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PRESIDENT MCKINLEY AND AMERICAN IMPERIALISM: A  
STUDY ON UNITED STATES FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC  
POLICY IN THE PHILIPPINES 1898-1900

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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14. ABSTRACT William McKinley actively sought territorial expansion during his tenure as President of the United States as a means to stimulate the domestic economy and increase American international prestige. This expansion was critical to the continued economic growth of the United States and its emergence as a world power. This report looks at McKinley's expansionist foreign policy and asserts it was tied directly to attaining economic markets and prosperity for the United States and not, as is commonly believed, a moral duty to help our 'little brown brothers.' This foreign policy designed to achieve economic growth conflicted with what many believed were the very foundations of our Constitution, the belief that no man should be ruled by another without consent. America had gained its independence from Great Britain because of the widespread acceptance of this belief and now, a little more than a hundred years later, the country was contemplating colonialism because it was sound business. The anti-imperialist movement and members of McKinley's own party opposed his expansionist plans. The President knew he had to have the unqualified support of the American people to attain his foreign policy objectives. His subsequent domestic policy campaign stressed that a moral duty had fallen upon America's shoulders, not that this form of colonialism would bring in more money. The argument that the acquisition of the Philippines was a duty from God that could not be refused was successful. The American public quickly rallied behind McKinley. The subsequent public pressure on Congress ensured ratification of all subsequent treaties and policies ensuring American annexation of the Philippines and several lesser islands throughout the Pacific. This report describes McKinley's expansionist beliefs, the reasons for those beliefs, and looks at his method of ensuring public support for his expansionist policies. McKinley was not a politician that was inclined to share his political decisions. He was hard to pin down on issues and left very little written material (primarily political speeches and rhetoric) for historical review. The policies of McKinley are therefore left open to interpretation. This report relies on primary source material from key members of McKinley's staff and Congress to establish the foundation of McKinley's administration goals. There is a great deal of secondary literature providing background information and accepted historical interpretation of critical events.
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## *Preface*

This year marks the centennial of the Spanish-American War, the war that launched America onto the international stage as a major actor. American involvement in this war did not become the subject of my research because of the anniversary, however, the development of the country's policies were a far more fascinating subject.

The journey I made to arrive at the decision to write about this topic was, to say the least, a torturous trip. I had initially been interested in the history of the United States' interactions with non-Westphalian state actors, but discovered I could not do justice to this topic in a thirty-page report because the number of non-state actors had really proliferated in recent years. I went back in history to find a time in which I could refine the scope of my study.

The Filipino Insurrection was the perfect war to study the interaction of the United States with Spain, a state actor in the Westphalian sense of the term, and the Filipino Insurrectionists, non-state actors unrecognized by the United States Government.

The more research I conducted the more fascinated I became by President McKinley's motivations to retain all of the Philippines following the defeat of the Spanish Asiatic Squadron in Manila Bay and the skill in which he attained his political objectives. A case study of McKinley failed to provide me with material for my first topic; he completely ignored the insurrectionists. What became so interesting was how he shaped his domestic policy and American public opinion to ensure the success of his

expansionist foreign policy. I decided I wanted to find out more about this remarkable politician and this paper is the result.

McKinley's story would not have been told in this report without the help of several people. It would be unpardonable not to mention them here even though I can never accurately portray the assistance they provided me at every turn. I would first like to acknowledge my research advisor, Major Carl Baner. Carl had to put up with the twists and turns of this report and valiantly attempted to keep me on track. This paper would not have been possible without his help and guidance.

My sincere thanks are extended to Dr. John Beeler of the University of Alabama History Department. Dr. Beeler graciously read this paper and provided feedback at a level of expertise I am fortunate to have received. His common sense approach to writing turns clumsy prose into brilliant composition.

This report's first words would never have been recorded had it not been for the excellent support, assistance, and patience exhibited by the Air University library staff during hours of research. The librarians never faltered in their quest to train me while helping me. I owe them more thanks than I can adequately express.

I must finally acknowledge the support and understanding of my family. They have contributed to this paper in their own way, one that normally entailed sacrifice. If this report had a dedication it would be theirs. Of course, even though the previously mentioned individuals have left their indelible mark on this paper, the contents of this report are entirely my responsibility.

*Abstract*

William McKinley actively sought territorial expansion during his tenure as President of the United States as a means to stimulate the domestic economy and increase American international prestige. This expansion was critical to the continued economic growth of the United States and its emergence as a world power. This report looks at McKinley's expansionist foreign policy and asserts it was tied directly to attaining economic markets and prosperity for the United States and not, as is commonly believed, a moral duty to help our "little brown brothers."<sup>1</sup> This foreign policy designed to achieve economic growth conflicted with what many believed were the very foundations of our Constitution, the belief that no man should be ruled by another without consent. America had gained its independence from Great Britain because of the widespread acceptance of this belief and now, a little more than a hundred years later, the country was contemplating colonialism because it was sound business.

The anti-imperialist movement and members of McKinley's own party opposed his expansionist plans. The President knew he had to have the unqualified support of the American people to attain his foreign policy objectives. His subsequent domestic policy campaign stressed that a moral duty had fallen upon America's shoulders, not that this form of colonialism would bring in more money. The argument that the acquisition of the Philippines was a duty from God that could not be refused was successful. The American public quickly rallied behind McKinley. The subsequent public pressure on

Congress ensured ratification of all subsequent treaties and policies ensuring American annexation of the Philippines and several lesser islands throughout the Pacific.

This report describes McKinley's expansionist beliefs, the reasons for those beliefs, and looks at his method of ensuring public support for his expansionist policies. McKinley was not a politician that was inclined to share his political decisions. He was hard to pin down on issues and left very little written material (primarily political speeches and rhetoric) for historical review. The policies of McKinley are therefore left open to interpretation. This report relies on primary source material from key members of McKinley's staff and Congress to establish the foundation of McKinley's administration goals. There is a great deal of secondary literature providing background information and accepted historical interpretation of critical events.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term little brown brother was commonly used to describe both Filipinos and Cubans and was prevalent in America during the 1890s. Its use was so common it has become the title of a book on American expansion in the Philippines. Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1961). This term reflects the Social Darwinist beliefs, common at that time, that the Anglo-Saxon was the superior culture and race and had "a social law of service" to help our "inferior brothers." Paul Crook, *Darwinism, War, and History* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 96. The prevalence of this view is reinforced by Dewey's private letters, in which he writes that the Filipinos "should be treated kindly, exactly as you would treat children, for they are little else." Phillip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root* (New York, Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1938), 331.



## Chapter 1

### The Politics of War

*They stopped. Their lieutenant replied, 'Halt!' - either derisively or because he was under orders similar to Grayson's. The Filipinos moved up to within fifteen feet. Grayson again yelled, 'Halt!'. "Halt, halt!" snapped the native lieutenant. After a moment's deliberation, Grayson fired and dropped him. When two of the other natives sprang forward, Private Miller killed one and Grayson the other.<sup>1</sup>*

Thus began the Philippine Insurrection, a conflict that would officially last three years and open a century that would find the United States repeatedly entangled in armed struggles on the Asian continent. This engagement of an armed Filipino patrol by Private Grayson marked the beginning of the Philippine Insurrection on February 4, 1899. While the actual event initiating the commencement of open hostilities may be easily determined, the events leading up to this exchange of gunfire and the struggle that follows are harder to establish.

I will argue that President McKinley's administration actively sought territorial expansion for the United States. This expansion was never intended to include the Philippine Islands until they were delivered to President McKinley by Admiral Dewey following the defeat of the Spanish Asian Squadron in the Battle of Manila Bay. The acquisition of these islands forced President McKinley to weigh the Philippines' strategic importance against the ideological principles of American democracy. Territorial expansion was a divisive foreign policy issue in both McKinley's own Republican Party

and in the Congress.<sup>2</sup> McKinley's skillful crafting of American public opinion and domestic policies provided him with the leverage he needed to attain his foreign policy goals.

The divisiveness of this issue was based, in part, in congressional reticence to be associated with colonialism. The United States had fought a war of independence from its own colonial master and had just finished another war over the rights of one man to rule another against his will. It seemed to many members of Congress that imperialism and expansion sacrificed the ideals at the very core of American political and ideological thought.

The American people became the key to McKinley's expansionist goals. His ability to sway public opinion was due in part to his Social Darwinism argument. McKinley argued that America had a God given responsibility to help inferior races. He convinced the American public that our involvement in the Philippines was not colonialism or imperialism based on oppressive European models but a presence in order to help an inferior race of people. The economic advantages and international prestige resulting from American involvement in the Philippines was only a benefit of doing one's duty.

There is little argument over the economic and strategic importance of the Philippines to the United States in 1898. The islands provided access to China, a great market which, at the time, was being exploited by several European nations. The potential of this market was not lost on a President elected to economically revive America which, during the 1896 election, was in the midst of the worst depression the country had yet experienced. The Philippine archipelago also provided the U.S. Navy

with ports and potential coaling stations. These forward bases were the lifeblood of a coal-powered fleet and effectively extended the range of United States military might.

### Notes

. 1 Leon Wolff describing the beginning of the armed insurrection by Filipinos against American rule in his book *Little Brown Brother* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1961), 10

<sup>2</sup> The arguments of Democratic Senator G. G. Vest center around the idea that there were no provisions in our Constitution for the European colonial system, a system based on the belief entire populations of large areas of territory can be held as subjects but never become citizens. The most ardent critic of McKinley's expansionist policies, however, was a Republican. George Frisbie Hoar of Massachusetts was adamantly opposed to expansion and voted against his party during the Spanish-American War treaty ratification. Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1936), 346-48.

## Chapter 2

### The Spanish

*The sleep had lasted for centuries.*

—Jose Rizal

#### **Spanish Occupation and Rule of the Philippines**

To understand America involvement in the Philippines, one must first understand the role the Spanish played in the islands. Spanish involvement dates back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Spanish, under the auspices of Ferdinand Magellan, first came to the Philippines sometime in March 1521. Two thousand warriors under the command of a local village leader named Humabon met Magellan as he landed at Cebu.<sup>1</sup>

Magellan, eager to prove Spain was a powerful ally, attacked the Mactans, Cebuan enemies. The odds certainly did not favor Magellan; his fifty men conducted a sea landing against over 1500 Mactan warriors. Magellan's firearms and European tactics failed to carry the day for the Spanish. The Mactans forced the Spanish contingent off the beach, killing Magellan in the process.<sup>2</sup> The remaining Spaniards, not welcome in the Humabon camp, fled the islands.

The survivors of Magellan's ill fated voyage eventually returned to Spain with tales of new trading partners, lands to colonize, and natives ready for conversion to

Catholicism. Spain returned to the Philippines, during the reign of Phillip II, for a stay that would last virtually uninterrupted for the next 350 years.

### **Filipino Insurgency against the Spanish Occupation**

Spanish rule varied in its harshness over three and half centuries of colonialism. There was a historical pattern of Filipino unrest and violence, which led to ruthless Spanish repression.<sup>3</sup> This pattern of unsuccessful rebellion traces its roots as far back in Filipino history as 1583.

Spanish rule slowly improved during the mid-nineteenth century. A public building program was initiated in 1860 and, later that year, the imperial government allowed native newspapers. Three years later a religiously based public education system was established. Within fourteen years of its inception 1,608 primary schools, with a total enrollment of over 177,000 students, had been created.<sup>4</sup>

Such reforms, however, did not forestall the insurrections. Ironically enough, the improvements begun in 1860 led to the downfall of Spanish rule in the Philippines. The reforms helped to create a new middle class among the Filipinos. This relatively comfortable class found it easier to send their children to Spanish schools. The children were, in turn, the first generation of Filipinos to receive higher education and they became the first Filipino upper class. This generation also furnished the early ideologists of the insurrection against Spain.<sup>5</sup>

The most notable child of this generation was Jose Rizal. Rizal was born June 19, 1861 in Calamba, a town very close to Manila. Rizal was a foreign-trained doctor who had studied in Madrid, Paris, Heidelberg, and Berlin as well as in the Philippines.<sup>6</sup> Rizal's early reputation as a Filipino patriot stemmed from his 200,000-page novel

entitled *Noli Me Tangere*. Although banned by the Spanish, it energized the Filipino population and is commonly referred to as the Philippine *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>7</sup>

Jose Rizal was an inspiration to the Filipino people. He was a reformer, however, not a revolutionary. He believed freedom for the Filipino people could be achieved under Spanish rule.<sup>8</sup> Rizal founded the Liga Filipina, a nationalist order consisting primarily of intellectuals. The Liga Filipina was not a severe threat to Spanish rule, it merely advocated reforms in the colonial system.

The Spaniards, refusing to accept any change to the colonial system that had been in place for centuries, believed Rizal was a threat to their rule. The Liga Filipina movement was never a serious danger to the Spanish primarily because it attracted the class of people that had prospered under Spanish rule. These people were known as the *Ilustrados*. More radical nationalist groups, however, did pose a threat to Spanish authority. The best known of these groups was the *Katipunan*, which advocated outright independence for the Philippines. The *Katipunan* ranks consisted primarily of urban, lower-middle, working class Filipinos.

The *Katipunan* and the *Ilustrados* formed a brief and uneasy alliance during the 1896 revolt. The alliance was destined to fail primarily because it could not overcome the large class distinctions between the two groups. The goals of the two groups and their reasons for participation in the insurrection were too divergent to promote an effective alliance. The *Katipunan* advocated complete overthrow of the Spanish government, equal representation in any subsequent Filipino government, and land reform. These ambitions threatened the very existence of the *Ilustrados* who wanted a

voice in the present Spanish government and retention of their advantages under the current system.<sup>9</sup>

The Spanish response to this revolt was typical. Mass arrests resulted in trials and executions. Property owners had their land confiscated. The Spanish, using the unrest to rid themselves of all potential adversaries, seized the opportunity to arrest Rizal, even though he had refused to cooperate with the Katipunan. Interestingly enough, he had volunteered to serve as a doctor for the Spanish army during military operations against Cuban revolutionaries and was aboard a ship headed to Cuba when he was arrested.

Spanish authorities transported him to Madrid instead of Cuba, where he was arrested and tried for his responsibility in inciting the Filipino uprising.<sup>10</sup> Jose Rizal was executed December 30, 1896.

This entire episode reflected Spain's refusal to compromise. Rizal refused Katipunan assistance to escape the Spanish authorities twice because he did not want to be associated with the independence movement. Yet despite his opposition to independence, the circumstances of his death made Rizal a martyr and in death he became a hero to the movement he had avoided during his life.

Rizal's execution did not end the Filipino revolt but it did pave the way for a new national hero and it was Emilio Aquinaldo who assumed this role. Aquinaldo was born in Cavite province in 1869. He was very prominent in the 1896 revolt raising a 30,000-man army and forming a Central Revolutionary Committee.<sup>11</sup> Aquinaldo emerged as the President of the revolutionary government following a brief power struggle with the founder of the Katipunan movement. This Filipino revolt was the most successful to date. Aquinaldo, however, did not believe the rebellion would be successful because of

division in his own political camp and a lack of funding to sustain the rebellion. He agreed to peace talks with the Spanish Governor General Fernando Prinio de Rivera.

Prinio de Rivera convinced Aquinaldo that defeat of the insurrection was inevitable. Aquinaldo agreed to peace talks and displayed a penchant for accepting verbal agreements, instead of written ones, during negotiations. He twice concluded agreements where “the conditions were not reduced to writing” assuming the negotiator “pledged his honor as an officer and a gentleman to [ensure] their performance.”<sup>12</sup> Both times he claimed the other party did not honor their agreement. This occurred during the Treaty of Biak-na-Bato and would occur later when Aquinaldo was working with American Consul Pratt and Admiral Dewey. Aquinaldo signed the treaty of Biak-na-Bato, without a written record of the treaty terms, on December 14, 1897. Shortly after signing he left the islands in exile bound for Hong Kong ending this phase of the Filipino insurrection.

This is not the final chapter in the history of Filipino revolt against Spain, although the clock was quickly running down on Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines. The peace of Biak-na-Bato was temporary. Filipino insurrectionists renewed fighting shortly after Aquinaldo’s departure.<sup>13</sup> Spain’s focus started to shift, however, from its internal Philippine and Cuban problems to the external threats posed by the United States during the early part of 1898.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> David Bernstein, *The Philippine Story* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1947), 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 33. Magellan’s actual cause of death is disputed in different sources. Bernstein writes that a poisonous arrow killed Magellan. Another account describes how he was hacked to death on the beach by several Mactans. At either rate, this was the end of the first Spanish presence in the Philippines. Humabon killed Magellan’s deputy following the failed attack and chased the Spanish away.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.



## Notes

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> There is little doubt Rizal was an intelligent man, he learned to speak Japanese in one month. Ibid., 55.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>9</sup> Most Ilustrados, including Jose Rizal, rejected the Katipunan movement because it threatened to destroy the Ilustrados way of life. Many Ilustrados assisted the Spanish and, later, the Americans against the insurgent movement. Stuart C. Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1982), 33.

<sup>10</sup> Bernstein, *The Philippine Story*, 58-59.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>13</sup> Several things caused the failure of the truce. The Spanish failed to completely honor the monetary settlement and institute reforms while the Filipinos failed to turn in the agreed number and type of weapons. Aquinaldo eventually used most of the money he received from the settlement to buy weapons prior to his return to the Philippines.

## Chapter 3

### The Road to War

*McKinley never discussed with me his reasons for taking the Philippine Islands. Taft said the United States blundered into colonization. If it was a blunder it was done deliberately.*

—Elihu Root<sup>1</sup>

#### The United States

The last half of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of the United States in international power and foreign relations. The great powers of Europe viewed the United States as a second rate power in 1871, albeit one that could tip the balance of power in their favor if required. The European powers began to court the United States as a result, increasing their diplomatic ties to America as a hedge against future American involvement in European affairs.<sup>2</sup>

America's amazing growth, as measured in the 1880's, was due to large population increases, agricultural production unsurpassed any where in the world, and an excellent transportation net capable of exporting excess crops. America became the world production leader for coal, iron, and lead within the next decade.<sup>3</sup> Congress increased defense spending to protect this new found prosperity, authorizing new coastal fortifications and a new naval fleet consisting of heavily gunned steel warships in the

1880's. This fleet surpassed the Austrian-Hungry and Italian navies and was the equal of Germany's.<sup>4</sup>

Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (1890) dominated American geopolitical thought in the 1890's.<sup>5</sup> Mahan espoused the need for securing command of the sea. Command of the sea allowed uninterrupted flow of commercial shipping. This trade required ships to carry the cargo, a strong navy to protect shipping and overseas bases.<sup>6</sup> This equation also requires permanent trading partners, often provided by colonies during this era. Colonies frequently performed a dual role for their imperial master. They served as an exclusive trading partner and provided overseas bases for the navy. The last allowed steam ships and navies to resupply, coal, and undertake repairs. America had a strong navy but did not have colonies or overseas bases necessary for trade with China, hence the need for expansion.<sup>7</sup>

Expansion did not occur until 1898 but it had been on the minds of politicians and military leaders for several years. General Arthur MacArthur outlined the need for United States expansion and "sovereignty of the Pacific" in his "Chinese Memorandum" published in 1883.<sup>8</sup> Most military leaders believed Far East bases would ensure access to Asian markets and "protect American citizens and American interests."<sup>9</sup> Mahan, an ardent imperialist, was also an enthusiastic social Darwinist and advocated expansion on ideological grounds as well as economic and strategic ones.

Westward expansion actually began in 1867 with Secretary of State William Seward's purchase of Alaska but Congress spent most of the late nineteenth century refusing to ratify treaties granting the United States overseas bases. The Senate rejected

opportunities to annex Hawaii in 1867, 1893, and 1897. The Senate also refused to ratify a treaty providing the United States exclusive basing rights in Samoa in 1872.<sup>10</sup>

McKinley personally desired expansion. He had submitted the third Hawaiian treaty the Senate rejected in 1897 and he quickly accepted the annexation of the Wake Islands in 1898. McKinley favored the annexation of the Samoan Islands and placed the islands under the navy's administration when the Senate finally approved a treaty in 1900.<sup>11</sup> When asked about the intentions of the United States in regards to the Philippines shortly after Dewey's victory he remarked "we should hold on to what we've got."<sup>12</sup>

American foreign policy interests in 1898 were tied to economic considerations. Westward expansion would provide the United States with new markets and new sources of raw materials. In the fall of 1897, Senator Albert Beveridge succinctly argued the economic need for expansion.<sup>13</sup> McKinley wanted access to the Chinese markets and had watched the Europeans position themselves to colonize the country.<sup>14</sup> McKinley was genuinely concerned about access to Chinese markets because of the actions of the European powers.

## **Spain**

The immediate source of dispute between the United States and Spain was halfway around the world from the Far East. America had been sympathetic to the struggles of Spain's colonial subjects in the Caribbean, especially on Cuba, for many years. The tiny island nation was virtually on America's doorstep and the Spanish attempts to crush the Cuban rebels were duly reported in the American press. In 1873-74 the *Virginius* incident almost provoked war between the two countries. This episode involved the Spanish seizure of a United States flagged vessel carrying arms to Cuban insurrectionists.

The Spanish summarily executed the officers and crew of this vessel, most of who were Americans, and the two countries almost went to war until a last minute diplomatic settlement resolved the issue.<sup>15</sup>

Rebellion flared into flame again in the 1890s when Spanish repression reached new levels of brutality and terror. Captain-General Valeriano Weyler became the most notorious Spaniard in Cuba and, to many Americans, seemed to embody all that was wrong with Spanish rule in particular and colonialism in general. Weyler established concentration camps throughout Cuba in 1896.<sup>16</sup> These camps housed the civilian population in squalid conditions in order to undercut public support for the Cuban insurrectionists. Weyler's policies "inflamed the American press, public, pulpit, and government."<sup>17</sup> Both Cleveland and McKinley administrations attempted to use diplomatic means to resolve the situation in Cuba but neither was able to influence Spanish policy or practice.

The situation between the United States and Spain continued to deteriorate. Events cascaded out of control in February 1898. A private letter written by Enrique de Lome, the Spanish Minister to Washington was forwarded to the press by a Cuban sympathizer and published.<sup>18</sup> The contents of this letter referred to McKinley as "weak and a bidder for the admiration of the crowd" and described him as a "would-be politician."<sup>19</sup> This personal attack on the President outraged the American people and undermined their trust in Spain.

The de Lome letter was followed a week later by the sinking of the *USS Maine* in Havana harbor. The explosion of the *Maine* was heralded on paper headlines throughout the country. An investigation of the disaster failed to determine the actual cause of the

*Maine*'s sinking. America's "Yellow Press," however, took every opportunity to blame the Spanish.<sup>20</sup> The United States, it seemed, had reached a point in which war with Spain was inevitable.

McKinley was notably silent concerning these events; he still entertained thoughts of averting a war once things settled down. His hopes of reaching a diplomatic solution were unfulfilled. The events surrounding the de Lome letter and the *Maine* forced McKinley's hand. On April 4, 1898 the President submitted the draft of his war message to Congress, that detailed his reasons for intervention in Cuba. It failed to mention the Philippines at all.<sup>21</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Secretary of War Elihu Root, in a letter to the author, discussing President McKinley's intentions regarding the retention of the Philippine Islands following the Spanish American War. Phillip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1938), 329.

<sup>2</sup> In 1871 the European powers courted the United States in an attempt to gain advantage in dealings with other European powers. Examples of these attempts include negotiations between the United States and Russia during the Russian problems in the Turkish Straits. Russia successfully used the threat of American involvement in other parts of the world to help attain a new strait convention with England. Germany also used talks with the United States to distract England during the Franco-Prussian War. The growing importance of the United States was further evidenced when all of the great European powers except Austria-Hungary had raised their Diplomatic Legations in Washington to Embassies by 1892. Earnest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6-7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> A comprehensive, yet concise, reading on Mahan's naval strategy can be found in *The Art of War in World History*. Mahan, Alfred Thayer. "Naval Strategy." In *The Art of War in World History*. Edited by Gerard Chaliand. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994, 787-807.

<sup>6</sup> May, *Imperial Democracy*, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Challenger discusses the influence of Mahan on U.S. policy and Navy's desire to obtain Subig Bay in the Philippines and Guantanamo Bay Bay in Cuba. Richard D. Challenger, *Admirals, Generals, and American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973), 39, 183.

## Notes

<sup>8</sup> MacArthur bases his “Sovereignty” argument on the needs of the United States to “attain natural growth” and exists as a “commanding and prosperous society.” Brian M. Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Challener, *Admirals, Generals, and American Foreign Policy*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> James C. Bradford, ed., *Crucible of Empire*. (Annapolis, Maryland, Naval Institute Press, 1993), xvi-xvii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

<sup>12</sup> H. Wayne Morgan, *America’s Road to Empire* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), 75.

<sup>13</sup> Excerpt from Beveridge’s speech arguing for expansion, “American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours.” David Bain, *Sitting in Darkness* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), 68.

<sup>14</sup> Much to the chagrin of McKinley and American business concerns, the Europeans were posturing themselves for a run on China. The French had annexed Indochina, the Germans were operating out of Kiaochow Bay, and the Russians had moved into Port Arthur, all during the period 1894-1897. Daniel B. Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to Philippine War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Schenkman, 1972), 67.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge, *The War With Spain* (New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1900), 11.

<sup>16</sup> These camps were known as reconcentration camps. The American press would label American camps in the Philippines serving the same purpose years later the same thing.

<sup>17</sup> Morgan, *America’s Road to Empire*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> This letter not only showed Spanish disdain for McKinley, it also proved Spain was dealing dishonestly with the United States in regards to Cuba. *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> America’s “Yellow Press” has often been credited with responsibility for creating war frenzy in America prior to the Spanish-American War. The most notable “Yellow Press” publishers, William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, went to great lengths to increase circulation, often sensationalizing stories and asserting unfounded accusations. The Maine incident is an example of this. The term “Yellow Press” is so described because of the color of the ink used in drawing the paper’s cartoons.

<sup>21</sup> Morgan, *America’s Road to Empire*, 61.

## Chapter 4

### Hostilities

*Our concern was not for territory or trade or empire, but for the people whose interests and destiny, without our willing it, had been put in our hands*

—William McKinley<sup>1</sup>

*...sending more American products abroad than we ever sent before.*

—William McKinley<sup>2</sup>

### The Spanish-American War

President McKinley demonstrated none of the reticence he displayed following the sinking of the *Maine* once war with Spain had been declared. He believed it was in the best interests of the United States to expand beyond its geographical borders and he was now presented with an opportunity to achieve these goals. McKinley knew this expansion would broaden foreign trade and he quickly annexed both Hawaii and the Wake Islands. He sought an agreement with Nicaragua in Central America in hopes of eventually building a pan-isthmus canal and the purchase of the Dutch West Indies.<sup>3</sup>

The role of the Philippines in achieving these policy objectives came about almost accidentally. Admiral Dewey's victory over the Spanish in Manila Bay had been the fruition of Naval planning since 1895, a plan McKinley knew of and signed into order in April 1898.<sup>4</sup> This plan was designed to defeat the Spanish naval presence in the Pacific



allowing the small American military to focus on the Cuban Theater of operations and not the acquisition of the Philippines as part of America's territorial expansion.

A quaint story is told about McKinley's response to Dewey's victory. McKinley is reported to have had to use a schoolbook map of the orient to follow Dewey's reports because he did not know where the Philippines was located.<sup>5</sup> This story has often been used to support the belief that McKinley did not have designs on the Philippine archipelago. McKinley himself said the acquisition of the Philippines was "a trust we have not sought."<sup>6</sup>

There is literature, however, indicating that McKinley was aware of the Philippines and may have planned on acquiring them along with Hawaii and Guam. Secretary of War Russell A. Alger wrote in his memoirs that McKinley planned to send an army of occupation to the Philippines before Dewey's victory at Manila Bay.<sup>7</sup> McKinley knew of Dewey's mission before the Battle of Manila Bay. Manila papers reported weeks prior to the attack that the Spanish Asiatic Squadron was Dewey's objective.<sup>8</sup> American industry, a great friend to the President, worked in the Philippines for years prior to the Spanish American War and was extremely interested in increasing access to China.

There is also research indicating McKinley had designs on the Philippines from the very start of the war. This research claims McKinley's primary war objective in the Pacific was not the destruction of the Spanish Asiatic Squadron but the acquisition of commercial and military footholds in the Philippines.<sup>9</sup> The dilapidated condition of the Spanish squadron lends credence to this argument; this fleet may have been incapable of conducted operations outside of Philippine waters.

One thing is certain, McKinley could have ordered Dewey to leave the Philippines as soon as word of the destruction of the Spanish fleet was received. Dewey had accomplished the stated objective, securing the American West Coast from raids and attacks by the Spanish Asiatic Squadron.<sup>10</sup>

McKinley opted instead to send an occupation force commanded by General Wesley Merritt, best known for his exploits as a “boy general” in the American Civil War. Merritt arrived in Manila with an American Army of Volunteers specifically recruited for this campaign. These volunteers were not a professional army but had been specifically trained for operations in the Philippines.<sup>11</sup> Merritt quickly lay siege to the city and its Spanish occupation force.

Merritt faced two problems. One of these was the Spanish Garrison and the other Aquinaldo’s Filipino army. Aquinaldo had returned to the Philippines on an U.S. Navy ship to assist in the defeat of the Spanish garrison at Manila. Aquinaldo believed he was fighting for Filipino independence. Merritt felt comfortable with the military problems presented by the Spanish garrison but he did not like the situation in which he found himself regarding Aquinaldo. Merritt did not understand the United States position and he repeatedly sought further guidance from the Secretary of War concerning the insurgent forces beginning as early as May 15, 1898.<sup>12</sup> Merritt finally received an official policy answer in August 1898 when instructions directed that there would be “no joint occupation of Manila” and that the General was “authorized to use whatever means ...are necessary to deny insurgents joint occupation of Manila.”<sup>13</sup>

General Merritt arranged the withdrawal of insurgent forces from Manila and the surrender of the Spanish Garrison. The capitulation of Spanish forces was complete and

the Philippines had been liberated from Spanish control, only to find themselves under the control of the Americans. Merritt transferred command to General Elwell S. Otis August 26, 1898 and departed the Philippines for Paris to participate in the Treaty negotiations with the Spanish.<sup>14</sup> The surrender of the Spanish physically marked the end of the Spanish-American War in the Philippines.

The defeat of the Spanish at Manila created enormous possibilities for the United States. Although there is evidence that suggests the seizure of the Philippines was the result of a policy of regional expansion aimed specifically at acquiring the archipelago, none of it is conclusive.<sup>15</sup> Most likely the acquisition of the Philippines fit into the administration's general policy of expansionism and had not been a specific objective prior to Dewey's victory at Manila Bay. In other words, the Philippines became a target of opportunity and they were, as the old saying goes, just too good for McKinley to pass up. The United States was on the verge of expanding its political and economic influence into Asia and becoming a genuine world power.<sup>16</sup> All McKinley needed to do was determine the fate of the Philippines to realize his foreign policy objectives.

### **The Filipino Insurrection**

The situation between American and Filipino forces continued to deteriorate following the surrender of the Spanish Garrison in Manila. Aquinaldo believed he had been dealt with dishonestly by the American diplomatic corps and military. First Merritt, and then Otis, never really understood the status of Aquinaldo or his army. These problems all stem from the lack of national objectives and foreign policy regarding the Philippines. It would take time for McKinley to determine the Philippines future once it

became his for the taking, but the Filipinos quickly understood the fate of their country would be decided without them.

The insurrection began in February 1899 when Private Grayson fired on the Filipino patrol. The insurrection lasted three years and generally followed three distinct phases. The first of these phases was conventional warfare between the Filipino and American armies. The Filipino army had been soundly defeated during this phase and was forced to transition to guerilla war. This marked the second phase of the struggle and the last one directly influenced by McKinley policy. The third phase was marked by atrocities on both sides as war weariness settled over the American military, politicians, and public. This phase indicates the beginnings of a distinct shift in American public opinion.

Otis had defeated the Filipinos in a conventional war. He promptly declared the insurrection over, changed command with General Arthur MacArthur and returned home amid great fanfare, crowned the nation's newest hero. McKinley was Otis' biggest cheerleader, the timing of the victory declaration was perfect. It fit in perfectly with McKinley's reelection plans and campaign. Expansion had occurred, the military had proven itself effective, and the navy had freedom of movement throughout the Pacific Ocean. Euphoric crowds greeted the President everywhere he went and the anti-imperialists were notably silent. All that remained for the United States was to start reaping the economic rewards that accrue to the colonial master. The problem was that the war was not over. The lull in the fighting was not attributable to the defeat of the Filipinos but to a period of reorganization while Aquinaldo's forces transitioned to a guerilla war.

MacArthur knew the war was not over but had only entered a different phase.<sup>17</sup> His reports fell on deaf ears in Washington, however, until the scope and intensity of conflict increased. Secretary of War Root immediately decreased the tempo of American operations. Reducing combat operations had the immediate effect of decreasing American casualties, which seemed to validate the belief in the United States that the war was over. McKinley may not have purposely misled the American people about the true nature of the situation in the Philippines but he maintained an illusion of peace only periodically broken by isolated insurgent terrorist acts.

Both Aquinaldo and McKinley anxiously awaited the 1900 Presidential elections but with different outcomes in mind. Both men sensed the elections would be a turning point in the war. Aquinaldo issued instructions to his forces to assume a guerilla war at least until the 1900 election when there was a chance a more sympathetic American administration would be voted into office.<sup>18</sup> Aquinaldo may have believed this election was his only chance to secure independence for the Philippines and he was willing to take desperate action. He sent representatives to the United States to approach the Democratic Party and promised a cessation of all hostilities if their candidate, William Jennings Bryan, were elected.<sup>19</sup> The Democrats, fearing Republican charges of treason, refused to see them.

MacArthur, on the other hand, could not conduct any large-scale offensive operations until after the election. United States policy shifted dramatically following McKinley's reelection. MacArthur immediately received orders to eradicate all Filipino resistance to American rule.<sup>20</sup> Root instructed MacArthur to resort to the methods used against American-Indians in the west.<sup>21</sup> The army shifted from the civil-military and

humanitarian assistance role they had been fulfilling, with heavy pre-election press coverage, to one of eradicating the Filipino insurgents.<sup>22</sup> Fresh American troops began to arrive in the islands following the election, eventually totaling more than 70,000 soldiers in December 1900.<sup>23</sup>

MacArthur took several steps to end the insurrection. He transitioned to a war of annihilation based on the campaigns against the American Indians and instituted General Orders 100, declaring part time guerillas no better than spies and pirates, undeserving of prisoner of war status.<sup>24</sup> He declared martial law and took steps to separate the insurgents from their population support bases. As a measure to ensure loyalty to the United States, MacArthur transitioned, as quickly as possible, to Filipino civilian rule once a province was reported pacified.

General Frederick Funston's daring capture of Aquinaldo became a turning point in the insurrection. Aquinaldo quickly, and publicly, recognized United States sovereignty and requested that all insurgents stop fighting. Most insurrection leaders surrendered in the next few months. The bottom had fallen out of the insurrection by the summer of 1901.<sup>25</sup>

McKinley, seeing this as an end to an insurrection that was becoming an embarrassment to his administration, quickly moved to transition control of the islands from a military Governor-General to a civilian authority. This transfer of power would serve as an indication to the American public that the military situation was finally under control. MacArthur knew this transition of power was premature. The insurrection was over in several provinces but continued to rage in isolated districts such as Batangas and Samar. MacArthur's reports once more fell on deaf ears, primarily because they

conflicted with the administration's official version of the situation. The transfer of command authority occurred on July 4, 1901 when MacArthur ceded authority over civil affairs to William H. Taft and military affairs to General Adna Chaffee.<sup>26</sup> Control of the Philippines was now in civilian, not military, hands for the first time since the Americans came to the Philippines.

The war slowly wound down. Filipino resistance ended on Samar in October 1901 and on Batangas in April 1902.<sup>27</sup> The insurrection was finally snuffed out. President Roosevelt officially declared the insurrection over on July 4, 1902 after three and a half years of armed resistance to American rule. Something this fiercely contested does not just stop, however, the fighting, mostly sporadic, continued for ten more years.<sup>28</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from a speech to the Boston Home Market Club, February 16, 1899. William McKinley, *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley* (New York, Doubleday and McClure Co., 1900), 187.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from a speech at Ackley, Iowa. *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis L. Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley* (Lawrence, Kansas, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980), 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 95. Admiral Dewey had actually been "on station" in Hong Kong since late 1897 in preparation for the attack on the Spanish Asiatic Squadron. H. Wayne Morgan, *America's Road to Empire* (New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), 62.

<sup>5</sup> Morgan, *Road to Empire*, 74.

<sup>6</sup> McKinley, *Speeches*, 187.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel B. Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to Philippine War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Schenkman, 1972), 67 and Smith, Ephraim K., "William McKinley's Enduring Legacy: The Historiographical Debate on the Taking of the Philippine Islands." *Crucible of Empire*, Edited by James C. Bradford. (Annapolis, Maryland, Naval Institute Press, 1993), 222.

<sup>8</sup> Stuart C. Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: the American Conquest of the Philippines* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *Enduring Legacy*, 222.

<sup>10</sup> Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1961), 45.

<sup>11</sup> Brian M. Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 14.

## Notes

<sup>12</sup> United States Adjutant Generals Office. *Correspondence Relating to the War With Spain: Including the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands and the China Relief Expedition, April 15, 1898 to July 30, 1902* (Washington: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1993), 645.

<sup>13</sup> Secretary of War response dated August 17, 1898 in reply to General Merritt's request for further guidance on use of force to ensure Filipinos "submit to the authority of the United States." *Ibid.*, 754.

<sup>14</sup> This is indicative of the role American military leaders had in foreign policy development. Both Merritt and Mahan were present at the Paris talks and McKinley placed "great importance" on the advice of Merritt and Dewey. Richard D. Challener, *Admirals, Generals, and American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973), 77, and USAGO, *Correspondence*, 765.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel B. Schirmer, Ephraim K. Smith, and Stuart C. Miller each cite evidence lending credence to the argument McKinley deliberately planned to obtain the Philippines for American use. The vast preponderance of literature, however, tends to support the more traditional view that the Philippines were acquired as part of a general policy of expansion and not as a specific acquisition. Schirmer, *Republic of Empire*, 67; Smith, *Enduring Legacy*, 222; Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Gould, *The Presidency of McKinley*, 96.

<sup>17</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 150.

<sup>18</sup> Schirmer, *Republic or Empire*, 187.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>20</sup> Gould, *The Presidency of McKinley*, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Linn, *The U. S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 23.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>23</sup> This was destined to be the highest American troop presence during the insurrection. *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 161-2, 212.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 174.

<sup>27</sup> Uldarico S. Baclagon, *Philippines Campaigns* (Manila: Graphic House, 1952), 128.

<sup>28</sup> Bain, *Sitting in Darkness*, 386.



## Chapter 5

### **Economic Imperialism or Benevolent Assimilation**

*...demand no more than Luzon, Guam, and Puerto Rico.*

—William McKinley<sup>1</sup>

#### **McKinley's Decision to Retain the Philippines**

Historians have been troubled for years by the lack of information on McKinley's personal opinions regarding the retention of the Philippines. A review of the Library of Congress records yields "practically nothing" written in McKinley's own hand.<sup>2</sup> McKinley gave the illusion he was a reluctant imperialist. He reported that he "didn't want the Philippines" and that they were "a gift from the gods."<sup>3</sup> McKinley did, however, want to expand America's geographical, economical, and ideological boundaries. He was an astute enough politician, however, to know this would require the support of the American people long after the patriotic fever of the Spanish-American War died down.

McKinley believed expansion could only occur with the blessing of the American people. His decision-making processes regarding retention of the islands reflect this belief. McKinley's initial instructions to the Peace Commission he sent to Paris to negotiate an end to the Spanish-American War directed that they "demand no more than Luzon, Guam, and Puerto Rico."<sup>4</sup> McKinley realized American public opinion was

solidly in favor of expansion through the retention of the Philippines. This realization came while he was on a speaking tour shaping American public opinion and campaigning for Republican candidates prior to the 1898 mid-term election. As his tour progressed, his speeches became more blatantly imperialist in nature and continued to receive wild applause.<sup>5</sup> The President had repeatedly stressed the themes of economic necessity and moral duty during his speaking tour and America responded; expansion was a means to help inferior races and spread Christianity.<sup>6</sup> McKinley, knowing he had the support of the American people, changed his instructions to the Peace Commission on October 25, 1898, directing nothing less than retention of all of the islands.

McKinley wanted expansion because of the economic benefits and advantages it would provide America but he faced opposition to his plans from anti-imperialist movements and from members of both the Democratic Party and his own Republican Party. Social Darwinist theories and beliefs prevalent in Anglo-Saxon culture during this period influenced him and he used their arguments to influence the American people. McKinley decided upon expansion for economic reasons and then undertook a program to ensure the American public's enthusiasm for the war carried over into support for expansion. This public support would ensure his Republican dominated, and heretofore sympathetic, Congress would continue to vote for his policies. The Republican Party held the presidency and controlled the Congress in 1898. Many prominent Republicans were staunch anti-expansionists and were opposed to the governing of a country desiring independence, such as the Philippines. This view is congruent with the party's tradition that only 35 years before had fought to end slavery in America and claimed Abraham Lincoln as its most famous member.

## **Economic Imperialism?**

There was widespread belief that the acquisition of the Philippine Islands, Hawaii, and Guam would maintain American Far East interest, unlock the doors to the orient, and allow the United States to tap into the China market.<sup>7</sup>

McKinley believed America should “keep all we get” while fighting the war with Spain and should “keep what we want” once the war was over.<sup>8</sup> There were several reasons why McKinley wanted to keep the Philippines, most of them economic. Several noted Republicans spoke of the commercial value of the Philippines. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge believed “we must on no account let the islands go...we hold the other side of the Pacific and the value to this country is almost beyond imagination.”<sup>9</sup> Senator Albert Beveridge had been arguing for expansion in support of America’s economy since 1897 because “American factories were producing more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume.”<sup>10</sup> McKinley’s Secretary of the Interior and his Attorney General both advised keeping the Philippines for their “commercial value.”<sup>11</sup>

McKinley favored retention of the Philippines primarily because of the economic advantages that would accrue to America. As noted earlier, McKinley had been “profoundly influenced by the European partitioning of China and viewed the Philippines as a possible foothold in the Orient.”<sup>12</sup> This “penetration and, ultimately, the domination of the fabled China market” was the sole American ambition in the Pacific.<sup>13</sup> The Philippines and other expansion acquisitions were means to that end. Lobbying efforts focused on McKinley increased as the Europeans continued their encroachment on China. American businesses wanted better trading facilities and demanded an Open Door policy

allowing unimpeded accesses to the markets. The New York Chamber of Commerce went as far as personally petitioning the President to protect their interests in China.

American economic concerns were decisive factors behind the American war with Spain. There is evidence suggesting that the retention of the Philippines was becoming an economic necessity to the United States if the latter's economic growth were to continue. Increased American productivity and exports worth over 1.2 billion dollars in 1898 made foreign markets extremely important to American businesses.<sup>14</sup> Governmental concerns about the fecundity of the islands are indicated by instructions sent to Dewey that included requirements to report on the archipelago's resources. McKinley ensured his Peace Commission knew his economic concerns about the islands. He included a statement in the directions to his delegation that the United States could not be indifferent to commercial opportunity in the Philippines.<sup>15</sup>

Moorefield Storey asserts that possession of the islands was not "unsought by the fortune of war," as McKinley was fond of proclaiming, but was the product of a war of conquest.<sup>16</sup> The American expansion resulting from the Spanish-American War secured American commercial access to Asian markets and did so without the burdens of more conventional colonial empires.

The financial worth of the Philippines could only be imagined in 1898 but, by 1900, Americans were tallying the returns. The Philippine Islands, Senator H. C. Lodge argued, were advantageous to the American people. The islands provided America a foothold in the east and resulted in increased commerce with China. The Philippine Islands were so lucrative, Lodge stated, that income from them was able to pay for the American civil and military presence there.<sup>17</sup>

Lodge also argued that the Philippines' vast natural resources were virtually untouched and waiting for American industry and knowledge to tap. Hemp, hardwood forests, copper, and coal topped the list of products waiting for American exploitation. As if his case needed strengthening, Lodge referred to the Philippines as an exclusive "market for our products."<sup>18</sup> He discussed the United States trade deficit with the Philippines that had existed in 1896. That deficit had been wiped out; only four years later there was a trade surplus.<sup>19</sup> The economic news was just as good concerning China; exports had risen by 256% during the same period.

This evidence suggests that the Philippines were "acquired to meet the demands of expanding industry and commerce."<sup>20</sup> The steady encroachment on China by European powers appeared to threaten United States' interests. Domestically, the country was in the midst of the worst depression America had yet experienced and McKinley had been elected to lead America out of this depression and into prosperity.<sup>21</sup> One of the roads to prosperity began in the Philippines.

### **Moral Obligation and Social Darwinism**

McKinley clearly wanted expansion for economic reasons but he also believed he had a moral duty to alleviate the suffering in the Philippines. Social Darwinism had helped to form the American public psyche and, indirectly, influenced the role America played in the Philippines. Public opinion, influenced by the press, strongly favored the Spanish-American War partly because the United States had a "social law of service" to inferior races and cultures.<sup>22</sup> This favorable opinion carried over to annexation because McKinley used this same argument to influence the American public.

Social Darwinism was a prevalent social concept throughout Europe and America at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Social Darwinism argued that certain races and cultures were superior to others and these superior races, in a reference to Darwin's survival of the fittest concept, naturally came to rule inferior ones. These attitudes of western superiority were also widely "translated into imperial or militaristic doctrines."<sup>23</sup>

Social Darwinists, based on their own personal beliefs, used their theories to argue either for or against the war. Lester Frank Ward was a prominent American Sociologist and Social Darwinist who argued for war with Spain. He wrote that "racial struggle and war were perfectly normal and healthy conditions" and "just as man has gained dominion over the animal world, so the highest type of man shall gain dominion over all of the lower type of man."<sup>24</sup> Another sociologist, Franklin H. Giddings, justified American expansion for several reasons, all of which are racially motivated. The "Northern Nations" needed tropical possessions as a source for raw materials. These possessions should be administered by western nations because western governments were "socially efficient."<sup>25</sup>

It is interesting to note that this type of racial prejudice was ingrained in American thought and significantly influenced United States foreign policy. Understanding this concept is essential to understanding the thoughts pervading the American populace during America's expansionist period and makes it easier to see how McKinley could convince the American public that the United States had a moral responsibility in the Philippines.<sup>26</sup>

Social Darwinist thought was rampant in the McKinley Administration. The implication that the Filipinos could not govern themselves was a phrase often uttered by

McKinley and his cabinet. Secretary of War Elihu Root insisted Filipinos were incapable of self-government.<sup>27</sup> Secretary of State John Hay also argued retention of the islands based on Filipino incapacity was an “obligation they could not avoid.”<sup>28</sup>

McKinley’s, a President who “led public sentiment quite as much as public sentiment led him,” set out to ensure the American public supported his foreign policy.<sup>29</sup> Shaping foreign policy through American public opinion became increasingly important to McKinley because of growing opposition to his Philippines policy. McKinley had viewed his speaking tour prior to the 1898 mid-term elections as an opportunity to gain the American public’s support for his policies. He would do the same thing during the Spanish-American War Treaty confirmation fight.

McKinley used the public response to his speeches to send messages to Congress that the public was in his corner. He rhetorically asks the public in one of his speeches, “If, following the clear precepts of duty, territory falls to us, and the welfare of an alien people requires our guidance and protection, who will shrink from the responsibility, grave though it may be?”<sup>30</sup> McKinley continued his public affairs campaign for his Philippine policy even after the treaty with Spain was ratified in Congress. In a speech to the Boston Home Market Club he comments on the American commitment in the Philippines, “it is a trust we have not sought; it is a trust from which we will not flinch.”<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly enough, several Filipinos had hoped McKinley would commit America to a policy of involvement in the Philippines. Aquinaldo’s Director of Diplomacy, Pardo de Tavera, recommended to Aquinaldo that he ask McKinley not to abandon the Philippines. Another prominent *Ilustrado*, Florentine Torres, was so concerned with

internal anarchy and European colonial powers that he was convinced that “frank and loyal acceptance of the sovereignty of America” was the best course for his people.<sup>32</sup>

McKinley rarely used economic arguments in his speeches because the Social Darwinist theories worked so well with the public. The need to help our “little brown brothers,” as both the Filipino and Cuban people were known in America, sufficiently sold the President’s foreign policy to the people and it was a policy Congressmen would fail to support it at their own peril. McKinley proclaimed that the sole American purpose in regard to the Philippines was to safeguard “the welfare and happiness and the rights of the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands.”<sup>33</sup>

McKinley’s plan, therefore, was to administer the islands in order to prepare the Philippine nation for self-rule while protecting them from the traditional colonial powers lurking in the wings. McKinley publicly stated that abandonment of the Philippines would result in the islands becoming the “helpless spoil of some other nation.”<sup>34</sup> It became evident to everyone involved that a European power would annex the islands if the United States did not. Root expressed his concern that an American withdrawal would leave the Philippines subject to control by a European power.<sup>35</sup> There is ample reason to believe the Philippines would become the colony of one of the European powers. Dewey wrote that the English, Russian, and German navies maintained a presence after his victory in Manila Bay. Hay, in a conversation with England’s Joseph Chamberlain, learned that Kaiser Wilhelm would have taken “Uncle Sam by the scruff of the neck” at Manila Bay if he only had a bigger fleet.<sup>36</sup>



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> McKinley's original instructions to his Peace Commission concerning Spanish concessions prior to their departure for the Paris Peace Talks. Stuart C. Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1982), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Ephraim K., "William McKinley's Enduring Legacy: The Historiographical Debate on the Taking of the Philippine Islands." In *Crucible of Empire*, Edited by James C. Bradford (Annapolis, Maryland, Naval Institute Press, 1993), 205. Smith is quoting Ernest R. May but fails to provide a citation.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> McKinley, William, *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley: From March 1, 1897 – May 30, 1900* (New York, Doubleday and McClure, 1900), 187-269, and Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Richard D. Challener, *Admirals, Generals, and American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *Enduring Legacy*, 209.

<sup>9</sup> May, *Imperial Democracy*, 245.

<sup>10</sup> David H. Bain, *Sitting in Darkness: Americans in the Philippines* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 68.

<sup>11</sup> May, *Imperial Democracy*, 250-1.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, *Enduring Legacy*, 210.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas McCormick Jr. as quoted by Smith. *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>16</sup> Moorefield Storey and Marcial P. Lichauco, *The Conquest of the Philippines by the United States 1898-1925* (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), v.

<sup>17</sup> Lodge, Henry Cabot, "Speech to the Senate, March 7, 1900", in *American Imperialism in 1898*, edited by Theodore P. Greene (Boston, D.C. Heath and Company, 1955), 73.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> In 1896 the Philippines exported \$4,308,000 worth of goods to America while importing only \$94,000. In 1900 American exports soared to \$20,000,000 while imports also rose to \$9,000,000. *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Enduring Legacy*, 213.

<sup>21</sup> H. Wayne Morgan, *America's Road to Empire* (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), 14.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Crook, *Darwinism, War, and History* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 96.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Lester Frank Ward as quoted by Crook, *Darwinism, War, and History*, 95 .

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> There is an excellent discussion of this theory and its impact on the Spanish-American war in Crook's *Darwinism, War, and History*.

## Notes

<sup>27</sup> Phillip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root* (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1938), 332.

<sup>28</sup> William R. Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay* (Boston, HoughtonMifflin Co., 1915), 198.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, *Enduring Legacy*, 206.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis L. Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley* (Lawrence, Kansas, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980).

<sup>31</sup> William McKinley, *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley from March 1, 1897 to May 30, 1900* (New York, Doubleday and McClure Co., 1900), 187.

<sup>32</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 39.

<sup>33</sup> Gould, *Presidency of McKinley*, 151.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander K. McClure and Charles Norris, *The Authentic Life of William McKinley* (Washington, W.E. Scull, 1901), 277-8.

<sup>35</sup> Jessup, *Root*, 346-8.

<sup>36</sup> Thayer, *John Hay*, 200.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

*We accept the fact that the Philippine Islands are ours today and that we are responsible for them before the world.*

—Henry Cabot Lodge<sup>1</sup>

The decision of the United States to retain the Philippine Islands will continue to be the subject of debate as long as there is discussion about American expansion. One thing all sources of information agree upon is the impotence of Filipinos in determining the fate of their country. The United States recognized Spain as the legitimate authority in the archipelago, not Aquinaldo and his Revolutionary Council.<sup>2</sup> The United States, upon receiving the Philippines from Spain, chose not to treat the Filipinos as legitimate actors. The subsequent interaction between America and the Filipino insurrectionists were the direct result of this policy decision.

Several reasons contributed to McKinley's decisions about the Philippines. The economic incentives and expansionist desires seem to have driven McKinley's foreign policy decisions. McKinley's initial decision to retain only bases for coaling stations did not guarantee economic return from his investment. Coaling stations, in lieu of complete annexation, could have granted the Philippines independence under a United States protectorate, but McKinley had no assurances he could defend the islands in this manner.

The President had repeatedly told the American people they had a moral obligation to help the Filipinos, doing anything else would be shirking their duty which he called a “providence from God.”<sup>3</sup> Whether this help was out of a sense of racial and cultural superiority or out of concern for their fellow man is open to debate. McKinley certainly used this theme to shape American public opinion and gather support for his expansionist foreign policy.

The United States rarely provides humanitarian assistance programs in the face of an armed insurrection unless there is something of vital interest to the country. McKinley believed access to China was in the vital interests of America in 1898 and was willing to fight to ensure that access. American public support was McKinley’s domestic key to ensuring expansion. It was in the interest of this country, and the presidential administration in office, to annex the Philippines. McKinley had actively sought territorial expansion for the United States to develop new markets, sources of raw materials, and stepping-stones to the China market. These economic motivations were the primary reason the United States refused to recognize Emilio Aquinaldo and the Filipino independence dreams.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Senator Lodge addressing the Senate March 7, 1900. Lodge, Henry Cabot, “Speech to the Senate, March 7, 1900”, in *American Imperialism in 1898*, edited by Theodore P. Greene (Boston, D.C. Heath and Company, 1955), 70.

<sup>2</sup> United States Adjutant Generals Office. *Correspondence Relating to the War With Spain: Including the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands and the China Relief Expedition, April 15, 1898 to July 30, 1902* (Washington: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1993), 757.

<sup>3</sup> William McKinley, *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley* (New York, Doubleday and McClure Company, 1900), 187.

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