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The Development of American Policy Toward The Philippines

THOMAS R. McHALE

AERICAN entry into the ranks of colonial powers as an aftermath of the Spanish American War was sudden, unexpected, and, chronologically speaking, late in the game of colonial empire building. Prior to the last decade of the 19th century, the United States had shown no lack of territorial acquisitiveness,¹ but national expansion was exclusively in terms of organic growth of the whole nation. There was no interest in, nor attempts at building a "colonial empire" along conventional lines in which territories and their inhabitants were placed "permanently" under control but not under a shared set of political institutions. Up to 1898, all "civilized" inhabitants of new territories were immediately given the status of United States citizens with all the rights and privileges thereof.

Weinberg, in his survey of motivations for national action, or rationalization for action taken, lists a proliferation of con-

¹ American territorial expansion had taken many forms: purchase, conquest, negotiation and voluntary cession. The major landmarks in American territorial expansion were the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the annexation of Florida through a treaty with Spain in 1819, the annexation of Texas in 1845 as a result of the request of the Americans who held power in the independent area at the time, and the purchase of Alaska in 1887 from Russia. For a discussion of this expansionistic tendency in the United States, see Kenneth Scott Latourette, *THE UNITED STATES MOVES ACROSS THE PACIFIC* (New York: Harpers & Bro., 1946) pp. 3-5.

burden", "paramount interest", "political affinity", "self-deceits that played a role in American territorial expansion. These included "natural right", "geographical predestination", "the destined use of the soil", "extension of the area of freedom", "true title", "the mission of regeneration", "natural growth", "political gravitation", "inevitable destiny", "the white man's burden", "paramount interest", "political affinity", "self defence", "international police power" and "world leadership".²

Despite this wide assortment of "motivation" — much of it nakedly imperialistic — which found articulation at various times in American history, American expansion in the pre-Spanish-American-War era was singularly non-colonial. The political inequality of newly acquired areas in respect of territorial status was always assured to be of temporary duration and scarcity of population figured as the only important deterrent to formal political equality as states for all such areas.

The non-colonial nature of American expansionism up to the last decade of the 19th century has a variety of explanations.

From the legal standpoint, American constitutionalism appears to have been an important barrier (but not insurmountable, as later events indicated) to the establishment of a colonial empire. The American Declaration of Independence with its assertions that "all men are created equal" and "governments derive just power from the consent of the governed" precluded colonial empire building in the minds of most constitutional theorists.

A number of Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution, dating from the early 19th-century decisions of Chief Justice Marshall, appeared to provide a solid buttressing for this position.³ In the famous Dred Scott case just before the American Civil War, Chief Justice Taney wrote a decision

² Albert K. Weinberg, *MANIFEST DESTINY, A STUDY OF NATIONALIST EXPANSIONISM IN AMERICAN HISTORY*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1935.

³ The anti-imperialist movement in the United States frequently used arguments based on such constitutional interpretations. See, for example, the numerous references in *REPUBLIC OR EMPIRE* (Chicago: Independence Co., 1899), *passim*.

which contains such categorical statements on the question of colonies that few Americans ever seriously argued the issue in the half century preceding the Spanish-American War.

A reading of the following excerpts from the Taney decision provides a firm point of reference on the question of constitutionalism involved.⁴

There is certainly no power given by the Constitution to the Federal Government to establish or maintain colonies bordering on the United States or at a distance, to be ruled and governed at its own pleasure, nor to enlarge its territorial limits in any way except by the admission of new States. That power is plainly given; and if a new State is admitted it needs no further legislation by Congress, because the Constitution itself defines the relative rights and powers and duties of the State and the citizens of the State and the Federal Government. But no power is given to acquire a territory to be held and governed permanently in that character. ...And, indeed, the power exercised by Congress to acquire territory and establish a government there, according to its own unlimited discretion, was viewed with great jealousy by the leading statesmen of the day. ...We do not mean, however, to question the power of Congress in this respect. The power to expand the territory of the United States by the admission of new States is plainly given; and in the construction of this power by all the departments of the Government it has been held to authorize the acquisition of territory not fit for admission at the time but to be admitted as soon as its population and situation would entitle it to admission. It is acquired to become a State and not to be held as a colony and governed by Congress with absolute authority; and as the propriety of admitting a new State is committed to the sound discretion of Congress the power to acquire territory for that purpose to be held by the United States until it is in a suitable condition to become a State upon an equal footing with the other States, must rest upon the same discretion.

The purely juristic attitudes on the question were paralleled by widely held beliefs that could best be described as part of America's political ideology. A typical expression of these beliefs is the following statement of Senator Hoar of Massachusetts in 1898:⁵

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁵ CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, 55th Congress, 3rd Session, as quoted in Caryl Grunder and William Livesey, *THE PHILIPPINES AND THE UNITED STATES* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 40.

I claim that under the Declaration of Independence you cannot govern a foreign territory, a foreign people, another people than your own, that you cannot subjugate them or govern them against their will, because you think it is for their good, when they do not; because you think you are going to give them the blessings of liberty. You have no right at the cannon's mouth to impose on an unwilling people your Declaration of Independence and your Constitution and your notions of what is good.

The constitutional questions involved were eventually resolved by a series of United States Supreme Court decisions in 1900-1901, usually referred to as the "Insular cases". Yet these decisions necessitated a complete reversal of widely recognized precedents to establish, in effect, that the Constitution did not necessarily "follow the flag".⁶

Pre-1890 United States was likewise in no need for "capital outlets"; in actual fact the United States was a high-interest-rate, capital-importing country until the last decades of the century. The need to import rather than export capital,

⁶ The specific cases did not apply to the Philippines but to Puerto Rico, yet the effect on the Philippines was the same. In essence, the key decision, which concerned the application of duties to be collected under the then existing Dingley tariff law, ruled that the new areas annexed by the United States as a result of the Spanish American War were "not foreign territories" nor at the same time were they "domestic territories within the meaning of the revenue clauses of the Constitution". With a fine splitting of semantic hairs, the Supreme Court ruled that these areas were territories "appurtenant to and belonging to the United States".

Elliott points out that the Supreme Court's conclusion was reached by various processes of reasoning and was much criticized by students of Constitutional law and the general public. He writes: "It was claimed that as four Justices believed that the Constitution was extended by its own forces to the new territory and four other Justices believed that an Act of Congress was necessary so to extend it, and the reasoning of the Justice who wrote the prevailing opinion was not concurred in by any of his associates, no Constitutional doctrine was declared by a majority of the Court". He adds, however, that "...so far as the binding effect of the decision was concerned, it is from a legal point of view entirely immaterial that a majority of the members of the Court were unable to agree on a single reason for the decision..." Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

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therefore, was basic to American economic relationships with the rest of the world.⁷

If we examine the problem from the point of view of internal politics in the United States, there are also strong contributory reasons why the United States did not embark on a program of colonial expansion. Of major importance was the lack of internal consolidation of power during most of the century. This was not only the result of the Civil War and attendant problems of absorbing a large new segment of population into the body politic; it also resulted from the continuous Indian Wars which did not cease until the Battle of Wounded Knee in 1890. The lack of internal consolidation had both political and politico-military implications. Essentially, it meant that the United States could ill afford the luxury of military adventurism in quest of new colonies even if it had desired them.⁸

Other factors against United States colonial expansionism can be mentioned. One was the traditional strain of egalitarian "liberal" idealism in America which found it hard to accept the idea of a permanent political inferiority status for any group of people. This ideal in American life was manifested in the political attitudes and arguments of both the Revolutionary and

⁷ An interesting sidelight relative to the high-interest-rate, capital-importing nature of the American economy can be found in the fact that Hou Qua, the famous Chinese Canton merchant, invested a sizeable amount of his wealth—through the Boston firm of George Perkins—in United States railroads in the 1890's. The suggestion implied in such a transaction was that interest rates in the developing United States were more attractive than in underdeveloped areas like China. See K. C. Liu, "Hou Qua: The Sources and Disposition of his Wealth", an Association of Asian Studies Paper, April 2, 1958, New York.

⁸ William Graham Sumner thought this to be a crucial factor. In an essay entitled "Earth Hunger" written in 1896, he stated that "those states only are prepared for colonization and foreign responsibilities whose internal cohesion is intense; for every extension of territory brings with it a strain upon the internal organism. If we had never taken Texas and Northern Mexico, we never should have had secession." *ESSAYS OF WILLIAM GRAHAM SUMNER* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), Vol. I.

Civil Wars and has always been a strong force in the American liberal tradition.⁹

A more practical matter was the real lack of American military power, particularly in the years immediately following the Civil War, to compete on equal terms with the European colonizing powers in Asia and Africa. Millis,¹⁰ for example, suggests that it was far from certain that the United States would be able to win a war that threatened with the little Republic of Chile as late as 1891. There was no doubt that the United States was strictly a second-rate naval and military power at the time.

One final fact can be added. The American merchant marine that had roamed the seven seas in the early part of the century and had made the United States a major maritime power was dealt a near-fatal blow by the Civil War. Not only was a large part of the American merchant marine destroyed, but the commercial activities of Americans in other parts of the world were in a steady decline from the 1840's until the late 1890's.

II

American opposition or indifference to modern colonial expansion underwent a rapid transformation in the 1890's, culminating during the Spanish-American War in what one observer described as a "jag" of jingoistic colonial imperialism.¹¹ This "jag" not only marked a revolutionary shift in American foreign policy, it also represented an important turning point in American history.

⁹ See Louis Hartz, *THE LIBERAL TRADITION IN AMERICA* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1955), chapter XI, for a discussion of this "value" in American Liberalism.

¹⁰ Walter Millis, *THE MARTIAL SPIRIT* (Cambridge: The Literary Guild of America and the Riverside Press, 1931), p. 4.

¹¹ Interesting studies on the background of the Spanish American War are: Julius Pratt, *EXPANSIONISTS OF 1898*, New York: Peter Smith, 1951; Walter Millis, *op. cit.* For the important role of the Press during the period, see Marcus W. Witherson, *PUBLIC OPINION AND THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR*, Baton Rouge, 1932.

The emergence of colonial expansionism as a "legitimate" goal in the United States was not the result of a consciously evolved ideological position nor was it the result of organized political pressure from class, regional or economic groups. A reading of the history of the era leaves no doubt that the United States moved into an imperialistic war against Spain against a background of tremendous spontaneous enthusiasm ⁴ but with a minimum of reflective thinking regarding the specific immediate problems involved or the long-run implications of such a move.

Political preparation for the assumption of a colonial-power posture by the United States was practically non-existent, and this fact was clearly apparent immediately after the end of the Spanish-American War. Symptomatic of the times was the fact that many of the strongest defenders of American colonial expansion were forced to divide their time between defending the cause of colonialism on the one side and examining the ways of the established colonial powers to find out how a colonial power is supposed to act on the other.¹²

The lack of a defined ideology to explain the American involvement in the Spanish-American War and the ephemeral nature of the political base for colonial expansionism did not mean that underlying forces were absent. To single out a dominant causal factor is not possible, but a complex of new conditions can be outlined which is relevant to the historical process of the era.

In interpreting the events of the 1890's, historians of the Frederic Jackson Turner school have pointed out the continuing importance of a "frontier" in American life; they have noted that by 1890 the internal frontier in the United States had passed away. This fact, they argue, led to a search for a new frontier to challenge the national energy; and the possibilities of colonization provided the answer in the minds of indi-

¹² See, for example, Claude G. Bowers, *BEVERIDGE AND THE PROGRESSIVE ERA* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), especially pp. 97-114, 131-157.

viduals who had previously been preoccupied with their own back yard.¹³

The impact of social-Darwinian theories during the late 1880's and early 1890's was certainly of importance in changing popular opinion on the question of colonies.¹⁴

Three notable popularizers of social-Darwinian ideas in the United States were Josiah Strong, John Fiske and John Burgess.¹⁵ Strong, a Congregational Minister from Cincinnati, was the author of a widely circulated book entitled *OUR COUNTRY, ITS POSSIBLE FUTURE AND ITS PRESENT CRISIS*.¹⁶ Fiske, a prolific writer on historical, philosophical and scientific subjects, was also a widely known popular lecturer. For some time he also used the lecture platform of Harvard University to advance his Darwinian and Spencerian interpretations of historical evolution. Burgess was perhaps the best known political scientist of his day and lectured at Columbia University.

The writings and speeches of all three individuals were nakedly racist, invariably placing the white Anglo-Saxon in the role of a superior world-civilizer with responsibilities to organize the rest of mankind. Typical was the statement of Burgess that it was "not a right but an obligation" of the Anglo-Saxon Teutons to develop a colonial policy which would bring the superior

¹³ A development of this thesis as it applies to Hawaii and the Philippines can be found in Kenneth Scott Latourette, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ A book length treatment of Social Darwinism in the United States can be found in Richard Hofstadter, *SOCIAL DARWINISM IN AMERICAN THOUGHT*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

¹⁵ To these three one might also add William Graham Sumner, the famous Yale sociologist, who embraced social Darwinism almost without reservation. However, Sumner appears to have consistently opposed American colonialism from the beginning. In 1896 he wrote that "the notion is that colonies are glory, but the truth is that they are burdens unless plundered—and then they are enemies." He suggested that it would be of great benefit to the United States if Britain would colonize the rest of the colonizable world—for then Britain would have the headaches and the United States the benefits of British-created Anglo-Saxon law and order. See Sumner, *op. cit.*, p. 194-5.

¹⁶ New York: American Tract Publishing Co., 1885.

governing skills of these people to the "barbarians" inhabiting the rest of the world.

Two other individuals, Captain Alfred Mahan and Benjamin Kidd, both affected to a large degree by Social Darwinism but best known for other aspects of their writing, played an important role in reshaping American attitudes toward expansion along colonial lines.

Mahan, a United States naval officer, combined Social Darwinism, geopolitics and a new theory on the importance of sea-power in a highly influential book entitled *THE INFLUENCE OF SEAPOWERS ON HISTORY*,¹⁷ first published in 1890. Between 1890 and 1897, Mahan published thirteen articles, most of which appeared in popular magazines, spelling out specific applications of his theory, particularly the need for controlling sea lanes by controlling seaports or coaling stations¹⁸ in the Pacific. Mahan's ideas were not only widely noted in the public press, but made a strong impression on the American Congress and policy makers.¹⁹

The other individual who appears to have had considerable influence, at least in American intellectual circles, in changing attitudes toward colonialism, was the English sociologist Benjamin Kidd. Kidd was the author of a book on social evolution in 1894 which provided the basis for the idea, later popularized by Kipling, that the coloured tropics were "the white man's burden" as far as development was concerned.

In 1898, Kidd came to the United States and lectured extensively in many parts of the country. He also published a

¹⁷ Boston, 1890.

¹⁸ These articles have been collected and published in *THE INTEREST OF AMERICA IN SEAPOWERS*, Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1897.

¹⁹ Pratt quotes a British observer writing in *BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE* to the effect that Mahan's teachings were "as oil to the flames of 'colonial expansion' everywhere leaping to life. Everywhere a new-sprung ambition to go forth and possess and enjoy reads its sanction in the philosophy of history ennobled by the glory of conquest... I doubt whether this effect of Mahan's teaching has gone deeper anywhere than in the United States." Pratt, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

study entitled *THE CONTROL OF THE TROPIC*,²⁰ in which he elaborated on his basic thesis from both the economic and geopolitical points of view. In it he argued that the world was on the verge of a tremendous new trade era in which the preponderant trade routes which had hitherto been within the temperate zone and East-West, West-East oriented, would shift, and the new pattern would be primarily between the temperate zones and the tropical zones, or North-South, South-North in orientation.²¹

From an economic point of view, fundamental changes in both the internal American economic structure and America's external economic relationships with the rest of the world were taking place in the 1890's. These changes have relevance to the emergence of American colonialism during the Spanish-American-War period — although the real importance of such economic changes has been questioned, as indicated below.

The facts of the economic transformation in the 1890's are clear: the United States was rapidly losing its characteristics as a basically agricultural, high-interest-rate, capital-importing nation. Industrialization in the 1880's had been extremely rapid; concurrent with this industrial development was the emergence of large internal money markets which were capable of financing new industrial enterprises.²² Accompanying these developments was a change in the complex of exports from one almost exclusively made up of agricultural raw materials and foods to one in which manufactured goods played a rapidly

²⁰ London: Macmillan Co., 1898. See also his articles: "The United States and the Control of the Tropics", *ATLANTIC MONTHLY*, December 1898, p. 721-727.

²¹ In addition to the impact of their writings and lecturing on the public in general, Kidd, as well as Mahan, Burgess and Fiske, appear to have had considerable impact on policy formation through intimate contact with national leaders of the day, and particularly contacts with Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge. See, for example, the comments of Theodore Roosevelt regarding Kidd in the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, CLXI (1895), pp. 94-109.

²² See S. Kuznets, "Qualitative Aspects of the Economic Growth of Nations" in *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL CHANGE*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1957.

growing and significant role. Between 1870 and 1890, industrial exports rose from 15 per cent of total exports to over 32 per cent.²³ In key industries like iron and steel and textiles the United States was changing into a large net exporter of industrial commodities.

While the facts of economic change are undisputed, the interpretation of their role in the promotion of colonial imperialism has varied. Faulkner, in his *AMERICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY*, states that the causes of the war with Spain are linked with the fact that the economic structure of the United States had reached the stage of financial imperialism. His implication is that the war was really fought for markets and fields of investment.²⁴

Pratt, however, has argued that such an explanation is a distorted over-simplification. He has shown that the American business community was generally opposed to expansion, or indifferent to it until mid-1898, and that economic influences appear to have played only a minor direct role in the picture. He states:²⁵

The need of American business for colonial markets and fields of investment was discovered not by businessmen but by historians and other intellectuals, by journalists and politicians.

A supplementary argument to that advanced by Pratt can be found in the limited interest of the American business community in overseas enterprises immediately prior to the Spanish-American War. This was particularly so in the case of the Philippines. American shipping had played an important role in opening the Philippines to world trade in the 1790's; in the early part of the 19th century, American commercial enterprises were of major importance as factoring agencies and as

²³ See Julius Pratt, *HISTORY OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955), p. 371.

²⁴ Harold Underwood Faulkner, *AMERICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY* (New York: Harper and Bro., 1924), p. 624-25.

²⁵ See Pratt, *EXPANSIONISTS OF 1898*, p. 22, and Chapter VII, pp. 230-278. Andrew Carnegie, the most prominent American industrialist of the day, was deeply opposing "imperial expansion" in the Philippines for commercial reasons. See "Should the United States Expand" in *RÉPUBLIC OR EMPIRE*, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-99.

quasi-banking establishments serving the abaca and sugar industries. These activities withered later in the century and had dwindled to practically nothing by the 1890's.²⁶ Certainly, there was little basis for the "flag" to follow the traders in such a situation.²⁷

The political counterpart of the "Duesenberry effect" can also be considered as another possible contributory factor to American colonialism. Essentially, the argument runs that the United States, in trying to gain recognition and acceptance as a peer among the major powers of the world, merely did what all the other major powers were doing at the time: scramble for colonies. If this was how a great power acted, the United States felt it would have to follow suit or be eliminated from the number of great powers.²⁸

One final factor should be considered: contemporaneous international relations in the Spanish-American-War period. Balance of power factors, both real and imaginary, were present in any new territorial acquisition by a major power. Power po-

²⁶ According to an American businessman in Manila, the firm of Henry Peabody & Co. of Boston and four Americans made up the entire American business community in the Philippines between 1893 and the end of 1895. See Earl Stevens, *YESTERDAY IN THE PHILIPPINES* (New York: Scribner & Sons, 1898), p. xix.

²⁷ C.f. the arguments of Moon which emphasized the fact that men, not nations, build colonial empires. Moon feels that colonial expansion into an area is invariably associated with the activities of particular men with particular economic interests. He lists these as exporters to an area, importers from an area, shippers calling at an area, arms and uniform manufacturers and banks that finance any or all of these activities. In the specific case of the Philippines, it is difficult to find "empire builders" in any of these categories. See Parker Thomas Moon, *IMPERIALISM AND WORLD POLITICS* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1926), p. 58-67.

²⁸ Canvassing the public and private papers of Theodore Roosevelt provides ample evidence that Roosevelt, a key figure in America's extension of sovereignty over the Philippines, was heavily influenced by the activities and attitudes toward imperial expansion of Russia, England, France and Germany during the latter part of the 19th century. See for example, Albert B. Hartland and Herbert Ferleger, *THEODORE ROOSEVELT CYCLOPEDIA* (New York: Roosevelt Memorial Association, 1941), pp. 245-6.

lities of the era, as far as colonies were involved, were largely oriented around naval coaling stations, internal trade areas, access to raw materials, or proximity to important trading centers. All the major colonial powers, and powers like Japan and Russia with colonial aspirations, were anxious to improve their own "power position" or at least prevent any other power or combination of powers from gaining strategic or economic advantages over them. It is in this balance-of-power context, as well as in others already mentioned, that America's decisions regarding the Philippines were made.

There is strong evidence that American policy makers contemplated nothing more than a naval show of force when they first considered the possibility of military action in the Philippines if war broke out with Spain.²⁹ Even during the peace conference which terminated the war, the American side of the negotiations showed no unanimity on the desirability of retaining the islands. When the ultimate decision was made in favor of annexing the Philippines, the question of international power relationships appears to have played a prominent role.

Germany, Japan and Russia all indicated their interest in moving into the Philippines if United States withdrew. Great Britain, on the other hand, was anxious for the United States to establish its sovereignty over the Philippines so that other powers considered more formidable rivals in the area would not. Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary of Great Britain at the time, openly and actively encouraged the United States to annex, as did most of the British press.³⁰ The importance of this encouragement is difficult to evaluate, but it undoubtedly contributed to the final decision on the question of annexation.³¹

²⁹ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *THE AMERICAN SECRETARIES OF STATE AND THEIR DIPLOMACY* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1927), p. 98.

³⁰ Charles Elliott, *THE PHILIPPINES TO THE END OF THE COMMISSION GOVERNMENT* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1916), pp. 369-9.

³¹ Discussion of these influences can be found *ibid.*, pp. 348-352; Moon, *op. cit.*, p. 393; and Bemis, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-101, 126. See also: Murat Halstead, *THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENT OF ADMIRAL DEWEY* (Chicago: Our Possessions Publishing Co., 1899), p. 216.

III

So far, this paper has suggested some of the factors involved in the shift of official and popular attitudes toward colonial imperialism. From indifference or opposition, American attitudes suddenly changed in the late 1890's; as part of the emotional response to the Spanish-American War, colonial imperialism gained substantial — if ambiguously motivated — support as a legitimate national goal.

American military involvement in the Philippines and the complete capitulation of Spanish arms to American forces immediately raised a series of policy questions. Should the United States withdraw from the Philippines and allow events to run a course uninfluenced by the United States? Should the United States annex the Philippines in whole or part as a permanent colonial possession, and exploit it along conventional colonial lines? Should the United States try to establish a completely new type of colonial relationship tailored to the political, economic and judicial facts of American life?

The universal acclaim that Admiral Dewey won in the United States as a result of his spectacular victory over the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay did not presage national agreement on what should follow military victory in the Philippines. Hardly had the war which Teddy Roosevelt later described as a "bully little war" ended, when bitter debate on the issue of colonization and the future of the Philippines developed.

The literature of this period reflects the deep divisions of opinion on the matter in the United States. At one extreme could be found the numerous popular books of Our Possessions Publishing Company³² under such titles as *THE PHILIPPINES, ELDORADO OF THE ORIENT*, with jingoistic appeals for American imperialistic expansionism. At the other extreme one found the steady stream of pamphlets and books issued by The Independence Publishing Company and the Anti-Imperialist League, all arguing against retention of the Philippines as a colony.

The initial decision of the United States to annex the Philippines did not involve any specific commitment as far as co-

³² Prophetically, this company went out of business in 1903.

lonial policy was concerned, since the essential issue was a transfer of formal sovereignty. The events involved, however, have been of great interest to historians. A widely publicized statement of President McKinley described the decision-making process in annexing the Philippines as follows:

When next I realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess that 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 that 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 or 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 would soon have anarchy and misrule worse than Spain's was; and (4) there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos and christianize them, and by God's grace do the best we could for them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died. And then I 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.³³

Moon, Grunder and Livesey, and Pratt are but a few who have questioned McKinley's somewhat confused desire to "Christianize" the Catholic Philippines; all have suggested that economic and strategic considerations of an "undivine" nature were at least equally as powerful an influence on McKinley as divine guidance. One also suspects that the President, a man with a reputation for a keen awareness of the popular pulse, became convinced that the American mood of the moment was strongly in favour of retention during the period of his soul searching.³⁴

³³ As quoted in Grunder and Livesey, *op. cit.*

³⁴ See John W. Foster, *AMERICAN DIPLOMACY IN THE ORIENT*, (Boston: Houghton, 1903), p. 404, and Grunder and Livesey, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

McKinley's progressive enlargement of territorial interest, first limited to Manila, then expanded to all of Luzon and finally encompassing the whole archipelago, paralleled increasingly favorable reports on the Islands' commercial potential in the months immediately following the war; it was also not unrelated to the aforementioned intense "interest" of European powers and Japan in the area at the time.³⁵

While the genesis of the Presidential decision to annex the entire Philippines is open to various interpretations, the decision itself was carried into the peace negotiations with Spain³⁶ and ultimately resulted in the ceding, by Spain, of the entire Philippines to the United States; the United States, however,

³⁵ See James K. Eyre Jr., "The Philippines, the Powers and the Spanish American War: A Study in Foreign Policy." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1942. Also Grunder and Livesey, *op. cit.*, p. 32; Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 403-4.

³⁶ It is interesting to note that the United States Peace Commission charged with the responsibility of working out a treaty with Spain was initially divided on the question of retaining the Philippines. William Day, former Secretary of State, who had been in charge of Foreign Affairs immediately prior to, and during the War, was strongly opposed to any annexation scheme at first; Senator Grey of Delaware, a strong anti-imperialist and a Democrat, was likewise opposed to any territorial acquisition, "unless possibly a coaling station". Senator Davis of Minnesota and Senator Frye of Maine thought the United States should keep Luzon and turn the rest of the islands over to Holland. Whitelaw Reid, the fifth member of the Peace Commission, was the only one interested in the retention of all the islands. None of the other four Commissioners could be considered deeply favorable to such an attitude. That the ultimate treaty that they worked out with Spain included the cession of all the Philippines to the United States was due to the specific instructions of President McKinley.

Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 319-358, treats the Peace negotiation in considerable detail. See also Pratt, *op. cit.*, pp. 331-345.

uncertain of its rights by conquest, agreed to pay 20,000,000 dollars to Spain as part of the over-all peace settlement.³⁷

Immediately after agreement was reached with Spain on a treaty, it was sent to the United States Senate for ratification. While the treaty itself attracted little systematic opposition from those opposed to America's colonial expansion, a series of resolutions were introduced in the Senate, seeking to clarify America's basic colonial position. Key resolutions would have restricted the United States from acquiring the Philippines or would have limited retention of the Philippines to a specific time in the same manner that the Teller amendment had precluded the extension of permanent United States sovereignty over Cuba.³⁸ The result of the voting on both the treaty ratification and the resolutions and amendments was clear cut: un-

³⁷ The 20,000,000-dollar payment was not a purchase price in the strict sense; but, in the minds of many people, payment of a sum of money to Spain for the Philippines added legitimacy to the American acquisition. In the year following the acquisition, one finds frequent mention of the fact that the Philippines was "ours by right of purchase". Cf. Elihu Root, *THE MILITARY AND COLONIAL POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), p. 70.

See also a letter of Commissioner Day of the Peace Negotiating Committee to D.K. Watson of Columbus, Ohio, in October 1899, as noted in LeRoy, *op. cit.*, I, 370. This letter, much commented on in the press at the time, has often been cited as the authority for the statement that the Philippines was purchased from Spain.

³⁸ The resolutions and amendment included the Vest-Gorman amendment that declared that under the Constitution, the United States Government had no right to acquire and to hold permanently territories; the McEnergy resolution which included a somewhat vague promise of future disposition "as would best promote the interests of citizens of the United States and inhabitants of said islands"; and Senator Bacon's amendment to the McEnergy resolution which stated that the United States did not desire permanent control of the Philippines nor did it intend to deny the right of self-government to the Philippines. See Kalaw, *op. cit.*, p. 42-81.

restricted acquisition with no commitment on future policy or disposition."³⁹

That the Senate attitude to annex the Philippines as well as President McKinley's attitude along the same line counted with strong grass-roots support at the time is difficult to deny. The business community, previously indifferent, suddenly became active promoters of "a large policy" that would not only provide economic opportunities in the Philippines itself, but also provide the stepping stone to the great China market. The religious press, both Protestant and Catholic, gave strong approval. Military men were also highly pleased by our new outpost in the Pacific. It also should be noted that many individuals closely associated with the anti-imperialist movement in the Senate, including William Jennings Bryan, actually voted for ratification of the Treaty of Paris and the initial annexation.

Yet the clear victory of the imperialists on the question of annexation did not mean that traditional imperialistic colonialism of the European type was subsumed in the victory. While Senator Albert Beveridge was telling his Senate colleagues in January of 1900 that "the Philippines are ours forever; territories belong to the United States forever . . . the power that rules the Pacific rules the world . . ."⁴⁰ and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, permanent chairman of the Republican National Convention, was telling the Convention that "we make no hypocritical pretence of being interested in the Philippines solely on account of others. We regard the welfare of these people as a sacred trust but we regard the welfare of the American people first. We believe in trade expansion,"⁴¹ the significant fact to note is that neither the Republican Party nor any

³⁹ The Vest-Gorman amendments and the Bacon amendments which would have committed the United States to a policy of granting the Philippines independence both failed to pass in the Senate; the vague McEnery resolution passed in the Senate but was never passed by the House. The Treaty itself, however, passed by a margin of one vote over the necessary two-thirds vote. See Kalaw, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ See Claude Bowers, *BEVERIDGE AND THE PROGRESSIVE ERA* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1932), p. 119.

⁴¹ Quoted in Kalaw, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

other important political group in the United States ever went on record in favor of permanent retention of the Philippines as a colony. The refusal of the Republican Party to commit itself in this respect in 1900, when the popular enthusiasm for expansion was at a high water mark, was highly significant. In retrospect, this failure can be termed the beginning of the end of America's shortlived colonial empire.

Formal commitment by the United States Congress to a policy of ultimate independence in the Philippines was not made until the passage of the Jones Act in 1916. Yet, long before this date, American policy in regard to the Philippines was patent in both the tone and substance of American administration of the islands. The decision was not made by formal consideration of policy in the usual decision-making institutions; instead, it emerged as a series of administrative attitudes and acts inconsistent with any policy other than ultimate withdrawal of American sovereignty.

Perhaps the earliest indication that United States colonial relationships with the Philippines involved a complete break with the canons of traditional colonialism and was non-permanent in character came in July of 1900. On the instructions of the first Philippine Commission, the Declaration of Independence was publicly read in both English and Spanish during the Fourth of July Celebration in Manila.⁴²

This was soon followed with the public enunciation of a policy of "the Philippines for the Filipinos"; this basic principle was contained in the letter of instruction prepared by Elihu Root for President McKinley in setting forth guide lines for the Philippine Commission,⁴³ the first civil governing body for the Philippines which took over in 1901. It is significant that in these instructions, no mention of responsibilities for promoting American political or economic interests was made. Americans in the Philippines soon became convinced that the Commission Government was actually favoring Filipinos over

⁴² Daniel R. Williams, *THE ODYSSEY OF THE PHILIPPINE COMMISSION* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1913), p. 65.

⁴³ See Root, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

Americans, and had no intention of treating the Philippines "as a colony should be treated".

It is easy to understand, therefore, how such a non-colonial (in the traditional sense) attitude of the United States Government in the Philippines would earn the bitter opposition of the small but highly vocal American business community in the Islands. During the period of the second Philippine Commission headed by William Howard Taft, Taft was bitterly attacked in the American press. His answer⁴⁴ to one of the charges gives an indication of the feeling of the time:

There are many Americans in these Islands, possibly a majority, and this includes all the American Press, who are strongly opposed to the doctrine of "The Philippines for the Filipinos". They have no patience with the policy of attraction, no patience with attempts to conciliate the Filipino people, no patience with the introduction into the Government as rapidly as their fitness justifies of the prominent Filipinos. They resent everything in the Government that is not American. They insist that there is a necessity for a firm government here rather than a popular one, and that the welfare of Americans and American trade should be regarded as paramount.

The enunciation of the policy of the Philippines for the Filipinos was followed by more substantive indications of American disengagement policy. Filipinos were rapidly brought into the judiciary and then into legislative positions, first by appointment and then by popular election. Americans undertook, with the willing cooperation of the Filipinos, an unprecedented and comprehensive educational program. The program reached all levels, from the establishment of compulsory primary education in the English language in almost all the Philippines to the sending of *pensionados* in both sciences and humanities to the United States for advanced training. No attempt was ever made to limit either the content or the level of education of Filipinos.

There can be little doubt concerning the uniqueness of America's colonial policy in the Philippines and the complete inconsistency of the policy with any goal of permanent colonial

⁴⁴ See Kalaw, *op. cit.*, Appendix D, p. 322-329.

rule.⁴⁵ As O. D. Corpuz, a prominent Filipino political scientist, has cogently stated it:⁴⁶

In their Philippine policy, the Americans proved their ineptitude—i.e. by orthodox standards—as a colonizing nation... their policies [were] destined to make United States sovereignty over the Philippines unnecessary and unwanted at some future date...

By 1908, William Howard Taft was publicly enunciating principles of the American colonial administration in the Philippines wherein independence was specifically mentioned:⁴⁷

Shortly stated, the national policy is to govern the Philippine Islands for the benefit and welfare and the uplifting of the people of the islands and gradually to extend to them, as soon as they shall show themselves fit to exercise it, a greater and greater measure of self-government. Another logical deduction from the main proposition is that when the Filipino people as a whole show themselves reasonably fit to conduct popular self-government, maintaining law and order and offering equal protection of laws and civil rights to the rich and poor, and desire complete independence of the United States, they shall be given it.

The fact that United States policy was pointedly oriented toward disengagement from the Philippines at an early date is clear; but where and by whom was the policy decision on this question made? A survey of the relevant literature of the first decade of the 1900's as well as congressional discussions on matters pertaining to the Philippines is of small help. It is impossible to pinpoint the time, place, manner and authority by which such a policy was established. It is also clear that the American public gave little consideration to the issue of colonial policy once the main issue of retention after the Spanish-American War was settled. Policy, as it developed in the

⁴⁵ However, Elliot claims that the American policy was in line with the British theory (not practice) laid down in the "Queen's Proclamation of 1858". The only difference to Elliot was in the strong faith Americans had in education. See Charles Burke Elliot, *THE PHILIPPINES TO THE END OF THE MILITARY REGIME* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1916), p. 59.

⁴⁶ O. D. Corpuz, *THE BUREAUCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES* (Manila: Institute of Public Administration, 1957), p. 6.

⁴⁷ As quoted in Grunder and Livesey, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

Philippines after the turn of the century, generated little or no opposition and almost no discussion.⁴⁸

The lack of identification of the formal decision making process regarding colonial policy questions does not mean that the American political temperament would not support a policy objective of disengagement if it were to be placed before them as the years went on. One only needs to trace some of the forces that contributed to America's colonial experiment at the end of the 19th century and note how these forces changed as they appeared in a 20th-century context to find a basis for a changing attitude toward the Philippines as an American colony.

An illustrative example of changing ideas on the Philippines can be seen in the attitudes of Teddy Roosevelt who, perhaps more than any one man, was responsible for the U.S. venture in the Philippines in the first place. In the 1890's Roosevelt spoke of America's "vigorous blood", "manifest destiny" and "natural expansionism" in promoting the cause of American imperialism in the Philippines.⁴⁹ Soon after the turn of the century, Roosevelt's attitude shifts to one in which America's moral obligation is paramount. By 1913, Roosevelt was expressing the hope that the United States would completely pull out of the Philippines. In 1914, he expressed himself on the issue in a letter to the *New York Times* as follows:⁵⁰

I hope therefore that the Filipinos will be given their independence at an early date and without any guarantee from us which might in any way hamper our future action or commit us to staying on the Asiatic coast. I do not believe we should keep any foothold whatever in the Philippines. Any kind of position by us in the Philippines merely results in making them our heel of Achilles if we are attacked by a foreign power. They can be no compensating benefit to us.

⁴⁸ It is true that the Democratic Party Platform from the turn of the century until the 1920's always carried a plank in favour of Philippine independence; but this, like their present day planks on the reuniting of Ireland, was of little consequence in the establishment of policy in the Philippines under Republican administrations.

⁴⁹ See THEODORE ROOSEVELT CYCLOPEDIA, A. B. Hart and H. R. Ferleger, eds. (New York: Roosevelt Memorial Association, 1914), pp. 244-5 and 426, for a number of relevant quotes along these lines.

⁵⁰ *NEW YORK TIMES*, November 22, 1914.

The role of the Philippines in American military planning also underwent a complete reversal within a short time after their acquisition. The Mahan disciples who saw the Philippines as a key military and commercial outpost in 1900 suddenly realized, as Teddy Roosevelt himself suggests in his statement of 1914, that overextended supply lines, a potential enemy right at the back door, and limited commercial advantages, made the Philippines a liability rather than an asset. By 1909, the Naval Planning Board of the United States Navy had given up the idea of a major naval base in the Philippines; at no time subsequent to this date are there any indications that the military planners in the United States considered the Philippines as anything other than an "Achilles heel".⁵¹

From the economic point of view, the Philippines in the early years of the 20th century proved of indifferent value. As an outlet for American products or as an area for capital investment, it was of no quantitative significance. A number of negative factors in the economic situation are also relevant. For one thing, the Philippines produced products that, in the main, were competitive rather than complementary to those of the United States. Philippine cane sugar competed with United States cane and beet sugar; tobacco and cigars competed with United States tobacco and cigars (although the field was not directly competitive in type of tobacco); Philippine copra and coconut oil competed with both the cottonseed oil of the United States South and the dairy industry's output of butter fat.

In terms of general economic importance, America's internal markets were so large and growing so rapidly that the Philippine market was of no consequential importance to the United States economy; Philippine imports, in the aggregate, never reached more than a very small fraction of one per cent of America's gross national product.

To those who expected America's emergence as a colonial power in the Philippines might offer a strong new challenge to America's national energies, the results were disappointing.

⁵¹ Warner R. Schilling, "The Admirals and American Foreign Policy", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1953.

With few significant exceptions, Americans were extremely reluctant to go to the Philippines for any reason — and most were even more reluctant to stay on if they did go. Corpuz, for example, points out that the civil service in the Philippines had great difficulty in holding Americans in service.⁵² After the initial flowering of interest, the opportunities for social and economic gain in the Philippines were largely ignored or discounted by Americans in general.

The Manifest-Destiny argument and the “White Man’s Burden” school of thought also lost both their popular appeal and their accredited status in intellectual circles as the 20th century added on years. Whatever remained of these factors by 1915 was but a faint echo of the emotional roars of the late 1890’s.

So also had the force of the “demonstration effect” evaporated. World powers no longer moved their navies and armed forces around the world to build up colonial empires. Part of this development was due to the fact that there were few remaining areas susceptible to colonial imperialism. Part was due to a growing conviction that colonies did not always pay.

In the realm of international relations, 20th-century United States was faced with sharply changing conditions. The United States was accepted as a world power after the Spanish-American War, but acceptance meant involvement, particularly in the power-balancing of other nations. When the Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1902 came to force, United States was suddenly faced with a military combination that made its position and commitments in the Philippines a liability rather than an asset.⁵³

⁵² Corpuz, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

⁵³ Beard feels that this alliance was of major importance in shifting American policy toward the Philippines. Charles A. Beard, *THE IDEA OF NATIONAL INTEREST* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1934), pp. 522-523. See also Schilling, *op. cit.* Schilling points out that Great Britain was considered the most likely enemy in the “next” war to be fought by the United States, in the eyes of United States Naval policy planners up to 1912.

Thus the collapse of the great expectations that colored the decision-making in 1898, the dissipating strength of the intellectual ideas that were involved, and the realities of the United States' new position in the international sphere, led to a rapid re-evaluation of Philippine-American ties. When the Philippines failed to provide any tangible material advantages to the United States, a reversal of the decision to annex colonial-ly involved no great soul-searching. The fact that the United States went into its colonial experiment without heavy ideological baggage meant that withdrawal from colonialism necessitated no painful disposal of such ideology. Less than two decades after the annexing of the Philippines by the United States, the only substantive question involved in the relationship was the timing and nature of disengagement.