

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

AN IDENTITY CRISIS: THE DEBATE SURROUNDING THE UNITED STATES OCCUPATION
OF THE PHILIPPINES AFTER THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

IAN CLAGGETT VICKERY

Spring 2011

A thesis proposal
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for baccalaureate degrees
in International Politics, History, and International Studies
with honors in History

Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Daniel Letwin
Associate Professor of History
Thesis Supervisor

Catherine Wanner
Associate Professor of History, Anthropology and
Religious Studies
Honors Adviser

Matthew R. Isham
Post-doctoral Fellow, Richards Civil War Era Center
Lecturer, Department of History and Religious Studies
Faculty Reader

*Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College

Abstract

The end of the 20th century saw dramatic change throughout the globe. As Europe and the West enjoyed an explosion in technological innovation spurred by the second Industrial Revolution, intense rivalry for economic, political, and militaristic power fueled the countries of the continent to use their advances to exploit lands less fortunate across the globe. In their pursuit of raw natural resources to power their expansive empires, the Europeans carved up large chunks of the globes, and subjugated the native inhabitants to work for “King and Country.”

The United States, having successfully healed from its destructive civil war barely 40 years prior, teetered on the edge of jumping into this great scramble for colonies. However, holding it back was a great debate on the nature of its identity. The U.S had always been the great experiment of liberal democracy. It prided itself on the fact that its people were all equal under the law and its government was one of the people, for the people, and by the people. To subjugate another would have violated its doctrine of liberty and justice for all, and it would have been hypocrisy to preach this ideal within its borders, then do the opposite abroad. But, the nation had always been an expansionist nation. Under the banner of Manifest destiny, Americans rolled their covered wagons all the way to the Pacific Ocean from the east, claiming anything their wheels crossed over as their own. Then, in 1898, America launched itself into a war with Spain, quickly defeating the dying Imperial power. From Spain, the U.S received a variety of new territory; the most controversial of it being the Philippine Islands. A debate quickly ensued on what should be done with the newly acquired land.

The debate surrounding the Philippine question on the surface appears to be just a dispute over the proper proceedings of what to do with the seized territory. However, in actuality, it was much more than that. The debate was used as the battleground in which the different visions of America’s future held by its citizens squared off. Instead of a black and white argument - to fully occupy the islands or to leave them in peace- the dispute centered in a world of grey. Every opinion on the situation was backed by an American ideal. For acquisition, against acquisition, for expansionism, against expansionism - every person within the debate felt like the rational for their belief was fully justified by a value that all citizens of the United States held dear. Each one looked to the Philippines as a crucial cog that would determine the future of that value in the United States for the century to come. From political, to economical, to religious and moral, to the United States position as a world power, the Philippines became the issue that Americans used to air their opinions on the past, present, and future of the nation.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
The Spanish American War: The Beginning of a Debate.....	1
A Nation Built on Debate	9
The New Great Debate.....	12
The Political Debate: Invoking the Constitution.....	15
The Economic Debate: Will the Philippines Pay?.....	26
The Moral Debate: Spreading Civilization.....	36
Conclusion.....	48
Bibliography.....	50

The Spanish American War- the Beginning of a Debate

Havana Harbor, February 15th, 1898. The United States battleship, the *USS Maine* had been in the Cuban port for 3 weeks. Sent to protect U.S interests and citizens in the country while its inhabitants were revolting against their long-term colonizer, Spain, the *Maine* had seen little action. The ship was there on standby; just waiting for something to happen that would prompt her crew to intervene in the conflict. Then, without warning, at 9:40 pm, the *Maine* exploded. More than 5 long tons of powder charges for vessel's sixteen inch guns had detonated, obliterating the forward third of the ship.¹ The remaining wreckage of the vessel quickly sank to the bottom of the harbor. The enlisted crew, who were sleeping or resting in their quarters at the front of the ship, suffered the bulk of the casualties. In all, 266 men lost their lives from the aftermath. Only 86 of the crew, 18 of whom were officers, survived.²

Who or what caused this explosion? The United States now faced a crisis. Tensions with Spain were already at an all-time high as reports flooded in from Cuba of atrocities Spain was committing against the people, including the placement of rural civilians into concentration camps. American newspapers, specifically the *New York World*, published by Joseph Pulitzer, and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* used these incidents as fuel for sensational headlines intended to appeal to the public and increase the sales of their papers. These headlines depicted the cruel acts of the Spaniards against the rebels and the prisoners they captured. Little by little, the American public came to abhor Spain. To the chiefly protestant population of the United States, the Catholic Spanish Empire

1 Michael J. Crawford; Mark L. Hayes; Michael D. Sessions. The Spanish–American War : Historical Overview and Select Bibliography. Naval Historical Center, U.S. Department of the Navy. <http://www.history.navy.mil/biblio/biblio7/biblio7a.htm>. Retrieved 15 February 2011

2" USS "Maine" (Navy Historical Center)". History.navy.mil. 17 November 1998. <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-m/maine.htm>.

was a backwards, immoral union built on the backs of enslaved natives and funded with stolen gold.³ Even before the *Maine* explosion, there was a consistent public outcry for the United States to intervene on behalf of the Cubans. The American public increasingly supported the idea of war with Cuba. This made the question of what blew up the *Maine* so pertinent. If the Spanish were somehow at fault for the explosion, then even the most pacifistic public leaders would have a hard time holding back the nation from mobilizing to invade the island.

Despite public outcry denouncing Spain and blaming them for the explosion, most American leaders took the position that the cause of the blast was unknown. Then, the U.S Navy, having conducted an investigation on the matter, issued a report on March 28th that the vessel's powder magazines were ignited from an external explosion, most likely a mine, set off under the ship's hull. Upon hearing this report, the American public demanded war with Spain. Unable to silence the war drums, and also under intense pressure from the opposing Democratic party, President William McKinley had no choice but to intervene militarily in Cuba – despite his misgivings on the situation. On April 11th, McKinley asked congress for permission to send U.S troops to Cuba to end the war there. On April 19th, Congress debated a resolution supporting Cuban independence. An amendment to the resolution, sponsored by Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado, barred the United States from annexing Cuba after the war. This resolution passed demanding that the Spanish leave and granted the President to use as much military force as he thought necessary to help the island country gain its independence from Spain. Soon after, Spain broke off all diplomatic relations and declared war. On April 25th, Congress followed suit and officially began the Spanish-American war.

While the United States focused its military efforts on Cuba, President McKinley also decided

³ Richard L. Kagan, "Prescott's Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (April 1996): 423–46.

to invade and attack other parts of the Spanish empire. In the Caribbean, the United States attacked Puerto Rico. In the Pacific, the American navy assaulted the Spanish colony of the Philippines

The Philippine campaign clearly demonstrated U.S. naval superiority over the Spanish. Under the leadership of Commodore George Dewey, the U.S Navy's Asiatic Squadron trounced the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, capturing the port of Manila on May 1st. The U.S. forces then launched a land assault of the Philippine islands. Just as in Cuba, a native rebellion against the Spanish had been going on for a number of years. The Americans provided important support to the rebels. Commodore Dewey transported Emilio Aguinaldo, the leader of the Filipino revolution which began in 1896, from exile in Hong Kong to the Philippines, in hopes that he would rally more Filipinos against the Spanish colonial rule. Under the illusion that they were fighting for their own independence, the Filipinos collaborated with the Americans willingly. After the combined forces had taken control of most of the island, on June 12th 1898, Aguinaldo proclaimed the independence of the Philippines.

The proclamation was short-lived. On August 13th, U.S. troops, unaware that a cease fire had been declared between Spain and the United States the day before, took the city of Manila from the Spanish. Despite their previous partnership, the Americans turned their back on the Filipinos and prevented their soldiers from entering into the captured city. This sparked a great distrust between the Filipinos and the Americans, which would ultimately worsen upon the news that the U.S purchased the rights to the Philippines from the Spanish in the Treaty of Paris that ended the war, effectively annulling Aguinaldo's declaration of independence.

Having won the war in stunning fashion in just 118 days, the United States now had to decide what to do with the spoils of victory. Of the new acquired territories from Spain, the Philippines presented the most logistical problems. Foremost, some Filipino rebel groups felt like they had thrown off the yoke of one imperialist power only to be yoked by another. They waged guerrilla warfare

against the American occupation. This new rebellion, which would be known as the U.S-Philippine war, would last three years and claim over 4, 000 U.S soldiers and nearly 200,000 Filipino rebels and civilians. Underlying the rebellion was the absence of any resolution, such as existed for Cuba, stating the United States intended to grant the Philippines their independence after the conclusion of the war. There was no clear time table set for how long the U.S would be in the islands – or even what the country's role would be in their development. Would the U.S annex them? Would it leave them to construct their own republic? The subsequent debate on the matter would define the United States foreign policy as it sought to establish its position as an emerging power on the global stage.

The timing of the war in the history of the United States and the world as a whole underscored the importance of this debate. For the first time in its history, the United States was looking to exert its power and influence outside of the North American continent. For centuries before, mainly European powers had dominated the world. Many in the United States wanted to join their ranks as an imperial power, and become a player in international affairs. Public opinion was far from unanimous, however. Some strongly opposed the idea of a new-found U.S. imperialism that would subjugate and oppress native populations in the same manner that the Europeans had done for centuries. In particular, some key figures of the Democratic Party took the stance that the U.S could not and should not hold colonies, and stood in strong opposition to the Republicans led by President McKinley and Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, who viewed direct involvement in foreign lands as vital to the success of the nation.

Many historians look back on this debate as an event rooted in the prominent issues and philosophies of the turn-of-the-century United States. However, there is no unanimous agreement over which one of these prominent issues presented itself at the foreground of this debate. The historiography is full of unique interpretations by different historians on what is to be considered centerpiece of the discourse – the driving force behind the reasons for or against the annexation of the

Philippines.

First, historian Gail Bederman, in her essay entitled “Gendering Imperialism: Theodore Roosevelt's Quest for Manhood and Empire”,⁴ makes the claim that it was Roosevelt’s quest for his nation to become more “manly” and “powerful” that drove a key part of the push for imperialism. At the beginning of the 19th century, politics and therefore, political power, was defined by its masculinity. Because women did not have the right to vote in the United States, the political leadership was a patriarchy, full of testosterone and championed by Theodore Roosevelt, the so-called “Cowboy of the Dakotas”, a name which, despite his New York origins, he gained from his days on the frontier. Roosevelt, according to Bederman, believed that the United States could only be great if it embraced what he called “the strenuous life” - where men would be “vile, vigorous, and manly”, and rejected “over-civilized decadence.” Likewise, the United States' foreign policy needed to reflect this “strenuous life.” The country must not reject its duty to civilize the savages but had to embrace it. Bederman pointed out that Roosevelt thought that “slothful men who lacked the “desire and power” to strive in the world were despicable and unmanly.” The only way the United States could ever achieve dominance on the global stage was to embrace an aggressive foreign policy and “big stick” diplomacy in which it would back up its interests abroad with the power of a large military. Ultimately, according to Bederman, the Philippine debate, and in extension the debate on American expansion was a black and white issue for Theodore Roosevelt and his supporters. Either American men were to embrace their “manly task” and intervene in the islands or they were to back down and become emasculated and irrelevant. There were no other options.

While Bederman focuses mainly on national masculinity being a central part of the expansionist push, another historian, Nell Irvin Painter, highlights another issue that was vital to both sides of the

⁴ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A cultural History of Gender and Race in the U.S., 1880-1917*. University of Chicago Press. 1995.

debate: race. In a chapter from her book *Standing at Armageddon*, she concentrates chiefly on the racial factors behind the discourse over the American occupation of the islands. On both fronts— for annexation and against – there was a central motivation due to inherent differences that they viewed between the white Anglo-Saxon American and the non-white Filipino. Inspiring the Republicans and their supporters – those pressing for occupation – was the idea that it was the duty of the white man, who was blessed by God in superior attributes, to spread civilization to the races less fortunate. Likewise, some of the Democrats opposing annexation cited the same inferiority of the other races as reasons for their proposed action. However, instead of viewing these perceived inferiorities as a reason to stay and help the natives, it was actually a reason not to become involved in the islands at all. Painter cites the views of white southern Democrats, like Benjamin Tillman, to support this belief. She states that, “he likened the Afro-Americans in the South to the Polynesians in Hawaii and Malays in the Philippines on what he called racial grounds: Afro-Americans, Polynesians, and Malays all had darker skins than white Americans, and “God Almighty made them inferior and lacking in moral fiber” She goes on to mention that the rationale behind their opposition to annexation of either the Hawaiian islands, which were also being debated at the time, or the Philippines was that “for most white southern Democrats, annexation of 10,000,000 or so nonwhites made no sense when white Americans already had their hands full with 8,000,000 blacks in the South.”⁵ Ultimately, according to Painter, the race issues present in the United States at the time were a large driving force behind some of opinions toward the country’s role abroad.

A third perspective on the debate over the Philippines comes from Jackson Lears. In a chapter from his book, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*, Lears identifies the discourse over annexation centered on a Republican push for what he calls “national regeneration”. This regeneration was attached to a personified view of the state, championed by Republicans like

⁵ Nell Irvin Painter. *Standing at Armageddon: the United States, 1877-1919*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987. pp. 161

Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt. Much like an individual, the state too had to express certain qualities to rise above its competition and become great. Among these qualities were moral and physical courage, strength, and endurance. Lears finds this thought centered in the rhetoric of both these politicians. He cites Lodge, “the athlete does not win his race by sitting habitually in an armchair. The pioneer does not open up new regions to his fellow men by staying in warm shelter behind city walls.”⁶ The nation had a responsibility in the Philippines, and consequently, the health – the so called regeneration – of the country depended on the character that the United States showed with its actions in its new acquired territory. If the nation did not fulfill its duty abroad, then it would eventually be ousted by other, stronger nations that would.

Furthermore, Lears characterizes the anti-imperialists argument as being “a refusal of euphemism, a realism tempered by ethical concerns about the corrupting effects of imperial power on both the rulers and the ruled.”⁷ They saw through the rhetoric of the Republicans, able to recognize “the difference between a republic and an empire.” Lears identifies the anti-imperialist camp as being composed of “disparate sources”. From African-Americans, like the black editor James Jefferson Roche, that were “skeptical about the beneficence of white paternalism” to prominent public figures including William Jennings Bryan, Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain and William James. Their concentration was not on the nation as a whole – or on the personified form that Roosevelt and Lodge liken it to - but on the individual citizens of the country and of those that the nation conquered. Roche was concerned for the African American, fearing that the proclaimed “White Man’s Burden” would result in more racism at home. Bryan was concerned for the liberty and freedom of the Filipinos, as he was one of the few on both sides of the issue that did not dismiss them as savages. Twain with his rapier wit and “well-grounded way of looking at the world” was concerned for the individual who was fooled by “pseudo-Christian arias of empire”, coming to their aid by continually juxtaposing the

⁶ T. J. Jackson Lears. *Rebirth of a Nation: the Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. pp 212

⁷ T. J. Jackson Lears *Rebirth of a Nation* pp.213

hypocrisy of Christianity as a foundation for pro-war apologetics used by many of the Republicans in his satirical writings. Likewise, James, in his work, attempted to unmask the imperialism parading as republicanism of the McKinley administration for the benefit of the common man.

Overall, these three historical interpretations collectively provide a good view of the magnitude of the Philippine debate. In actuality, the discourse encompassed a whole range of issues in America. It did not pertain to just one or two elements of the society of the United States, but to all of it. It was, in a sense, an identity crisis. With the stunning changes of both the United States and global politics at the end of the 19th century, the nation was now pressed to redefine itself for the twentieth century yet still stay true to the principles upon which it was founded on. The debate over the Philippines became not just a debate over annexation, but a debate over the history, present and future of the country as it moved forward. But, this was not the first time this had happened. Other events throughout the history of the country had sparked others of these monumental debates over the identity of the nation. It was, in a large part, how the country was designed. A grand experiment, the only way for the country to thrive was for it to continually reexamine itself and fix what was wrong – or what was lacking. This, in many ways, was how the Founding Founders desired the nation to be.

A Nation Built on Debate

July 4, 1776. The signing of the Declaration of Independence marked a birth of a nation. A nation, that instead of being bond by common kin or lineage, was forged on the notion that “all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” For 5 years after that day, that nation fought to free itself from the yolk of foreign rule so that that ideal could survive.

But, what started in 1776 did not end in 1781, when that nation won its independence from Great Britain. As Woodrow Wilson noted, “The American Revolution was a beginning, not a consummation.” Fleshing out a government and society that could perfectly reflect the ideals contrived from enlightened thought could not possibly be created quickly, and certainly not in the course of several congregations of even the brightest and most noble men of the time. Despite their best efforts, the founders' first attempt at government under the Articles of Confederation failed to live up to the standards that they established on that famous day in Independence Hall, Philadelphia.

At this point, the leaders of the young republic fully recognized that shaping this ideal government would not come easy. Everyone held an idea of the direction in which they wanted the nation to go. Everyone had their own view of what best would preserve the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all people. Consequently, a great debate arose. In 1789, in another convention in Philadelphia, representatives of the 13 colonies went back and forth on what should constitute the foundations of our government. How shall each state be represented? What should the roles of the branches of government be? How shall laws be passed? The founders had to try to fit the questions of practical applications of a government into the abstract concept of freedom and equality.

After a great compromise, the Constitution of the United States of America emerged. At its core was the idea that debate preserves liberty. With this Constitution, and the amendments added to it in 1791, known as the Bill of Rights, which further protected individual liberties, the great American

experiment finally had a tangible foundation that expanded upon the ideals laid out in the Declaration of Independence. Now, the United States moved forward as a nation with a precedent set before them.

But, the continual and dramatic changes of the 19th century would test the young republic and its ideals. The largest of these issues stemmed from the question of slavery. Millions of African-Americans were held in bondage, used as the predominant labor source of the booming cotton industry of the South. However, with the advantages and technology brought by the Industrial Revolution, the North found less and less use for slave labor. To some slavery became a great injustice, violating the doctrine “that all men are created equal” and have the inalienable rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. Soon, another debate erupted.

This debate quickly brought the nation to its knees. Members of congress like John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay attempted to settle the issue in the halls of the U.S capitol building. However, discussion broke down, tensions rose, and no compromise could be reached. With each side refusing to back down with their claims, the South rallying around the banner of states’ rights, the North – preservation of the union, the nation plunged into a 4 year civil war that cost 600,000 American lives.

In 1865, with the North victorious, the South defeated, a president assassinated, and the future of the health of the nation uncertain, Americans had to figure out how to reconstruct the unity of the country. A debate emerged on what should be done with the vanquished South. Should they be punished? Admitted back in the union with open arms? The questions of Reconstruction occupied the American political scene until its termination in 1877.

Toward the end of the 19th century, the United States found itself in a new situation. Having finished its conquest of the North American continent through “Manifest Destiny”, recovered from the wounds of civil war, and experienced an explosion of technological advancements from the Second Industrial Revolution, the U.S sat poised to extend its influence outside its borders. It now had the

resources to a power in the global arena.

But, this arena was still dominated by the same players of the last several centuries. Western European nations maintained an iron grasp of the course of world politics, their empires spanning to the far reaches of the globe. These empires continued their expansion under the banner of a new kind of Imperialism. Instead of a policy marked by mercantilism and an establishment of permanent colonies which would be populated by Europeans, these nations looked to conquer places with the sole purpose of exploiting and plundering their natural resources for capital gains. Free trade and the pursuit of commercial hegemony were the new goals and the industrial innovations of the 19th century were by and large the means. These nations had the technology and the infrastructure to fuel and sustain global empires.

Now the United States had these same advancements and many in the nation had a desire to broaden the country's economic horizons. After Reconstruction, the U.S had gone through a series of depressions, the worst being the panic of 1893, which made many businessmen and politicians question whether American industry had expanded the capacity of existing markets and now needed new outlets. They looked to the Europeans and their example of imperial expansion as their model to remedy this situation. The nations of Western Europe had already moved into Africa, which they had carved up and proportioned among themselves in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. The British, by and far the most successful imperialist, also had total control of India and was the most dominate force in China. Many American political and business leaders salivated at the thought of being part of the quest for new territory. After his landslide election in 1896, President William McKinley fed off of this sentiment by implementing an aggressive foreign policy. McKinley's aim was to greatly bolster American producers in foreign markets. He had been an advocate for U.S annexation of Hawaii and the establishment of a naval base on one of the islands, as well as a steadfast supporter for American interests in China. He viewed expansion as a way for America to earn prosperity at home and prestige

abroad.

However, not everyone was in agreement with expansionism. They argued that America should focus on its domestic issues, and not concern itself with interests abroad. The U.S, they believed, should stay clear of the imperialist tendencies of the Europeans.

For a while, this discussion was able to stay minimal, pushed to the back-burner of public officials in light of the other more serious issues of the time, like the controversy of the gold standard and burdens of monopoly. It could remain rhetorical, something that the United States to not have to address head on quite yet.

The New Great Debate

However, the Spanish American War changed all of that. With the great victory over Spain, the discourse over the role of the United States outside of the North American continent blew up into a full scale debate. Just like the previous great debates - the Constitution, slavery, Reconstruction - it would shake the foundation of the principles of the country as each side vehemently stood upon their perceived ideals of America. Again, the United States had run into another snag not addressed by the founders and unresolved by any Congress before them. The political leaders of the United States had to decide their proper course of action in the Philippine islands. They had to decide if the it was just, right, and in line with the nation's principles for the country to annex territory outside of the North American continent.

It is true that this topic had been addressed many times over in the decades prior to the Spanish – American war. Academics, politicians, and businessmen had all weighed in with their thoughts on the expansion beyond o the North American continent. However, now, the issue was real, no longer theoretical. By result of war, the U.S had already expanded. The issue had moved to center stage. And it was specifically the gain of the Philippines that made it so.

The other territories that the U.S acquired from Spain did not cause as much of an uproar. The

acquisition of Puerto Rico could be written off as normal territorial gain given its close proximity to the United States. Cuba presented little issue as the U.S granted the country its independence soon after the war. Guam, insignificant in size and scarcely populated, also presented no real topic of debate. The Philippines, however, could not be dismissed as such. It presented a perfect storm of issues that would make it impossible to skirt around the topic of imperialism.

First, the Philippine islands presented the United States with nearly 8 million people that were now under the United States command. On top of the sheer number, the majority of the Filipinos spoke a different language than the average American – either Tagalog or Spanish, adhered to a different religion – 80% were Roman Catholic, and for the most part had a completely distinct culture and way of life.

In addition, the islands were over eight thousand miles away from the coast of California, across an entire ocean. Completely isolated from other U.S states and territories, they just did not fit in with the typical pattern of American expansionism that had dominated the 19th century.

Finally and most importantly, the people had just fought a long bitter war with their colonial oppressor that had occupied their islands for over 300 years. They expressed a clear and present desire to be independent and free of any outside influences ruling over them.

These issues and many more, were now on the table, ready to be discussed as the United States tried to figure out what to do with the islands. The country had never faced an issue like this before. There was no clear guideline on the procedures of acquiring foreign territory, especially one as diverse and distinct as the Philippines. Therefore, just like with the great debates before it, Americans balanced the foundational values of the nation with the circumstances of the present times. It was another moment to define the country's identity, updating the abstract principles the nation was founded upon for the 20th century. Hence, the debate was not entirely black and white - to annex the Philippines or to grant them their independence. Instead, there existed a multitude of possible actions, each one

supported by a rationale that was entirely centered on what was best or most logical for the United States to improve itself. Among these were arguments from a political perspective – how did U.S annexation of the Philippines apply to the Constitution? - an economic view – would the acquisition benefit the American industry and business? – and a moral standpoint – was expansion justified by the shared ethics and beliefs of the American people.

The Political Debate : Invoking the Constitution

In this great debate of American identity, it is important to start by examining the one single factor that has contributed the most to the formation of the character of the nation. This single element, of course, is the Constitution (of course coupled with its sister – the Declaration of Independence). Just like all of the great debates in the country’s history before it, the debate over the annexation of the Philippines started – at its base – from a dispute over various interpretations of these two documents. Each side, those in favor of American occupation of the islands and those against, pointed to certain aspects or past inferences of the text that justified their proposed course of action for the nation. Ultimately, it was not a debate whether the Constitution should be applied to the issue or not – everyone was in agreement that the United States had to stay true to its core document- but it was a debate over how best it could be applied to modern circumstances that could not be foreseen by the Founding Fathers. The U.S and in larger context, the world as a whole, was continually changing. It was therefore the task of the political leaders of the nation to apply the concepts of the Constitution in the best way possible to the conditions of the times. This idea was a central part of the debate over the role of the United States in the Philippines. Naturally, not everyone was in agreement on what approach the country should take in regards to the islands from the context of the Constitution. Some, mainly the opponents of annexation, held a strict interpretation of the text, often invoking it directly to justify their claims. However, this was mainly in reaction to the arguments of Republican leaders who, in their empirical rhetoric, tended to stray away from directly using the document to back their proposed actions. Therefore, the debate on constitutionality was not spearheaded by the proponents of annexation, but the reactionary anti-imperialists who pressed Republican leaders on their adherence to the doctrine. Nevertheless, the Constitution still formed the underlying basis for the Philippine debate, whether it was directly referenced or not. This debate really boiled down to three pressing questions on how the document should be applied to the issue. One, did the Constitution account for expansion

outside of the North American continent? Two, did the rights, liberties, and claims endowed by the Constitution apply to the Filipinos? And, three, how best could the United States equip the Philippines to develop their own system of government including the same principles present in the document?

First, the question of expansion of the United States became a focus point for the debate on the Philippines. The Constitution did not address this issue, and throughout the history of the country, the leaders of the nation had to face each opportunity to expand the borders of the nation on a case-by -- case basis. The same was true with the Philippines. This opportunity to acquire a territory so diverse and unique had to once again be debated among the political leaders of the time.

One side, those in favor of American annexation of the Philippines, claimed that this expansion was merely a continuation of the process of expansion that the United States had been undertaking for the past century. “Manifest Destiny”, the belief that the borders of the United States were to extend from sea to shining sea – the Atlantic to the Pacific- was still in effect. Now, the U.S was to expand outside of the borders of the continental United States. In regards to the Constitution, the proponents of annexations pointed to the fact that there was nothing in it against this idea of expansion. Furthermore, to support their argument even further, they made the claim that the document had been scrutinized for over a hundred years, and in each and every time, the political leaders of the era found expansion to be constitutional. This had happened numerous times: the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the Texas Annexation in 1845, the Mexican Cession in 1848, the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, and finally the purchasing of Alaska from the Russians in 1867. In his article, *Philippine Annexation Justified by Our History, Constitution and Laws* that appeared in the *Overland Monthly* magazine in October 1899, Irving M. Scott noted that “Now, if the acquisition of the Philippine and other islands is unconstitutional, then certainly was the acquisition of each and every tract of territory by the United

States, from the Louisiana tract to that of Alaska, unconstitutional”⁸ From the view of the proponents of annexation, there was little difference between the addition of territory from Alaska to the addition of an archipelago in the South Pacific. All of it fell under the same precedent set before them that the expansion of the United States is natural and inline with the Constitution. Moreover, to back up this justification even more, the proponents of annexation of the Philippines cited the fact that it was Thomas Jefferson, one of the strictest interpreters of the Constitution, that set this precedent of territorial expansion for the country. If he could find no fault in document with the government purchasing new land, then who else could?

But, the opponents of annexation did find fault with the constitutionality of a U.S acquisition of the Philippines. Specifically, they found fault with the belief that the country’s previous expansions justified this one. The Philippines were inherently different from all of the other territories acquired by the United States. Consequently, these dissimilarities made it so the precedent set before the United States on expansion did not apply to the new situation laid before them. In a speech that he delivered at the convocation at University of Chicago in January of 1899, Senator Carl Schurz of Missouri went through these key differences. The first was that, “all the former acquisitions were on this continent and, excepting Alaska, contiguous to our borders.” The islands were thousands of miles away and across an entire ocean. It took weeks just to get there by ship. Second, “they were situated, not in tropical, but in the temperate zone, where democratic institutions thrive and where our people could migrate in mass.” All the other territories provided an easy transition for U.S migration and the construction of democratic government. The U.S citizen would have a hard time adjusting to the tropics and subsequently, democratic institutions could possibly fail. Third, “they were but very thinly peopled in fact, without any population that would have been in the way of new settlements.” The Philippines

⁸ Irving M Scott, *Philippine Annexation Justified by Our History, Constitution and Laws*. Overland Monthly. 34. 202. 1899 p. 311

had a population of nearly 10 million people and the island had been densely settled for thousands of years. Again, this would impede on a successful migration of U.S citizens to the territory, something that had been the key success of the other expansions. Fourth, “they could be organized as territories in the usual manner, with the expectation that they would presently come into the Union as self-governing States with populations substantially homogeneous to our own.” The Philippines presented themselves more as colonial possessions rather than potential future states. Finally, “They did not require a material increase of our Army and Navy, either for their subjection to our rule or for their defense against any probable foreign attack provoked by their being in our possession.”⁹ Likewise, with a large population, isolated from the rest of the country, and situated in a region already dominated by European colonial powers, the Philippines would require a large amount of military resources to govern, protect, and police, a cost that would quickly become a burden on the American people.

Ultimately, it was a combination of these five points that the opponents of annexation stumped in their speeches rallying against the justification of previous expansions applying to this situation. The Philippines were just too different to fit into the American system. The precedent set by Jefferson in the Louisiana Purchase did not apply. Therefore, where the supporters of the U.S possession of the islands saw natural expansion, they saw imperialism. Imperialism, they argued, was not consistent with the spirit of the Constitution. To possess colonies and rule over the people, subjecting them to be governed by a body that they never elected or chose would not line up with the inherent freedom, equality, and liberty expressed throughout the document. The Filipinos, being subject under the United States, were thereby entitled to all of the rights endowed by the U.S Constitution. The chief among this was enfranchisement. In order to grant the Filipinos a government that was created and empowered through the “consent of the governed”, they had to have a full say in how they were ruled. The Filipinos needed a voice to thereby determine how they would be governed. This principle was intrinsic to American

⁹ Charles Schurz, “The Policy of Imperialism,” *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*, vol. 6, pp. 119–20 (1913).

political philosophy. According to some of the anti-imperialists, to be consistent to the natural laws upon which it was founded, the United States could not pick and choose where it would apply this principle. It was inherent and eternal, and it did not matter that these people came under the American jurisdiction by military conquest. This point was emphasized by William Jennings Bryan. In a speech he gave in Omaha, Nebraska on June 14th, 1898, Bryan, a senator from Nebraska who had run once and would run two more times for President under the Democratic ticket, posed the rhetorical question, “our guns destroyed a Spanish fleet, but can they destroy that self-evident truth, that governments derive their just powers, not from superior force, but from the consent of the governed?”¹⁰ To Bryan, people endowing their government with the right to rule over them was a fact, not an ideal. The Constitution merely mirrored that truth. To go against it would be unnatural and wrong, especially for a country like the United States that had grown up immersed in that certainty.

However, to this notion, the supporters of annexation had an answer. They did not deny that the belief in government deriving its power from the consent of the governed was not an intrinsic American value and a political truth. What they disagreed on was whom exactly it applied to. There was, in their view, a criterion that had to be met in order for this right to apply. Not everyone was entitled to being ruled under a government that they assented to. American history supported this fact. In a speech he gave on the Senate floor, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts explained how when Jefferson, the drafter of the Declaration of Independence first mentioned “the consent of the governed”, he did not mean that everyone in the American colonies would be consented upon to determine the nature of the government. First, “Negros” and “persons of African descent”, who formed one quarter of the population, were excluded. Women also were not permitted by voice or vote to express an opinion on the proposed change of government. Lodge went on to pose the question, “Did

¹⁰, William Jennings Bryan “First Speech Against Imperialism” delivered at Trans-Mississippi Exposition, Omaha, Nebraska. June 14, 1898

the revolutionary government rest on the consent of all the white males in the colonies?” to which he sharply replied, “Most assuredly not. There was the usual age limitation ... Everywhere the suffrage was limited, generally by property qualifications, sometimes by other restrictions...”¹¹ The point Lodge made was that the Filipinos fell under the same category that blacks, women, and minors fell under. Therefore, it was not an infraction of the Constitution to bar them from having a say in the government by which the United States would rule over them. Similarly, in an article that appeared in the *Catholic World* magazine published in 1900, author E.B Briggs argued that the “consent of the governed” principle also did not pertain to the Filipinos. In his article, he claimed that “in their present state [the Filipinos] do not constitute an organized society or people.”¹² In order for the rule discussed in the Declaration to apply, the Filipinos had to be an actual organized group of people. They were, however, decentralized and tribal, having no common government or institutions. Even the name, Filipino, had no bearing on their actual identity of a people and was instead given to them by the Spanish. Simply put, the Filipinos did not meet the necessary qualification to be considered worth of electing their own government.

Furthermore, the proponents of annexation responded to the claims of their opponents who saw acquisition of territory in the South Pacific as imperialism. They denounced the use of the word, claiming that the spread of the American civilization was not imperialistic but the continuation of “Manifest Destiny” – the idea that the nation had a duty to spread liberty and republicanism abroad and redeem “backward” peoples by replacing their native culture with the principles of democracy - that had propagated all of the other expansions of the United States. Being a country founded on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it was only natural that the country would want to expand those ideals to all reaches of the globe. These qualities could not be contained, but had to be spread in order to survive. In the eyes of the supporters of annexation, this is what made the country great. In a speech he gave on

¹¹ Lodge, Henry Cabot, Senator from Massachusetts, speech before the U.S. Senate, March 7, 1900. 56th Cong. 1st Sess.

¹² E. B. Briggs, "The "Consent of the Governed" and the Filipino." *Catholic World* 70 (1900): 794-801.

the Senator floor, Orville H. Platt, a Republican senator from Connecticut, expressed this sentiment, “I believe that we have been chosen to carry forward this great work of uplifting humanity on earth. From the time of the landing on Plymouth Rock in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, in the spirit of the Constitution, believing that all men are equal and endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights, believing that government derive their just powers form the consent of the governed, we have spread that civilization across the continent until it stood at the Pacific Ocean looking ever westward.”¹³ The country had already completed its expansion to the Pacific. Now, Americans were looking beyond the Pacific, to other territories that had not yet been blessed with the same fortune as the United States.

However, many believed that this was not just an inevitability, but a duty that the Americans had to the world. Now that the United States had emerged from its beginnings and a bloody and costly civil war to become a budding world power, it was time for the country to use its newfound clout to spread its blessings upon the rest of humanity. This was the new “Manifest Destiny”. The country had completed the first phase of it. Now it was time to move on to the second. But, first in order for this to happen, the proponents of American expansionism believed that the policy laid down in Washington’s Farewell address of isolationism needed to be dismissed. The world had changed. The United States had changed. As Henry Watterson, editor of Louisville Courier Journal, said in an interview in the *New York Herald*, “the traditional stay-at-home and mind-your-own-business policy laid down by Washington was wise for a weak and struggling nation. But each of the centuries has its own tale of progress to tell ... We must adapt ourselves to the changed order. We must make a new map. ...The United States from now on is destined to be a world power. Henceforth its foreign policy will need to

¹³ Orville H Platt,. “Speech to U.S Senate on Philippines”, 55th Cong. 3rd Sess. *Congressional Record* 32. (January 9, 1899): 501

be completely reconstructed.”¹⁴ This foreign policy needed to be one that sought to achieve influence in multiple regions of the world. In order for the United States to be a global force, it needed to expand the reaches of power. In an article entitled “Expansion and Peace” that appeared in the magazine *The Independent* in 1899, then Governor of New York, Theodore Roosevelt, explained his idea on how the country could only achieve eternal greatness through an aggressive foreign policy and territorial acquisition, “nations that expand and nations that do not expand may both ultimately go down, but the one leaves heirs and a glorious memory, and the other leaves neither... the Roman expanded, and he has left a memory which has profoundly influenced the history of mankind ... Similarly to-day it is the great expanding people which bequeath to future ages the great memories and material results of their achievements, and the nations which shall have sprung from their loins.”¹⁵ To Roosevelt, for the nation to be great – and for its people to express their manliness as he articulated in his other writings – it had to leave a lasting impression on the globe. The only way to do this was to expand its borders and influence.

In addition, some of the proponents of annexation saw some of the great imperial nations of the era as idyllic illustrations of the successes of an expansionist policy. In particular, these proponents, like Roosevelt himself, looked to England as “the archetype and best exemplar of all such mighty nations.” England had left a mark on the world so grand that Roosevelt only could look up to it and aspire that his country would do the same. Other writers of the time agreed with Roosevelt. In an essay entitled “Expansion”, diplomat and author of great works on international affairs, Theodore Marburg, wrote about the benefits that England gained from its policy of conquest and expansion. He noted that the liberty and freedoms of the average English citizen actually increased during the last three hundred years of British colonialism, “in 1780 the right of petition was established, in 1792 the freedom of the press further fortified ... During the 19th century ... occurred the great extension of suffrage and popular

¹⁴ Henry Watterson “Interview” New York Herald, June 22, 1898.

¹⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, “Expansion and Peace,” The Independent, Dec. 21, 1899.

education ...”¹⁶ The acquisition of foreign territory did not lead to the depression of liberties in a country, unlike some opponents of annexation of the Philippines had claimed, including William Jennings Bryan, but instead lead to progress in areas of civil rights and freedoms. Therefore, the United States had no reason – no excuse – in not seeking to spread its reach to the foreign lands of the globe. In order for the nation to be grand, and for it to continue the process of improving the way of life for both its own citizens and of the people that come under their rule by acquisition, the U.S had to annex new territories abroad, starting with the Philippine islands.

Those against the Philippine annexation and the expansion of the United States outside of the North American continent also pointed to the example of the British Empire. However, they claimed that England’s colonization was not as successful and grand as Theodore Roosevelt and his fellow expansionists thought. In fact, one of the principle British colonies at the time, India, was actually a burden to England. Andrew Carnegie, an avid Anti-Imperialist, noted that, “England in India stands today upon a volcano. She has to keep 60,000 British troops there to hold the people in subjection ...there is scarcely a statesman of Britain who does not wish privately: "Would that we were safely out of India!” He then went on to warn the American public that if the US went through with its plan of annexation of the islands and did not relinquish sovereignty to the Filipinos, then “the Philippines will be the curse of the United States” just as “India is the curse to the British.”¹⁷ In many ways, Carnegie was right. Many of the Filipinos were already rebelling against the American occupation. They wanted complete independence and the power to govern themselves. This, coupled with the rampant poverty, oppressive tropical climate, and extremely diverse people groups, would make the proper governing of the islands an extremely challenging task for the United States, no matter how prepared it was and how noble its efforts.

Ultimately, the questioned remained, what was the course of action that the United States

¹⁶ Theodore Marburg, *Expansion*. (1900).

¹⁷ Andrew Carnegie , "Should the United States Expand," (1899).

should take with the Philippines in terms of their government? What was the way that best lined up with the spirit of the U.S Constitution? To the anti-imperialists, it simply was to leave. The Filipinos had to construct their own government that was derived from “the consent of the governed”. They already had a groundwork set in place under the leadership of rebel leader Aguinaldo. It was their right to try and construct a proper republic – not that of the United States. Furthermore, only the Filipinos could know best how to govern themselves. The leaders of the United States occupation – no matter how wise and how well versed in government and diplomacy – could never make up for the lack of knowledge of the culture, customs, religion, languages, and general way of life of the people. As Robert E. Bisbee noted in his article “Why I Oppose our Philippine Policy”, “Even if the Filipinos were willing or desirous that we should govern them, I doubt our ability to do so properly...we do not understand the condition or needs of a tropical people, and we never can... there can be no true government without a complete knowledge of a people’s needs and a perfect sympathy with the natural order of their life and development. ¹⁸ No American occupation could create a form of government that truly represented the people of the Filipinos in the best way possible. The U.S simply did not have the capability to do this.

On the other hand, the proponents of annexation held firm to their belief that a U.S occupation could create a successful government for the Filipinos, which significantly improved the basic rights and way of life present under the tyranny and oppression of the Spaniards. The McKinley administration sent two Commissions to the Philippines to construct this new government. In line with the advice given by A. Lawrence Lowell, the President of Harvard University, in 1899 that “If our colonies are to thrive and add to our own prosperity, we must select only thoroughly trained administrators, fit them for their work by long experience, and retain them in office irrespective of party”, McKinley selected some of the best and brightest scholars, lawyers, and military, scientists,

¹⁸ Robert Bisbee, *Why I Oppose Our Philippine Policy*. Arena. August 1902.

diplomats and military officers to fill the commissions. He was confident that these men would best represent the values of the United States and its Constitution and best apply it to the new government of the islands.

Overall, the debate on the annexation of the Philippines from the context of the Constitution and the proper political approach to the issue raged on in the halls of Congress and in the press for years. Each side held firm to what they believed to be the proper interpretation of the text to the changing landscape of the turn of the 20th century. In many ways, it was a rereading of the language and rhetoric with which the Founding Fathers endowed both documents, the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Abstract and, at times, vague and unspecific, these two texts focus more on the framework and foundation on which a government – and a society for that matter- would be based upon. The details were left to be decided by the inferences and debate of the leaders of the time with respect to the principles laid out in the text. This is what the politicians and political office holders of the turn of the last century chose to do. However, some, mainly those in favor of annexation of the Philippines, decided in many ways to look past the Constitution, only loosely applying it in guiding their contemporary foreign policy. Subsequently, they were challenged by their backward gazing counterparts, the anti-imperialists that rested their arguments chiefly on a strict interpretation of the language of the document. The two sides – for and against annexation – provided a political debate on the future of the international affairs of United States that, ultimately, fit right in line with the intentions of the Founding Fathers. The debate over the annexation of the Philippines, just like the most of the other great debates before it, showed that the framework of the American political system was indeed working as planned.

The Economic Debate: Will the Philippines Pay?

Along the same lines as the political debate, the Philippine question went into the realms of a discussion over the future of the economic system of the United States. The country, after slavery, had mainly developed a system of free trade and capitalistic enterprise. Rugged individualism and the self-made man, while still an ideal, mesmerized many of the inhabitants of the country, both native and immigrated, as they hoped to achieve prosperity through hard work and perhaps a little bit of luck. While many managed to only obtain marginal profits through their endeavors, a select few broke through to the top and achieved unprecedented financial success in their businesses. Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, J.P Morgan, and Cornelius Vanderbilt were just a few of the men whose companies and enterprises skyrocketed, themselves earning millions upon millions of dollars in net profit. While anti-trust legislation in the later part of the 19th century feebly worked to break up some of these commercial giants, many still placed their hope in western capitalism. The prevalence of monopolies and the Panic of 1893, were not enough to deter some of the most important businessmen in the country to pursue capitalism. The leaders of the era just thought that they needed to push it back on the right direction, provide a spark to help fire up the American economy again.

After the conclusion of the Spanish-American war and the treaty of Paris which gave the United States the Philippines, many of these leaders – both in the field of business and politics – saw the islands as the grand opportunity to greatly bolster the American economy. Capitalism is naturally expansive and always looks for new markets and new places to gather resources and labor. The Philippines provided both of these entities for the United States.

However, some of the opponents of annexation viewed the acquisition of the Philippines as not necessary for the improvement of the American economy. In fact, many viewed it as counter-intuitive, that territorial expansion would just worsen the inherently exploitative nature of capitalism and benefit

very few at the expense of the majority, something that the labor leaders and the populist politicians had been arguing against for the latter half of the 19th century.

Again, a debate among the political and economic elite of the United States emerged over the best options for the United States from an economic standpoint to take in regards to the Philippines. This debate would go down to the heart of the capitalistic philosophy that had been the core of the American economy for its all of its existence. It was a time to realign the direction of American business and enterprise for the new century.

First, the core issue that became the centerpiece of the economic debate of the annexation of the Philippine was the simple and obvious question, will annexation of the Philippines pay? From a pure business standpoint, this was the primary focus. Would investments made in the institutions of the islands come to yield profit, or would it be pouring like throwing money into the wind as the territory offered little resources to be desired by the American consumer? This was a key question that American political leaders and businessmen alike argued back and forth on. It was an issue of pure dollars and cents. Would the Philippines make the United States a wealthier nation?

Pushing this argument of the potential financial boom that the control of the Philippines could provide was the McKinley administration itself. In August of 1898, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Frank A. Vanderlip, expressed the importance of the Philippines to the economic future of the United States. He claimed that the islands themselves were ripe with potential assets that would make American capitalists very wealthy. In a report on the islands, Vanderlip listed all of the agricultural resources present on the Philippines. The most important of these products was Manila hemp. Thousands of tons of this fiber were raised annually on the Pacific slopes of the southern islands., Vanderlip noted the grand business opportunity that awaited American investors, “hemp of this kind is grown nowhere else in the world ... it is said that a fortune awaits one who can invent a machine which

will accelerate the process of pressing out the juice and pulp, leaving only the fiber.”¹⁹ In addition, Vanderlip also noted that sugar was in abundance on the islands. Throughout the world there was a large market for this good, principally China and Japan in the East, and the United States and Great Britain in the West. Therefore, the Philippines were crucial to future of the sugar industry. Just like with hemp, Vanderlip offered his encouragement for Americans to invest in the sugar production. The Philippines were primed to become a major hub of sugar production. They had many thousands of laborers available for work in the manufacturing of the cane in addition to large tracts of fertile land. He concluded by stating that “the intelligent use of capital, added to these, would revolutionize the industry, and make the Philippines a great cane-sugar-producing country.”

In addition to these two products, Vanderlip listed a number of other potential resources that could be of advantage to the American capitalist, including tobacco and coal. The point Vanderlip wanted to make to the American public, was that the Philippines were a tropical paradise just waiting for a civilized and economically productive society to come and tap into all of the agricultural potential that resided in the islands. This territory was vital for the economic future of the country. It would be illogical not to take advantage of a possession that by way of just war and treaty came into possession of the United States.

But, the opponents of annexation disagreed with the claim that the annexation of the Philippines would be a financial windfall for the country due to the quality and abundance of their natural resources. In fact, some viewed the opposite – that the islands presented themselves of little economic advantage to the United States, and production and manufacturing in the islands would cost the nation more than it would earn. The rationale behind this belief is best manifested in the writings of Frank Doster, who in an article that appeared in *the Arena* in May 1901, attempted to answer that core question *Will the Philippines Pay?* Doster countered the McKinley administration’s claim that the

¹⁹ Frank A. Vanderlip, *Facts about the Philippines*. Cosmopolitan. August 1898

islands would yield specifically yield substantial profit quite bluntly in his answer to the question that he posed. He claimed that, “There is little or nothing among these products that is not found in abundance within less than a thousand miles from our southern coast.”²⁰ Tobacco, sugar, hemp, coffee, and tropical fruits were all native growths of Mexico, Central and South America, and the West Indies. He continued by stating that there was not a product of forest, mine, or soil in the Philippine Archipelago that did not also lie within a three days' voyage from the shores of the United States. There was little advantage the United States could gain from trade with the islands. Doster went on his article to estimate the profit that the U.S would gain from future trade with the islands based on the statistics of imports and exports to and from the Philippines since 1841. In the end, he determined that “the profits on our Philippine trade for the next two hundred years would not give us back the money thus far expended in the prosecution of the war, with a reasonable rate of interest on the account.” Unlike what Vanderlip had claimed, trade with the islands would not be a financial windfall. Huge amounts of investments would have had to been made in order to make the Philippines anywhere near suitable for American style industrial capitalism. This, coupled with the sheer amount of distance between the U.S and the Philippines which would slow down trade, would result in huge economic losses for anyone looking to do business with or in the islands. Ultimately, according to Doster, they just were not worth it for the country. Unlike Great Britain, which needed colonies for the purpose of making new homes for her overcrowded population in addition to providing land to grow food and other raw materials for home markets, the United States did not need any colonies. Doster claimed that, “we do not need new lands for such purposes, nor will be for generations yet to come.” The country would be economically sufficient focusing its efforts on the North American continent and the lands immediately surrounding it.

The debate between those in the camp of McKinley and Vanderlip and those in the camp of

²⁰ Frank Doster.. *Will the Philippines Pay?* Arena. 1901 p.466

Doster represented really a debate over the future of the economic policy of the United States. Would the country pursue internal markets, keeping jobs inside the boundaries of the nation, or would they open up to outside opportunities, incorporating the resources, trade, and labor that foreign territory had to offer? Virtually every political leader had a strong opinion on the matter and rooted their arguments in what they thought would yield the greatest benefit to the average American citizen.

Some of these leaders looked to protect the interests of the American laborer. For decades, these political figures had led the charge defending the rights of the workers against increasing exploitation by monopolies. They looked to the acquisition of the Philippines as a potential threat to the labor interests which they had worked so hard to defend. First, William Jennings Bryan, who had built his several Presidential campaigns on the basis on the populist free-silver movement, thought that just focusing on the problems of the Philippines alone would distract from the real economic issues at home. The United States would pour millions of dollars in military spending to subdue and control the Filipinos, costing thousands of U.S lives in the process. This would, in turn, grab the attention of the American public, causing them to ignore some of the most pertinent domestic issues. In Bryan's opinion, this was Labor. In an article that appeared in the New York Journal, Bryan expressed his concerns for the U.S's involvement in the Philippine in regards to this issue, "While the American people are endeavoring to extend an unsolicited sovereignty over remote peoples, foreign financiers will be able to complete the conquest of our own country. Labor's protest ... will be drowned in noisy disputes over ... boundary lines." He feared that the giant corporations of the time would continue to exploit the common laborers of the day as few would be able to muster enough voices to speak out against them, going on to say that "monopoly can thrive in security so long as the inquiry, "Who will

haul down the flag," on distant islands turns public attention away from the question, who will uproot the trusts at home?"²¹

Furthermore, Samuel Gompers, the President of the American Federation of Labor, also voiced his concern that the acquisition of the Philippines would impede on the wellbeing of the American laborer. However, unlike Bryan, Gompers saw the threat not coming from a distraction of labor issues from the political stage, but he influx of ethnic workers looking for work. In an 1898, he posed the question in a speech, "If the Philippines are annexed what is to prevent the Chinese, the Negritos and the Malays coming to our country.... if these new islands are to become ours, it will be either under the form of Territories or States...can we hope to close the flood-gates of immigration from the hordes of Chinese and the semi-savage races coming from what will then be part of our own country?"²²

Gompers did not just fear the impact that these immigrants would have on the culture of the United States, although he mentioned that as the reason in his speech. Instead, as a labor leader, he feared that these foreigners would compete with American laborers for jobs. This would play right into the hands of the monopolists, allowing them to significantly reduce wages at the influx of the supply of potential laborers.

But, where Bryan and Gompers championed the interests of labor, some of the proponents of annexation advocated the welfare of capitalism. The economic success of the United States, they insisted, depended on its businesses making a profit. For the nation to be prosperous, its industries had to be prosperous. To American investors, not only were the Philippines ripe with natural resources and cheap labor, but they provided a link to the large trading market of the Orient. Access to this market, was crucial to the United States. Charles Denby, a once active member of the Democratic Party,

²¹ William Jennings Bryan. *Will it Pay?* New York Journal, January 15, 1899.

²² Samuel Gompers. Speech on Philippines and Labor . Dec. 1898. *The Samuel Gompers Papers*. Vol. 5. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986.

former minister to China, and member of the first commission of the Philippines under Dr. Jacob Schurman, commented on this pressing need for the U.S to trade with the Orient, “the whole world sees in China a splendid market for our native products there is a boundless future which will make the Pacific more important to us than the Atlantic.”²³ All of the other great nations of the time had seen the economic potential in Asia. Nearly all of the imperial powers of the time possessed some territory in the Orient and continually jockeyed with each other for supremacy in the region. The U.S had a grand opportunity to enter this market. They had come into possession of a territory by defeating the decaying Spanish empire. Now, as Denby noted, “if we give up the Philippines, we throw away the splendid opportunity to assert our influence in the Far East.” The islands were the U.S’s foothold for it in the Far East. The possession gave it standing and influence, as well as valuable trade both in exports and imports. Supporting Denby’s claim that the United States could use the Philippines for economic gain was Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana. In a speech he gave before the U.S Senate, Beveridge proclaimed that, “the Philippines are ours forever: "territory belonging to the United States," as the Constitution calls them. And just beyond the Philippines are China's illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either. We will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago. We will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient.”²⁴ America had always been known as the land of opportunity. Now the nation had an opportunity of its own in the Orient, one that would lead to commercial success for not just its businesses, but in extension, to all of the American population. Even China itself, recognized this great chance that the United States had significantly increase their trading revenue. At an annual dinner of the American Asiatic Association, Wu Ting-Fing, a Chinese minister to the United States, stated, “we all know that China is one of the greatest markets of the world, with a population of 400,000,000 that must be fed and clothed... She wants your wheat, your cotton, your iron and steel, ...It is a fine field for American industry to fill these wants. It is particularly easy for you to reach China on

²³ Denby, Charles *Shall We Keep the Philippines?* Forum Sept. 1898

²⁴ Albert Beveridge, “Our Philippine Policy” speech before U.S. Senate, January 9, 1900. *Congressional Records, Senate* 704-711

account of the fine highway you have on the Pacific, and especially desirable that you do so since you have become our ... neighbor in the Philippines." Both these leaders, Beveridge and Ting-Fing, saw that the economic future of their respective nations lied in the international markets. They recognized that the nature of business was changing before their eyes. No longer could a nation prosper economically by closing off its borders to international trade. It instead had to embrace the world market and become active in securing the best agreements and arrangements with other countries. With the addition of the Philippines, the United States already had this set up. China was waiting and willing to become a major trading partner. All American industrialists and investors had to do was to act upon the great opportunity.

However, many in the opposing side to this argument did not deny that China and the Orient were vital to the economic prosperity of the United States. Where they made their disagreement was the belief that ownership of the Philippines was intrinsic in forming a trading relationship with the nations of Asia. In another speech he delivered in Chicago, this time before the Anti-Imperialistic Conference in October of 1899, Senator Schurz elaborated on how the U.S did not need to annex the Philippines in order to have access to the Asian markets. To the many imperialists that claimed that America needed a foothold into China, Schurz responded, "I ask what kind of a foothold we should really need. Coaling-stations and docks for our fleet, and facilities for the establishment of commercial houses and depots. That is all."²⁵ In his opinion, the U.S did not need to conquer the Filipinos, but could easily conduct good trade relations with the Philippines as an independent nation. The nation only needed very few things out of the islands, just merely a place to refuel and store goods, nothing else. There was no reason that the U.S had to wage a war to subdue and control the people – which would cost significant money and lives to do - so that they could merely form a link to trade with the

²⁵ Carl Schurz, "The Policy of Imperialism" Address at the Anti-Imperialistic Conference in Chicago, Oct 17, 1899. *Speeches, Correspondence, and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*. Ed. Frederic Bancroft. Vol. 6. New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1913.

Orient. Furthermore, Schurz also noted that the U.S traded with other independent nations at the time and did not seek to conquer them. If the nation did this, Schurz claimed that “we should never have had any foreign commerce at all.” William Jennings Bryan also made a point of this. In his speech to the Democratic National Convention in 1900, he stated firmly that, “It is not necessary to own people in order to trade with them.” America had already established that it could do trade without necessarily occupying the land in which it conducted it in. “We carry on trade today with every part of the world, and our commerce has expanded more rapidly than the commerce of any European empire. We do not own Japan or China, but we trade with their people. We have not absorbed the republics of Central and South American, but we trade with them.” A policy of peaceful trade was the American way, and it had been proven to work for decades. Therefore, according to those against the annexation of the Philippines, there was no justification to occupy the islands based on any reason of trade, commerce, or economic relations with the Orient.

Overall, the economic debate in regards to the annexation of the Philippines was a moment in which American leaders could air out their opinions on the direction in which they wanted American capitalism to head. It was a chance to establish the American economy for the 20th century. One side saw the future as being in markets abroad. This was the new face of American capitalism. Business and enterprise in foreign lands. New markets in new countries. It was clearly evident that the technological innovations made conducting international trade and industry so much easier that no one could deny that it was the way of the future. The nation therefore, had to adapt accordingly. Occupation of the Philippines was a step that nation could take – an easy one for that matter considering it had already acquired them by way of the Paris treaty- to achieving prosperity in the emerging global economy. However, where the proponents of annexation saw a chance for enterprise, their opponents saw opportunities for monopolies to expand their influence and continue to oppress. The future of American capitalism needed to not be in new lands, but in the old one. There was too much to fix domestically for

the nation to be focusing its efforts of international endeavors. Labor issues were the most important subject that the U.S had to face. Trust-busting, ethical business, prosperity for all Americans – these were the goals that the political leaders of the nation should strive to achieve. Ultimately, the economic debate of the Philippines was just the starting point for a much larger discourse over the changing nature of the American economy going into the new century – a debate that would continue to be waged among the leaders of the United States for decades to come.

The Moral Debate: Spreading Civilization

Beyond shaking the foundations of the political and economic identity upon which the United States was built, the debate on the annexation of the Philippine brought into question the moral character of the nation. What was the ultimate duty of its people? Moving into the 20th century, the world becoming smaller due to advancements in transportation and international relations becoming even more important, what obligation did the United States have to fulfill to the rest of the world? These were the questions that the political leaders of the time were called upon to answer. While all championed the same great ideals of the nation: liberty, equality, freedom, the pursuit of happiness for all as being central its moral character, there was still the question on how the nation could practically apply these principles in its relations to other nations and peoples. When the Philippines came under U.S possession, this fundamental question – how the U.S could spread best spread wellbeing and prosperity to native people of the islands, the Filipinos – came into full debate. On one side, there was a desire to bring the islands into the 20th century – to modernize their government, social institutions, and industries with the professed desire of benefiting all of its inhabitants. The United States had a moral obligation to spread “civilization” to their lesser brother. On the other side, there was a push to grant its people complete independence as the United States could not morally govern the islands without serious infractions against its own code of ethics and without committing subsequent violations against the wellbeing of the common Filipino. Both sides – the opponents of annexation and the supporters of possession of the islands, came at the issue armed with their own supporting evidence and rhetorical strategies.

First, on the side supporting annexation, the proponents for U.S possession of the Philippines held a shared belief that the Filipinos themselves did not possess the means to create a government that was capable of adequately ruling the islands. Having been a under Spanish rule for so long, more than 300 years, the Filipinos did not have a sound basis for self-government, and given the dramatically

divided people groups – distinct tribes, different religions, varying social classes- there was substantial evidence to believe that any attempt at a unified government would break down and a civil war would ensue. The United States, having justly come under ownership of the territory by purchase and treaty, could not morally step back and do nothing while violence and chaos began to rule the islands. In an article that appeared in *the Independent* magazine on October 11th 1900, Marion Wilcox, the editor of *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines* defended this belief. He broke down the nature of the different parts of the islands. The problem he noted, was that most who believed in an American withdrawal believed that a “Philippine Republic” could be created with peace and ease by the leading men of the Luzon tribe, the people that the American forces prominently fought alongside with during the Spanish-American war. Their leaders, Aguinaldo, Mabini, Paterno, among others, would be the ones to head the new Filipino government, extending their influence all the way from Luzon , the island of the north, down to Visayas, the main central island, then to Mindanao and the southern islands. However, Wilcox claimed that this scenario would not play out with such peace and ease. The people of Luzon had been mainly Christianized by the Spaniards. They had a Roman Catholic fervor that was now 300 years deeply ingrained. In contrast, the tribes of the southern islands were principally Muslims, also equally fervent to their faith and willing to fight to defend it. Therefore, the extension of a republic headed by the leaders of Luzon, would not sit very well with the people of the South. These two sides had a long history of fighting and peace was very fragile between them, brokered mainly by the Spanish colonial government. Now that the Spaniards were gone, the United States had inherited the job of keeping peace between the North and the South. Wilcox feared the outcome if the country followed a proposed action of leaving, “if we should withdrawal our ships and garrisons, the Moros would be at their favorite work again before the departing vessels were hull down; we should make ourselves directly responsible for a war of South against North, utterly ruinous and brutal, a condition

of affairs far more distressing and hopeless than that which appealed to us so irresistibly in Cuba.”²⁶ He went on to say that if the United States left, they would inevitably be back again to “restrain once more the mad men our own act had set loose.” Therefore, it was the moral obligation of the country to stay and support the Filipinos as they worked together their own republic that would stand the test of time and, ultimately, avoid a bloody and detrimental civil war. In order to bring peace and prosperity to the Filipinos, the U.S had no choice but to govern them.

But, the opponents of annexation had a counter to the argument that the U.S had to remain in the islands to promote peace and stability. Their evidence, however, was not rooted in mere speculation of what could happen, but on actual incidences of what was happening. While the Americans did battle against the guerrilla warriors of the Philippine insurgency, stories came in to the American public about atrocities committed by U.S soldiers against native Filipinos. These stories stoked the fire under those that rallied against U.S occupation as being neither just nor moral. One of these stories, reported in an article that appeared in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* in April 1900, depicted in detail an example of some of the horrendous acts of U.S soldiers. The author, Bryan J. Clinch, allowed his audience to judge for themselves “the condition of the people of Manila under the military despotism set over them in the name of American Liberty” based on the story which was first corresponded in the San Francisco newspaper, *Call*, of the actions of a group of American soldiers from Minnesota. These soldiers were charged with policing the city of Manila, which the newspaper added that they “had filled the bill to the limit, incidentally filling the Coroner's office at the same time...the native population of had conceived something nearly akin to contempt for the American soldier, not being able to disassociate kindness and justice from weakness and cowardice.”²⁷ The newspaper went on to report an incident that exemplified how these soldiers came to earn this reputation. In the city, there was a large market near that was the rendezvous of a rough gang. The

²⁶ Marion Wilcox, “Peace and the Philippines” *Independent*. Oct. 1900

²⁷ Bryan J. Clinch, “Imperialism in the Philippines” *American Catholic Quarterly Review* April 1900 p.213

market was continually used for gambling behind closed doors. One day, one of the Minnesota soldiers heard a chink of a coin and went to investigate. As he entered one of the many shacks, he came upon a game running with a forced draught. He then ordered the proprietor to close the place and come with him. The Filipino, however, instead of obeying, made a lunge at the soldier. The soldier shot the Filipino dead on the spot. He then “turned loose on everything in sight.” A huge crowd gathered, which three members of the California guard had to work their way through with the butts of their rifles “leaving sore heads and bleeding flanks to mark their paths” Upon entering the shack, which was filled with smoke and the bodies of Filipinos, they found the Minnesota soldier sitting at a table, casually munching an orange while waiting for someone to come and clean up the mess.

The Americans had become as bad as the Spaniards – no different than any other brutal colonial power. The country that came in the name of the spread of freedom and democracy now demonstrated a toleration of atrocious acts of violence against the native population by the ranks of their army. To make matters worse, these reports were not isolated incidents, but common occurrences. The fact that the American newspapers had caught wind of quite a few of them sent red flags up about the true depth of the problem. One could only speculate about the true regularity of these atrocities and how horrible, in actuality, was the treatment of the Filipinos by the U.S occupation. A letter from a California soldier in the Artillery, published in another San Francisco newspaper, gave another glimpse of the atrocities in the Philippines. After encountering Filipino insurgents, and subsequently driving them back, the soldier's regiment charged after the rebels. In the pursuit, they came across a town where the headquarters of the insurgents was located, which they shelled with artillery and burned to the ground, sending its inhabitants “running like sheep.” Then, as the soldier reported, when they had stopped shelling the town, “the First California regiment entered, and what we had not burned they finished with a vengeance... their motto, as well as that of the other regiments, is: “the only good Filipino is a dead one; take no prisoners, as lead is cheaper than rice.” ”The story continued with the young man

describing the other regiments doing exactly the same thing as his, burning everything in sight. He noted that, “the Tennessee men were on the right, and an orderly came aboard and reported that they were killing every native in sight, whether soldier or not.” The opponents of annexation would use stories like these as rallying points. The United States had no place trumpeting on their moral high ground when reports like these flowed in from across the Pacific. The McKinley administration had expressed its desire to gain “prestige abroad” - it being part of his motto of his 1900 campaign. However, there was nothing prestigious about having a foreign policy marred by the slaughter of innocent civilians and wanton destruction of whole native villages. Those against U.S possession of the islands held firm in their belief that the presence of the U.S army and navy in the region was doing much more harm than it was doing good.

Furthermore, some of the opponents of annexation feared what the horror of the war against the Filipino guerrillas was doing to the overall character and wellbeing of the U.S troops. Many were concerned that the reports of malicious slaughter of native villages was a sign that the conditions of the islands had turned the soldiers into brutal savages themselves. Author B.O Flowers, in his article “Some Dead Sea Fruit of our War of Subjugation” that appeared in the *Arena*, expressed his dismay, “the fact that our soldiers are becoming familiar with despotic acts and savage practices, and that they see on every hand a disregard for the very things our fathers held most fundamental and essential to a republic – such as freedom of the press, respect for civil authority, and the rights of man – should be the subject of the gravest concern to thoughtful lovers of free government everywhere.”²⁸ Because of the impact of their brutal environment and the barbarity they were exposed to, the soldiers quickly became not an instrument that would spread freedom – the crux of the argument that U.S was spreading morality and civilization to the Filipinos- but rather a tool that would continue to breed disorder, destruction, and misery on the islands. The military presence of the United States on the island helped

²⁸ B.O Flowers. “Some Dead Sea Fruit of our War of Subjugation.” *Arena*. June 1902.

neither the Filipino nor the American soldier, but served as a way to subsequently worsen the overall condition of both.

But, beyond the issues of military conflict, the proponents of annexation were still resolute in their sentiment that the U.S was bringing “civilization” to the savage people of the Philippines. After years of colonial oppression, the natives of the island had not developed. The U.S, having thrown off the burdensome yoke of the Spaniards for the Filipinos, was now primed to grant them all of the blessings of the West. It was an active manifestation of the Rudyard Kipling poem “The White Man's Burden” which praised the pursuit of empire but also warned of the costs involved. The poem appeared in the popular magazine *McClure's* in 1899 with the subtitle *The United States and the Philippine Islands*. It expressed a common sentiment of the time - that the Caucasian race had been bestowed by fate as the leaders of the world, and at this point in history, were now charged with collectively bringing the other peoples of the globe into the same prosperity and class culture that they had developed. Kipling, a product of the British Empire, had seen this first hand in his experiences with colonialism. He recognized that this process was certainly not easy, and sometimes not welcomed by the colonized. The imperialist always got his hands a little bit more dirty than he thought he would as he tried to spread “civilization” to the masses. Kipling, now seeing the Americans begin to do what his nation had been doing for centuries, was offering his sober warnings to the country.

However, many in the United States did not see his poem as a warning to the challenges of imperialism, but as a sure justification for their policies in the Philippines and subsequent belief that occupation was a noble endeavor. They did emphasize the nature of the word “burden” present in the title of the poem, but this was seen as an obligation – a duty – not as anything meant to deter from the action. Moreover, those that supported U.S possession of the Philippines took the “White Man's burden” one step further and limited to just the burden of the United States to spread the blessings bestowed on its nation to the rest of the world. They very much believed in American Exceptionalism,

that the U.S was unique among the other nations of the world in all aspects. Its foundation, history, people, and shared values and ideals made the country special. Therefore, now that the nation had the means and circumstances to do so, it was now time for it to go out and spread all of the institutions, values, and benefits they had created. One of the champions of this idea was the dynamic Theodore Roosevelt. In a speech that he delivered at a Chicago men's club in 1899, then governor of New York, Roosevelt, trumpeted the valiant reasons why the U.S had to be so involved in the Philippine islands and the other territories gained from Spain. First, he presented the Spanish-American war as being inevitable that “we could not help being brought face to face with the problem of war with Spain.”²⁹The U.S could not back down from the contest but had to enter it bravely, reflecting the true valor and character of its people. The country had a grand victory in that war, but the work was far from over. Roosevelt made it plain, “we cannot avoid the responsibilities that confront us in Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.” With the new lands that it had acquired, the U.S now had a problem to solve.

This problem was bringing these lands and their people into the modern era – the 20th century. Now that the U.S had been thrust into this role – by pure obligation according to Roosevelt- they now were charged with staying through to the end and, ultimately, improving the situation of the people as a whole. Roosevelt proclaimed that the United States could not back down from this challenge just like it did not back down from the war. The country had to “do our share of the world's work, by bringing order out of chaos in the great, fair tropic islands from which the valor of our soldiers and sailors has driven out the Spanish flag.” Roosevelt claimed that the men of the U.S were to lead “the strenuous life” which really, in his mind, was the only national life “which is really worth leading.” This is a life where the people work hard to bring prosperity to not just their own selves, but to all of the others they interact with, including those outside of their borders. Therefore, in regards to the Philippines, it was

²⁹ Theodore Roosevelt “Strenuous Life” speech Chicago, 1899. *The Strenuous Life; Essays and Addresses*. New York: The Century Co., 1900

the duty of the U.S to send the best public servants to “grapple” with the problems faced there.

Roosevelt recognized that the islands presented major challenges, foremost noting that their population was an uneven mix between half-caste and native Christians, warlike Muslims, and wild pagans. Many of these people, he claimed, were “utterly unfit for self-government, and show no signs of becoming fit.” Now that the U.S had driven the Spanish tyranny out of the islands, they could not just leave. If they did, the islands would collapse into utter anarchy, and the U.S’s work would have been for harm and not for good. Therefore the U.S had to stay. It was their solemn duty. In his speech, Roosevelt also countered some of the opponents of U.S involvement in the Philippines. He sternly stated, “ I have even scantier patience with those who make a pretense of humanitarianism to hide and cover their timidity, and who cant about “liberty” and the “consent of the governed” in order to excuse themselves for their unwillingness to play the part of men.” What mattered to Roosevelt was action. He firmly viewed a prosperous and productive life as one that undertakes a multitude of challenges and attempts to tackle even the greatest of problems. He applied this view to his nation. He believed that what made his country great was its ability to solve issues and, most importantly, work to improve the condition of all people. Anyone that sought to do nothing in a situation, regardless of the pretense, Roosevelt saw as idle, wrong, and going against what it meant to be a man of worth. Ultimately, Roosevelt deeply held the belief that the United States had a clear and concise role to play in the foreign lands that they had acquired. His nation had to be active in its endeavors. It could not sit back and let the islands fall into ruins. The blood and chaos from this would be on their hands. Instead, the United States had to take charge of the Philippines, and teach them all the ways that lead to liberty, peace, and prosperity for their people. Yes, it would be burdensome of the United States to do so, and no it would not be easy, but it was ultimately, the right course of action, and the path that best reflected the valiant spirit of the nation as whole.

Furthermore, other proponents of annexation of the Philippines pointed to examples in the history of the United States that demonstrated first hand that the destiny of the nation was to grant civilization to the people in the world less fortunate. In a speech he gave on the Senate floor on January 9th, 1899, the U.S senator from Connecticut, Orville H. Platt, used the examples of the Native American Indians as evidence that the theory of the “White Man’s Burden” had already been proven to have been true and successful. He noted that, “we [the white colonists] found here a continent in the hands of the Indians ... who did not want us to come here, who did not want to be governed by us without their consent, and with them incapable of consenting, we have, nevertheless, gone on and legislated for them and governed them, and now, at last, have brought many of them to a state where they have become citizens and incorporated with us....”³⁰ The nation had already shown that it had the ability to transform a people – even ones as “savage” and “uncivilized” as the Native Americans. Therefore, the Filipinos were not beyond the help of the Americans. The nation had an obligation to fulfill. It had come into possession of this territory, not it was time to bring its people into 20th century and show them the ways of “civilization”.

But, the opponents of annexations viewed the spreading of “civilization” to the Filipinos as something that could not happen in an imperialistic system – which they argued would be the nature of the U.S occupation of the islands as the Philippines would be a colony and not a state. If the United States offered the very basics that pertained to being “civilized” which would be an education, then according to the anti-imperialists, the Filipinos will begin to question the legitimacy of the U.S occupation. William Jennings Bryan, in the same speech he gave to the Democratic National Convention, noted on this paradox, ““If we expect to maintain a colonial policy, we shall not find it to our advantage to educate the people. The educated Filipinos are now in revolt against us, and the most

³⁰ Orville H. Platt. Speeches in U.S. Senate, January 9, 1899 (U.S. Cong. Rec. 55th Cong., 3rd Session, p. 501).

ignorant ones have made the least resistance to our domination.”³¹ Therefore, the number one priority of the United States in the Philippines would not be to grant them an education, but, instead, to control them through military force to promote stability. To those against the occupation, this was not something that the country could stand for. It was not in line with the moral character of the nation. There was no duty here to spread liberty and freedom, only selfish desire to exploit for profit.

Furthermore, the debate over the Philippines became so divisive, that both sides looked to the matter of religion and faith to back their beliefs. At the turn of the 20th century, Christianity and the Protestant heritage of the country were still very much important to the majority of the population of the United States. Among the political leaders of the time, there was little discourse over whether the values and morals of the religion played into the matter. Many of the members of Congress on both sides of the aisle were very devout in their faith, not afraid to invoke the name of God to justify their political decisions. However, they disagreed on just how the principles of the faith should play out in the Philippine situation. What was the most Christian approach to the issue of occupation?

The proponents of annexation saw the opportunity in the Philippines as a sign from God that the Christians of the United States were to spread the gospel of Christ to the population. They believed that it was their holy mission to advance the message of the faith- to put into practice the Great Commission that Jesus called of his disciples. Leaders of churches threw their hat into the political arena to voice their opinion to the masses of what they believed God was calling the nation to do. One reverend, A.B Leonard, published an article in the Methodist publication, *Gospel in All Lands*, expressing his desire for the United States to take advantage of the occasion, “but we do know that great opportunities are suddenly open before the Christian Church for advancing among long-oppressed peoples the kingdom of God. The Philippines ... are by the naval and military prowess of a Christian

³¹ William Jennings Bryan. “The Paralyzing Influence of Imperialism” Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Kansas City, Mo., July 4, 5 and 6, 1900, Chicago, 1900, pp. 205-227.

government suddenly thrown open for evangelistic operations... the Christian Church must follow the army and occupy the territory conquered by the war power of the nation.”³² In the eyes of these religious leaders, the best way that the United States could spread wellbeing to the Filipinos was to grant them the means to salvation. It was job of Christian Americans to spread the Gospel. They could not achieve this however, if the U.S abandoned its influence in the islands. This also was the firm belief of President McKinley. A devout Christian, himself, McKinley believed that a key to the U.S occupation of the Philippines was to convert the natives to Christianity. In an interview he gave to a group of Methodists visiting the White House in 1899, recorded by General James F. Rusling, McKinley went over the reasons why he thought American possession of the Philippines was vital. One of them, he stated, was “that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died.”³³ To the President, Christianity represented the height of civilization. Having thrown off the yolk of the Spaniards, the United States was now primed to grant the Filipinos this great gift that they had long been deprived of. According to the advocates of annexation, it was the holy duty of the nation, a commitment that was thrust upon the United States by God Himself as the nation had been blessed by Him for the task.

However, the opponents of annexation challenged the nature of the Christianity practiced by those that justified American rule over the Filipinos as a divinely appointed task. They saw blatant contradictions in the practices of the U.S occupation and those that claimed to be there in the name of the Gospel, and the commandments of Jesus. Richard Bisbee noted in his article on opposing the McKinley Philippine policy that the leaders of the U.S occupation had “lost sight not only of American principles but of the real nature and teachings of Christ.” He went on to discuss the inherent flaw with the strategy of the United States in regards to their dealings with the Filipinos, “it is better to

³² A. B. Leonard, "Prospective Mission Fields," *Gospel in All Lands* August, 1898

³³ James Rusling, "Interview with President William McKinley," *The Christian Advocate* January 22, 1903

treat a man with justice, and give him social and industrial freedom, than it is to make a proselyte of him.”³⁴ In his opinion, the United States did not have their priorities straight in spreading the Gospel. Although he did not disagree with the notion that Christianity needed to be shared with the Filipinos, Bisbee viewed actions as speaking louder than words. The U.S had to treat the Filipinos like they would other Christians instead of oppressing them if they were to truly have them convert to the faith. Samuel Parks, author of the article *the Causes of the Philippine War* which appeared in the *Arena* magazine in June of 1902, had even harsher words to say about the U.S occupation parading under the banner of Christianity. He bluntly stated that it was strange that Christianity in all of its history had not eradicated the fact that “professedly Christian rules, in direct violation of the command, “Thou shalt not kill,” will slaughter for territory or trade or tribute, in cold blood and without remorse, thousands of their fellowmen – and that many of them will do this in the name of humanity, civilization, and religion.”³⁵ In his opinion, the U.S was falling under the same folly that so many others before them have- using religion to justified their practices of oppression and subjugation. The overall practices of the US colonial government most certainly did not match up with the religion that they claimed to confess to.

Overall, the Philippine question really challenged political leaders and average citizens alike to ponder the true character of the nation. There was little doubt that the United States was unique – set apart from the other nations of the world. It had the strong virtues set forth from the Enlightenment principles of the founding fathers coupled with the Protestant spirit and ethics that dated all the way back to the days of the Pilgrims. But, now, facing the issue of annexation of the Philippines – a land vastly distinct from anything else the U.S had ever occupied- the nation had to decide the best practical action to take based on this conceived moral character. It was another element that had to be updated for the 20th century for the United States.

³⁴ Bisbee, *Why I Oppose our Philippine Policy* pp. 116

³⁵ Samuel Parks. *Causes of the Philippine War*. *Arena*, June 1902.

Conclusion

Ultimately, as John A. Fry, author of the piece *Phases of Empire: Late Nineteenth-Century Foreign Relations*, notes, “several of the most important overviews of late nineteenth –century U.S foreign relations have examined such themes as the “transformation” of American foreign policy, the old versus the new diplomacy, America’s “outward thrust”, the emergence of America as a great power, and the “new empire.”³⁶ The story of this transformation of the United States at the close of the 19th century is well documented in the historiography on the era. Many historians share the interpretation that there was shift among many of the political leadership of the time to renege on the old standard of isolationism and break out on to the global stage. For example, the very opening line of the chapter entitled “The Emergence of Foreign Policy” in Robert H. Wiebe’s book *The Search for Order*, reads “during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the mind’s eye of an American swept world affairs with marvelous freedom.”³⁷ Principally it was the Republicans, like McKinley, Roosevelt, and Lodge, that were eager to take this desire to become influential in the world and move a step forward – to empire building itself. They wanted to see the United States begin to rival the great imperialist nations of the time, like Great Britain, in the strength of overseas colonies. The war with Spain of 1898 greatly boosted this pursuit. As Lears notes in his book, “Imperialists could hardly have asked for a more propitious conflict.”³⁸ As a result of conquest, the Republicans already had their empire. All they needed to do was to hold on to the gains, shooting down the protests of anti-imperialists that wanted to grant the new acquisitions their sovereignty.

Specifically, it was the controversy surrounding the acquisition of the Philippine islands that

³⁶ John A Fry,. "Phases of Empire:Late Nineteenth-Century U.S Foreign Relations." *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*. By Charles W. Calhoun. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. pp.303

³⁷ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877 - 1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007 p.224

³⁸ Lears. *Rebirth of a Nation* pp.207

ignited the furious debate over annexation of foreign territory. As Fry notes, “of the war’s various outcomes, this action [the extension of formal colonial rule over the Philippines] most often has been cited as a “departure from American traditions... Never before had land thousands of miles away and inhabited by millions of people been acquired.”³⁹ Indeed, Fry is correct with this assessment. The Philippine acquisition and subsequent colonial rule was a first for the United States. Moreover, it was this departure from American traditions that really underscored the discourse over annexation of the islands. The debate was really a debate not necessarily over just the Philippines, but more so over the larger context of the traditional values of America and how they would fit into a changing foreign policy tailored for the 20th century. The core principles of the nation – political, economic, and moral – became the centerpieces of the rhetoric used by both sides of the discourse – those against expansionism and those for. It was another great American debate - another identity crisis – that would once again rock the halls of Congress just like the others before it.

Overall, it is these types of debate that really speak to the uniqueness of the United States. As a Great Experiment, the United States continually has the opportunity to evolve – to adapt to the present times and circumstances. However, as a country with the oldest active constitution, despite its evolution it persistently stays true to the values of liberty and democracy laid down by its founders. It is this balancing act – the preservation of the old and the adaptation of the new – that truly defines the nation. Moreover, just as this balancing act helped reshape the identity of the nation moving into the 20th century through the debate over the annexation of the Philippines, it will continue to do so as more debates arise in the future. The people of the nation will face more ground shaking disputes over the nature of the country – more identity crises – and consequently, more opportunities to improve on what has been done already, continually striving for the more perfect union that the Founder Fathers intended.

³⁹ Fry *Phases of Empire* p. 324

Bibliography

- Bederman, Gail *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the U.S., 1880-1917*. University of Chicago Press. 1995.
- Beveridge, Albert "Our Philippine Policy" speech before U.S. Senate, January 9, 1900. *Congressional Records, Senate* . 704-711
- Bisbee, R. E. "Why I Oppose Our Philippine Policy." *The Arena* 28 (1902): 113-18.
- Briggs, E. B. "The "Consent of the Governed" and the Filipino." *Catholic World* 70 (1900): 794-801.
- Bryan, William J. "First Speech Against Imperialism." Trans-Mississippi Exposition., Omaha, Nebraska. 14 June 1898. *The Public*. 126th ed. Vol. 3. Chicago, 1900. 333.
- Bryan William J. "The Paralyzing Influence of Imperialism" Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Kansas City, Mo., July 4, 5 and 6, 1900, Chicago, 1900, pp. 205-227.
- Bryan William J. *Will it Pay?* New York Journal, January 15, 1899.
- Carnegie, Andrew. *Should the United States Expand?* Philadelphia: Curtis, 1899
- Clinch, Bryan J. "Imperialism in the Philippines." *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 25.98 (1900): 209-25.
- Crawford Michael J.; Mark L. Hayes; Michael D. Sessions. *The Spanish–American War : Historical Overview and Select Bibliography*. Naval Historical Center, U.S. Department of the Navy. <http://www.history.navy.mil/biblio/biblio7/biblio7a.htm>. Retrieved 15 February 2011
- Denby, Charles *Shall We Keep the Philippines?* Forum September 1898
- Doster, Frank. "Will the Philippines Pay?" *The Arena* 25.5 (1901): 465-70.
- Flowers, Benjamin O. "Some Dead Sea Fruit of Our War of Subjugation," *Arena* 27 (1902): 647-53
- Fry, John A. "Phases of Empire:Late Nineteenth-Century U.S Foreign Relations." *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*. By Charles W. Calhoun. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.
- Gompers, Samuel, Stuart Bruce. Kaufman, Peter J. Albert, Grace Palladino, Marla J. Hughes, and Mary C. Jeske. *The Samuel Gompers Papers*. Vol. 5. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986.
- Kagan, Richard L. "Prescott's Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain,"

- The American Historical Review 101, no. 2 (April 1996): 423–46.
- Lears, T. J. Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation: the Making of Modern America, 1877-1920*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009
- Leonard, A. B. "Prospective Mission Fields," *Gospel in All Lands* August, 1898
- Lodge, Henry Cabot. "The Retention of the Philippine Islands." 56th Cong. 1st Sess. *Congressional Record* 33 (March 7, 1900): 42-43
- Marburg, Theodore. *Expansion*. New York: John Murphy, 1900.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. *Standing at Armageddon: the United States, 1877-1919*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.
- Parks, Samuel. "Causes of the Philippine War". *Arena*, June 1902.
- Platt, Orville H. "Speech to U.S Senate on Philippines", 55th Cong. 3rd Sess. *Congressional Record* 32. (January 9, 1899): 501
- Roosevelt, Theodore, "Expansion and Peace," *The Independent*, Dec. 21, 1899.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Strenuous Life; Essays and Addresses*. New York: The Century Co., 1900.
- Rusling, James. "Interview with President William McKinley," *The Christian Advocate*. January 22, 1903
- Schurz, Carl. *Speeches, Correspondence, and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*. Ed. Frederic Bancroft. Vol. 6. New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1913. Print. 1899-1906.
- Schurz Charles, "The Policy of Imperialism," *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*, vol. 6, pp. 119–20 (1913).
- Scott, Irving M. "Philippine Annexation Justified by Our History, Constitution and Laws." *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* 34.202 (1899): 310-18.
- "USS "Maine" (Navy Historical Center)". History.navy.mil. 17 November 1998.
<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-m/maine.htm>.
- Vanderlip, Frank A. "Facts About the Philippines," *The Century: A Popular Quarterly*, 56 (August 1898): 555.
- Watterson, Henry. "Interview" New York Harold. June, 22. 1989
- Wiebe, Robert H. *The Search for Order: 1877 - 1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007
- Wilcox, Marion. "Peace and the Philippines" *Independent*. Oct. 1900

Academic Vita

Ian C. Vickery
9408 Wildoak Drive
Bethesda, Maryland 20814
icv5003@gmail.com

Education:

Bachelor of Arts Degrees in International Politics – International Relations,
History, and International Studies, Penn State University, Spring 2011
Minor in Spanish
Honors in History
Thesis Title: An Identity Crisis: The Debate Surrounding the United States
Occupation of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War

Related Experience:

Internships with Senators John Ensign and Arlen Specter (Summer 2010)

Honors:

Phi Beta Kappa (inducted 2010)

Phi Kappa Phi (inducted 2010)

Phi Alpha Theta History Honors Society (inducted 2009)

Penn State Dean's List: Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Fall
2010, Spring 2010, Fall 2011

Activities:

Navigators Christian Fellowship

Navigators THON: Family Relations Chair