



## Is Iraq on the Way to Democracy?

Can Iraq’s religious and ethnic groups overcome decades of distrust and violence to form a united democracy?

One hundred years ago, the modern state of Iraq did not exist. The land it today occupies was part of three outlying provinces of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. During World War I, Great Britain invaded and occupied most of these provinces. By the end of the war, the Ottoman Empire had collapsed. Since the Ottoman Turks were on the losing side of the war, they surrendered control of these provinces to Britain under the authority of the League of Nations. The British were primarily interested in the oil reserves of this area.



With U.S. Marines watching from a rooftop, voters line up in front of a polling place in Fallujah, Iraq, on January 30, 2005. (U.S. Department of Defense)

### A People Divided

The British put the provinces together to serve their strategic and economic interests. The Iraqis, however, were then, as they are now, a people divided by religion and ethnicity. Iraq is mainly inhabited by three major ethnic groups—Sunni Arabs, Shiite Arabs, and Kurds.

Arabs trace their ethnic origins to the desert tribes of Arabia, and Muhammad converted these tribes to Islam in the early 600s. Arabic is the language of the Koran, the sacred book received by Muhammad.

The Sunni Arabs form 20 percent of Iraq’s population, living mainly in several provinces surrounding the city of Baghdad. This group of Muslims calls itself “Sunnis” after the Sunnah, the way of life based on the teachings of Muhammad. Nearly all Muslim nations in the world today follow the Sunni tradition of Islam. Although the Sunni Arabs are a minority in Iraq, they have ruled most of Iraq for centuries.

The Shiite Arabs make up about 60 percent of the Iraqi population. They heavily populate the southern part of Iraq around Basra, Iraq’s second largest city and main port. The south is the major oil production area of the country. In this area more than 1,000 years ago, the

Shiites established their form of Islam after they lost a war over Muhammad’s successor. The Shiites believe only a descendant of Muhammad qualifies as the rightful leader of Islam.

Shiites make up a solid majority of Muslims only in Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain. The Sunni Arab rulers of Iraq have long discriminated against and oppressed the Shiite Arab majority.

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### American Interventions

This edition of *Bill of Rights in Action* looks at three different military interventions of the United States. The first article examines the U.S.’s most recent intervention, Iraq, tracing the history of Iraq for the last 100 years. The second article explores at the acquisition the Panama Canal Zone and the building of the canal. The last article examines the Boxer Rebellion, which ultimately involved U.S. troops.

**Current Issues:** Is Iraq on the Way to Democracy?

**U.S. History:** Roosevelt and the Panama Canal

**World History:** The Boxer Rebellion in China

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The Kurds mostly live in northern Iraq around the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. Composing about 15 percent of Iraq's population, they are a mountain people with their own distinct culture and language. Most are Sunni Muslims, but they are not Arabs. The area they reside in contains an estimated 40 percent of the country's oil reserves.

In 1920, both Sunnis and Shiites revolted against the British occupation. The British quickly put down the revolt, killing thousands by attacking villages from the air.

In setting up a government, Britain favored the Sunni Arab elite, which had administered the Ottoman provinces. In 1921, the British held elections, which the Shiite Arabs boycotted, to install a Sunni Arab king and parliament. British advisors wrote a constitution and occupied key positions in the government.

A few years later, Britain added to Iraq an oil-rich area in the mountainous north, homeland of non-Arab Kurds. In 1932, the League of Nations admitted Iraq. The British ended their military occupation, but they left their advisors in Iraq's government.

### **The Baath Party**

After the British ended their military occupation, violence often erupted. The Sunni-dominated government twice violently put down Shiite rebellions. Sunni military officers attempted several coups. When officers started meeting with German officials during World War II, British troops re-occupied Iraq. After the war, however, they left Iraq for good. Riots and more plots against the monarchy finally ended in 1958 with a military takeover and the murder of the entire royal family.

For a brief period, a Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish military council ruled Iraq. But a struggle for power among Sunni military officers kept the country in turmoil. Then, in 1967, the Arab socialist Baath Party grabbed control of Iraq.

The mainly Sunni Baathists established a government-controlled economy. They also wanted Iraq to be a secular state where religion had little role in political affairs. To hold onto power, the Baathists imprisoned and executed thousands of their opponents.

In the 1970s, the Baathists embarked on an ambitious campaign to modernize Iraq. They ended foreign control of the oil industry and improved health care and education.

Within the the Baath Party, however, Sunni Arabs fought each other for power. In 1979, one of the most ruthless Sunni Baathist leaders, Saddam Hussein, rose to power by jailing, murdering, or executing his opponents. He became Iraq's president and military commander.

### **Saddam Hussein**

That same year, Iraq's neighbor Iran overthrew its monarch and installed a radical Islamist government. Its new Shiite religious and government leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, called for Iraqi Shiites to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Some Shiites rebelled, but Hussein crushed the rebellion. Seeing Iran as a continuing threat to his regime and believing his army far superior to Iran's, Hussein invaded Iran.

The Iran-Iraq War lasted nearly 10 years (the United States supported Iraq). Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and Iranians died. During the conflict, Hussein used chemical weapons against Iran.

Most Shiite Iraqis chose country over religion and fought against the Shiite Iranians. But the Kurds in the north aided Iran. Hussein punished them by ordering chemical weapon attacks against hundreds of Kurdish villages. Iraqi forces demolished thousands of villages and some small cities. Hussein expelled more than 200,000 Kurds from Kirkuk, a city important to Iraq's oil industry, and replaced them with Arab settlers.

The Iran-Iraq War ended in a stalemate. Hussein had borrowed billions of dollars from other countries. One of these countries was Kuwait, a small oil-rich kingdom bordering Iraq on the Persian Gulf. Kuwait insisted on collecting on its loan and pressured Hussein by forcing oil prices lower. This threatened Iraq's oil-financed economy and Hussein's grip on the country.

Iraq had long claimed Kuwait as its own. In August 1990, Hussein sent his armies into Kuwait, annexing it as an Iraqi province. In response, the United States led a military action, approved by the United Nations, to drive Hussein's soldiers out of Kuwait.

After this war, President George H.W. Bush (the current president's father) encouraged Iraqis to overthrow Saddam Hussein. When the Shiite Arabs and Kurds revolted, however, the United States offered no aid. Hussein's Sunni Arab elite military units slaughtered tens of thousands of them.

The United States and its allies then established no-fly zones in the Shiite south and Kurdish north. U.S. and British warplanes protected the Shiites and Kurds from any attacks by Hussein's air force. Because Hussein had few troops in the northern Kurdish areas, the no-fly zones protected the Kurds. But in the south, where Hussein had many troops, he kept persecuting the Shiites. His troops arrested and shot thousands of Shiites. They drained the marshes in southern Iraq destroying the way of life of hundreds of thousands of Shiites.

When Saddam Hussein surrendered at the end of the Gulf War, he had agreed to U.N. inspections to rid Iraq of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. During the 1990s, however, he constantly refused to cooperate with United Nations' inspectors.

The United Nations tried to pressure Hussein to allow the inspections by imposing trade restrictions on what Iraq could import. The pressure failed to persuade him. The restrictions caused great economic hardship for the Iraqi people and led to a decline in their health, especially among children. But Hussein, his family, and close Baathist allies skimmed millions of dollars from oil revenues that were supposed to benefit the Iraqi people.

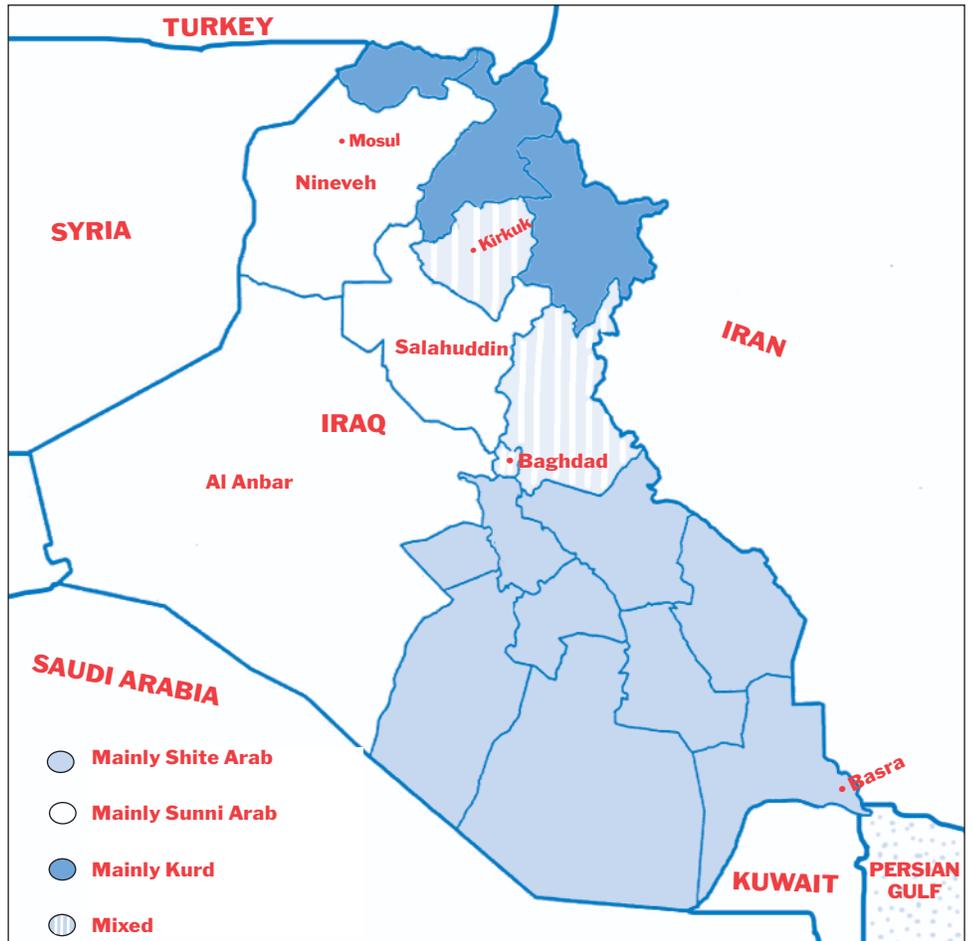
Hussein's continuing obstruction caused U.N. inspectors to withdraw from Iraq in 1998. U.S. intelligence reports, which later proved false, persuaded President George W. Bush that Saddam Hussein was a threat to U.S. security because he was hiding stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction. A group of President Bush's advisors had long argued for the removal of Hussein from power in Iraq. They viewed this as a first step to bring democracy and eliminate Islamist terrorism throughout the Middle East.

President Bush considered getting specific U.N. Security Council approval to invade Iraq, but eventually decided against it. In March 2003, he ordered U.S. military forces to lead a coalition of nations to remove the Iraqi dictator.

### The Occupation

A quick military victory ended Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. But looting and lawlessness erupted, and soon a bloody guerilla insurgency arose. It was centered in the Sunni Arab provinces around Baghdad. The U.S. Congress approved billions of dollars to reconstruct Iraq's economic and social infrastructure. But insurgent violence has stalled some of this effort.

Coalition troops could not guarantee the security of 25 million Iraqis. Some have criticized the American occupation chief, L. Paul Bremer, for disbanding Iraq's army and firing thousands of Baath Party officials. These actions resulted in large numbers of unemployed men whom the insurgency



sometimes recruited. Bremer believed his policy was necessary to rid Iraq of the tight grip the Baath Party held on Iraq.

In June 2004, the American-led occupation government handed over sovereignty (supreme political authority) to an interim Iraqi government chosen by U.S. and U.N. officials to represent Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds. But the interim Iraqi leaders still depended heavily on the 160,000, mostly American, occupation troops to fight the growing insurgent violence.

### Bringing Democracy to Iraq

In his inaugural address in January 2005, President Bush declared, "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands." Bush went on to say that "America will not impose our own style of government on the unwilling," but will help other peoples "attain their own freedom, and make their own way."

The insurgency, however, has blocked progress in Iraq. It is composed mostly of Sunni Iraqis and Baathists who resent their loss of power, oppose the foreign military occupation, and fear Shiite majority rule. In addition, foreign Islamist terrorists have entered the country to add to the violence.

## January 2005 Election

U.S. and U.N. officials set the country's first free election in January 2005. Iraqis elected 275 representatives to a National Assembly. The National Assembly is empowered to select a transitional president, two deputy presidents, a prime minister, and a supreme court. Its most important responsibility, however, is to write a permanent constitution that Iraqis will vote on in October 2005. If the voters approve the constitution, they will vote again in December to choose a permanent government.

In the January 2005 election, Iraqis voted for one of 111 political groups or lists of candidates. Each list represented one or more political parties. The lists won seats in the National Assembly according to the percentage of votes they got in the election. For example, if a list got 40 percent of the total vote, it received 40 percent of the 275 seats (110).

Insurgent violence constantly threatened the election campaign. The insurgents denounced democracy itself since, they said, it put governing into the hands of the people rather than God and Islamic law.

Shiite clerics, however, said it was a religious duty for their followers to vote. Rival Kurdish political parties joined to maximize their vote turnout. But Sunni religious leaders, objecting to an election held during foreign occupation, called for Sunnis to stay home on election day.

Most of the 7,000 candidates on the party lists kept their names secret to avoid assassination. Party campaigning relied heavily on posters pasted on walls and television ads.

There was little public debate among the parties or candidates. A poll taken just before the election by the International Republican Institute indicated that the top three concerns of Iraqis were unemployment, infrastructure problems (like unreliable electric power), and health care. Only 28 percent favored electing religious leaders to political office, while 51 percent said religion and government should remain apart.

The Iraqi government virtually closed down the country on election day, January 30, 2005, banning automobile traffic to prevent car bombings. Iraqi police and soldiers, with U.S. troops nearby, guarded polling stations.

Despite insurgent threats to kill those who voted, Shiite Arabs and Kurds cast ballots in huge numbers. Almost 60 percent of registered voters turned out to vote. The turnout in the northern Kurdish regions averaged 85 percent. In the southern Shiite areas, it averaged 71 percent. Sunni Arab participation was far lower. In the Sunni Arab regions of

Salahuddin, Nineveh, and Al Anbar, the turnout was 29 percent, 17 percent, 2 percent, respectively. The vote for parties broke down as follows:

United Iraqi Alliance (Shiite)	48 percent
Kurdistan Alliance (Kurd)	26 percent
Iraqi List (secular Shiite)	14 percent
Other parties	12 percent

The future of Iraq depends on whether the three major ethnic groups can unite under a new government.

## The Shiite Arab Majority

The big winner in the election was the United Iraqi Alliance, a coalition of diverse Shiite political parties. The most powerful Shiite religious leader in Iraq, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, worked to form the Alliance. It won 48 percent of the vote and 140 of the 275 seats in the National Assembly.

At least two major Alliance parties have close ties and possible financing from Shiite Iran. Some of the parties want Islamic law to dominate Iraq's constitution while others call for a secular government. The parties in the Alliance also disagree on how long foreign troops should remain in the country.

Ayatollah Sistani was not a candidate on the Alliance list, but Shiites deeply respect his views. During the election campaign, Sistani restrained his followers from retaliating against the Sunnis when insurgents tried to provoke a religious war.

The Shiites are positioned to take the leading role in Iraq's government for the first time. But Sistani must hold together the coalition of restless Shiite parties while also addressing the concerns of the Sunnis and Kurds.

The leading candidate for prime minister is Ibrahim Jaafari, leader of the Daawa, an Islamist party. He left the country during most of Hussein's rule, living first in Iran and later in Britain. He is believed to be a moderate and desire Iraqi unity. He has expressed the belief that Islamic law should rule Iraq.

## The Sunni Arab Minority

Sunni Arabs have the most to lose in a democratic Iraq because they will no longer dominate. Even Sunnis who oppose insurgent violence are nervous about Shiite majority rule.

The Sunnis' boycott of the election left them with few seats in the National Assembly. Unless the Shiites decide to involve them, their influence will be limited in writing the all-important constitution.

The Sunnis still have one political advantage. The new constitution will fail if three provinces reject it by a two-thirds vote. Since the Sunnis hold a majority in at least three of Iraq's provinces, the Shiites may have to include them in the government and writing of the constitution.

### The Kurdish Minority

Protected by the “no-fly” zone after the Gulf War, the Kurds in Iraq have held elections and practiced self-government for more than a decade. They favor a secular government, a free market, and greater equality for women. They oppose the imposition of Islamic law on them.

They want a great degree of regional self-rule in the new Iraqi constitution. Many want outright national independence. Many Kurds never accepted their forced attachment to Iraq by the British and have long demanded nationhood. Other Iraqis oppose Kurdish independence. Also opposing it are neighboring Syria, Turkey, and Iran. They fear that their own Kurdish populations would revolt to join a Kurdish nation.

Another point of contention is Kirkuk. The Kurds want to regain control of this city, which was forcibly “Arabized” by Saddam Hussein. This remains a bitter issue between the Kurds and Arabs of Iraq.

Kurds make up the majority in three provinces. This means that, like the Sunnis, they could scuttle the new Iraq constitution if they strongly oppose its provisions.

### The American Exit Strategy

President Bush says American troops should stay until Iraq becomes a democratic and peaceful nation. Much depends on how long it will take to train Iraqi police and soldiers to take over the fight against the insurgency. But the newly elected Iraqi government may press for an earlier withdrawal of foreign troops. The American public, too, may grow impatient if U.S. military deaths mount along with the high financial cost (currently about \$4 billion per month).

### For Discussion and Writing

1. What are the forces pushing Iraq toward unity and a democratic government?
2. What are the forces pushing Iraq away from unity and democracy?
3. What are some scenarios—good and bad—for the future of Iraq? In terms of U.S. interests, what do you think would be the best possible outcome in Iraq? What would be the worst?
4. What do you think should be the U.S.'s exit strategy from Iraq?

### For Further Reading

Anderson, Liam and Stansfield, Gareth. *The Future of Iraq, Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Ghosh, Aparisim. “Can Iraq Rule Itself?” *Time*. 31 Jan. 2005:24-29.

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## A C T I V I T Y

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### The Future of Iraq

In small groups, do the following:

1. Choose one of the following three scenarios and analyze whether or not it is likely to happen. Find at least two pieces of evidence in the article to support your conclusion.
  - A. The Shiite Arab majority will include the Sunni Arab and Kurdish minorities in writing a constitution that will result in a united and democratic Iraqi nation.
  - B. Iraq will erupt into civil war.
  - C. The Iraqi constitution will not be ratified and Iraq will split up into two or three independent nations.
2. What you think will be the most likely scenario for the future of Iraq. It might be one of the three scenarios above or another scenario that you create. Be prepared to participate in a class debate on the most likely future of Iraq.

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## ‘This Great Enterprise’: Theodore Roosevelt and the Panama Canal

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt took advantage of a revolution in Panama to launch the building of an American canal there.

Every day, about 14,000 ships pass between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the Panama Canal. Completed in 1914, the canal system extends about 50 miles across the Isthmus of Panama, the narrow strip of land connecting North and South America. The Panama Canal consists of manmade waterways, lakes, dams, and locks. The locks raise and lower ships so that they can pass through a channel cut through the continental divide. (The continental divide is the high ground from which rivers flow in opposite directions on a continent.)

Americans first became interested in Panama during the California Gold Rush of 1849. Miners walked or rode across the isthmus on mules, avoiding thousands of miles of sailing around Cape Horn, which is at the tip of South America. After the Civil War, the United States expanded its trade relations with Asian countries like China and Japan, sparking interest in an isthmus canal.

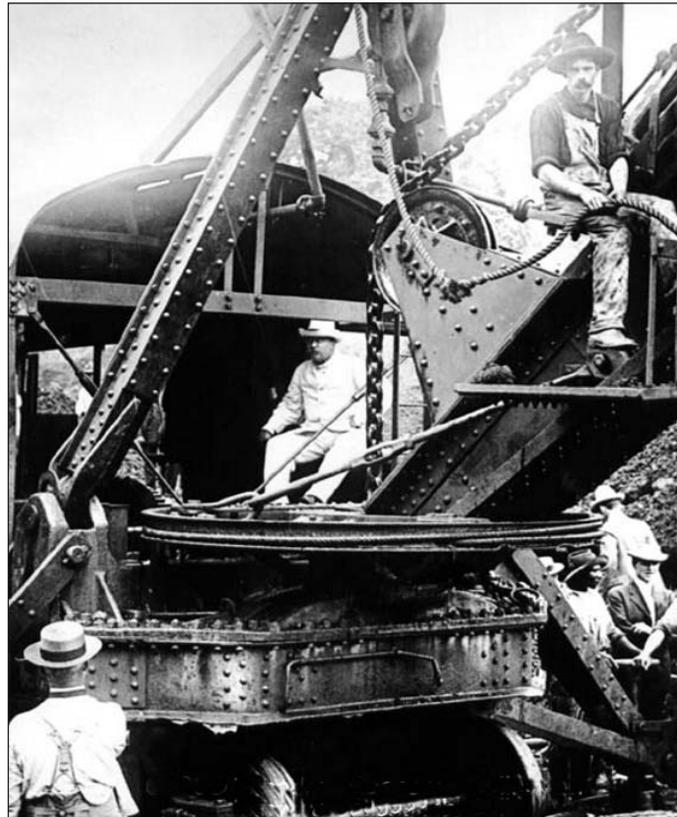
During the 1870s, President Ulysses S. Grant authorized several expeditions to survey possible canal routes across Panama and Nicaragua. But Americans would not be the first to attempt to build an isthmus canal.

### U S H I S T O R Y

#### The French Private Enterprise in Panama

Ferdinand de Lesseps was the most famous canal builder of his time. He conceived the idea and raised the money to construct the enormously successful Suez Canal completed in 1869. This was a sea-level canal dug straight through the sands of Egypt connecting the Mediterranean and Red seas.

In 1875, de Lesseps began promoting a sea-level canal through the Isthmus of Panama. He formed a private company, sold shares of stock to thousands of French investors, and secured rights from Colombia to build and operate a canal across its province of Panama for 99



*President Theodore Roosevelt (dressed all in white) sits on one of the huge steam shovels that is digging the Panama Canal. (Library of Congress).*

years. He announced, “Our work will be easier at Panama than at Suez.”

He failed to recognize the significant differences between building a sea-level canal across a flat sandy desert and one through a jungle blocked by mountains and rivers that flooded during the rainy season. The lowest pass through the continental divide was more than 300 feet above sea level. When asked about the dangers of malaria and yellow fever, de Lesseps dismissed them as inventions of his enemies.

In 1882, massive steam-operated canal dredges began digging the canal in Panama. The French canal company also purchased controlling stock in the American-built Panama Railroad, but failed to make good use of it to dispose of the tons of dirt excavated every day. The powerful Chagres River, with rapids running throughout it, was in the path of the canal, but the engineers never designed plans for a dam to contain it. During the long rainy season (May to December), floods and landslides erased weeks of work.

By 1885, thousands of men were working on the canal. Most were laborers from Jamaica. Many died of malaria and yellow fever.

As terrain, climate, and disease slowed the digging in Panama, investors in Paris began to get nervous. De Lesseps stubbornly resisted those who wanted to build a lock canal, which would have reduced the digging across the continental divide.

Unable to finance the increasing cost of construction, the French canal company finally declared bankruptcy in 1889. Nearly a million shareholders lost their money. French prosecutors tried and convicted De Lesseps for what they called the “greatest fraud in modern times.” The total cost of the French private enterprise in Panama was \$287 million. An estimated 20,000 workers died, mostly from malaria, yellow fever, and other diseases.

### **Panama or Nicaragua?**

The United States had long seen the value of a canal somewhere across Central America for commercial reasons. By the turn of the 20th century, many came to believe that a canal was necessary for American military power.

In 1890, Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, which argued that national greatness depended on supremacy in all oceans. Mahan, a faculty member at the U.S. Naval War College, wanted an isthmus canal to easily move U.S. warships between the Atlantic and Pacific. He made his point when the U.S. warship *Oregon* took 67 days to sail 12,000 miles from San Francisco around Cape Horn to Florida during the Spanish-American War.

After the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt entered the White House. A friend of Mahan, Roosevelt quickly declared his support for an isthmus canal. A commission appointed by McKinley had already recommended a route across Nicaragua.

At this point, a dynamic Frenchman arrived in Washington to revive the ill-fated canal in Panama. Philippe Bunau-Varilla had worked on the French canal project as the chief engineer. He held shares in the reorganized company that owned all the assets of the failed French enterprise in Panama. Bunau-Varilla told Roosevelt that the company would sell its land rights, buildings, equipment, railroad, and 11 miles of

excavated canal for \$40 million. Roosevelt could not pass up this deal.

Bunau-Varilla lobbied heavily for a Congressional bill proposed by Roosevelt, authorizing the U.S. government to construct a canal in Panama. Bunau-Varilla’s strongest argument against a canal in Nicaragua was that there were volcanoes in that country, as shown clearly on its postage stamps. Panama, he pointed out, had no volcanoes.

### **The Panama Revolution**

In 1903, the United States negotiated a treaty with Colombia that granted the United States the right to construct and operate a canal for 100 years within a zone six-miles wide across Panama. Because of uncertainty over its sovereignty (supreme political authority) in the canal zone, Colombia’s senate refused to ratify the treaty.

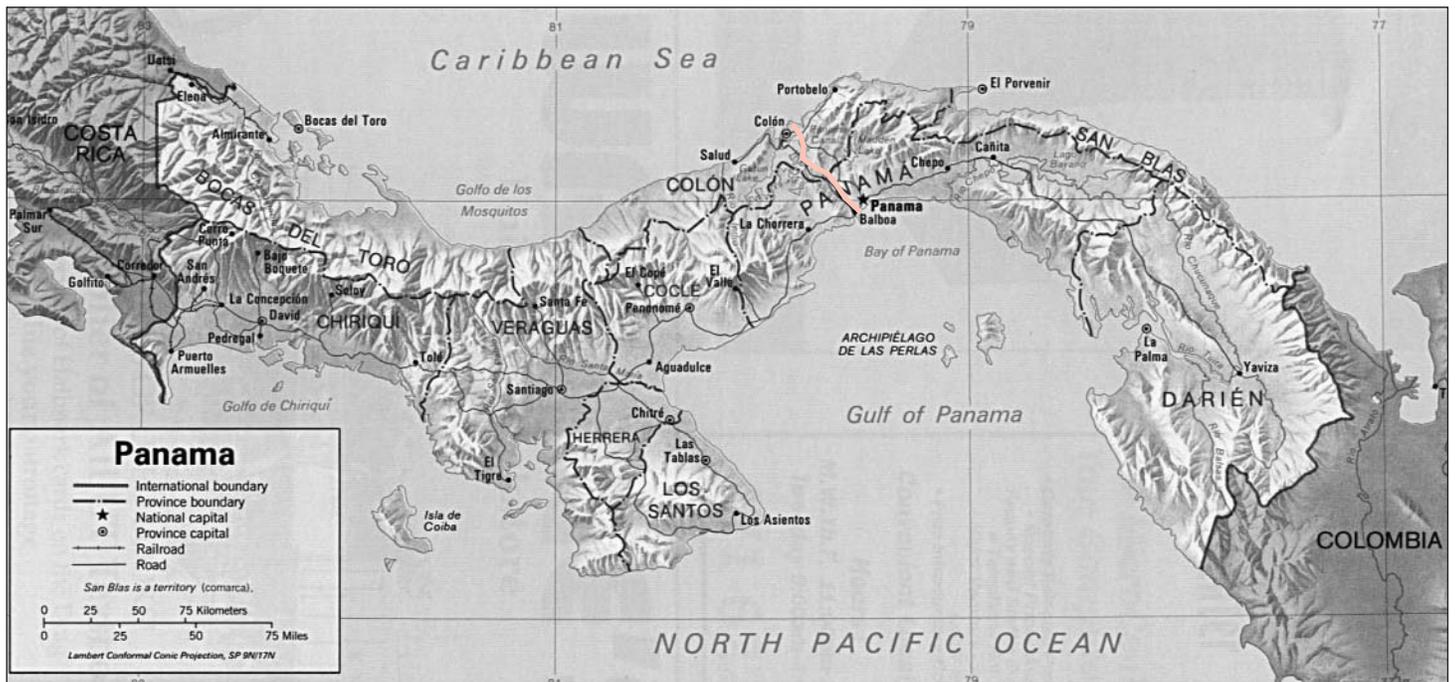
Panama was an isolated province, and its inhabitants often rebelled against the government of Colombia. While the Colombia senate was debating and rejecting the canal treaty with the United States, a group of Panamanians was plotting a revolution. Soon, Bunau-Varilla was conspiring with them.

In October 1903, Bunau-Varilla met with Roosevelt and informed him that a revolution was brewing in Panama. Bunau-Varilla suggested that a revolution, establishing an independent Panama, might be the way to secure the elusive canal treaty. Roosevelt did not express a view on this, but did order U.S. Navy ships in the Caribbean and Pacific to sail nearer to Panama. Bunau-Varilla, however, flatly promised the plotters in Panama that the United States would protect them against Colombia once the revolt began.

On November 2, the U.S. warship *Nashville* with 500 Marines aboard docked at Colon on the Caribbean side of Panama. The appearance of the *Nashville* was all the revolutionaries needed to launch a bloodless takeover of Panama. Colombian troops in Colon soon left after the officer in charge received a bribe advanced by the American superintendent of the Panama Railroad. More U.S. gunboats and Marines soon arrived in Panama. Barely three days after the revolt began, the United States recognized the Republic of Panama.

The revolutionary government appointed Bunau-Varilla to negotiate a canal treaty with the United States in exchange for American protection of the newly independent nation. Roosevelt’s secretary of

(Continued on next page)



state, John Hay, proposed an American-controlled canal zone 10-miles wide across Panama “in perpetuity” (forever).

To secure rapid ratification of the treaty by the U.S. Senate, Bunau-Varilla made the treaty even sweeter for the Americans. He proposed a provision that granted to the United States “all the rights, power, and authority within the zone . . . [as] if it were the sovereign.” In effect, Bunau-Varilla agreed to give away Panama’s sovereignty over its own territory.

Hay and Bunau-Varilla signed the canal treaty on November 18, 1903. It gave the United States the right to construct and operate a canal “in perpetuity” for \$10 million, an annual payment of \$250,000, and a guarantee of Panama’s independence.

No Panamanians had participated in the negotiations. While surprised at the treaty’s provisions, the new government in Panama quickly ratified it, fearing the United States might make another deal with Colombia or even Nicaragua.

The United States also paid the reorganized French canal company \$40 million for its rights and assets in Panama. Bunau-Varilla got \$440,000 of this for his investments in the French company.

### “This Great Enterprise”

President Roosevelt moved rapidly to begin building the Panama Canal, which he called “this great enterprise.” In 1904, U.S. Army Colonel William C. Gorgas, an expert in tropical diseases, was one of the first to

begin work in Panama. He had helped eliminate yellow fever and malaria in Cuba by proving that two different kinds of mosquitoes carried these diseases to humans.

Gorgas discovered in Cuba how to eliminate the mosquitoes by such methods as removing uncovered containers of water and screening houses and hospitals. Unfortunately, few in Washington wanted to spend money on such things.

The first chief engineer in charge of construction, John Wallace, introduced massive steam shovels at the Culebra Cut (now called the Gaillard Cut) where the canal would pass through the continental divide. Everyone still assumed the canal would be at sea level from ocean to ocean.

Wallace soon resigned and a railroad man, John Stevens, replaced him. Stevens began to make heavy use of the Panama Railroad to remove the excavated earth. He also proved to be an ally of Gorgas, giving him all the men and supplies he needed to eradicate mosquitoes. By the end of 1905, Gorgas had conquered yellow fever and malaria in the Canal Zone.

Stevens concluded that digging a sea-level canal was impossible and recommended a lock canal instead. Three locks, or water chambers, on the Atlantic side would raise ships as large as the *Titanic* until they could sail into a huge manmade lake. After the ships sailed 23 miles on the lake and nine more through the Culebra Cut, another set of three locks would lower them back to sea level on the Pacific side. Twin locks would allow

two-way traffic. President Roosevelt approved this lock system in 1906.

Stevens resigned in 1907 because of exhaustion. A U.S. Army engineer, Lt. Col. George W. Goethals, took over. He remained in charge of all canal construction until the completion of the project in 1914.

Goethals directed a workforce of up to 50,000 laborers. About 6,000 white Americans, some with their families, worked as administrators, engineers, and at skilled jobs. They lived in communities with free housing and all the comforts of home. Most of the remaining employees were black laborers and service workers from the Caribbean island of Barbados. Coming to Panama to escape poverty, they lived in racially segregated barracks, squalid tenements, or jungle huts.

By 1909, Goethals was using nearly 70 huge steam shovels to dig the nine-mile long Culebra Cut. He also built a hydroelectric dam on the Chagres River. This dam formed Gatun Lake, which eliminated the need for more than 20 miles of canal construction, and provided a controlled supply of water for the canal and locks. Waterpower and electricity operated the six pairs of locks. Electric engines towed the ships through the lock chambers.

The grand opening of the Panama Canal occurred on August 15, 1914, during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson. There was little fanfare since World War I was erupting in Europe.

Theodore Roosevelt's "great enterprise," completed six months ahead of schedule, cost \$352 million. Shortly before the Panama Canal opened for traffic, President Wilson signed a treaty with Colombia, agreeing to pay \$25 million "to remove all misunderstandings."

About 5,000 canal workers, almost all of them black laborers, died due to disease and accidents. This was a quarter of the death toll of the failed French effort.

Critics of Roosevelt called his intervention in Panama "an act of sordid conquest." He always denied any involvement in the Panama Revolution. After he had left office, however, Roosevelt famously boasted, "I took the Isthmus."

The United States operated the Panama Canal and occupied the Canal Zone for almost 90 years. Then, in 1978, the U.S. Senate ratified a treaty negotiated by President Jimmy Carter that handed over complete ownership and operation of the canal to Panama in 2000.

## For Discussion and Writing

1. What mistakes did the French make that caused the failure of their private enterprise in Panama?
2. Why was the United States interested in an isthmus canal in Central America?
3. Do you think President Roosevelt's intervention in Panama was an "act of sordid conquest"? Explain.

## For Further Reading

McCullough, David. *The Path Between the Seas*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977.

Morris, Edmund. *Theodore Rex*. New York: Random House, 2001.

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# A C T I V I T Y

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## The Next "Great Enterprise"

The history of the United States is filled with "great enterprises": settling the West, building the Panama Canal, the civil rights movement, putting a man on the moon. If you had to choose the next great enterprise of the United States, what would it be?

1. Carry out human space travel to Mars and back
2. Build a national hydrogen fuel infrastructure to phase out gasoline-operated vehicles
3. Find a cure for AIDS
4. Repair and modernize public schools and universities
5. Design a new generation of fast commercial airplanes
6. Organize a "Democracy Corps" to send Americans to countries that want to learn how to create a democratic political system

Procedure:

1. Designate a different area of the classroom for each of the six enterprises.
2. Students choose and move to the enterprise they like the most.
3. Each of the six groups lists three arguments on chart paper in favor of its enterprise.
4. Each group displays its chart and tries to persuade the class that its enterprise is the best one.
5. After all groups have presented, the students may move again to whatever they now believe should be America's next great enterprise.

## The Boxer Rebellion in China

In 1900, a violent anti-foreign uprising of young martial-arts militants called Boxers provoked a war between China and nearly a dozen other nations.

Dynasties of emperors ruled China from about 2000 B.C. until the early 20th century A.D. At the beginning of the 1600s, invaders from Manchuria, the Manchus, swept southward into China and overthrew the Ming Dynasty. The Manchus established their own ruling dynasty in Beijing's "Forbidden City" of palaces and temples.

The Manchus adopted China's traditional form of government and appointed many Chinese as officials. They accepted the traditional view in China that its civilization was the best and other peoples were "barbarians."

The Manchus tripled the size of the Chinese Empire. For a while, government surpluses grew, the arts flourished, and the country prospered. The population tripled in 200 years. After 1800, however, the rapidly increasing population resulted in smaller farm plots and increasing poverty. The

Manchus put down numerous rebellions when floods and droughts caused famine.

European traders had long sought China's tea, silk, and porcelain. During the 1700s, the Manchus opened the door for Britain, other European countries, and the United States to trade with China, but only at the port of Canton (in the south of China).

The Chinese had little desire for European products. So European traders had to pay in silver for Chinese products. The British, seeing their treasury of silver diminish, desperately sought a product that the Chinese populace would buy. They found one in opium, a highly addictive narcotic produced in India. By 1830, the value of opium imports exceeded that of all other goods traded to China.

While the British dominated the opium trade, all the other nations trading at Canton, including the United States, participated in it. Seeing the harm opium caused, the Manchu government tried to outlaw its importation. But the trade was too profitable, both for the foreigners and corrupt Chinese customs officers, and it continued.



*To put down the Boxer Rebellion, U.S. and European troops attacked the Chinese city of Tianjin, driving out Boxers and Chinese troops. (Library of Congress)*

In 1838, the Manchu government threatened to cut off all trade unless the foreign traders at Canton surrendered their opium and posted a bond to assure they would not engage in this traffic in the future. The Americans largely accepted these demands, but the British refused. British traders began using American ships to land their opium along the coast north of Canton. When the Chinese attempted to stop these evasions, Britain declared war on China in 1839.

After easily defeating the Chinese with their warships, the British forced the Manchu government to grant them special trading privileges in four major Chinese ports in addition to Canton. China also handed over to Britain the valuable port city of Hong Kong.

Over the next 20 years, Britain and the other nations trading in China forced the Manchu government to accept formal trade and diplomatic relations. The foreigners also secured immunity from prosecution in Chinese courts for any crimes their citizens committed in China. In addition, the Manchu government agreed to open China to Protestant missionaries. (European Catholics had been converting Chinese to Christianity since the 1500s.) The emperor even decided to legalize the opium trade.

In 1894, Japan invaded and conquered Korea, an ancient Chinese possession. The Japanese victory against China encouraged the European nations to demand more concessions from the Manchu government. These included such things as exclusive trading ports, foreign residential areas, and railroad rights-of-way.

By 1900, the British, French, Italians, Russians, Germans, and Japanese all controlled areas in China called “spheres of influence,” where they monopolized trade. These European countries began talking about dividing China into colonies as had recently been done in parts of Africa.

The United States, which was fighting a war against rebels in the Philippines, was only interested in trade. It did not seek Chinese territory. In 1899, U.S. Secretary of State John Hay argued for an “Open Door Policy” allowing all nations equal access to Chinese ports.

The weakened Manchu government was not sure how to handle the increasingly arrogant European powers in China. Many common Chinese people, however, grew to hate the foreigners.

### **The Anti-Foreign Reaction**

When foreigners introduced changes in China, they often disrupted old patterns of life. For example, the northern province of Shandong was a cotton-growing region. Many women worked at home, spinning yarn and weaving cloth. When British traders sold cheap machine-made cloth, many of these women were put out of work.

Some Chinese welcomed new foreign technology, especially the military, which quickly adopted modern European weapons. Others, however, lost jobs when foreigners introduced railroads and steamboats.

The foreigners demanded concessions of land so they could build railroads from the ports they controlled to markets inland. In many cases, they destroyed villages and graveyards while constructing their rail routes.

Christian missionaries followed the traders. By 1900, about 850 Catholic and 2,800 Protestant missionaries lived in China. Some aggressively protected their new Christian converts. They often put pressure on Manchu government officials to decide legal cases in favor of Chinese Christians, causing bad feelings between them and their non-Christian neighbors.

Germany, a late comer to the scramble for Chinese concessions, sought an excuse to grab its own sphere of influence. In 1897, after a mob in Shandong killed two German Catholic priests, the German navy seized the province’s main port, Qingdao. The Germans forced the Manchu government to sign a 99-year lease for Qingdao along with railroad and mining concessions in Shandong. German missionaries became bolder in converting Chinese. When some Chinese rebelled, German soldiers marched into the countryside to kill the troublemakers and burn their villages.

The Chinese populace grew increasingly bitter. Shandong and other northern provinces around Beijing suffered severe floods followed by a long drought. Unemployment and famine struck. Many people blamed the foreigners for angering the traditional Chinese gods. A rumor began to spread: “Wipe out the foreigners, and the rain will come.”

### **The Boxer Uprising**

The martial arts had long been a folk tradition in China. Those versed in the martial arts fought with their hands and feet along with weapons such as knives and swords. Some fighters formed secret societies and practiced rituals that they believed gave them magical powers. They would write charms on papers, burn them, mix the ashes with water, and drink the potion. After doing this, they believed swords or even guns could not harm them.

In 1898, foreign missionaries in Shandong province demanded that the Manchu government punish Chinese villagers who had been fighting Christian converts for possession of a temple. Hundreds of martial arts fighters responded by attacking the converts.

In another part of Shandong, martial arts fighters known as “spirit boxers” believed they could call on gods to possess their bodies and protect them from harm in battle. Soon they and the other martial arts fighters in Shandong were calling themselves “Boxers United in Harmony.” The Boxers shrewdly began to use a new slogan: “Support the Dynasty, Destroy the Foreigners.”

In 1899, thousands of young men, often poor and unemployed, and even a few women flocked to the Boxer cause against the foreigners. Posters with sayings appeared everywhere in Shandong and throughout northern China. One poster read:

The will of heaven is that the telegraph wires will be cut, then the railways torn up, and then shall the foreign devils be beheaded.

The Boxers first targeted the Chinese Christian converts, whom they called “second devils.” Boxers attacked, looted, and burned their homes and churches. By the spring of 1900, Boxers, wearing red kerchiefs on their heads, streamed northward to Beijing. Along the way, they killed and often mutilated thousands of Chinese Christians. Then the Boxers began attacking missionaries and their families.

### **Division in the Manchu Court**

Tzu Hsi was the mother of the former emperor who died in 1875. Known as the Empress Dowager, Tzu Hsi named her 3-year-old nephew, Kwang Hsu the next emperor. While

he was growing up, Tzu Hsi ruled from the Forbidden City in his name.

After Kwang Hsu became emperor, he made some decisions that angered the conservative Empress Dowager. In 1898, just as the Boxer Uprising was beginning in Shandong, the 26-year-old emperor ordered radical reforms to modernize the Manchu government. Infuriated, Tzu Hsi conspired with a top army general. They placed the emperor under house arrest and revoked his reforms. She resumed her rule in his name.

But the royal court was deeply split over the Boxers. A growing anti-foreign faction argued for the government to make an alliance with the Boxers to rid China of all the “foreign devils.” Some believed that the Boxers possessed magical powers. Others wanted to keep on friendly terms with the foreigners and called for the Chinese army to destroy the Boxers.

Tzu Hsi was torn. She feared that European nations might use the Boxer Uprising as a pretext to restore the emperor and use him as a puppet while they divided China among themselves. She also feared that if she tried to crush the Boxers, they might lead a revolution against the Manchu Dynasty. Finally, she cautiously ordered her armies to put down the Boxers, but not with too much force.

The European, Japanese, and American ambassadors lived with their families in an area of walled embassies called the Legation Quarter just outside the Forbidden City in Beijing. Most of the foreign diplomats knew little about the fears and divisions within the Manchu court. But they were beginning to panic about a possible Boxer massacre of foreigners in Beijing. In early June 1900, they fortified the Legation Quarter and sent for more guards from the port city of Tianjin.

Several hundred guards came, but without the permission of the Manchu government. Tzu Hsi nervously interpreted their arrival as evidence that the foreigners planned to overthrow her. The anti-foreign faction in the Manchu court persuaded Tzu Hsi to order her generals to stop fighting the Boxers.



*Tzu Hsi, the Empress Dowager, ruled in the name of the emperor. She decided to support the Boxers in their attempt to expel foreigners from China. (Library of Congress)*

## The Boxer War

Boxers by the tens of thousands flooded unopposed into Beijing. Chinese army troops joined them in besieging the fortified Legation Quarter.

Believing that the Manchu Court was conspiring with the Boxers to massacre them, the foreign diplomats sent pleas to their home governments for more protection. On June 10, 1900, over 2,000 foreign soldiers, commanded by British Vice Admiral Edward Seymour, left Tianjin by train for the 70-mile trip to Beijing. Learning of Seymour’s advance on the capital, Tzu Hsi believed that the foreigners were about to take over China. She ordered her generals to stop Seymour.

Boxers tore up the railroad tracks and cut telegraph wires in front of and behind Seymour’s troop trains, trapping them. Boxers and units of the Chinese army attacked the foreign troops and slowly drove them overland back toward Tianjin. But Boxers

died in large numbers. When they attacked the foreigners with swords and spears, their magical charms did not protect them from bullets.

Well-armed Chinese troops and thousands of Boxers occupied Tianjin. They attacked the foreign residential area of the city and slaughtered many Chinese Christians. But warships from several European nations and the United States, arrived with thousands of fresh troops at Tianjin’s port.

When the foreigners attacked Tianjin, they drove out the Boxers and Chinese soldiers after fierce fighting. The foreign troops looted Tianjin.

Cut off from telegraph communication with Tianjin, Tzu Hsi did not know what to do. She finally issued an ultimatum to the diplomats in the Legation Quarter to leave Beijing within 24 hours. But the diplomats feared they would all be killed if they left the city.

On June 21, Tzu Hsi received word that foreign troops had assaulted Tianjin. She declared war on the foreign powers in China.

Chinese troops and Boxers attacked the Legation Quarter with firearms and artillery. About 800 civilians and guards from 18 nations, along with 3,000 Chinese Christian refugees, huddled behind barricades and in embassy buildings. In another part of the city, Boxers assaulted a fortified Catholic cathedral, which harbored about 100 Europeans and thousands of Chinese converts.

Back in Tianjin, the foreign powers organized an international military expedition to Beijing. On August 4, about 20,000 Japanese, Russian, British, and American soldiers departed on foot to fight their way to the Chinese capital. A week later, they entered Beijing. Tzu Hsi and her court fled the city.

Although the Legation Quarter and cathedral had both withstood a 55-day siege, about 100 foreigners and many more Chinese Christians had died. Some evidence indicates that the Chinese generals restrained their troops and the Boxers, fearing that a massacre of foreigners in Beijing would bring on terrible vengeance by the foreign nations.

Soldiers, diplomats, and even missionaries started looting Beijing. Troops went on “Boxer hunts” into the countryside where they beheaded many young men—some who were Boxers and many who were not.

In 1901, 11 nations forced representatives of the Manchu government to agree to these provisions of the Boxer Treaty:

- A massive payment of \$333 million (\$4.4 billion in today’s dollars) to compensate the foreign nations for their injuries during the Boxer Uprising and war. (The United States later returned most of its share for the education of Chinese students studying in America.)
- The execution of over 100 Boxer leaders and Chinese officials who aided them.
- The exclusion of any Chinese residents from the Legation Quarter.
- The destruction of Chinese forts outside Tianjin.
- The permanent stationing of foreign troops at various places between Beijing and Tianjin.
- The death penalty for any member of an anti-foreign group like the Boxers.

Despite the harsh terms of the Boxer Treaty, the Manchu Dynasty remained in power, and China avoided being split up. Tzu Hsi returned to the Forbidden City in January 1902. She agreed to some modern reforms, but the Boxer

Uprising and resulting war permanently weakened Manchu rule in China.

Tzu Hsi and the emperor, still under house arrest, both died in 1908. Pu Yi, whom the Empress Dowager had chosen as the next emperor, ruled only until 1911 when a revolution brought down the Manchu Dynasty, the last Chinese dynasty.

### For Discussion and Writing

1. Who were the Boxers? Why did they hate the foreigners?
2. How did Christian missionaries add to anti-foreign feeling among many Chinese?
3. What, if anything, do you think could have prevented the Boxer Rebellion? Explain.

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## A C T I V I T Y

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### A Question of Responsibility and Fairness

Form small groups to discuss the following questions. Then report your conclusions and reasons to the rest of the class:

1. Who was most responsible for the Boxer Uprising and resulting war?
  - Boxers
  - Tzu Hsi and the Manchu Royal Court
  - European nations
  - Christian missionaries
2. Was the Boxer Treaty of 1901 fair? Why or why not?



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# Standards Addressed

**National High School Civics Standard 22: Understands how the world is organized politically into nation-states, how nation-states interact with one another, and issues surrounding U.S. foreign policy.** (1) Understands the significance of principal foreign policies and events in the United States' relations with the world. (9) Understands the current role of the United States in peace-making and peacekeeping.

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 11.9: Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.**

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 10.10: Students analyze instances of nation-building in the contemporary world in at least two of the following regions or countries: the Middle East, Africa, Mexico and other parts of Latin America, and China.** (2) Describe the recent history of the regions, including political divisions and systems, key leaders, religious issues, natural features, resources, and population patterns. (3) Discuss the important trends in the regions today and whether they appear to serve the cause of individual freedom and democracy.

**National High School U.S. History Standard 21: Understands the changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I.** (1) Understands U.S. foreign policy and involvement in foreign countries in the early 20th century (e.g., . . . the U.S. role in the Panama Revolution of 1903).

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 11.4: Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.** (3) Discuss America's role in the Panama Revolution and the building of the Panama Canal.

**National High School World History Standard 36: Understands patterns of global change in the era of Western military and economic dominance from 1800 to 1914.** (13) Understands significant political events in 20th-century China (e.g., reasons for initial Chinese imperial support for the Boxer Rebellion . . .)

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 10.4: Students analyze patterns of global change in the era of New Imperialism in at least two of the following regions or countries: Africa, Southeast Asia, China, India, Latin America, and the Philippines.** (3) Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule.

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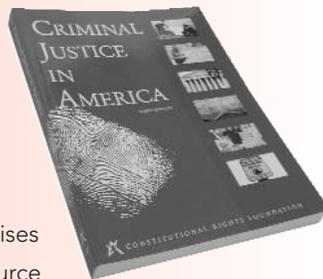
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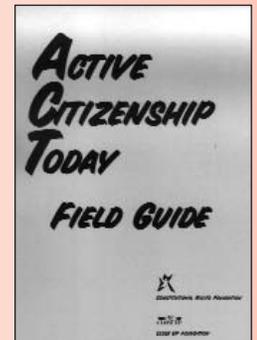
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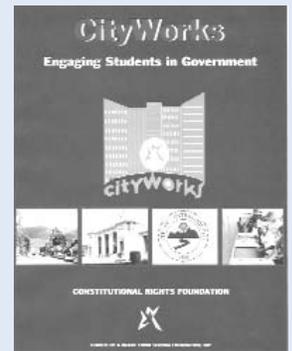
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