Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the United States departed from a George Washington style neutrality and began to assert themselves on the world stage evident in the Pan American Conference, the United States expansionism was actually a departure from past foreign policy only to a small extent and a continuation of past ways to a large extent due to similarities socially, politically, and economically.

Sociably, before the Progressive Era and the age of imperialism, Americans were using their ideas of manifest destiny and Social Darwinism to justify their conquering and conquering of Native American lands. With the Louisiana Purchase, the Homestead Act, and the Dawes Act, Americans continued to assert their dominance and infringe upon these Native Americans’ liberties, preaching a superior Anglo-Saxon culture. These traditions continued into the Progressive Era and were exercised no just on a domestic scale but on an international scale. Following the enclosure of the West, Frederick Jackson Turner issued his Frontier Thesis of American History stressing the importance of the West as a safety valve for America. It emphasized the concept of manifest destiny and was meant to be applied to the age of American imperialism, the necessity America held to continue to expand (Context & Purpose, Doc. 3). Building off of this long-held American concept came another long-held American concept: Christianizing. Missionaries felt it their duty to preach their superior Christian beliefs as well as spread their superior Western technology and medicine to lesser continents and peoples (Context and Purpose, Doc. 2). The concept illustrated in Josiah Strong’s writing emphasized a transformation of Social Darwinism to International Darwinism, an even greater justification for imperial pursuits, consistent with the justification Americans utilized with Native Americans from the colonial era through the nineteenth century. From the Antebellum era to the Progressive Era the concepts of Manifest Destiny and Social Darwinism applied, emphasizing a continuation of United States expansion to a large extent.

Utilizing these social concepts, United States expansion echoed similar political approaches to expansionism as well. Before the American age of imperialism, the Monroe administration of the Era of Good Feelings issued the Monroe Doctrine, stating United States dominance of the Western Hemisphere and warning Europe that the age of colonization was over. Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the United States departed from past foreign policy only to a small extent and a continuation of past ways to a large extent due to similarities socially, politically, and economically.

Sociably, before the Progressive Era and the age of imperialism, Americans were using their ideas of manifest destiny and Social Darwinism to justify their conquering and conquering of Native American lands. With the Louisiana Purchase, the Homestead Act, and the Dawes Act, Americans continued to assert their dominance and infringe upon these Native Americans’ liberties, preaching a superior Anglo-Saxon culture. These traditions continued into the Progressive Era and were exercised no just on a domestic scale but on an international scale. Following the enclosure of the West, Frederick Jackson Turner issued his Frontier Thesis of American History stressing the importance of the West as a safety valve for America. It emphasized the concept of manifest destiny and was meant to be applied to the age of American imperialism, the necessity America held to continue to expand (Context & Purpose, Doc. 3). Building off of this long-held American concept came another long-held American concept: Christianizing. Missionaries felt it their duty to preach their superior Christian beliefs as well as spread their superior Western technology and medicine to lesser continents and peoples (Context and Purpose, Doc. 2). The concept illustrated in Josiah Strong’s writing emphasized a transformation of Social Darwinism to International Darwinism, an even greater justification for imperial pursuits, consistent with the justification Americans utilized with Native Americans from the colonial era through the nineteenth century. From the Antebellum era to the Progressive Era the concepts of Manifest Destiny and Social Darwinism applied, emphasizing a continuation of United States expansion to a large extent.

Utilizing these social concepts, United States expansion echoed similar political approaches to expansionism as well. Before the American age of imperialism, the Monroe administration of the Era of Good Feelings issued the Monroe Doctrine, stating United States dominance of the Western Hemisphere and warning Europe that the age of colonization was over. Although not intended for total conquest, Spanish violation of the Monroe Doctrine prompted U.S. intervention and an eventual acquisition of Cuba as a protectorate, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. The acquisition of these territories and protectorate as a result of war and violation of the Monroe Doctrine is consistent with the emphasis the Monroe administration placed on this doctrine earlier in the Era of Good Feelings, echoing similar political approaches to imperialism. Although militaristic approaches took on new forms in the Progressive Era and age of American imperialism, the same political concepts applied, therefore a small extent a departure in foreign policy. In the midst of this age, the U.S. Navy increased its power with construction of all-steel warships as a result of Alfred T. Mahan’s emphasis on sea power and its effect on the world of imperialism that the U.S. was facing (Context and Purpose, Doc. 4). Theodore Roosevelt, as the assistant general to the Navy, followed this call for naval power and motivated to show off this new beast in the Great White Fleet which toured the world to emphasize the United States political and imperialistic aspirations as well as emphasizing determination to keep the Open Door open in Asia. Although in the early nineteenth century Thomas Jefferson opposed a strong military, he still used the navy to defeat the Barbary pirates in Tripoli. So despite a difference in ideology between Jefferson and Roosevelt, the policy over time was similar to a great extent. Jefferson was reacting to attacks by pirates, and Roosevelt was similarly reacting to an attack on Manila Bay. Roosevelt advocated his Big Stick foreign policy, emphasizing aggressiveness, a strong navel, and a presence on the world stage (Context and Purpose, Doc. 6). Teddy achieved this through the Roosevelt Corollary, Lodge Corollary, and Platt Amendment. These three acts further emphasized American dominance in the Western hemisphere. Although one could argue the imperialism of the Progressive Era was a departure from past time and was a bit extreme, all the actions echoed the same calls from earlier eras.

Therefore, United States expansionism was a continuation of past United States expansionism to a large extend and a departure to a small extent. Similar to the Progressive Era’s economic imperialist attitudes were the motivations of industry in the West post Civil War. During the age of American imperialism, Senators in Congress called for new foreign markets and an expansion of foreign trade especially in the Pacific (Context and Purpose, Doc. 5). This is evident in the Open Door Policy in China enacted by the U.S. during the Progressive Era and was similar to the economic motivations found in the West post Civil War through gold and silver rushes, homesteaders, Indian Wars, and cattle ranching on the Great Plains. Similar motivations rang true through these eras where Manifest Destiny and Anglo-Saxon culture dominated.
How NOT to write the DBQ
A student sample

Prompt:
To what extent was late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century United States expansionism a continuation of past United States expansionism and to what extent was it a departure?

America was not in a state of expansion in the late 1800s and early 1900s, they were just in a state of Manifest Destiny. America annexed Hawaii in 1998 and then went to war with Spain and took Cuba, Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. We never added Puerto Rico as a state but it and Guam are still American territories. American Samoa too which was taken from Germany.

In the late 18th century America fell behind in the world power race due to an increasingly greedy Europe. Document 1 shows European powers salivating over carving up the world for themselves. The United States wanted to compete with them which meant expanding.

Document 2 is an excerpt from Josiah Strong’s Our Country and it uses belief in Social Darwinism to encourage expansion. Anglo-Saxon Americans believed it was their destiny to spread their culture across the earth.

Frederick Jackson Turner wrote the Frontier Thesis explaining how the frontier was a central part of American history. Turner said, “Moving westward, the frontier became more and more American.” And in the next century America would start expanding overseas.

Alfred T. Mahan said, “Is she prepared to acquiesce in any foreign power purchasing from Haiti a naval station on the Windward Passage, through which pass our steamer routes to the Isthmus?” He encouraged expansion with these words including the purchase of Hawaii and building the Panama Canal. Building the canal is another example of American destiny.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge expressed this feeling of destiny when describing how the United States will have China. All of these forces led to the U.S. having the largest navy on earth. Destiny also included spreading freedom.

At the turn of the 18th century the United States had spread all the way around the globe from North America to the Philippines. The peak of the expansion occurred under President Theodore Roosevelt who carried a “big stick” as can bee seen in the political cartoon in document 6.

America further expanded by getting involved in WWI although at first President Wilson said in document 7, “Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality.” Then Germany sank the Lusitania and sent the Zimmerman telegram which caused Americans to once again embrace expansion to spread liberty or as Wilson called it “make the world safe for democracy.”

Therefore the United States was in a state of Manifest Destiny from the 1800s to the 1900s. This is just like when James Monroe sent his Monroe Doctrine.