**Alfred T. Mahan**

Some supporters of imperialism were concerned with national power. This was true of naval officer and military historian, **Alfred T. Mahan**. In an important book titled The Influence of Sea Power upon History, Mahan argued that sea power was key to national greatness. The time had come, he believed, for Americans to pay more attention to becoming a major world power. “Whether they will or not, Americans must now begin to look outward,” Mahan wrote in an article summarizing his views.

To Mahan and his supporters, becoming a world power meant building a strong navy. This would require not only ships, but also well-protected harbors. It would also require naval repair facilities and coaling stations overseas in U.S.- controlled territories like American Samoa.

**Source:** Mahan, A T. The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783. Boston: Little, Brown, 1949. Print.

*“…influence in world affairs requires underlying (basic) military readiness, like the proverbial (well-known) iron hand under the velvet glove.*

*To provide this, three things are needful: First protection of the nation’s chief harbors by fortifications and coast-defense ships, which gives defensive strength...*

*Secondly, naval force, the arm of offensive power, which alone enables a country to extend its influence outward.*

*Thirdly, it should be an inviolable (unbreakable) resolution of our national policy, that no foreign state should henceforth acquire a coaling position (station) within three thousand miles of San Francisco...For fuel is the life of modern naval warfare; it is the food of the ship; without it the modern monsters of the deep lie.*

*…The question is eminently one in which the influence of the government should make itself felt, to build up for the nation a navy which, if not capable of reaching distant countries, shall at least be able to keep clear the chief approaches to its own…. the enemy must be kept not only out of our ports, but far away from our coasts.”*

Mahan’s writings greatly influenced, political leaders of the time such as Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt. When “The Influence of Sea Power on History” was published Roosevelt read it “straight through” and wrote to Mahan that he was convinced it would become “a naval classic.”