

## Political Factors for the Emergence of the United States in Global Affairs

**Excerpt, *The Cycles of American History*, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999**

An alternative hypothesis is that the American empire was produced not by the economic system demanding expansion in order to survive but by the political state demanding expansion in order to feel safe; not by the quest for material prosperity but by the quest for physical security; not by businessmen and farmers seeking private profit but by politicians and military men seeking national power.

The foreign markets interpretation of post-Civil War expansion is ludicrous. The consequential foreign market, then and thereafter, lay in Europe, not in undeveloped areas coveted by political and military men. The markets of Alaska? of Santo Domingo? of the Danish West Indies? of Samoa? of Puerto Rico? of Guam? of Midway? The Open Door historians must be kidding.

American expansion was essentially the product of what Langer called "preclusive imperialism." U.S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge summed up the rationale of preclusive imperialism with perfect clarity. "The great nations," he said, "are rapidly absorbing for their future expansion and their present defense all the waste places of the earth... As one of the great nations of the world, the United States must not fall out of line of march." In short, America needed to meet the competition. "If we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at the hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear," said Theodore Roosevelt, "then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world."

As historian Howard K. Beale has written, "The Roosevelt-Lodge expansionists who took the American people into an imperialist struggle for world power were not primarily concerned with American economic interests around the world. The primary concern of Roosevelt and his fellow-expansionists was power and prestige and the navel strength that would bring power and prestige. They gloried in the thought of American greatness and power that their expansionist policies would create."