and the seemingly unrestrained mobility of global capital – generated heated debate in the United States. Immigration, imperialism, tariffs, and international monetary policy dominated U.S. politics. The domestic terms of this contest were shaped by the Republican Party's reinvention of the federal state during the Civil War. As secession removed their state-rights-focused Democratic antagonists, Republicans pursued a vision of national integration via transcontinental railroads, a national banking system, a high tariff, and a regularized currency. They promoted immigration, sought the swift reintegration of a free labor South, and put in place policies to encourage the rapid settlement of the West. Enthusiasm for this program ebbed by the late 1870s, as anxieties about the commanding role of capital and the apparently subversive status of immigrants

swelled, and the federal government seemed passive in response. This discontent was substantial despite the big-picture story of U.S. economic growth in the late nineteenth century.

Republican' efforts to advance national integration in the aftermath of the Civil War played out in conjunction with their efforts to exercise power beyond national borders.. In 1865, the Republicans' newly remodeled nation-state faced the world without an obvious foreign policy trajectory. For all the grand rhetoric of Republican speechifiers in the 1850s, the post-war Union was heavily indebted and naturally focused on reintegrating and reconstructing the states of the former Confederacy. This was undoubtedly a period of experimentation, contingency, and adaptation to forces beyond the control of policymakers. But, while we should be wary of reading this period as nothing more than the pre-history of the turn to an island empire in 1898, we can see that in a variety of areas - international law, humanitarianism, evangelical missions, and commercial engagement – the United States' global footprint was significant, and growing.

It was also frequently enmeshed in transimperial exchange, as Americans exploited the imperial circuits of other states, particularly Britain, even as they sought to increase their own international clout. Politicians pursued pan-American agreements in an effort to extend the commercial reach of the United States, and they increasingly talked the transnational language of liberal civilization. These economic and ideological imperatives came together in the ambition to build a transisthmian canal, the great U.S. geopolitical goal of the late-nineteenth century. As with a number of other grand projects in this period, ambition outran achievement, but these commercial and moral dynamics shaped U.S. foreign relations in the other ways. By the start of William McKinley's presidency in 1897, the United States had a demonstrated and growing capacity to exert its influence overseas. The growing political force of humanitarianism, in particular, provided an intoxicating rationale for intervention overseas and, ultimately, for imperial ambitions at the turn of the century.

Opportunity and Discontent in an Integrating World

The United States was strikingly open to global movements of people, finance, ideas, and goods in the nineteenth century. Telegraph lines, steamships, remittance networks, and railroads realized global connections that were unthinkable at the beginning of the century. Yet even as emerging technologies and structures forged connections, they also led to sharp divisions over how they might be made to work in the interest of the American people. Some, like conservative Democrats, believed that a small state and an active market would efficiently allocate people, goods and capital where they would be most productively employed. Others, like the populist agrarian reformers of the 1880s and 1890s, believed that Americans, ought to exert greater democratic control over the market. But the dominant political party of the period was the Republican party, which dominated both the Senate and the Presidency (though not the House of Representatives) in the late-nineteenth century..

Generally speaking, Republicans at the end of the Civil War emphasized harmony between the component parts of the American economy; an ideal – if not always realized – of the construction of connective infrastructure, particularly railroads; the reincorporation of a conquered, free labor south; and the orderly settlement and development of the western territories by settlers from the east and overseas at the expense of Native Americans;. This represented a holistic blueprint for the development of the United States. In its execution, it both fed on and generated flows of people and capital, primarily from Europe, directed by a state that encouraged close collaboration between government and business. And in its unintended consequences – the exposure of new places and people to a more aggressive cycle of economic boom and bust – it set the parameters for the economic and political life of the nation for a generation.

In the aggregate, the economic policies pursued by administrations between the Civil War and the First World War were strikingly successful. In this period the economy quintupled in size, as did the size of the U.S. railroad network, linking western settlers with markets, liquidity and settlers from the eastern United States and beyond. Steel production boomed: American mills produced 1,600 tons in 1867; thirty years later the figure was 7.2 million tons. By 1900, 14.6 million cattle passed through Chicago's stockyards each year, up from 1.5 million in 1866.¹ Eastern and European capital accelerated the absorption of the West into the national – and global – economy through the financing of railroads, farming, mining, the cattle industry, and other enterprises. The development of infrastructure, extraction and industry in the West, alongside growing urbanization and industrialization nationwide behind relatively high tariffs, transformed the antebellum republic, which had been more reliant on exports of cotton and corn, into an economic behemoth with a sophisticated and well-connected domestic market.

The costs of this transformation were most obviously borne by Native Americans. The contest for control over the American West was ongoing through the 1870s as federal troops fought the Sioux and Comanche empires of the northern and southwestern plains respectively, as well as other Native American polities. Once they had been defeated and these western Native Americans largely confined to reservations, there were no immediate rivals to contend with. When U.S. statesmen spoke of peaceful expansion they had in mind the outward movement of the borders of the republic. They gave little thought to processes of expansion and colonization *within* those borders as being a function of foreign relations. This was despite the endurance of that formal mechanism of international relations - the treaty system - remaining in place until the early 1870s. Historians divide over exactly how coherent and how ruthless U.S. treatment of Native Americans was in the decisive decades that followed the Civil War, but it is clear that the elimination of Native polities - either through enclosure on reservations, or evangelically-

¹ Data taken from Mark Wyman, *Round-Trip to America: the Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 48.

inspired projects of assimilation or, at its most extreme, through genocide - was fundamental to the American state-building project in the West. Estimates suggest that the Native population declined from about 308,000 in 1860 to 228,000 in 1890 at a time when the western population of the United States increased as whole by about 180%. By the time of the Spanish-American War, Native Americans held only 4% of the country's land.² Demand for land for agricultural cultivation and for mineral wealth generated explosive settler population growth, which in turn demanded a federal response. Unable or unwilling to roll back white settlement, the federal state enabled and rationalized dispossession. Simultaneously, the destruction of migratory bison rendered null the very premise of many federal-Indian treaties: that the right of particular Native American polities to pursue the hunt across large areas of territory would be respected. Between 1870 and 1880, 3.5 million bison were slaughtered, the majority by white hunters, often for the value of their hides as machine belts. By 1884, there were only a few hundred wild bison left.

In the late nineteenth century, the United States sold off a substantial portion of the lands it had expropriated in the west. Under the 1862 Homestead Act the federal government allocated up to 160 acres of land in the western territories to anyone prepared to farm it for five years, and pay the small fee of \$1.25 per acre. By 1934, 270 million acres of western land had been granted under the Act's provisions - an area totaling about 15% of the landmass of the lower forty-eight states. The 1887 Dawes Act extended the principle of private, individualized landholding enshrined in the Homestead Act to Native Americans. The sought to break up tribal lands, to individualize Native Americans ready for absorption as full citizens of the United States, and, not coincidentally, to open up more land to white settlers, as land left over after allotment could be sold on the open market.

² *Statistical Record of Native North Americans*, edited by Marlita A. Reddy (New York: Gale Research, 1995); Brian DeLay, "Indian Polities, Empire, and the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History*, 39:5 (Nov. 2015), 932.

In dividing, selling and settling indigenous land, the United States was not unique. The process of integrating peripheral lands into the international markets via population expansion, increasing density of infrastructure, and the development of extractive industry, all at the cost of indigenous peoples was common to Chile, Australia, Canada, Argentina, South Africa, and a host of other places in the mid-nineteenth century. Here was what scholars have called 'settler colonialism' in action.³ Land was rapidly settled by white immigrants, often European-born, as part of a demographic explosion that overwhelmed native people. Those settlers, equipped with more destructive technologies than their native counterparts, often carried with them racially exclusive ideas about democratic self-rule that generated a kind of settler nationalism that valorized the masculine frontiersman, who first dispossessed and then romanticized Native Americans, as the embodiment of American virtues.

The construction of a transcontinental railroad network was key to this demographic explosion of settlers. By the mid-1880s, when construction peaked, 43% of all the world's railroad mileage was in the United States, including multiple transcontinental lines.⁴ The population of the trans-Mississippi west grew from a little over 9 million in 1860 to over 25 million by 1890.⁵ As a consequence nine states entered the Union between the Civil War and the end of the century. Built, owned and operated by private companies that benefited from federal subsidies and land grants, the railroad appeared to some contemporaries as definitively answering the question of who would govern the American west. Writing in 1883, at the end of his career as commanding general of the U.S. army, William Tecumseh Sherman wrote that "the recent completion of the last of the four great transcontinental lines of railway has

³ On 'settler colonialism', see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: a Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and Ian Tyrrell, "Beyond the View from Euro-America: Environment, Settler Societies, and the Internationalization of American History," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), esp. 168-172.

⁴ Railroad data in David Chambers, Sergei Sarkissian, Michael J. Schill, 'Geography and Capital: Explaining Foreign Listings of U.S. Railroad Securities during the First Era of Financial Globalization', 10, available via EH.net at <http://eh.net/eha/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Chambersetal.pdf>, accessed 7 April 2018.

⁵ Data taken from the 1890 U.S. census report.

settled forever the Indian question, the Army question, and many others which have hitherto troubled the country.”⁶

If railroads were essential to the development of a truly integrated national market, so too was the deliberate cultivation of manufacturing. To this end, Republicans erected high tariffs to protect American industries from foreign competition. Late nineteenth century protectionists drew from earlier advocates of tariffs, including the Whigs of the first half of the nineteenth century. Like the Whigs before them, the high-tariff men of the post-Civil War period contended that Americans were trapped in a commercial world dominated by British financiers and industrialists, and therefore not truly independent. Exigency complemented ideology – the 1861 Morrill Tariff was necessary because the financial demands of the Civil War crippled an already depleted U.S. Treasury – and contingency, because its passage was only possible because of the secession of free-trade Democrats. The high tariffs of this period were, in a global sense, disintegrative (as all tariffs are) even as their boosters hoped they would further integrate the domestic market of the United States. Those hopes were realized: between the end of the Civil War and 1890 industrial output rose by almost 300%, though economic historians caution us against seeing this dynamic growth as primarily due to protectionism. Still, by 1890 the United States boasted a diverse and robust manufacturing sector, the value of which was twice that of Britain, and manufacturing had long supplanted agriculture as both the country’s largest employer and in terms of its share of GDP.

For those concerned about access to foreign markets, the tariff looked like a serious obstacle. When Republicans pursued overseas markets in the late-nineteenth century, they had limited success. Their solution was a patchwork policy of reciprocity treaties with individual countries that aimed to prize open foreign markets, particularly in Latin America, whilst leaving the larger protectionist architecture in place. This was exemplified by the McKinley Tariff of 1890 which hiked duties whilst allowing the selective

⁶ William Tecumseh Sherman quoted in Eric Rauchway, *Blessed Among Nations: How the World Made America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 130.

opening of the American market to cheaper foreign goods. Tariffs continued to generate intense partisan division, as Democrats accused Republicans of corruption and of supporting special interest groups, and Republicans accused Democrats of undermining American industry in favor of 'British' free trade.

Despite their exclusionary nature, tariffs were not indicative of an economy closed to foreign influence. British finance, in particular, found the United States an attractive outlet. This was a function not only of shared language and historic ties, but also a result of the opportunities that the integration of the American west into the global economy offered investors. The Treasury Department estimated in 1866 that foreign investment in the United States totaled \$600 million. Economic historian Mira Wilkins puts the figure in 1895 at \$3.145 billion in 1899, of which almost 80% came from British sources.⁷ The majority of foreign investment poured into private enterprise, not government bonds, often via the Wall Street banks that the financial demands of the Civil War had produced. Feelings of imagined community and close personal and social ties facilitated close relationships between the U.S. and British financial sectors. Transatlantic financiers developed strong working relationships in the mid-nineteenth century that helps to explain the capital flows of the late nineteenth century, particularly in the context of floating Union loans during the Civil War. After the war, this collaboration continued, most successfully in Mexico, where elites were keen to attract foreign capital for infrastructural development in much the same way that U.S. statesmen had been earlier in the century.

The ease with which capital and labor might move in the economy of the mid-nineteenth century had inevitable consequences: market integration meant economic panics in one part of the global economy might prompt a crash in another. This was not novel: earlier crashes in 1819 and 1837 had their roots in significant European market adjustments. The two great depressions of the late-nineteenth century, beginning in 1873 and 1893, illustrated more of the same. What *was* different was the rapid

⁷ Mira Wilkins, *The History of Foreign Investment in the United States to 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 91, 147, 159.

transfer of information between markets, thanks to the inauguration of permanent transatlantic telegraph links in 1866, and the extent to which corporations - and, most importantly, railroad corporations - listed their stocks in multiple overseas markets. This brought together greater numbers of distant creditors and debtors who would never meet one another. In good times their interests aligned but in downturns they starkly diverged.

Republican idealism presumed that an integrated economy would promote economic growth, which in turn would benefit all. This overlooked the more extreme cyclical downturns that accompanied a maturing, industrializing economy and underestimated the extent to which different sectors of the economy and different sections of the country experienced economic change. Farmers, particularly in the states west of the Mississippi, felt themselves distant from political power and increasingly exposed to economic risk. Many had moved west on the promises of railroad corporations, anticipating a future of secure farm ownership and access to - but not dominance by - distant markets via the very railroads that had shipped them west in the first place. In practice, an overextended and often financially overexposed railroad network contracted painfully in response to economic shocks, leaving settlers stranded in rural outposts with such limited access to markets that they struggled to pay their creditors. As Henry Adams noted, "the generation between 1865 and 1895 was already mortgaged to the railways, and no one knew it better than the generation itself."⁸ Although much of the anti-railroad ire focused on East Coast capitalists, the generation that Adams referred to was well aware that the person holding the mortgage might live in Lille, or Glasgow, or Bremen. And the more peripheral a railroad line, the more likely it was to be dependent on foreign capital, over which settlers felt they could exercise even less influence. This was because railroad lines in more settled, integrated places could rely on better access to domestic capital markets; they did not need to look overseas for funds. Settlers in places such as the Dakota

⁸ Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York, 1918), 240.

Territory might hold state and national governments accountable, but they found it far more difficult to exercise leverage over an investment bank in the City of London.

Distant financiers, uncaring middlemen, and apparently predatory railroads drove agrarian discontent in this period. Each of these constituencies seemed to leverage political power far more effectively than farmers themselves, despite the apparently central place that the noble agrarian occupied in the Jeffersonian conception of American nationhood. This sense of agrarian precarity was exacerbated by environmental factors - drought, floods, and plagues of insects - and the opening up of global sources of supply in markets that American farmers had previously dominated. Egypt and India emerged as competitors in cotton; corn and wheat producers suffered competition from Russia. Heavily mortgaged U.S. farmers, already seeing prices decline as railroads opened up new territory in the domestic interior and new technology increased productivity per acre, now faced potentially ruinous foreign competition.

Unlike settlers in other parts of the world experiencing rapid integration into a global market, most white men in western territories could vote - first in territorial assemblies and later, with statehood, nationally. The Jeffersonian republic might have been largely destroyed by the Civil War but one of its central ideals - equality of states in a federal union - survived. North Dakota had no less senatorial power than Massachusetts, and indeed, even more per capita. The pathbreaking role of western territories and states in passing women's suffrage legislation made them leaders in democratic inclusion, though here again we can see the importance of global connections. (The women's suffrage movement was self-consciously transnational in organization, particularly from the early 1880s onwards, as veterans of the abolition, peace, moral reform, and temperance movements in Europe and the United States exchanged ideas and tactics in pursuit of their goal.) Western residents had some ability to participate in national political debates. Political discontent could find an outlet in established political parties, whose policy agendas were sometimes accommodating. Where they were not, settlers could build new political

coalitions to push their claims, most notably in the case of the Populist movement of the 1890s. This new party proposed a graduated income tax, a government-owned-and-run postal savings bank, greater control over elected officials through referenda and recall elections, a responsive sub-treasury system, and public control of the railroad and telegraph systems. As this suggests, those anxious about losing out in the process of market integration - those who felt that the levers of American capitalism were drifting further from them - proposed constructive solutions that proposed greater democratic control over the terms of market exchange. More darkly, this sentiment could also find expression in opposition to 'others': as anglophobia, which persisted as a powerful strain in American political culture despite the growing consonance of British and American geostrategic interests; as anti-Chinese sentiment, which was ever more deeply embedded in federal policy through the last two decades of the nineteenth century; and as an insidious anti-semitism, which characterized certain elements of the Populist Party.

Rapid global integration was a product of improved communication links, better integrated markets, and cheaper transportation. These factors allowed the United States to pull in vast quantities of both capital and labor, and each reshaped the nature of American society, economics, and politics. Republican political economy demanded large numbers of migrants to build its railroads, labor in its factories, farm its fields, and excavate its metals and fuels. The demand for exploitable labor was all the more acute given the destruction of American slavery that occurred during the Civil War. Between the end of that conflict and 1900 almost 13 million immigrants arrived in the United States; one third of the increase in the U.S. labor force between 1870 and 1910 was a product of immigration.⁹ A degree of fluidity characterized not just the migration of labor *to* the United States, but also *from* it: estimates for the period 1908-1923 suggest that of those who migrated to the United States perhaps a third left

⁹ Total migration for the years 1866-1899 was 12,810,897, taken from Carter, Susan B. and Richard Sutch, "U.S. immigrants and emigrants: 1820-1998," table Ad1-2 in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition*, edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Wyman, *Round-Trip to America*, 48.

again.¹⁰ There is little reason to think that this pattern was unique to the early-twentieth century. The United States also drew its immigrants from a far wider variety of places than other New World states, connecting the republic to a wide array of places of origin through familial ties, correspondence, and remittance networks.

Republicans argued that the post-war United States would require a massive infusion of labor. William Seward, who served as secretary of state in the administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, regarded immigration as “a chief source of the nation’s wealth and prosperity” and essential “to repair the ravages of war and the waste of national strength.”¹¹ As such he sought to facilitate migration from Europe and ease the process of naturalization for new arrivals. This was most notable in an 1867 treaty with China, which recognized “the inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of free migration and emigration... from one country to the other,” but it was also evident in a series of contemporary treaties made with European states.¹²

American demand was matched by global supply. Seward worked in a context in which competition between shipping lines drove down prices for transatlantic travel and, simultaneously, wars and the dislocations of nineteenth century capitalism produced a pool of migrants willing to make the journey. The increasing globalization of commodity markets in agricultural produce that fueled farmers’ discontent in the American south and west in the closing decades of the nineteenth century was exactly the same globalization that made small-scale agriculture less feasible as an occupation in large parts of Europe. By extension, emigration to the United States and employment in its booming industrial sector could look like economic salvation. In Europe and East Asia, steamship line agents funneled immigrants to

¹⁰ Wyman, *Round-Trip to America*, 9.

¹¹ William H. Seward quoted in Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington, as Senator and Secretary of State* (New York, 1891), 227.

¹² Article 5, Burlingame Treaty (1868) available via the Library Of Congress’s Treaties and International Agreements: 1776-1949 page: <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/b-cn-ust000006-0680.pdf>. Accessed 18 June 2019.

the United States. Writing in 1904 the U.S. commissioner-general of immigration described this enterprise as “one of the best organized, most energetically conducted branches of commerce in the world.”¹³ The United States, then, was an attractive destination for both capital and labor in the late-nineteenth century – but labor and capital were not equally mobile. At times of economic downturn, capital could flee for more stable environments with greater ease than could labor.

Xenophobia and the attendant calls for immigration restriction and deportation were not new in the post-Civil War era, though nativist constituents were more vocal and better organized by the 1870s. Despite this, federal policy remained relatively insulated from xenophobic politics until the last quarter of the century. Immigration restriction, when it came, sometimes took the outward form of protecting laborers themselves. This was true of the 1885 Foran Act, which prohibited corporations actively recruiting workers overseas and bringing them into the United States under contract. At other times concern for labor was explicitly racialized. In 1875 Congress responded to Californian pressure and passed the Page Act, excluding Asian contract labor and the importation of women engaged in “lewd or immoral purposes” (i.e., prostitution.)

Anti-Chinese sentiment tended to be strongest on the west coast. Between the end of the Civil War and 1882, just under 215,000 people from China had come to the United States, with the majority living and working in the west.¹⁴ Advocates of restriction, echoing the white supremacist politics of Anglo settlers in parts of Australia and Canada, argued that the federal government’s sluggishness in translating anti-Chinese prejudice into law was another example of eastern indifference and further evidence that westerners were not truly in control of their own destinies. They were partly right: calls for restriction were at odds with the diplomatic ambitions of the federal government, which sought greater access to

¹³ Frank P. Sargent quoted in Wyman, *Round-Trip*, 25.

¹⁴ The total number for the period 1866-1882 was 214, 689. Robert Barde, Susan B. Carter and Richard Sutch, “Immigrants, by country of last residence – Asia: 1820–1997,” table Ad136-148 in *Historical Statistics of the United States*.

Chinese markets. Only with sustained lobbying did opponents of Chinese migration secure what they sought - the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act – that prohibited both the further migration of Chinese laborers and granting of citizenship to Chinese immigrants. In practice, the act’s impact on migration from China was modest but, once established, restriction became increasingly deep-rooted and effective. In 1892, congress passed the more aggressive Geary Act, which required all Chinese residents to carry a permit under threat of hard labor or deportation. It also curtailed their rights to testify in court and to *habeas corpus*.

The opportunities and resentments detailed above were most obviously in operation in the northern and western states. The southeast – the region that Republicans were most vexed about integrating (or reintegrating) into the nation – remained relatively isolated from these currents. Southerners struggled to attract in-migration from Europe, not least because a combination of chain migration and industrious recruitment by northern and western employers meant that immigrants knew where they wanted to settle once they had arrived in the United States, and it was not generally in the states of the former Confederacy. In fact, southern states saw out-migration, as laborers sought economic opportunity elsewhere in the United States. The African American “exodusters” who resettled from the South to the Great Plains portended the “great migrations” of the twentieth century. By 1914 income per capita in the south was about half that of the northeast, and the national capital market that had developed in the United States served to move funds from the surplus east to the deficit west, frequently bypassing the south.¹⁵ Cotton ensured that the region retained its antebellum reliance on foreign trade. Paradoxically, the south sat at the heart of the market for this global commodity that, in turn, perpetuated its regional underdevelopment and relatively poor integration into the burgeoning national market. In contrast to the western territories, there was no expropriation of former owners of

¹⁵ David F. Good, “Uneven Development in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparison of the Habsburg Empire and the United States,” *Journal of Economic History*, 46:1 (Mar. 1986): 140, 146.

the land and no program of allotment adopted despite many Republicans' hopes to remake the southern states in the image of the free labor north. The southern Homestead Act, passed in 1866, was designed along much the same lines as its 1862 counterpart, and aimed to allot unoccupied land to African Americans and white loyalists. The poor land offered, limited access to land offices, and a lack of political power on the part of homesteaders explain its meager results

Transatlantic Convergence, Hemispheric Power

The Civil War remade both the American state and the dynamics of domestic politics. Its principal impact on the foreign relations of the Union was in the abolition of slavery and, by extension, the end to the pro-slavery territorial expansionism that had played out in Texas, Northern Mexico, and Central America in the 1840s and 1850s. Not all Republicans were opposed to territorial aggrandizement. William Seward, the most prominent Republican of the 1850s, argued for a capacious vision of the future American republic, in which the "borders of the federal republic... shall be extended so that it shall greet the sun when he touches the tropic, and when he send his glancing rays toward the polar circle, and shall include even distant islands in either ocean."¹⁶ In his most exuberant moments he proclaimed that the future capital of the United States might be Mexico City; that Canadians were building "excellent states" fit to be annexed to the Union; and that the settlements of the Russian northwest would soon become "outposts of my own country."¹⁷

Seward was the most forceful Republican advocate of some form of territorial expansion before

¹⁶ William Seward, "The Destiny of America," speech delivered 14 Sept 1853, in *The Works of William H. Seward*, edited by George Baker (5 vols., Boston, 1884), iv, 122.

¹⁷ William Seward, "Political Equality the National Idea," speech delivered 18 Sept 1860, in *Works*, iv, 332-333.

the Civil War. However, with the exception of the Alaska purchase in 1867, his Reconstruction-era achievements as Secretary of State were underwhelming. His loyalty to the increasingly-unpopular Andrew Johnson left him at odds with most congressional Republicans and limited his domestic political capital. Negotiations with the Colombian government to complete a transisthmian canal succeeded but were rejected by the U.S. Senate after he left office. His schemes for intercontinental telegraph lines were likewise unsuccessful. Despite calling for greater investment in the US consular service, it remained an under-resourced and poorly-staffed operation for much of the rest of the nineteenth century. The long-standing dream of Canadian annexation foundered as Britain's North American subjects turned to confederation and a nascent Canadian nationalism. Attempts to secure naval bases in the Caribbean came to naught due to domestic skepticism, as did his somewhat-cryptic plea for "buttress" republics in the region.¹⁸ Later attempts by the Grant administration to annex Santo Domingo – a project that appealed to some as a means of solving internal conflict over Reconstruction by opening a territory to black out-migration from the former Confederacy and to others as an opportunity to pursue the emancipationist moment overseas – also failed. Stories of congressmen torpedoing the executive's geopolitical plans foreshadowed later struggles over the United States' global role and disagreements about the proper response to the strong currents of globalization. As always, domestic politics determined the trajectory of U.S. foreign relations as much as any single leader's grand strategy.

Seward had greater success with Alaska. The Russian government saw the territory as of limited economic value and not worth the cost of defending in the event of war. In the mid-1850s the Russian and U.S. governments began negotiating about the possibility of transferring ownership, a conversation that was halted by the outbreak of the Civil War. In March 1867 Tsar Alexander II directed his Minister in the United States, Eduard de Stoeckl, to reopen negotiations about a sale. These were concluded within

¹⁸ Seward quoted in Frederick W. Seward, *Reminiscences of a War-Time Statesman and Diplomat, 1830-1915* (New York, 1916), 310-311.

hours of de Stoeckl bringing the matter to Seward's attention, with Seward provisionally committing the United States to paying \$7.2 million for the territory. The Senate comfortably ratified the treaty in early April, though the House took more than a year to approve the necessary funding. For supporters, the treaty offered an opportunity to convince settlers in British Columbia that their future lay with the republic to the south, and to increase U.S. influence in East Asia. In practice Alaska's accession did little to help either; by the end of the century its characterization as "Seward's Folly" was far more common than it had been in 1867. It was hardly a useful blueprint for future expansionists. Less controversial, but also of long-term significance, was the 1867 annexation of the Pacific atoll of Midway. Annexed under the terms of the 1856 Guano Act, which Seward had promoted during his days in the Senate, Midway was of limited use as a coaling station. In the twentieth century, however, it would have great strategic value during the Second World War.

Of more immediate significance was the U.S. embrace of "informal imperialism," the projection of power and pursuit of economic advantage in ways short of full-blown annexation and colonialism. As the example of the British in Latin America made clear, informal imperialism offered influence without the formal costs of administration. The high costs of formal imperialism undoubtedly deterred U.S. expansion in this period. The rapid demobilization of the Union army, drastic cuts to the U.S. navy, and the reunited nation's crippling debt limited the range of options open to those who wanted to see a more aggressive U.S. foreign policy. More viable was the idea of commercial dominance as a tool for projecting post-war U.S. power. As Seward and other Republican secretaries of state like Hamilton Fish (in office 1869-1877) and James Blaine (1881 and 1889-1892) saw it, the United States ought to pursue influence through market penetration and, where necessary, the establishment of protectorates to protect trade routes. This logic was at work in the 1875 Reciprocity Treaty with Hawaii, which brought the island more closely within the economic orbit of the United States, as well as Hamilton Fish's proposed solution to the ongoing Cuban Rebellion, which Fish thought might be resolved via Cuban independence, an indemnity

for Spain, and reciprocal market access between the U.S. and the island. In this, and in President Ulysses S. Grant's statement in May 1870 that "hereafter no territory on this continent shall be regarded as subject to transfer to a European power," American statesmen saw the importance of curtailing European imperial influence in the Americas.¹⁹ The same year, the Senate explicitly linked this principle with the desire to increase U.S. trade - and by extension, influence - in Latin America by noting that the United States was entitled by geography and their commitment to republicanism, to "that proportionate share of the trade of this continent."²⁰ Contemporaries argued that domestic divisions over slavery had compromised efforts to build up U.S. influence in Latin America, where British exports were more than double those from the United States. Slavery gone, Americans ought to address this imbalance.

The clearest attempt to do so came in the pan-American policies of the 1880s and 1890s, most significantly championed by Republican secretary of state James G. Blaine. Blaine was candid about his desire to emulate the successes of the British Empire but combined this with a sizeable dose of public anglophobia. Anxious about British imperial ambition in the western hemisphere, his solution was to coordinate hemispheric cooperation - under the leadership of the United States - in an attempt to insulate the continent from European (and specifically British) influence. Blaine's pan-Americanism was predicated on racialized suspicion of "hot-blooded" population of Spanish descent and an explicit sense that the United States had a role in "rais[ing] the standard of civilization" in Latin America; it was *not* predicated on an ideal of republican solidarity, as similar Latin American-initiated projects had been earlier in the century. Indeed, Blaine's plans exhibited a studied ignorance of the longer tradition of collaborative politics that Latin American states had pursued since the 1820s, which was just as well as

¹⁹ Ulysses S. Grant, special message to the Senate, 31 May 1870, in James D. Richardson, *Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1916), vii, 61.

²⁰ Senate resolution quoted in Grant, special message to the Senate, 14 Jul 1870, available via the American Presidency Project at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=70172>, accessed 8 Apr 2018.

these were often pitched “against the power not only of Europe but also the United States.”²¹ On his agenda at the misnamed “First” International Conference of the American States in 1890 were arbitration; a customs union; improvements in hemispheric transportation and communications; an inter-American bank; and agreement on weights, measures and coinage. Latin American delegates were well aware of Blaine’s condescension. Opposition, most notably from Argentina, and U.S. diplomatic bumbling (only one U.S. delegate spoke Spanish) ensured the Conference’s failure. As the *Chileno* newspaper bluntly put it, the rhetoric of “America for the Americans” meant “South America diplomatically and commercially for the United States.”²²

Despite the limited enthusiasm displayed by many Latin American statesmen, Blaine’s hopes were not entirely misplaced. The United States had been strikingly successful in using its comparative financial and commercial muscle to integrate Mexico into the American informal empire. There, a receptive government had sought American investment in the hope that it would produce rapid economic development and, as president Benito Juárez put it, extend “the bonds of fraternity between the two republics.”²³ In practice this proved a more contentious relationship than Juárez anticipated, as Mexican nationalists contested the political influence that necessarily came with such a large infusion of American capital. By the time of the 1890 pan-American conference, American investment in Mexico was accelerating towards the \$500 million it would reach in 1900. Elsewhere, U.S. capitalists made significant investments in Cuban sugar production, despite Cuba’s ongoing status as a Spanish colony, again demonstrating the gravitational pull of American finance and the American market. As a writer in the *North American Review* boasted in mid-1888 this “species of ownership” conferred “all the advantages...

²¹ The *Monitor Republicano* newspaper, quoted in Michel Gobat, “The Invention of Latin America: a Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race,” *American Historical Review*, 118:5 (Dec. 2013): 1373.

²² Valparaiso’s *Chileno* newspaper, quoted in David Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Trade and Investment: American Economic Expansion in the Hemisphere, 1865-1900* (Columbia, MO, 1998), 238.

²³ Benito Juárez quoted in John Hart, *Empire and Revolution: the Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley, 2002), 46.

without hampering us with the responsibilities springing out of annexation... Mother Britain has taught us how to own Cuba without owning it."²⁴

This use of familial language late in the century contrasted with the sharp Anglo-American antagonism of the post-war years. The Civil War had left a Union that in the immediate post-war years was shot through with pockets of deep anglophobia: in the north, because of the apparent haste with which the British Government recognized the Confederacy as a belligerent power; in the south, because Britain had not done more to support a commercial ally in her pursuit of self-determination. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, Irish-American nationalists, organizing themselves as the Fenian Brotherhood, sought to exploit this anglophobia to gain support for Irish independence. They were also able to draw on a considerable Irish-born population of around 1.8 million, a result of the mass migration that the Famine, economic opportunity, and easier, quicker transportation links produced. The Fenian Brotherhood raised funds, purchased arms, lobbied U.S. politicians, and played on a latent public hibernophilia. Some travelled to Ireland to support revolution and, when arrested, tried to force the State Department to protect their rights as naturalized citizens. They also launched two relatively significant raids into Canada in the spring and summer of 1866, hoping to force the United States into diplomatic conflict - if not more – with Great Britain and to pressure American politicians to make good on any pro-Irish statements they had made.

In practice, their potential to provoke conflict prodded statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic to secure agreements on citizenship, expatriation, and neutrality that provided the legal, racial and cultural groundwork for late-nineteenth century Anglo-American rapprochement. Both countries revised their laws to recognize a right of expatriation. In 1871, they negotiated the Treaty of Washington that provided for arbitration of outstanding Civil War issues, including the question of culpability for the Fenian raids

²⁴ V. Perry Atwell, "Our Hold on Cuba," *North American Review*, 146: 378 (May 1881): 581.

and *Alabama* claims concerning the building of Confederate warships in British shipyards. A year later, at Geneva, the arbitration commission awarded \$15.5 million damages to the United States. The resolution of the *Alabama* Claims and the marginalization of the Fenian issue by the mid-1870s fueled confidence in the power of arbitration and, more generally, of international law. Liberal statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic were increasingly convinced that it offered a feasible alternative to armed confrontation. British Prime Minister William Gladstone, writing in 1870, confidently claimed that “a new law of nations is gradually taking hold of the mind, and coming to sway the practice, of the world,” and that the treaty was “a great honour to the two Anglo-Saxon countries.”²⁵

Transatlantic convergence, then, was produced by emulation and pragmatism. It was also a function of growing similarity. In 1865 the United States joined the United Kingdom as an abolitionist power, and successive reforms in 1832, 1867, and 1884 democratized the British franchise for men. Though these measures still fell short of the mass franchise that existed in the United States, even taking the Jim Crow south into account, British politics came to more closely resemble its American counterpart as the century progressed. Simultaneously, a new transatlantic class of elite liberal thinkers in the final third of the century saw the United States and Great Britain confronting the same processes of modernity with the some of the same attendant anxieties: urbanization and poverty; political corruption; mass culture; and widespread political participation in the absence of mass education. They also confronted a shared “Irish question.” In both countries an Irish-born, mostly Catholic working class population congregated in urban areas, where they were casually conflated with poverty, drunkenness and crime, and frequently racialized as inassimilable by their hosts. This parallel both generated and legitimated a discourse of Anglo-American liberal modernity, beset by irrational and emotional immigrants, and was

²⁵ William Gladstone quoted in Jay Sexton, ‘The United States, the Cuban Rebellion, and the Multilateral Initiative of 1875’ *Diplomatic History*, 30:3 (Jun. 2006): 347; Gladstone to Goldwin Smith, 13 Jun. 1871, in *The Gladstone Diaries*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew (Oxford, 1992), vii, 508.

often expressed in Anglo-Saxonist terms.

These transatlantic liberals' high ambitions of the mid-1870s went unrealized, at least in the short term. International law failed to act as a brake on imperialism in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and sometimes in fact served as an additional instrument in the imperialists' tool kit. More enduring was the racialization evident in talk of two civilized powers settling their differences through negotiation. The language of civilization - and its converse, savagery - was increasingly common among transatlantic intellectuals in this period. This sometimes took the form of shared interest in elite projects of racial classification, including eugenics, and veneration of an idealized Anglo-Saxon community that its boosters claimed was peculiarly imbued with a genius for self-governance and an innate gift for spreading the rule of law, the English language, representative institutions, and Protestantism to the remote corners of the earth. As historians have noted, educated Americans were well versed in the administration of European empires long before the late-century intervention in Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Elsewhere, U.S. promotion of international law found greater traction in Latin America at the end of the century, where attempts to legitimize U.S. hegemony were complemented by international lawyers who sought to co-opt the power of the United States in the service of multilateralism and anti-imperialism.

The language of civilization also framed the most ambitious - but also frustrating - project of this period: the construction of a transisthmian canal. For four decades after the Civil War U.S. statesmen struggled to secure the conditions necessary for its construction under American auspices. They were constrained by their predecessors as, in 1850, the Whig administration had agreed with the British government to forgo unilateral occupation of territory in Central America for the purposes of building a canal. Codified as the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, this was a candid recognition of the limits of U.S. power and the influence wielded by the British in the region. The treaty also declared that any future canal would be built cooperatively. After the Civil War, U.S. statesmen repeatedly tried to escape this commitment. They

were spurred especially by the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, which highlighted new technological capacity, and by an abortive 1878 attempt by a French consortium to construct a canal through Panama. Seward, Grant, Blaine and others made the case that the Clayton-Bulwer treaty had outlived its usefulness and was now impinging on American sovereignty. In 1880 president Rutherford B. Hayes trumpeted that any canal would be “virtually a part of the coast line of the United States”: “no other great power would... fail to assert a rightful control over a work so closely and vitally affecting its interest and welfare.”²⁶ Such bombast masked the fact that there was no consensus in the United States about who might build a canal, who might pay for it, and where construction might be viable. In 1885 an attempt to sidestep the Clayton-Bulwer treaty altogether fell divisions in the Senate; it wasn’t until 1901 that Britain agreed to nullify the treaty, and then only on the proviso that the canal be operated with neutrality. Building the canal ultimately required the support of Panamanian elites, who schemed with the Roosevelt administration to secede from Colombia in late 1903

Finally, ideas of liberal civilization reshaped the global evangelical community and, with it, ideas about humanitarian intervention overseas. In part this involved the gradual secularization and professionalization of humanitarian activity that had previously been a function of evangelical faith. Throughout the nineteenth century, American missionaries had reported back to their home audiences news of famine and humanitarian crises elsewhere. Those missionaries had long worked within the structures of other empires, particularly the British Empire. These humanitarians and their missionary networks produced knowledge for domestic consumption, and they were well integrated, not just into the religious and fundraising worlds on which they relied, but into the broader American population who consumed the artifacts, lectures, books, sermons, and journals that helped shape global imaginations in the United States. Closer global integration allowed for the easier and more distant migration of these

²⁶ Rutherford B. Hayes, special message to the Senate, 8 Mar 1880, available via the American Presidency Project at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=68534>, accessed 8 Apr 2018.

proselytizers, and the speedier communication of news – both sacred and profane – to American audiences.

The establishment and evolution of the American Red Cross, for instance, demonstrates the shifting nature of humanitarian organization. From its foundation in 1881 by Clara Barton to its rebirth as a classic Progressive-era reform institution in the first decade of the twentieth century it drew upon the energies and convictions of religiously-minded individuals, even as the management of the organization itself professionalized. Among evangelicals, ecumenicism frequently trumped sectarianism in charitable fields. Improved communications, more modern advertising methods, including the use of photography, ease of travel, increasing organizational sophistication, and a growing sense that the world was becoming a more connected and integrated place prompted public outpourings of charity for distant peoples. This was evident, for instance, in American responses to Irish and Russian famine in 1880 and 1891-2 respectively, and to Ottoman massacres of Armenian subjects between 1892 and 1896. These drew on this well-established and expanding matrix of internationally-mobile and transnationally-minded missionaries and their reciprocal relationship with mission organizations back in the United States, though of course each was also supported by migrants from Armenia, and Russia, and Ireland in the United States, publicizing this humanitarian work and lobbying for greater state support for it. Here we can appreciate a robust, integrative, and well-resourced agenda for American foreign relations that stood apart from, but also informed, discussions of formal and informal expansion at the end of the nineteenth century. Humanitarian interest neither precluded nor mandated official U.S. imperial engagement, though it was frequently entangled in imperial formations. Early in the nineteenth century, missionaries promoted humanitarian causes and worked within the structures of other empires, particularly that of the British. By the end of the century, humanitarianism was confidently identified by McKinley's administration as a powerful legitimation for anti-imperial intervention against Spain as well as a consequent justification for imperial rule by the United States.

At the time of William McKinley's inauguration in March 1897, the United States was a nation that remained strikingly open to global currents of goods, people, and capital. The 1890 tariff (that McKinley had played a major role in passing) still restricted foreign imports, though various reciprocity agreements were beginning to chip away at its totemic status. The prohibition on Chinese migration remained in force and was increasingly seen as a successful model for restricting the movement of "new immigrants" from Eastern and Southern Europe, but those who proposed such restriction would have to wait another two decades to see their hopes realized. The collapse of the Native American population over the past two generations had been prompted by - and had facilitated - the booming settler population of the West and the relatively successful integration of that region into both the federal republic and the global economy. British - and more generally, European - capital continued to seek profitable outlets in the United States, and increasingly U.S. capital was moving overseas to find returns. Commercial expansion had proved successful in northern Mexico, Cuba, and Hawaii, though the U.S. government rejected the opportunity to annex the latter in 1893, in what seemed at the time to be a turn away from imperialism. Americans experimented with more systematic, complex projects - pan-Americanism, a transisthmian canal, coordinated policies and subsidies to promote American investment overseas, and various annexation schemes. Though these had had mixed success, their limitations hardly prompted a retreat from world politics, as burgeoning interest in international law and transnational humanitarianism indicated. Processes of global integration had profoundly shaped the demography, economy, culture and partisan politics of the post-Civil War Union, and they forged opportunities and constraints when Americans considered the state of their foreign relations. "We have cherished the policy of non-interference in the affairs of foreign governments," McKinley intoned that March afternoon.²⁷ But this didn't mean that the United States had let the world alone, and he well knew it.

²⁷ William McKinley's inaugural address, 4 Mar 1897, available via the American Presidency Project at <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-43>, accessed 19 May 2019.