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Brian Hurd

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Delayed Success: The Redefined Anti-Imperialist Movement of 1898-1900

Brian Hurd

On 1 May 1898, the United States Navy, under the command of Commodore George Dewey, engaged and nearly destroyed the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay. This battle not only provided the United States with a decisive victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898, but it also inaugurated a new era in American expansion. No longer confined within its borders, United States growth would now continue abroad in the Pacific Ocean. At first, the American public and press welcomed the news of military advances during the Spanish-American War. However, the ratification of the Treaty of Paris in February 1899 and the annexation of the Philippines sparked a new protest movement in the United States that opposed this American expansion into Asia.

Those who favored economic expansion into Asia saw the Philippines as a new market for American industry and a possible gateway to the more lucrative Chinese markets. They also saw this expansion as an opportunity to spread civilization into the dark places of the world. Historian Fred Harvey Harrington argues that in opposition, the anti-imperialist movement, which began in 1898, objected to imperialism for political reasons. Many of the arguments found in the anti-imperialist movement were motivated by the political principle that a republic such as the United States should not possess colonies. The anti-imperialists did not oppose colonial expansion for economic or

humanitarian reasons, but rather because such a policy was inconsistent with the self-determination set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address.¹ American imperialism violated the tradition of republican expansion whereby new territories were added with the expectation of eventual admission into the union as a state. As Henry Van Dyke stated in his Thanksgiving Sermon in 1898, an “imperialistic democracy is an impossible hybrid.”² Old World expansion ran counter to American ideals, and it would weaken America’s moral position as an example of freedom, democracy, and self-determination in the world.

Some historians, such as Harrington, overlook the issue of race in the imperialist debate of 1898. While those who favored expansion into Asia cited paternalistic reasons of spreading civilization to “dark corners of the world,” the anti-imperialists also used race to justify their arguments. As radical historian Christopher Lasch asserts, many politicians condemned imperialism on the grounds that Filipinos, like African-Americans, were innately inferior to white people and therefore could not be assimilated into American life.³ Anti-imperialist arguments focused on these racial and

¹Fred H. Harrington, “The Anti-Imperialist Movement in the United States, 1898-1900.” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 22 (Feb. 1935): 211.

²Henry Van Dyke, “The American Birthright and the Philippine Pottage, a Thanksgiving Sermon Preached in the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City, 24 Nov. 1898,” in *Imperialists Versus Anti-Imperialists*, ed. Richard E. Welch, Jr. (Itasca: F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1972), 78.

³Christopher Lasch, “The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines, and the Inequality of Man,” *Journal of Southern History* 24 (August 1958): 319-31.

political consequences of imperialism, not the economic benefits that expansion into the Philippines would have on American industry.

Harrington also believes that the anti-imperialist movement failed because it was unable to elect William Jennings Bryan to the presidency in 1900. However, the movement initially stated that its objectives were to redefine the notion of American foreign policy following the Spanish-American War. The anti-imperialists did not oppose the ensuing conflict with Filipinos for control of the Philippine Islands. Even though the Philippine-American War lasted longer, cost more money, and took more American lives than the Spanish-American War, the new protest movement was anti-imperialist, not anti-war. An examination of the lasting effects of the movement reveals that the anti-imperialists did not fail as Harrington and other historians have suggested. The Philippines were eventually promised independence in 1916, and the result of the movement was a distinctive form of American Open Door Imperialism, which, according to historian William A. Williams, is based on commercial and moral development without the problems of political entanglement.⁴

This imperialist debate, which was a result of Dewey's invasion of the Philippines, was prompted by the need for American expansion at the end of the nineteenth century. In his 1893 essay, Frederick Jackson Turner stated that "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American

⁴William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1972), 50.

development.”⁵ The history of the United States to this time had been the expansion, acquisition, settlement, and growth of the lands west of the Appalachians to the Pacific Ocean. The United States, for the first time in its brief history, no longer found itself facing the challenge of taming the frontier.

With the absence of the American frontier in the 1890s, Americans began to look beyond their borders for new places to spread their economic and cultural ideals. Foreign commercial expansion and national prosperity seemed intertwined, and many felt that it was the duty of the national government to acquire new markets for economic opportunity. In April 1897, Senator Albert J. Beveridge stated that American factories are “making more than the American people can use, and American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy to us: the trade of the world must and shall be ours.”⁶ This “trade of the world” that Beveridge referred to was the Asian markets. By this time, the world had embarked on a second era of colonialism in which European interests had shifted to the Orient. As Senator Henry Cabot Lodge wrote in a letter to a friend on 18 May 1898, “all of Europe is seizing China” and there is a “consequent need to establish ourselves in the East so as not to be shut out of the Asian markets.”⁷

The Spanish-American War, which captivated the minds of the American people, presented the United

⁵Margaret Walsh, *The American Frontier Revisited* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1981), 11.

⁶Williams, 28.

⁷Daniel B. Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing, 1972), 72.

States with an opportunity to secure such a foreign market. At the same time as this movement for expanding American markets, there was also a feeling that the United States was the guardian state of the Western Hemisphere under the Monroe Doctrine. As a result, the Spanish-American War began as a demonstration of American humanitarianism and sympathy towards the Cuban insurgents who were fighting Spanish control. Americans felt that the Spanish had no right to retain a colonial empire in the New World. In his annual address to Congress on 6 December 1897, President William McKinley stated that in regard to Cuba, "I speak not for forcible annexation, for that cannot be thought of. That, by our code of morality, would be criminal aggression."⁸

Even though the United States had claimed it declared war on Spain over popular indignation of Spanish colonial interests in the Caribbean, the first battle in the war to free Cuba actually took place in the western Pacific. When Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, he presented a new array of problems for Americans at home. Out of this naval victory emerged a crisis of national identity in regard to the acquisition of the Philippine Islands. Almost immediately, the presence of American forces in the Philippines and the possibility of taking on the Philippines as America's first colony split the nation on the issue of shaping the peace following the Spanish-American War.⁹

⁸William McKinley, "The Alternatives in Cuba: McKinley's Annual Message to Congress, 6 Dec. 1898," in *The Annals of America, vol. 12, 1895-1904: Populism, Imperialism, and Reform*. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1976), 164.

⁹Schirmer, 80.

Those who favored the formal annexation of the Philippines following the Treaty of Paris on 12 February 1899 believed that the islands would serve as the source of the much-needed markets for American industries. In November 1898, economist John Barrett declared that the acquisition of the Philippines would serve as “an unsurpassed point in the Far East from which to extend our commerce and trade and to gain our share in the immense distribution of material prizes that must follow the opening of China, operating from Manila as a base, as does England from Hong Kong.”¹⁰ The Philippines were not needed as a traditional colony, but rather as an entrepôt into the China market and as a center of American military power in the Pacific.¹¹

Largely ignored at this time in the discussion of Philippine markets were the natives of the islands. During the Spanish-American War, the Filipinos had united with the American army to defeat the Spanish. The Filipinos assumed that once the war had ended, the Americans would leave and grant them independence. However, when the Americans remained, the Filipinos rebelled again. During the ensuing Philippine-American War (often referred to in the United States as the Philippine Insurrection) the Filipinos made no distinction between their Spanish and American conquerors. They believed that the American military showed the Old World sense of

¹⁰John Barrett, “The Problem of the Philippines, Nov. 1898,” in *Imperialists Versus Anti-Imperialists*, 64.

¹¹Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), 107.

imperialism by remaining on the islands and not granting them their independence.¹²

Never before had Americans fought outside North America. In the jungle terrain of the Philippines, they fought seven thousand miles from home.¹³ As the war progressed, Americans realized that suppressing the Filipinos would be far more difficult and costly than defeating Spain. By mid-November 1899, after his army had suffered defeat in conventional battle, Filipino leader Emilio Aguinaldo switched to guerrilla tactics, a brutal strategy that would prolong the war another three years.¹⁴ Poorly trained and ill supplied, the Filipino army proved no match for the Americans. In fact, the American government did not even recognize the conflict as a war but rather as an insurrection against legitimate American authority.

This conflict, however, did not play a large part in the imperialist debate at home. At the time, many Americans did not have information about the war due to military censorship imposed upon the press. The military created the impression that the hostilities were purely defensive in nature. The American public was unaware of the extent of losses on both sides, and opponents who sought to describe the human and financial costs of the war were called liars.¹⁵ Instead, debate focused on the Philippines merely as the stage

¹²Richard E. Welch, Jr., *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 25.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Frank Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 51.

¹⁵Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 42.

of imperialism, not considering the military implications of the Philippine-American War specifically.

Historians have agreed that the anti-imperialists of 1898 were a diverse group that was united only through their common opposition to the formal annexation of new territories by the United States. However, there is much disagreement over the particular motives of the various groups of anti-imperialists. Historian Robert Beisner critically analyses several of these anti-imperialist groups, arguing that the anti-imperialists offered a wide range of objections to the acquisition of new territories, including constitutional, diplomatic, moral, racial, political, and historical reasons.¹⁶ Following the annexation of the Philippines, many Anti-Imperialist Leagues were founded to, as historian Richard Welch states, “prevent the Spanish-American War from being perverted into a war for colonial spoils.”¹⁷ Early on, however, the Anti-Imperialist League was essentially a protest movement against overseas imperialism, not the military subjugation of the Filipino people.

In this sense, the anti-imperialists were motivated by political philosophy, not the humanitarian implications that such a foreign policy would have on the rest of the world. New opposition to imperialism did not emerge out of moral condemnation of colonialism but instead primarily focused on the political dangers posed by such a foreign policy.¹⁸ They feared that even more imperialism would emerge following the annex-

¹⁶Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 216.

¹⁷Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 43.

¹⁸Ninkovich, 200.

ation of the Philippine Islands. Former Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz warned in 1898, "If we take these new regions, we shall be well entangled in that contest for territorial aggrandizement, which distracts other nations and drives them far beyond their original design."¹⁹ It was the belief of many anti-imperialists that an imperialist foreign policy would undermine the institutions and moral health of the nation.

The unifying argument used during the anti-imperialist movement, as Harrington suggests, centered around the implications that an imperialist policy would have on the American political identity. The anti-imperialists were guided by abstract principles of a political ideology, which they felt were founded in the Declaration of Independence. They asserted that a republican form of government could not also be an imperial government, and the United States could not preserve its own democracy if it denied the right of self-rule to others.²⁰

In his first speech against imperialism in Omaha, Nebraska on 14 June 1898, William Jennings Bryan stated, "To inflict upon the enemy [Spain] all possible harm is legitimate warfare, but shall we contemplate a scheme for the colonization of the Orient merely because our ships won a remarkable victory in the harbor of Manila?" Still wearing his uniform after being discharged from the army, Bryan continued, "Our guns destroyed a Spanish fleet, but can they destroy that self-evident truth, that governments

¹⁹Alden March, *The History and Conquest of the Philippines* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 248.

²⁰Beisner, 220.

derive their just powers, not from a superior force, but from the consent of the governed.”²¹

Historically, anti-imperialists such as Bryan felt that a policy of imperialism violated the tradition of American expansion whereby new territories in North America had been added with the expectation that they would eventually be admitted to the union as a state. Many cited the fact that the United States intervened in Cuba to protect its people from foreign arms, and now the United States had the same imperialistic vision in the Pacific. In a speech delivered at the Duckworth Club banquet in Cincinnati, Ohio on 6 January 1899, Bryan declared, “The real question is whether we can, in one hemisphere, develop a theory that governments derive their power from the consent of the governed, and at the same time inaugurate, support, and defend in the other hemisphere a government which derives its authority entirely from superior force.”²² In response to the question of whether the Constitution follows the flag of the United States, Secretary of War Elihu Root said in 1901, “as near as I can make out the Constitution follows the flag—but it doesn’t quite catch up with it.”²³

One final argument used by anti-imperialists, which had a tremendous impact on public opinion regarding the Philippines, was race. Historian Mark Van Ells proposes that Americans viewed Filipinos the

²¹William Jennings Bryan, speech delivered at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, Omaha, Nebraska, 14 Jun. 1898, in *Bryan on Imperialism: Speeches, Newspaper Articles, and Interviews* (Chicago: Bentley & Company, 1900), 4.

²²*Ibid.*, William Jennings Bryan, speech delivered at the Duckworth Club banquet in Cincinnati, Ohio, 6 Jan. 1899, 9.

²³Ninkovich, 56.

same as they viewed Native Americans in the United States. "Americans surveyed the Philippines in much the same way they did the North American frontier just a few decades before," Van Ells argues, "as one of the world's dark places awaiting Euro-American civilization and enlightenment."²⁴ He believes Americans thought that the Filipinos, like the American Indians, had to either yield to their way of life or face extermination.

The generalizations that Van Ells describes emerged from the public perception of the Filipinos received from the American press. Filipino historian John Lent analyzed this perception of the Filipino people and reveals that "American newspapers in 1898 had the view that the islands were a rich, untapped source of American wealth and capital. The natives, half-devil, half-child, insist on playing government, a group of warlike tribes who will devour each other the moment American troops leave."²⁵ In most cases, the press portrayed the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands as helpless, mischievous children who desperately needed American care and civilization.²⁶

As a result of the limited knowledge that Americans had regarding the Philippine-American War from the press, there was a strong sense of racism concerning Filipino rights. In the 7 February 1899 issue of the

²⁴Mark D. Van Ells, "Assuming the White Man's Burden: the Seizure of the Philippines, 1898-1902," *Philippine Studies* 43 (Winter 1995): 612.

²⁵John A. Lent, "The Philippine Press During the Revolution and the Filipino-American War," *Asian Thought and Society* 3 (September 1978): 315.

²⁶Christopher A. Vaughan, "The Discovery of the Philippines by the U.S. Press, 1898-1902," *Historian* 57 (Winter 1995): 305.

New York Times, an article entitled “Future Work in the Philippines” proclaimed that Aguinaldo’s “insane attack” and “stupendous folly” offered conclusive evidence that the Filipinos were “undisciplined children.” To give them any political power was “to give a dynamite cartridge to a baby for a plaything.”²⁷ There was a belief among many Americans that there was an innate incapacity for self-government among “colored” races. The subsequent “insurrection” of the Filipinos was seen as confirmation of their need for American rule and tutelage.²⁸ These notions are also reflected in the letters of Henry Adams, an American soldier in the Philippine-American War, to his wife Elizabeth Cameron. In a letter dated 22 January 1899, Adams wrote that the army “must slaughter a million or two of foolish Malays in order to give them the comforts of flannel petticoats and electric railways. We all dread and abominate war, but cannot escape it.”²⁹

It is important to note here that both those who favored expansion and those who opposed it used these racial ideas to justify their argument. Imperialists, who favored the expansion into Asia on the premise of securing new American markets, argued that part of America’s role as a world power included spreading civilization throughout the dark parts of the world such as the Philippines. This idea not only reflected the notion of Manifest Destiny, which was used to secure North American lands in the nineteenth

²⁷“Future Work in the Philippines,” *New York Times*, 7 Feb. 1899, 4.

²⁸Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 102.

²⁹Henry Adams, “Letters of Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 22 Jan. 1899,” in *Imperialists Versus Anti-Imperialists*, 106.

century, but it also included the concept of Social Darwinism, which argued that survival and growth belonged not only to the strongest individuals of a species, but also to the strongest nations of the world. It was as carriers of civilization that the United States was obligated to annex the Philippines.³⁰ The result of these two principles was a distinctively new form of American Imperialism that assumed commercial development and the spread of civilization were twin imperatives.³¹ As Theodore Roosevelt stated in 1899, “expansion gradually brings peace into the red wastes where the barbarian peoples of the world hold sway.”³²

Using principles of American superiority, Senator Beveridge defended the annexation and imperialist policy of the United States before Congress on 9 January 1900. In response to the anti-imperialist argument that the political ideology of the United States forbids the country to annex the Philippines, Beveridge argued, “The Declaration of Independence applies only to people capable of self-government . . . [The Filipinos] are not a self-governing race.”³³ Beveridge felt that self-government should only be endowed upon the “graduates of liberty, not the name of liberty’s infant class, who have not yet mastered the alphabet of freedom.” He considered it America’s duty

³⁰Lasch 328.

³¹Julie A. Tauson, “The Ideology of Empire in *National Geographic Magazine*’s Coverage of the Philippines, 1898-1908,” *Geographical Review* 89 (Spring 1999), 35.

³²Theodore Roosevelt, “Expansion and Peace, Dec. 1899,” in *Imperialists Versus Anti-Imperialists*, 121.

³³*Congressional Record*, 56th Congress, 1st Session. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1900), 704-711..

to carry out God's mission of civilization throughout the world, and that Americans "cannot retreat from any soil where Providence has unfurled our banner."³⁴

Those who opposed American expansion in the Pacific also used race as justification for their beliefs. Both the imperialists and anti-imperialists, as historian Alfred McCoy states, "believed that the Philippine reality could not impinge on their national self-image of America as a new world power with civilization worthy of imitation."³⁵ However, unlike their opponents, the anti-imperialists believed that Manifest Destiny was merely continental, not global. Historian Stuart Creighton Miller notes that the most effective anti-imperialist argument was to "exploit racial fears by threatening to insist that full citizenship be extended to Filipinos unless the 'foolish venture' into imperialism was abandoned."³⁶ Anti-imperialists spoke passionately about the dangers of bringing in, as one southern senator described it, "yet another inferior race under the American flag."³⁷ These racist fears of Filipino infiltration into American life were echoed in the House of Representatives. Congressman Champ Clark from Missouri warned his fellow representatives that "very soon almond-eyed brown-skinned United

³⁴Albert J. Beveridge, "The Taste of Empire: A Campaign Speech Given in Indianapolis, 16 Sept. 1898," in *The Annals of America*, vol. 12, 202.

³⁵Alfred W. McCoy, "Philippine-American Relations: A Problem of Perception," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 6 (Summer 1987): 18.

³⁶Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903*, (New Haven: Yale University, 1982), 125.

³⁷Van Ells, 614.

States Senators would destroy the very Constitution that had granted them the rights of citizenship.” Such a statement drew resounding applause from Clark’s fellow anti-imperialists in the House. Clark continued, “No matter whether they are fit to govern themselves or not, they are not fit to govern us.”³⁸

With only very few exceptions, such as Senator George Hoar, the anti-imperialists shared the expansionists’ belief in the inferiority and incapacity of the world’s “colored” population. However, while the imperialists assumed that it was the responsibility of Americans to care for these savage races of the world, the anti-imperialists appealed to these same racist assumptions to justify excluding non-white people from a place in the American way of life. Beisner states that both groups believed that “the blood of tropical peoples would taint the stream of American political and social life and further complicate the nation’s already festering racial problems.”³⁹

Herein lies the essence of the anti-imperialist argument. An imperialist policy of annexation would have been a dramatic departure from American expansionism. Anti-imperialists fixed the limits of westward destiny at the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Because all new territories were contiguous, citizens of other states could easily settle the new territories and establish a population that was indistinguishable from other states. These new lands could then be admitted with the same standing as older states. Anti-imperialists

³⁸*Congressional Record*, 55th Congress, 3rd Session. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1900), 5888.

³⁹Beisner, 219.

believed that such a policy could not exist in new territories such as the Philippines because of racist principles. They believed that the Filipinos were not qualified to become American citizens, and they would therefore have to be governed as subjects. However, a republic based on the principle of self-determination could not have subjects because it was a contradiction of the principles over which the founding fathers had separated from England, ideals which are found in the Declaration of Independence and elaborated on in the Gettysburg Address passage that states a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from this earth.” This evidence suggests that, as Harrington asserted, the focus of the anti-imperialist argument of 1898 originated in historical precedence and political principles.

The anti-imperialist movement began to grow after the annexation of the Philippines in February 1899. Members from literary, labor, and political organizations from all over the country joined Anti-Imperialist Leagues. Almost immediately, imperialism became the central issue in the presidential election.⁴⁰

In the election of 1900, as rumors surrounding the atrocities committed by the military in the Philippines spread, the Republican Party platform regarding imperialism stated: “It is the high duty of the Government to maintain its authority, to put down armed insurrection, and to confer the blessings of liberty and civilization upon all the rescued peoples.”⁴¹ Democrats, on the other hand, nominated the anti-imperialist Bryan. In his nomination acceptance speech, Bryan

⁴⁰Harrington, 220

⁴¹Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 64.

proclaimed imperialism the central issue of the race. In describing the party platform regarding imperialism, Bryan stated: "We favor immediate declaration of the nation's purpose to give the Filipinos, first, a stable form of government; second, independence; and third, protection from outside interference such as has been given for nearly a century to the republics of Central and South America."⁴² Bryan knew that this election would decisively determine American foreign policy abroad.

Bryan's defeat in the 1900 election served as a crushing blow to the anti-imperialist organization. Bryan had fewer votes than in the 1896 election, and this loss prompted the Democratic Party to end all affiliations with the anti-imperialist movement.⁴³ In his analysis of the reasons why they lost the election, Harrington states that anti-imperialists had failed to unite bi-partisan support behind a single candidate. Many anti-imperialists did not like Bryan because of his support of the Treaty of Paris.⁴⁴ They also had to contend with strong national feelings of patriotism and pride elicited by the war with Spain. As Beisner explains, the anti-imperialists had to "ask people aroused by American armed triumphs to surrender the fruits of victory."⁴⁵

Harrington believes that the defeat of the anti-imperialists signaled the failure of the movement in American history. However, while the election may

⁴²E. Berkeley Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate, 1890-1920*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), 228.

⁴³Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 71.

⁴⁴Harrington, 233.

⁴⁵Beisner, 230

have resulted in the formal break-up of Anti-Imperialist Leagues throughout the country, anti-imperialist ideas still remained in American politics. In looking at the lasting effects of the movement, it can be seen that the movement did not result in failure as Harrington and other historians have suggested.

In terms of the originally stated goals of the movement, the anti-imperialists were able to change the American foreign policy of annexation. They had opposed the annexation of the Philippines because it violated the fundamental political foundations of the country. This issue was well received following the 1900 election, and even though the anti-imperialist movement had formally ended, Americans no longer annexed foreign lands as it had after the Spanish-American War. Since 1900, the Philippine Islands were America's sole experiment in colonialism, and the Philippine-American War has been considered merely a postscript to the Spanish-American War.

The Jones Bill, also referred to as the Organic Act of the Philippine Islands, reflected that anti-imperialist ideas were still in American politics after the movement formally ended. Enacted on 29 August 1916, this bill gave the Filipinos a greater measure of self-government and confirmed the intention of granting the Filipinos eventual independence. American industries would still have a presence in the Pacific, but the Philippine Islands themselves would be granted independence. Moorfield Storey, former president of the Anti-Imperialist League, stated in 1913 that "the American people know in their hearts that they have no right to hold the Philippines. They will hail with delight and profound sense of relief the passage of any measure which restores their self-respect by setting

the islanders free.”⁴⁶ However, not all those who supported Philippine independence were anti-imperialist. Theodore Roosevelt also supported the Jones Act for military reasons, reflecting America’s move towards isolation prior to World War I. In a letter to the *New York Times* on 22 November 1914, Roosevelt declared: “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. There can be no compensating benefit to us.”⁴⁷

Granting the Philippines independence was one of the major issues for anti-imperialists, and the enactment of the Jones Bill in 1916 shows that ultimately the purpose and objectives of the original anti-imperialist movement of 1898, as stated in Bryan’s platform, were achieved. The anti-imperialists had desired to change the American practice of imperialism in the twentieth century because it violated, what the Anti-Imperialist League called, “the spirit of 1776.” Another result of the anti-imperialist movement was that, as historian Frank Ninkovich notes, “underneath the political and aesthetic contrasts, there was neither Old nor New World [emerging], but a common, economy-driven new-world-in-the-making.”⁴⁸

This new type of imperialism that emerged from America’s involvement in the Philippines is what historian William A. Williams calls “Open Door Imperi-

⁴⁶John A. Beadles, “The Debate in the United States Concerning Philippine Independence,” *Philippine Studies* 16 (July 1968): 424.

⁴⁷Theodore Roosevelt, “The Navy as a Peacemaker,” *New York Times*, 22 Nov. 1914, SM5.

⁴⁸Ninkovich, 36.

alism.” Williams argues that while Americans had agreed upon the need for commercial expansion to secure new markets, the imperialist debate disputed the proper strategy and tactics of such expansion. This debate, Williams believes, was solved by “a policy of the open door that was designed to clear the way and establish the conditions under which America’s preponderant economic power would extend the American system throughout the world without the embarrassment and inefficiency of traditional colonialism.”⁴⁹ This Open Door policy would become the Monroe Doctrine of the twentieth century and the central feature of American foreign policy.

While Williams does recognize the emergence of Open Door Imperialism at the turn of the century, he does not identify that this new type of imperialism was based upon the beliefs of the anti-imperialists. All Americans, including the anti-imperialists, realized the need for foreign markets. The anti-imperialists did not contest the war in the Philippines or the economic aspects of colonialism, but rather opposed the political implications that an imperialist policy would have on the American tradition of self-determination. Anti-imperialist leader Carl Schurz believed that this Open Door Imperialism would “extend freedom by exerting civilizing influences upon the population of the conquered territories and gain commercial opportunities of so great a value that they will more than compensate for the cost of the war.”⁵⁰ The anti-imperialists

⁴⁹Williams, 45.

⁵⁰William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire: A Study of the Growth and Shaping of Social Consciousness in a Marketplace Society* (New York: Random House, 1969), 441.

believed that wars such as the Philippine-American War were necessary in order to ensure American industries new markets such as the Philippines. This new Open Door Imperialism was a creative solution for anti-imperialists because it satisfied their desires for economic growth and preserved democratic purity. They became pioneers of a new foreign policy that would guide American economic growth throughout the twentieth century and today.

After receiving news of the American naval victory in Manila Bay in 1898, the *Washington Post* declared, "The guns of Dewey at Manila have changed the destiny of the United States. We are face to face with a strange destiny and must accept its responsibilities."⁵¹ The war to drive Spain from Cuba opened the door for the establishment of an American marketplace throughout the world. As the result of Dewey's victory in the Philippines, Americans debated contrasting visions of the proper foreign policy for their country. The United States, which only a century earlier had been born out of a reaction to imperial domination, now itself became an imperial power. Americans favored expansionism not colonialism. Realizing that they could not expand in the traditional European way, Americans found a way to expand their interests economically and socially, but without violating the modern notion of democracy, which the United States itself had established. This foreign policy was vital to American growth and, for the first time, the United States was building an overseas empire. This new Open Door Imperialism, which resulted in part be-

⁵¹Henry F. Graff, *American Imperialism and the Philippine Insurrection* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969), xiii.

cause of the anti-imperialist movement of 1898, did not violate the spirit of 1776 and had all the advantages while escaping all the burdens of colonialism. At the turn of the century, Americans had the economic need, the Social Darwinian vision, and the progressive impetus to develop a new foreign policy that had the power to create a worldwide market where American businesses could buy, sell, and openly invest in other parts of the world.