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Male Degeneracy and the Allure of the Philippines (1998)

KRISTIN L. HOGANSON

Begun as a chivalrous crusade to redeem American honor and liberate the Cubans from Spanish oppression, the Spanish-American War ended as a self-aggrandizing war, a war that resulted not only in the temporary occupation of Cuba but also in the annexation of Puerto Rico and Guam. Most ironic of all, it ended in a bloody colonial war in the Philippines that involved over 126,000 American soldiers, more than 4,000 of whom lost their lives. For years, historians have grappled with the question, Why did the United States finish one war, waged in the name of liberty, only to start another, waged in behalf of empire?

The United States initially became involved in the Philippines as part of the war effort against Spain. After Commodore Dewey sank the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, President McKinley sent reinforcements, who took the city of Manila from the Spaniards in an attack on August 13, 1898. (During the hostilities the Filipino nationalists who ringed the city established a foothold in some of its suburbs.) The peace treaty with Spain, signed on December 10, ceded the Philippines along with Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States. The treaty, known as the Treaty of Paris, then went to the U.S. Senate for ratification. But the Filipinos who had been fighting for independence from Spain did not want to be ceded. On February 4, 1899, shortly before the Senate voted on the treaty, fighting broke out between Filipino troops and American soldiers when a private from Nebraska fired at Filipinos who refused to obey his command to halt. The Senate went ahead and narrowly ratified the treaty ending the war with Spain on February 6, leaving the nation to confront an even greater issue: whether to wage a war against the Filipino nationalists.

Economic motives certainly played a significant role in the decision to fight for the control of the Philippines, which were located close to the hotly contested and potentially lucrative China market. Those who believed the nation needed strategic bases to secure its share of eastern profits regarded

Source: Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, pp. 133–134, 138–140, 142–143, 149–150, 153–154, 176–177, 178–179. Copyright © 1998. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Yale University Press.

the Philippines as a stepping-stone. Yet a troubling question remains: What led Americans to set their democratic scruples aside and wage a trans-Pacific war of conquest? To answer this question, a number of historians have turned to the racial assumptions of the time. Imperialists generally thought the Filipinos *unfit* for self-government. They viewed them as even less adept than the Cubans, who at least had enjoyed a favorable image as heroic fighters prior to the Spanish-American War. . . .

Unlike the anti-imperialists, who drew on negative stereotypes of the Filipinos to argue that the United States should not admit the islands into the Republic, imperialists employed images of savage, childish, and feminine Filipinos to argue that the United States had humanitarian obligations in the Philippines. Claiming that the seemingly unmanly Filipinos were unfit to govern themselves, imperialists held that the United States had a duty to do it for them. Yet given the brutality of the war (an estimated sixteen to twenty thousand Filipino soldiers and two hundred thousand civilians died in the conflict) such humanitarian assertions seem more a justification of imperialist policies than a reflection of a guiding spirit of altruism. But if assessments of the Filipinos served primarily to make U.S. policies seem more palatable, we are left with the original question: Why did the United States wage a lengthy war for control of the Philippines? What explains the imperialist impulse?

To more fully understand the imperialist impulse, meaning the desire to take and govern the Philippines, it is necessary to turn the spotlight from perceptions of the Filipinos to American self-perceptions. Imperialists' comments on American men and American democracy indicate that they wanted to govern the Philippines not only because they doubted the Filipinos' governing capacity, but, just as important, because they doubted their own. In addition to being motivated by markets (and the military bases that seemed necessary to secure them), imperialists were driven by another fundamentally self-interested motive: the conviction that holding colonies would keep American men and their political system from degenerating.

Although a number of Americans believed that, by creating a new cohort of veterans, the Spanish-American War had ensured the well-being of the nation's political system for another generation, some men continued to be plagued by anxieties that an extended peace would lead to, as one author put it, "effeminate tendencies in young men," foremost among them the middle- and upper-class white men who enjoyed the many comforts of industrial society. Rather than easing their minds, the post–Spanish-American War valorization of the serviceman as the ideal citizen and political leader only underscored the question that had troubled them before the war: What would happen if the martial spirit dissipated in the United States? Theodore Roosevelt mentioned some of these concerns in 1901 in a letter to his English

friend Cecil Arthur Spring Rice: "I do not wonder that you sometimes feel depressed over the future both of our race and of our civilization," he wrote. " . . . I should be a fool if I did not see grave cause for anxiety in some of the social tendencies of the day: the growth of luxury throughout the English-speaking world; and especially the gradual diminishing birth rate; and certain other signs of like import are not pleasant to contemplate." Fearful that the short Spanish-American War had not permanently rectified the softness wrought by industrialization, Roosevelt turned to empire as a more lasting remedy.

Imperialists like Roosevelt believed that holding colonies could prove to be a longer-term solution to modern civilization's seemingly dangerous tendency to make young, middle-class, and wealthy men soft, self-seeking, and materialistic. They thought that the experience of holding colonies would create the kind of martial character so valued in the nation's male citizens and political leaders (especially in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War), and that, in so doing, it would prevent national and racial degeneracy. James C. Fernald, who in less militant moments worked on abridging the *Standard Dictionary*, conveyed this idea in his expansionist tract *The Imperial Republic*, published in 1898. Imperial pursuits, he wrote, would "provide adventurous occupation for a host of sturdy men," thereby preventing the United States from retrograding "toward Chinese immobility and decay." Fervent imperialists joined with Fernald to contend that American men must embrace rigorous overseas challenges lest they lose their privileged position in a Darwinian world. "The law of evolution is pitiless and he who gets in its way will be run over," wrote one expansionist to his senator. "There is no standing still, forward or backward we must go." Sen. Jonathan Ross (R, Vt.) drew on similar logic in a speech advocating retention of the Philippines: "Stagnation is decay and ultimate death. Honest struggle, endeavor, and discussion bring light, growth, development, and strength." To such men, colonies held the key to character.

Imperialists wanted to build manly character not only because they were concerned about American men's standing relative to other races and nations but also because they were worried about American men's position vis-à-vis women. Fernald illustrates this point. Seven years before publishing *The Imperial Republic*, he published a tract titled *The* New *Womanhood* that deplored women who did not devote themselves to maternity and homemaking. In this tract, Fernald said that "for high manly health," boys needed "a certain roughness and severity of exercise," but that women would be destroyed by such strenuous endeavors. He was so committed to womanly delicacy that he deplored the style of dress that tried to give women the "high, square shoulders which are the beauty of the manly figure." He went on, "The tendency of man is toward authority, command, and penalty; of woman, toward tenderness, persuasion and reward" and concluded that women should be sheltered from the wider world for their moral well-being.

From Fernald's point of view, women who ceased to devote themselves to men and instead competed with them, who preferred "manly" self-assertion to "womanly" self-sacrifice, threatened the health of the race. But just as worrisome was women's threat to traditional male prerogatives. Warning that softness in men and assertiveness in women indicated degeneracy, Fernald offered imperial policies as a solution. He looked to overseas policies to solve domestic problems because he believed that the rigors of combat and challenges of establishing colonial control would test American men more thoroughly than domestic pursuits. Beyond that, they seemed certain to separate American men from effeminizing domestic influences. . . .

As the nation celebrated its victory, some observers concluded that American men had done more than prove their manhood in war—they had improved it. Manhood, they opined, was the greatest legacy of the war. The newspaper editor Henry Watterson conveyed this idea in his *History of the Spanish-American War.* "Above all, it [the war] elevated, broadened, and vitalized the manhood of the rising generation of Americans," he wrote. Similarly, an article in *Century Magazine* held that "exhibitions of the finer and rarer qualities of manhood, added to the record of bravery made by white and black, regular and volunteer, all these are national possessions that can never be taken away from us, that can never work us injury; they are of more real value than any territorial possessions that the war has brought or may bring to these United States. For it remains forever true that it is the manhood, the nobility, the character of its people, and not the extent of its territory, that makes a country great." Such statements implied that the war had been, above all, a wonderful and ultimately successful opportunity for American men to "vitalize" their manhood and then flaunt it before everyone who had doubted it. This included American men themselves. In the Republican convention of 1900, Sen. Chauncey M. Depew (R, N.Y.) applauded the war's effects on American men's psyches. Thinking of charges such as those made by Theodore Roosevelt on the eve of the war that "shilly-shallying and half-measures at this time merely render us contemptible in the eyes of the world; and what is infinitely more important in our own eyes too," Depew declared, "There is not a man here who does not feel four hundred percent bigger in 1900 than he did in 1896. Bigger intellectually, bigger hopefully, bigger patriotically, bigger in the grasp of the fact that he is a citizen of a country which has become a world power."

It was against this martial backdrop that the United States confronted the Philippine issue. The ascendant belief that martial endeavors were good for the nation because they vitalized American men made overseas colonies appear desirable not only for their economic and strategic benefits but also for their character-building potential. This assumption was particularly noticeable in the thought of the prominent imperialists Theodore Roosevelt, Albert

Beveridge, and Henry Cabot Lodge, all of whom regarded manly character as the bedrock of American democracy. . . .

Roosevelt, Beveridge, and Lodge had plenty of company in glorifying imperial policies for their effects on character. Similar strains of thought can be seen in the statements made by many of their fellow imperialists, including even President McKinley. After resisting the pressures for war with Spain in the early months of 1898, McKinley caught a mild dose of war fever. "What a wonderful experience," he said of the Spanish-American War. The success of the war and his own increased status made McKinley more receptive to taking and holding the Philippines. Though never an ardent imperialist, McKinley went along with the affirmations put forth by such imperialists as Roosevelt, Beveridge, and Lodge. Echoing their assertions, he explained his decision to take the Philippines by saying, "The progress of a nation can alone prevent degeneration. There must be new life or there will be weakness and decay." McKinley proffered the Philippines as a challenge with great potential, as "the mightiest test of American virtue and capacity." Like a number of other imperialists, he concluded that aggressive Philippine policies would build character in American men. "We have not only been adding territory to the United States," he declared in 1899, "but we have been adding character and prestige to the American name (continued applause)."

Driven by a desire to build character in American men, imperialists welcomed the Philippine War as a great challenge. Behind their noble-sounding talk of U.S. obligations to the Filipinos lay a self-serving motive: the belief that the Filipinos were opportunities as well as responsibilities. The imperialists' calls to duty, calculated to appeal to Americans' sense of mission, masked the less benevolent idea that conquering and governing the Philippines would benefit American men. The stereotypes of the Filipinos [mentioned] earlier can reveal much about these self-interested concerns if they are interpreted with their implications for American men foremost in mind. . . .

At the turn of the century, Lodge, Beveridge, and Roosevelt worried that American men were abdicating their domestic authority, thus causing women to become more active in public life. Like Fernald, the imperial publicist and exponent of domesticity for women, all three deplored women's growing political presence and insisted that electoral politics should remain a male preserve. . . .

Believing that the refinement and purity of such women as [his wife] Anna Lodge depended on their distance from ugly political and commercial struggles, Henry Cabot Lodge and his like-minded allies on the imperial issue preached men's responsibility to shelter and protect women. . . . For his part, Roosevelt maintained that a healthy state relied on women's domesticity as well as men's heroism. "The woman must be the housewife, the helpmeet of the homemaker, the wise and fearless mother of many healthy

children," he wrote in "The Strenuous Life." "When men fear work or fear righteous war, when women fear motherhood, they tremble on the brink of doom." Fearing that "race suicide" would enfeeble the nation, Roosevelt told his turn-of-the-century audiences that women's primary political role was to bear and raise children.

Roosevelt, Beveridge, and Lodge wanted to build American men's governing capacity in part to counter women's increasing political activism. They believed that more authoritative men would dispel the pernicious "propaganda" of women's equality and cause women to return to domestic pursuits. These objectives contributed to their commitment to martial policies, for they assumed that by teaching American men to wield authority, such policies would teach them to govern their households with a firm, though benevolent, hand. Arduous struggles, they believed, would enable men to regain women's respect, devotion, and admiration. The same logic which held that an inability to govern household dependents served as evidence of Filipino men's political incapacity led Beveridge and other imperialists to think that shouldering responsibility for childlike or feminine colonial dependents would demonstrate American men's political fitness. . . .

By imperialist accounts, the [anti-annexationists] deserved little credibility in political debate because they were effeminate, homebound critics, not bold men of action. In "The Strenuous Life," Roosevelt blamed the "silly, mock humanitarianism of the prattlers who sit at home in peace" for costing the lives of American men in the Philippines. The timid antis, he maintained, spoke of liberty and the consent of the governed merely to "excuse themselves for their unwillingness to play the part of men." Roosevelt continued this theme in another address: "We need display but scant patience with those who, sitting at ease in their own homes, delight to exercise a querulous and censorious spirit of judgment upon their brethren who, whatever their shortcomings, are doing strong men's work as they bring the light of civilization into the world's dark places. . . ."

As they struggled to stigmatize antis as womanly, imperialists benefited from the widespread tendency to construe opposition to war as a sign of cowardice, weakness, or other supposedly unmanly attributes. Especially in the frenzy of militarism that followed the Spanish-American War, militance seemed to indicate manly character, and a lack thereof, effeminacy. Imperialists also benefited from the composition of the anti-imperialist forces. Women were, indeed, important to the anti-imperialist cause. Although the Anti-Imperialist League had no women in its elected leadership, women were highly visible among the ranks. In the first mass meeting to protest imperialism, held in June 1898, half of the people in attendance were women. The antis' campaign to recall volunteer troops from the Philippines in the spring of 1899 relied heavily on the energies of women, who lobbied to have the troops returned. Women also helped sustain the anti-imperialist movement financially. In the second meeting of the New

England Anti-Imperialist League, an officer reported that "noble-hearted ladies in Boston and New York" had contributed "ten or a dozen times each" to the league. . . .

By depicting the antis as women, imperialists suggested that the elderly, peaceable, seemingly female (if not literally female) antis did not represent the [founding] fathers as much as themselves, for, although older, the antis lacked the fathers' manly character. Despite their relative youthfulness, imperialists could say that they resembled the manly fathers more than the womanly antis did. Because of the martial ideal of citizenship that flourished in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and the more fundamental assumption that manhood mattered in politics, these claims significantly benefited imperialists. The valorization of manly character in late-nineteenth-century U.S. politics meant that the "aunties," as the "old lady element" in public affairs, appeared less qualified to judge whether American policies were consistent with American principles than the imperialists, who might have seemed boyish but always seemed male.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The primary sources fall into several categories: cartoons from the popular press, writings of expansionists regarding the Philippines, selections from the congressional debates over Philippine annexation, and statistical tables related to U.S. overseas trade. As you evaluate these sources, remember that they may support different conclusions about the decision to annex the Philippines and thus may reinforce or contradict Kristin Hoganson's argument in Source 1. They will also help you come to your own conclusion about why the United States decided to keep the Philippines.

Cartoons on Philippine Annexation

This section contains cartoons related to the issue of the annexation of the Philippines. Political cartoons such as these were regular features in the late nineteenth-century popular press. Because they were a form of political commentary intended for a mass audience of paying readers, it is reasonable for historians to assume that they shaped *and* reflected popular views and prejudices. As you study these images, note the issues that they emphasize. Pay particular attention to images revealing attitudes toward masculinity or gender. Do these images reveal that proponents of annexation attempted to use gender as an effective weapon in the debate over the Philippines? Do any of these images suggest that the need to assert masculinity was connected in annexationists' minds to other issues?

This cartoon, originally published in the *Minneapolis Tribune*, comments on the opposition of Massachusetts senator George Hoar to Philippine annexation.

"Recommended by Hoar" (1899)

RECOMMENDED BY HOAR.

HOAR: "Give the child over to the nurse, uncle, and it will stop crying."—From the *Tribune* (Minneapolis).

Boston Athenaeum

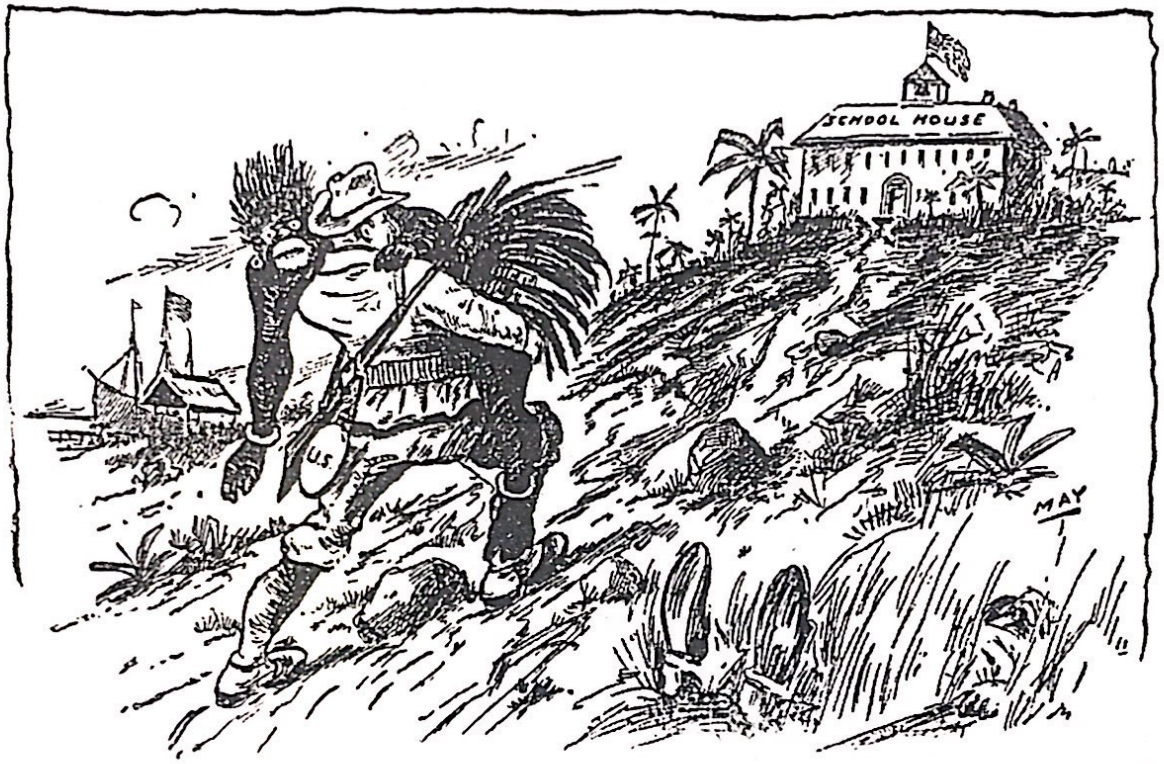
3 This cartoon from *Judge* magazine also focuses on George Hoar's opposition to annexation. The figure on the lower left is John P. Altgeld, the former governor of Illinois who gained nationwide attention by freeing three of the accused bombers in Chicago's Haymarket Square bombing.

"The Anti-Expansion Ticket for 1900" (1899)

Boston Athenaeum

4 English poet Rudyard Kipling penned the poem "The White Man's Burden" in celebration of the U.S. Senate's ratification of the treaty with Spain. This cartoon, originally from the *Detroit Journal* and reprinted in the *Literary Digest*, illustrates the same theme.

"The White Man's Burden" (1899)

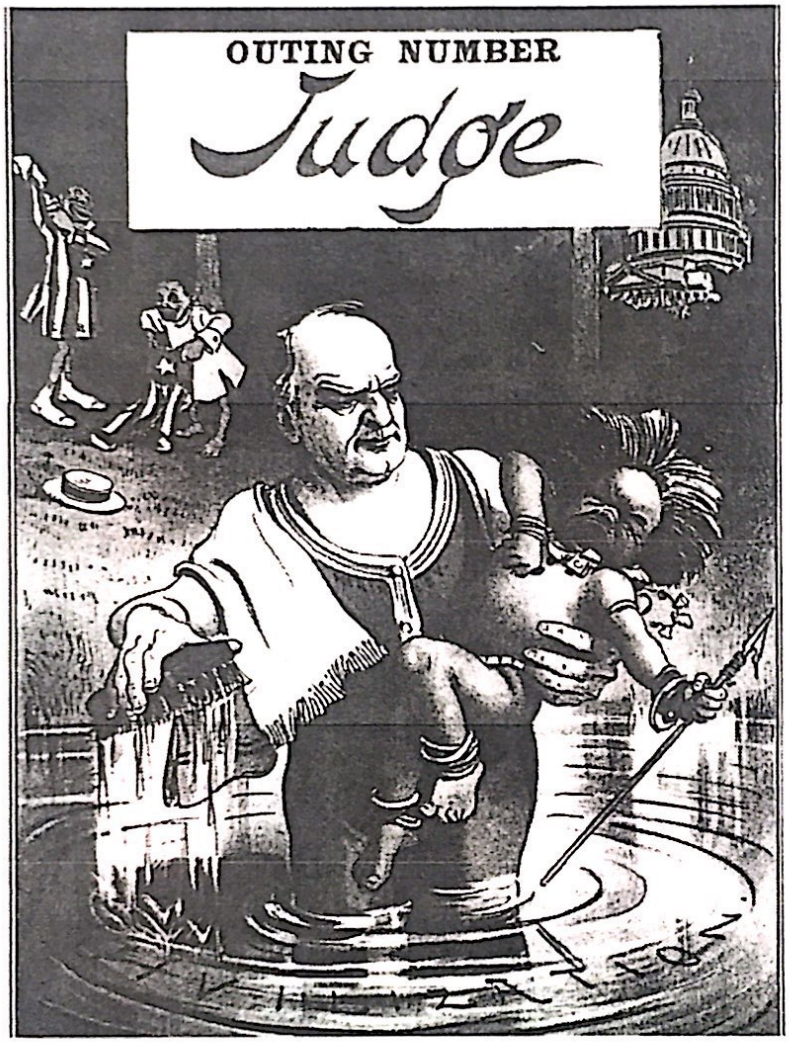


THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN.—*The Journal, Detroit.*

Harvard College Library, Widener Library, P 267.3

5 Also from *Judge* magazine, this cartoon makes an obvious connection between cultural uplift and annexation. Note, too, the contrasting images of McKinley and Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

"The Filipino's First Bath" (1899)



Courtesy of Harvard College Library, Widener Library, P 248.4F

Statements by Expansionists

Even before the start of the Spanish-American War, many American expansionists were vocal in their desire to see American influence expand overseas. After the U.S. Senate voted to ratify the treaty with Spain, which turned over the Philippines to the United States, they were equally vocal in support of a war against Filipino nationalists upset with the American decision to keep their country. This section contains excerpts from speeches, articles, and books written by some of the most prominent expansionists. As you read them, note the various justifications offered for taking—and then fighting to keep—the Philippines. Do any of these sources equate manliness with such a policy?

There was no more ardent or vocal expansionist than Theodore Roosevelt. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Roosevelt ordered Commodore Dewey, several months before the Spanish-American War started, to keep his fleet together and, in the event of war with Spain, engage the Spanish fleet in the Philippines. Roosevelt also wrote and spoke widely on the desirability of American overseas expansion. His essay "The Strenuous Life," originally delivered as a speech in April 1899, offers an especially forceful statement of Roosevelt's thinking about America's role in the world. It is also a vivid demonstration of his thinking about manliness and gender.

"The Strenuous Life" (1899)

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

A life of slothful ease, a life of that peace which springs merely from lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things, is as little worthy of a nation as of an individual. I ask only that what every self-respecting American demands from himself and from his sons shall be demanded of the American nation as a whole. Who among you would teach your boys that ease, that peace is to be the first consideration in their eyes—to be the ultimate goal after which they strive?. . . We do not admire the man of timid peace. We admire the man who embodies victorious effort; the man who never wrongs his neighbor, who is prompt to help a friend, but who has those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual life. . . .

In the last analysis a healthy state can exist only when the men and women who make it up lead clean, vigorous, healthy lives; when the children are so trained that they shall endeavor, not to shirk difficulties, but to overcome them; not to seek ease, but to know how to wrest triumph from

toil and risk. The man must be glad to do a man's work, to dare and endure and to labor; to keep himself, and to keep those dependent upon him. The woman must be the housewife, the helpmeet of the homemaker, the wise and fearless mother of many healthy children. . . .

When men fear work or fear righteous war, when women fear motherhood, they tremble on the brink of doom; and well it is that they should vanish from the earth, where they are fit subjects for the scorn of all men and women who are themselves strong and brave and high-minded. . . .

. . . In 1898 we could not help being brought face to face with the problem of war with Spain. *All* we could decide was whether we should shrink like cowards from the contest, or enter into it as beseemed a brave and high-spirited people; and, once in, whether failure or success should crown our banners. So it is now. We cannot avoid the responsibilities that confront us in Hawaii, Cuba, Porto [*sic*] Rico, and the Philippines. All we can decide is whether we shall meet them in a way that will redound to the national credit, or whether we shall make of our dealings with these new problems a dark and shameful page in our history. To refuse to deal with them at all merely amounts to dealing with them badly. We have a given problem to solve. If we undertake the solution, there is, of course, always danger that we may not solve it aright; but to refuse to undertake the solution simply renders it certain that we cannot possibly solve it aright. The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues, the ignorant man, and the man of dull mind, whose soul is incapable of feeling the mighty lift that thrills "stern men with empires in their brains"—all these, of course, shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties; shrink from seeing us build a navy and an army adequate to our needs; shrink from seeing us 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 the Spanish flag. These are the men who fear the strenuous life, who fear the only national life which is really worth leading. They believe in that cloistered life which saps the hardy virtues in a nation, as it saps them in the individual; or else they are wedded to that base spirit of gain and greed which recognizes in commercialism the be-all and end-all of national life, instead of realizing that, though an indispensable element, it is, after all, but one of the many elements that go to make up true national greatness. . . .

. . . It is worse than idle to say that we have no duty to perform, and can leave to their fates the islands we have conquered. Such a course would be the course of infamy. It would be followed at once by utter chaos in the wretched islands themselves. Some stronger, manlier power would have to step in and do the work, and we would have shown ourselves weaklings, unable to carry to successful completion the labors that great and high-spirited nations are eager to undertake. . . .

Source: Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1903), pp. 1–4, 6–8, 9–10, 17–18; original copyright © 1899 by The Century Company.

The problems are different for the different islands. Porto [*sic*] Rico is not large enough to stand alone. We must govern it wisely and well, primarily in the interest of its own people. Cuba is, in my judgment, entitled ultimately to settle for itself whether it shall be an independent state or an integral portion of the mightiest of republics. . . . The Philippines offer a yet graver problem. Their population includes half-caste and native Christians, warlike Moslems, and wild pagans. Many of their people are utterly unfit for self-government, and show no signs of becoming fit. Others may in time become fit but at present can only take part in self-government under a wise supervision, at once firm and beneficent. We have driven Spanish tyranny from the islands. If we now let it be replaced by savage anarchy, our work has been for harm and not for good. I have scant patience with those who fear to undertake the task of governing the Philippines, and who openly avow that they do fear to undertake it, or that they shrink from it because of the expense and trouble; but I have even scanter 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. Their doctrines, if carried out, would make it incumbent upon us to leave the Apaches of Arizona to work out their own salvation, and to decline to interfere in a single Indian reservation. Their doctrines condemn your forefathers and mine for ever having settled in these United States.

7 In a meeting with a group from the Methodist Episcopal Church, President William McKinley explained how he came to a decision about the desirability of annexing the Philippines.

William McKinley on Annexation (1899)

Hold a moment longer! Not quite yet, gentlemen! Before you go I would like to say just a word about the Philippine business. I have been criticized a good deal about the Philippines, but don't deserve it. The truth is I didn't want the Philippines, and when they came to us, as a gift from the gods, I did not know what to do with them. When the Spanish War broke out [Admiral George] Dewey was at Hongkong, and I ordered him to go to Manila and to capture or destroy the Spanish fleet, and he had to; because, if defeated, he had no place to refit on that side of the globe, and if the Dons were victorious they would likely cross the Pacific and ravage our Oregon and California coasts. And so he had to destroy the Spanish fleet, and did it! But that was as far as I thought then.

Source: Charles S. Olcott, *William McKinley* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916; reprinted in 1972 by AMS Press, New York), Vol. II, pp. 110–111.

When I next realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess I did not know what to do with them. I sought counsel from all sides—Democrats as well as Republicans—but got little help. I thought first we would take only Manila; then Luzon; then other islands perhaps also. I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany-our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) 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. And then I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly, and the next morning I sent for the chief engineer of the War Department (our map-maker), and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States (pointing to a large map on the wall of his office), and there they are, and there they will stay while I am President!

8 Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana was another vocal defender of American imperialism. In this speech before the Senate in January 1900, Beveridge defends the American effort to keep the Philippines in the face of both armed Filipino resistance and vocal critics at home of an increasingly costly Philippine-American War.

"In Support of an American Empire" (1900)

ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

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. We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee under God, of the civilization of the world. And we will move forward to our work, not howling out regrets like slaves whipped to their burdens, but with gratitude for a task worthy of our strength, and thanksgiving to Almighty God that He has marked us as His chosen people, henceforth to lead in the regeneration of the world.

This island empire is the last land left in all the oceans. If it should prove a mistake to abandon it, the blunder once made would be irretrievable. If it proves a mistake to hold it, the error can be corrected when we will. Every other progressive nation stands ready to relieve us.

But to hold it will be no mistake. Our largest trade henceforth must be with Asia. The Pacific is our ocean. More and more Europe will manufacture the most it needs, secure from its colonies the most it consumes. Where shall we turn for consumers of our surplus? Geography answers the question. China is our natural customer: She is nearer to us than to England, Germany, or Russia, the commercial powers of the present and the future. They have moved nearer to China by securing permanent bases on her borders. The Philippines gives us a base at the door of all the East.

Lines of navigation from our ports to the Orient and Australia; from the Isthmian Canal to Asia; from all Oriental ports to Australia, converge at and separate from the Philippines. They are a self-supporting, dividend-paying fleet, permanently anchored at a spot selected by the strategy of Providence, commanding the Pacific. And the Pacific is the ocean of the commerce of the future. Most future wars will be conflicts for commerce. The power that rules the Pacific, therefore, is the power that rules the world. And, with the Philippines, that power is and will forever be the American Republic.

China's trade is the mightiest commercial fact in our future. Her foreign commerce was $285,738,300 in 1897, of which we, her neighbor, had less than 9 per cent, of which only a little more than half was merchandise sold to China by us. We ought to have 50 per cent, and we will. And China's foreign commerce is only beginning. Her resources, her possibilities, her wants, all are undeveloped. She has only 340 miles of railway. I have seen trains loaded with natives and all the activities of modern life already appearing along the line. But she needs, and in fifty years will have, 20,000 miles of railway.

Who can estimate her commerce then? That statesman commits a crime against American trade—against the American grower of cotton and wheat and tobacco, the American manufacturer of machinery and clothing—who fails to put America where she may command that trade. . . .

It will be hard for Americans who have not studied them to understand the people. They are a barbarous race, modified by three centuries of contact with a decadent race. The Filipino is the South Sea Malay, put through a process of three hundred years of superstition in religion, dishonesty in dealing, disorder in habits of industry, and cruelty, caprice, and corruption in government. It is barely possible that 1,000 men in all the archipelago are capable of self-government in the Anglo-Saxon sense.

Source: U.S. Congress, Senate, "In Support of an American Empire," speech by Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana, 56th Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record 33 (January 9, 1900): pp. 704–712 passim.

My own belief is that there are not 100 men among them who comprehend what Anglo-Saxon self-government even means, and there are over 5,000,000 people to be governed. . . .

Mr. President, reluctantly and only from a sense of duty am I forced to say that American opposition to the war has been the chief factor prolonging it. Had Aguinaldo* not understood that in America, even in the American Congress, even here in the Senate, he and his cause were supported; had he not known that it was proclaimed on the stump and in the press of a faction in the United States that every shot his misguided followers fired into the breasts of American soldiers was like the volleys fired by Washington's men against the soldiers of King George his insurrection would have dissolved before it entirely crystallized. . . .

Mr. President, this question is deeper than any question of party politics; deeper than any question of the isolated policy of our country even; deeper even than any question of constitutional power. It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as his chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master is upon us: "Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you rule over many things."

Senate Debate on the Treaty with Spain

In early 1899, the U.S. Senate debated the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, negotiated with Spain at the end of the Spanish-American War. The treaty called for the Philippines to be turned over to the United States, a key issue in the debates on the treaty in the Senate and the country at large. As you read the following excerpts from these debates, notice how annexationists counter objections to taking the Philippines. How did racial attitudes influence each side's arguments? What issues seem most important in the minds of the expansionist senators?

*Filipino nationalist Emilio Aguinaldo was the leader of the armed resistance to American occupation.

9 Selections from the Treaty Debate (1899)

SEN. [DONELSON] CAFFERY (*D, LOUISIANA*)

In the first place, any people that we take jurisdiction over, by taking the territory in which they live, ought not to be, and, in my opinion, cannot [*sic*] be, incorporated into our midst, to be bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, without their free consent.

In the second place, if such a people are unfit and in all human probability never will be fit for the glorious privileges, franchises, and functions of an American citizen, we ought not in that case to even think of incorporating them into the United States, for we cannot [*sic*] establish the principle of despotic sway in America. . . .

Sir, when I look at the condition of the world to-day, when I review the history of the past, I am unalterably convinced that no permanent sway can ever be held by the white man over the colored races of the Tropics; and if sway is held, it is held under the power of unlimited, cruel despotism. That is the only way the white man can rule in the Tropics. It is the only way he has ever ruled. Whether it is providential or whether it is not, it is a fact. . . .

SEN. [ORVILLE H.] PLATT (*R, CONNECTICUT*)

Mr. President, what did we do with the Indians of this country? I said that that doctrine would have turned back the Mayflower from Plymouth Rock. We found here a continent in the hands of the Indians, aborigines, 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. If you attempt to make a literal application of this doctrine, what answer have you to make when the Indian raises his voice and says: "I did not want to be legislated for, I did not consent to be governed by the United States; you violated your Declaration of Independence when you attempted to legislate for and to govern me without my consent"?. . .

. . . I am one who believes that we shall not have done a great wrong to humanity, that we shall not have imperiled our institutions, that we shall not have rung the doom knell of republican institutions if we extend over the people who reside in the territory which we may acquire those principles which protect them in their lives, which protect them in their property, which protect them in their efforts to secure happiness, and the American Senate and the American House of Representatives are not going to legislate in any other spirit, Mr. President. . . .

Source: Congressional Record, 55th Cong., 3rd sess., January 1899, pt. 1, pp. 436, 437, 502–503, 639, 640, 641, 959, 960.

I believe in Providence. I believe the hand of Providence brought about the conditions which we must either accept or be recreant to duty. I believe that those conditions were a part of the great development of the great force of Christian civilization on earth. I believe the same force was behind our army at Santiago and our ships in Manila Bay that was behind the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock. I believe that we have been chosen to carry on and 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 governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, we have spread that civilization across the continent until it stood at the Pacific Ocean looking ever westward. . . .

The English-speaking people, the agents of this civilization, the agency through which humanity is to be uplifted, through which despotism is to go down, through which the rights of man are to prevail, is charged with this great mission. *Providence has put it upon us. We propose to execute it.* We propose to proclaim liberty in the Philippines Islands, if they are ours. We propose to proclaim liberty and justice and the protection of life and human rights wherever the flag of the United States is planted. Who decries that? Who will haul down those principles?. . .

SEN. [JOHN LOWNDES] MCLAURIN (*D, SOUTH CAROLINA*)

I feel that a representative from South Carolina is peculiarly qualified to speak upon one phase of the question, and it is that pertaining to the incorporation of a mongrel and semibarbarous population into our body politic, a population that, so far as I can ascertain, is inferior to but akin to the negro in moral and intellectual qualities and incapacity for self-government. The experience of the South for the past thirty years with the negro race, is pregnant with lessons of wisdom for our guidance in the Philippines. It is passing strange that Senators who favored universal suffrage and the full enfranchisement of the negro should now advocate imperialism.

In other words, that territory can be acquired by conquest, held as a colony, and its inhabitants treated as vassals rather than citizens—governed by military rule or legislation not authorized by the Constitution. There is a glaring inconsistency in these positions. If they are sincere in their views as to the Philippines, they should propose an amendment to the Constitution which will put the inferior races in this country and the inhabitants of the Philippines upon an equality as to their civil and political rights, and thus forever settle the vexed race and suffrage questions in this country as well as the outlying territories.

How can they consistently, justly, and, I might add, constitutionally advocate a policy for outlying territories, embracing races so nearly akin to the negro, which differs so radically from the policy adopted as to that race in the South? There can be but one answer to that question, and that is that they substantially admit, in the light of a third of a century's experience, that universal suffrage is a monumental failure and that the time has come for the correction of this stupendous government error. . . .

Therefore, if the Philippine Islands were annexed and formed into States, this Chamber and the other House would contain about one-seventh Japanese, Malays, Chinese, or whatever mixture they have out there. We would have representatives with a voice in directing the affairs of this country from another continent, speaking another language, different in race, religion, and civilization—a people with whom we have nothing in common. For me, I cannot [*sic*] tolerate the thought. The great strength of our country is not merely its isolated position, washed on each side by the waters of a great ocean, but in a homogeneous population, speaking a common language, and with similar aspirations and ideas of liberty and civilization. . . .

In a commercial point of view, I believe the importance of the Philippines per se is greatly exaggerated. They are chiefly valuable as the key to the Orient, but we need not colonize to obtain that advantage. The exports of the Philippines, according to the Statistical Abstract, in 1896 amounted to $30,806,250. If this entire trade was monopolized by us it would be insignificant. We will have to teach them to wear shirts and breeches before we can trade with them much. But England and Germany have large trade interests in the Philippines, and under our agreement with Spain she must have equal trade privileges with the United States. As a matter of dollars and cents, I doubt its advantage. . . .

If we embark in a colonial system, it means the inauguration of a despotic power in Washington. It means a large standing army that will not only be used to rule outlying territories with an iron hand, but that sooner or later will be used at home to overawe and override the popular will. An imperialistic democracy, like an atheistic religion, is an impossible hybrid. . . .

SEN. [HENRY CABOT] LODGE (*R, MASSACHUSETTS*)

What our precise policy shall be I do not know, because I for one am not sufficiently informed as to the conditions there to be able to say what it will be best to do, nor, I may add, do I think anyone is. But I believe that we shall have the wisdom not to attempt to incorporate those islands with our body politic, or make their inhabitants part of our citizenship, or set their labor alongside of ours and within our tariff to compete in any industry with American workmen. I believe that we shall have the courage not to depart from those islands fearfully, timidly, and unworthily and leave them to anarchy among themselves, to the brief and bloody domination of some self-constituted dictator, and to the quick conquest of other powers, who will have no such hesitation

as we should feel in crushing them into subjection by harsh and repressive methods. It is for us to decide the destiny of the Philippines, not for Europe, and we can do it alone and without assistance. I believe that we shall have the wisdom, the self-restraint, and the ability to restore peace and order in those islands and give to their people an opportunity for self-government and for freedom under the protecting shield of the United States until the time shall come when they are able to stand alone, if such a thing is possible, and if they do not themselves desire to remain under our protection. This is a great, a difficult, and a noble task. I believe that American civilization is entirely capable of fulfilling it, and I should not have that profound faith which I now cherish in American civilization and American manhood if I did not think so.

Take now the other alternative. Suppose we reject the treaty or strike out the clause relating to the Philippines. That will hand the islands back to Spain; and I can not conceive that any American should be willing to do that. Suppose we reject the treaty; what follows? Let us look at it practically. We continue the state of war, and every sensible man in the country, every business interest, desires the reestablishment of peace in law as well as in fact. At the same time we repudiate the President and his action before the whole world, and the repudiation of the President in such a matter as this is, to my mind, the humiliation of the United States in the eyes of civilized mankind and brands us as a people incapable of great affairs or of taking rank where we belong, as one of the greatest of the great world powers. . . .

There is much else involved here, vast commercial and trade interests, which I believe we have a right to guard and a duty to foster. But the opponents of the treaty have placed their opposition on such high and altruistic grounds that I have preferred to meet them there, and not to discuss the enormous material benefits to our trade, our industries, and our labor dependent upon a right settlement of this question, both directly and indirectly. For this reason I have not touched upon the commercial advantages to the country involved in the question of these islands, or the far greater question of the markets of China, of which we must have our share for the benefit of our workingmen. I have confined myself solely to the question which has been brought to the front here, and to the proposition that we could not be trusted to deal honestly with those islands of the East, for that is what the argument of the opposition, stripped of rhetoric and ornament, amounts to.

Tables on American Exports

As you examine these tables (which are better read from bottom to top), note the trend in manufactured exports and in the exports to particular nations or regions. Also compare the values of exports to Asia with those of exports to the Americas or Europe. Are these trends or values relevant in understanding the decision to annex the Philippines?

10 Value of Manufactured Exports, 1880–1900

[In millions of dollars]

Year	Manufactured foodstuffs[a]	Semi manufactures[b]	Finished manufactures
1900	320	153	332
1899	305	118	263
1898	285	102	223
1897	235	98	213
1896	219	76	182
1895	219	62	144
1894	250	67	136
1893	247	49	130
1892	250	50	133
1891	226	48	140
1890	225	46	133
1889	175	43	123
1888	170	40	114
1887	176	37	112
1886	163	34	112
1885	202	39	111
1884	195	38	118
1883	186	38	122
1882	178	37	125
1881	226	33	102
1880	193	29	93

[a]Processed food.
[b]Partially finished manufactured goods.

Source: Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960), pp. 544–545.

11 Value of U.S. Exports by Country of Destination, 1880–1900

[In millions of dollars]

		America						Europe					Asia					
Year	Total value	Total	Canada	Cuba	Mexico	Brazil	Other	Total	United Kingdom	France	Germany	Other	Total	China	Japan	Other	Australia and Oceania	Africa
1900	1,394	227	95	26	35	12	59	1,040	534	83	187	236	68	15	29	24	41	19
1899	1,227	194	88	19	25	12	50	937	512	61	156	208	49	14	17	18	29	19
1898	1,231	174	84	10	21	13	46	974	541	95	155	183	45	10	20	15	22	18
1897	1,051	159	65	8	23	12	51	813	483	58	125	147	39	12	13	14	23	17
1896	883	153	60	8	19	14	52	673	406	47	98	122	26	7	8	11	17	14
1895	808	143	53	13	15	15	47	628	387	45	92	104	18	4	5	9	13	6
1894	892	153	57	20	13	14	49	701	431	55	92	123	22	6	4	12	12	5
1893	848	152	47	24	20	12	49	662	421	47	84	110	17	4	3	10	11	5
1892	1,030	139	43	18	14	14	50	851	499	99	106	147	20	7	3	10	16	5
1891	884	131	38	12	15	14	52	705	445	61	93	106	26	9	5	12	18	5
1890	858	133	40	13	13	12	55	684	448	50	86	100	20	3	5	12	16	5
1889	742	125	41	12	11	9	52	579	383	46	68	82	19	8	5	6	16	4
1888	696	110	36	10	10	7	47	549	362	39	56	92	20	5	4	11	15	3
1887	716	104	35	11	8	8	42	575	366	57	59	93	20	6	3	11	14	3
1886	680	98	33	10	8	7	40	541	348	42	62	89	23	8	3	12	15	3
1885	742	104	38	9	8	7	42	599	398	47	62	92	21	6	3	12	14	4
1884	741	123	44	11	13	9	46	584	386	51	61	86	17	5	3	9	13	3
1883	824	129	44	15	17	9	44	660	425	59	66	110	17	4	3	10	14	4
1882	751	113	37	12	15	9	40	600	408	50	54	88	19	6	3	10	13	6
1881	902	108	38	11	11	9	39	766	481	94	70	121	13	5	1	7	10	5
1880	836	93	29	11	8	9	36	719	454	100	57	108	12	1	3	8	7	5

Source: Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960), pp. 550–551.