McKinley Defends U.S. Expansionism

In 1899 Americans divided sharply over whether to annex the Philippines. Annexationists and anti-annexationists, despite their differences, generally agreed that the U.S. needed opportunities for commercial expansion but disagreed over how to achieve that goal. Few believed that the Philippines themselves offered a crucial commercial advantage to the U.S., but many saw them as a crucial way station to Asia. Had we no interests in China, noted one advocate of annexation, the possession of the Philippines would be meaningless. In the Paris Peace negotiations, President William McKinley demanded the Philippines to avoid giving them back to Spain or allowing a third power to take them. One explanation of his reasoning came from this report of a delegation of Methodist church leaders.

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 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.

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 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!

The Blount Report

After the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, President Cleveland sent a Special Commissioner named James Blount to Hawaii to investigate what had happened. The Blount Report "first provided evidence that officially identified the United States' complicity in the lawless overthrow of the lawful, peaceful government of Hawaii." Blount concluded that U.S. Minister to Hawaii John L. Stevens had carried out unauthorized partisan activities, including the landing of U.S. Marines under a false or exaggerated pretext, to support the anti-royalist conspirators; that these actions were instrumental to the success of the revolution; and that the revolution was carried out against the wishes of a majority of the population of Hawaii.

But for the notorious predilections of the United States Minister for Annexation (John L. Stevens), the Committee of Safety, which should be called the Committee of Annexation, would have never existed. But for the landing of the United States forces upon false pretexts respecting the danger to life and property the committee would never have exposed themselves to the pains and penalties of treason by undertaking the subversion of the Queen's Government. But for the presence of the United States forces in the immediate vicinity and in position to afford all needed protection and support, the committee would not have proclaimed the provisional government from the steps of the Government building.... But for the lawless occupation of Honolulu under false pretexts by the United States forces ... the Queen and her government would have never yielded.


Post Annexation Hawaii

Below is a brief history of Hawaii since World War II which explains how the war affected Hawaii. It also gives a brief explanation of Hawaii's economy.

[World War II] transformed Hawaiian society, bringing it more into mainstream America and attracting enormous financial investment. The huge military presence continued with two Pacific wars, Korea and Vietnam, as well as the cold war. The advent of affordable air service after the war brought flocks of tourists, and Hawaii's prolonged hotel and resort building boom began in the 1950s. The end of World War II also brought unionization to Hawaii's plantation workers, who became among the best-paid agricultural workers in the world.

Statehood had been proposed in the 1930s, and in 1940 voters approved statehood by a large margin. In Washington, D.C., however, racial anxieties and wartime fears intervened; Republicans also were wary of the political impact of Hawaii's large and well-organized dockworker and agricultural unions. Hawaii was at last admitted in 1959 as the 50th state.

Tourism became the state's most important industry in the 1960s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, more than 6 million people visited Hawaii annually, mostly from the mainland or from Japan. The military presence remains large, with about 100,000 personnel stationed in the state, and is an important part of the economy. Agricultural and fishery exports have fluctuated in value, as some crops, including pineapple, have suffered from foreign competition. Hawaii's mid-Pacific location, however, has made it an increasingly important crossroads of the growing Pacific Rim trade.

American Imperialism in the Philippines

After the Spanish American war ended, there was a debate in America about whether or not to continue to control the Philippines. This debate, however, did not seem to include whether or not the people of the Philippines wanted to remain under US control. In fact, there were many things done by the United States in the Philippines which were not well publicized or reported at the time.

In 1898, following the Spanish American War, the United States assumed colonial rule of the Philippines, thereby extending its "Manifest Destiny" to the Pacific. After intense debate, Congress finally decided to retain the Philippines as a U.S. possession—ostensibly to prepare the archipelago for eventual independence. Battling to oust their new overlords, Filipino nationalists held off U.S. rule for several years. From the very beginning, superior American fire power put Filipino troops at a dreadful disadvantage. In the opening battle in Manila, "dead Filipinos were piled so high that the Americans used the bodies for breastworks." After this initial rout, the Philippine Army quickly resorted to mobile warfare, whereby they took advantage of their superior knowledge of the terrain and the ardent support of many Filipinos. Harassed and attacked throughout the islands by determined peasants, the Americans slowly realized that the major foe of U.S. imperialism was not the Philippine Army but rather the Filipino people.

A series of bloody "pacification" campaigns ensued. Unable to penetrate the guerrillas, the Americans began to attack the population at large, burning barrios, destroying storehouses and crops, poisoning wells, slaughtering farm animals, and killing noncombatants. In the notorious Samar campaign in late September 1901, General "Howlin' Jake" Smith ordered his troops to ravage the province and to kill everything over ten. Three months later, in another brutal campaign, Major General J. Franklin Bell set out to destroy Batangas. According to statistics compiled by U.S. government officials, by the time Bell was finished, at least one hundred thousand people had been killed or had died as a direct result of the scorched-earth policies. In 1902, through superior military force and the collaboration of the conservative and moneyed Filipinos, the Americans finally put an end to the armed nationalist resistance. Although it is difficult to determine how many Filipinos died resisting American aggression, estimates of the combined death toll from fighting, disease, and starvation ranged from several hundred thousand to one million. According to Sucheng Chan, many of the brutal facets of the Philippine American War remain largely hidden from the public.

**Luis Muñoz Marín.**

Puerto Rico was one of three major territories acquired by the United States from Spain at the end of the Spanish American War (the others were The Philippines and Guam). Below is a reading about the modern history of Puerto Rico as it relates to one of its more famous Modern Leaders from the modern era Luis Muñoz Marín.

Called the father of modern Puerto Rico, José Luis Alberto Muñoz Marín served as the elected governor of Puerto Rico for 25 years and pushed for its status as a commonwealth of the United States. Muñoz Marín was born on February 18, 1898 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. At the end of the 19th century, Muñoz Marín's father, Luis Muñoz Rivera, had negotiated Puerto Rico's independence from Spain. Soon after, Puerto Rico came under the control of the United States.

The year 1947 saw Puerto Ricans earn the right to elect their own governor. Their first choice was Muñoz Marín. In 1950, Puerto Rico created its own constitution, which was approved by the U.S. Congress in 1952. Puerto Rico then became a commonwealth with its own flag and the right to make domestic laws and elect officials.

With increased production and a rapid influx of tourist dollars, Puerto Rico in the 1950s and 1960s became the richest state in the Caribbean. Puerto Ricans showered Muñoz Marín with their thanks and reelected him to the governorship three times. In 1964, he left that office, refusing to run for a fifth term. Instead, he entered the Puerto Rican Senate.


**President Theodore Roosevelt’s Message to Congress**

Below is a small portion of a message from President Theodore Roosevelt to congress in 1906 regarding America’s relationship with the Philippines (A US territory from 1898-1946)

So far our action in the Philippines has been abundantly justified, not mainly and indeed not primarily because of the added dignity it has given us as a nation by proving that we are capable honorably and efficiently to bear the international burdens which a mighty people should bear, but even more because of the immense benefit that has come to the people of the Philippine Islands. In these islands we are steadily introducing both liberty and order, to a greater degree than their people have ever before known. We have secured justice. We have provided an efficient police force, and have put down ladronism—We are constantly increasing the measure of liberty accorded the islanders, and next spring, if conditions warrant, we shall take a great stride forward in testing their capacity for self-government by summoning the first Filipino legislative assembly; and the way in which they stand this test will largely determine whether the self-government thus granted will be increased or decreased; for if we have erred at all in the Philippines it has been in proceeding too rapidly in the direction of granting a large measure of self-government. We are building roads. We have, for the immeasurable good of the people, arranged for the building of railroads. Let us also see to it that they are given free access to our markets—