# Bound to empire: the United States and the Philippines

H. W. Brands

# BOUND TO EMPIRE

The United States and the Philippines

H.W. BRANDS

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## Preface

Americans have never been comfortable with the idea of empire. Beneficiaries of the first successful anti-imperial revolution of the modern era, Americans have often expressed their outright repugnance for the notion. The charter of American independence denied the right of one people to hold another against the latter's will, and during the initial hundred years of their existence as a sovereign nation Americans applauded the efforts of peoples around the world—Latin Americans, Greeks, Hungarians—to join them on the plateau of self-determination.

Yet much in the American experience belied and undermined the anti-imperial tendency. Only on rare occasions did significant numbers of Americans express compunctions about dispossessing the indigenous inhabitants of North America. In annexing Louisiana, the Floridas, Texas and California, Americans scarcely paused to consider the wishes of the French and Spanish populations involved. Americans would have snatched Canada had Britain not blocked the way, and perhaps Cuba and all of Mexico if not for the divisive influence of slavery. To some extent the slave system itself exhibited features of imperialism, with the object of conquest being not land but labor, and the conquered residing within the metropolis rather than abroad. (Whether America's agrarian South stood in a subordinate semi-imperial relationship to the industrializing North is another question.)

Further, as the institution of slavery abundantly testified, Americans of European descent exhibited the attitudes of racial and cultural superiority that have usually accompanied empire-building, and that certainly did so in the nineteenth century. The sweeping but vague arguments of America's manifest destinarians helped beget the more closely articulated analyses of the Social Darwinists, and

together the movements produced a firm belief that expansion of the American system brought benefits to conquered and conquerors both. When to these considerations was added the desire to secure foreign markets for American goods and capital, a desire that increased with advancing industrialization, the temptation to empire grew irresistible.

At the end of the nineteenth century America succumbed. In the war with Spain the United States acquired an overseas empire, of which the most significant part was the Philippine archipelago. Americans took the Philippines for the same reason men have long taken wives (and women, when given a choice in the matter, husbands): they were attractive and available. For a decade economic expansionists had pointed to the islands as a staging area for the penetration of the China market, and navalists eagerly eyed Philippine harbors and fuel resources. The fight with Spain, although triggered by events in the Caribbean, gave these covetous souls an opportunity to grab the Philippines. Grab they did.

The imperialists' coup touched the still-connected anti-imperialist nerve in the American body politic and set off an impassioned debate over the exportability of democracy and other American institutions, over America's role in the world and over the very meaning of the American experiment. The anti-imperialists lost this round: in 1899 the Senate approved a treaty with Spain annexing the Philippines to the United States.

But anti-imperialism did not die. If anything it grew stronger as Filipinos displayed a violent aversion to American rule, waging an anti-imperial war that brought out, to a greater degree than most wars, the worst in both sides. By the time American troops suppressed the resistance, Americans had lost all desire to extend the American writ further, to find another Philippines. One was plenty.

For nearly half a century the Philippines rested at the fulcrum of America's ambivalence toward empire. To which side the balance tipped often depended on who held power in Washington. Republicans usually displayed confidence in the value, to Americans and Filipinos alike, of American possession of the islands, and when the party of Lincoln—the iron was lost on neither Democrats nor Filipinos—controlled the government in Washington the ties binding colony to metropolis generally stayed tight. Democrats, by contrast, commonly looked on the colonial relationship as corruptive of both the United States and the Philippines. Retention of the islands, Democrats relieved, contradicted American ideals and prevented the natural development of Filipino society. Periods of Democratic rule normally brought a loosening of imperial bonds, to the point of independence in 1946.

The situation regarding the Philippines, cowever, was never quite as straightforward as this first approximation suggests. In the United States, special interests disrespected party lines in lobbying for favored treatment. Philippine legislation regularly produced unlikely alliances among conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats. Matters were more complicated still in the Philippines,

where everyone claimed the label of nationalist but where the label covered a wide variety of groups and individuals. From the first, American administrators of the islands looked for governing help to the educated and well-to-do among the Filipinos, just as the Spanish had done for three hundred years. The Filipino elites, as they had done for three hundred years, demonstrated their mastery of the imperial game, turning the American presence to their own ends. Central among these was the maintenance of their comfortable position.

The collaboration between the American government and the Filipino elites was not without conflict. In principle the United States had committed itself to the introduction of democracy to the Philippines, and during occasional fits of idealism it attempted to put the principle into practice. The Filipino elites usually resisted, fearing a loss of power and preferment. Quarrels among different elite elements spilled over into relations with the Americans. The greatest source of contention, however, lay in the refusal of the Filipino masses to acquiesce in the condominium of the American rulers and the Filipino upper classes. During the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, peasant movements challenged the status quo in the islands. Often the agitation from below forced the elites to the political left, compelling elite leaders to adopt publicly a more nationalistic position than they would have assumed on their own. Equally often the threat of mass unrest caused the elites to look to their American sponsors for political and other support. That the elites spoke the language of Filipino nationalism while relying on the United States, and that American leaders espoused democracy for Filipinos even as Washington reinforced rule by the elites, made for a tangled relationship between the two countries and the two peoples.

Complicating things further during the entire period of direct American control was the presence of an increasingly powerful Japan. Acquisition of the Philippines transformed the United States overnight from an interested observer of Asian affairs into a proprietary player. But because the American government never succeeded in persuading the American people to fund adequately the islands' defense, the Philippines turned out to be a source of American weakness rather than American strength. For forty years American diplomats sought to cover America's exposure with an assortment of treaties and executive agreements, yet ultimately they failed, and the war many had feared for two generations came in December 1941.

America's exposure in the Philippines was, to an obviously greater degree, Filipinos' exposure, as the islands' educated population fully recognized. Sometimes this recognition drove the Filipinos closer to the United States, while at other times it inspired them to look elsewhere for security. During World War II, when American protection broke down entirely, it prompted a significant portion of the Filipino leadership to cooperate with the Japanese occupation forces. At all times it added an extra wrinkle to the already convoluted fabric of Philippine-American relations.

Though the postwar period soon brought a close to the era of formal American control over the Philippines, many of the links connecting the Philippines—and especially the Filipino elites—to the United States survived the termination of direct American rule. The new Philippine government, facing a communist-inspired guerrilla uprising, called for and received American assistance in subduing the rebels. The United States, reading in the rise of Asian communism a challenge to international order and American security, called for and received Philippine assistance in erecting a barrier against further communist expansion. The imperial bond persisted, although in looser and less explicit form than before.

For a while the arrangement worked well enough. During the 1950s the United States extended its anticommunist alliance system from Europe across Asia to the Pacific. The government in Manila vociferously denounced communism and most regimes not so conservative as itself. For its efforts in this regard, and for permitting the United States to retain military bases in the islands, the Philippine government received large payments of American military and economic aid.

Yet the symbiosis, designed to secure stability, eventually generated just the opposite. The American commitment to containing communism outstripped American material and psychological resources, leaving the United States in the morass of Vietnam. In the Philippines, garden-variety corruption gave way to the brutal kleptocracy of Ferdinand Marcos. As had nearly all his predecessors, Marcos portrayed himself as a guarantee against the spread of communism in Asia. But after Vietnam revealed the fallacies of the domino theory, after Marcos became an international embarrassment, and after the Filipino people, including large segments of the upper classes, demonstrated their utter distaste for the dictator, Washington canceled the support it had supplied Marcos for twenty years.

The cancellation, however, applied only to Marcos. During the late 1980s, Washington and Manila again found common ground. Although the communist specter was losing its fear-provoking capacity, the American government continued to desire military base rights. The Philippines enjoyed a more democratic form of government than under Marcos, but the upper classes still exercised inordinate influence and resisted power-sharing claims of the New People's Army and other dissenters. As had happened before, the Filipino elites appeared willing to accept American help in maintaining political stability, and the United States appeared willing to provide it in exchange for services rendered.

But the imperial bond was no longer what it had been. The bases issue got enmeshed in the politics of the approaching 1992 Philippine elections, and the Philippine senate rejected a treaty granting the Americans a ten-year extension of base rights. The Philippine government then offered the Americans three years to wind up their affairs, but even this proved too generous for Philippine nationalists, and at the end of 1991 Manila announced that the Americans must be gone within twelve months. Washington, retrenching financially and watch-

ing the Soviet Union self-destruct, acquiesced quietly to the eviction order. Through almost a century of coexistence the governing groups in the United States and the Philippines had supported each other's interests. During that time the two sides had exercised considerable ingenuity adjusting the terms of support to fit changing circumstances. Finally, though, it seemed that the pool of collaborative ingenuity has gone dry.

The present volume is a study in power. In particular, it is an examination of the structure of power that has bound the United States and the Philippines together. There is a wonderful and engrossing tale in the history of the Philippines and of Philippine-American relations. I hope the drama of the tale comes through in the chapters that follow. But telling the tale is not my principal purpose. (Stanley Karnow has accomplished this in a fashion not soon to be repeated.) Instead I concentrate on the essentials of the colonial and postcolonial relationship between the two countries. I focus on those individuals and groups, Americans and Filipinos, who have wielded power, in order to determine what they did with their power and why they did it. I pay greatest attention to the most significant manifestations of power, especially military, political and economic. Cultural relations between the American and Filipino peoples, worthy of examination in their own right, enter the picture here chiefly as they affect power relations.

Two considerations have motivated my approach. The first is a desire to understand how American power has operated in the context of interactions with America's most important colony, during the colonial period and after. How did American power respond to the lesser but not negligible forms of Filipino power? What purposes did American power serve? Was American power a force for good? Whose good? Was American imperialism in the Philippines more benign than other countries' imperialism elsewhere? To what degree has American power in the Philippines in the postcolonial period constituted a kind of neo-imperalism?

The second consideration is a belief that America's relationship with the Philippines can provide a valuable case study in America's international relations generally. The domestic and external forces impelling the United States to acquisition of the Philippines in 1898–99 were the same forces that launched America on a career of globalism. The imperatives of power that shaped American treatment of the Philippines were, mutatis mutandis, the same imperatives that conditioned American responses to the revolutionary developments of the twentieth century throughout Asia and the world. The military, political and economic mechanisms of American power in the Philippines were the same mechanisms by which the United States extended its sway across much of the planet. The compromises and accommodations American leaders made in the Philippines were much like the compromises and accommodations American leaders have made in other countries. The process of power-brokering among different fac-

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tions in the American polity with respect to the Philippines, and the interplay in this brokering of perceived interests and professed ideals, showed features similar to those that have marked America's overall approach to foreign affairs for two centuries. In sum, to untwist the strands of American relations with the Philippines is to make a fair start toward understanding American relations with humanity at large.

For better and worse, the United States during the last hundred years has had enormous impact on the world, impact greater than that of any other country. Filipinos, also for better and worse, have felt the American impact more directly than almost any other people. Chemists study certain classes of reactions by examining particular instances under heightened temperature and pressure. Historians cannot manipulate their subject matter as chemists do, but they can select samples of history that exhibit general tendencies in concentrated form. The nine decades of United States-Philippine relations compose one such sample.

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Austin September 1991

H.W.B.

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## T

## THE CALL

## 1

# Manic Depression 1890s

## I. Showing her age

By the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, Americans had tired of centennial observances. The year 1875 had brought commemoration of Lexington and Concord, 1876 of the declaration of independence, 1881 of Yorktown, 1883 of the Treaty of Paris, 1887 of the writing of the Constitution, 1889 of the organization of the government it specified. To be sure, Americans could use reminders of great days past, for the present afforded scant solace. With each passing year America grew more like the Europe Americans and their ancestors had fled. Disparities of wealth increasingly invaded the public consciousness. The census of 1890 reported that the most affluent 1 percent of the nation's population controlled a fortune greater than the combined resources of the remaining 99 percent. Jacob Riis made the same point in the same year, in more eloquent fashion. In How the Other Half Lives, Riis depicted the miserable lot of the working poor of the cities, an existence he called "a slavery as real as any that ever disgraced the South." But no ties of paternalism softened the demands of the rapacious capitalist, who controlled both the workplace and the living quarters, usually a stifling room in a squalid slum, of the unfortunate laborer. "Not content with simply robbing the tenant, the owner, in the dual capacity of landlord and employer, reduces him to virtual serfdom by making him become his tenant, on such terms as he sees fit to make, the condition of employment at wages likewise of his own making."1

The growth of enormous business enterprises enforced the inequality between worker and capitalist, effectively extinguishing most hopes of rising from the masses. Following the example of John D. Rockefeller and the Standard Oil trust,

corporations consolidated rapidly during the post-Civil War era. Trusts dominated industries in all sectors of American economic life, and when a consumer bought beef, sugar, whiskey, coal, or kerosene, or a farmer purchased a plow, reaper, or binder, or a merchant contracted for any number of goods from steel pipe to stoves, trusts set the prices and took the profits. Whether, in strictly economic terms, the nation's households suffered from the rise of the trusts is a difficult question. Economies of scale tended to offset noncompetitive pricing. But the loss of individual autonomy the corporatization of the country entailed produced psychological distress that more than overbalanced any pocketbook gain. America was supposed to be the land of opportunity. Where was opportunity now? Popular upset with the trusts had developed so far that in 1890 a Republican senator, John Sherman, introduced into Congress and a Republican president, Benjamin Harrison, signed into law a measure ostensibly aimed to curb the trusts and other combinations in restraint of trade. That the Sherman antitrust bill in practice did almost nothing to hinder the growth of business consolidations, in fact providing a weapon for use against labor unions, testified to the resilience of the capitalists and the cleverness of their lawyers.

The congressional session that spawned the Sherman Act also begot the McKinley tariff, the latest and most successful effort by business interests to curtail foreign competition. With rates averaging nearly 50 percent, the McKinley tariff—the Ohio congressman's sole legislative claim to prominence but one sufficient to win the support of grateful businessmen and the Republican presidential nomination in 1896—made no pretense at revenue-raising, which would have required far lower scales. It was, plain and simple, an instrument to boost prices and profits, a forced transfer payment from consumers to capitalists. As matters turned out, McKinley and his colleagues overestimated what the traffic would bear, and largely as a result of their promiscuous presumption the Democrats recaptured the House of Representatives, retiring McKinley temporarily to Canton.

If sharpening class divisions in the cities made Americans feel that the United States was growing more like Europe, conditions in the less populated regions offered little relief. Besides describing the increasingly inegalitarian distribution of wealth in the country, the 1890 census abandoned the notion of the frontier as demographically meaningful. The trans-Mississippi West had hardly filled in, and more land would yet be homesteaded than settlers had claimed to date. But the West was civilizing by the day. In 1889 and 1890 alone, six new states joined the previous thirty-eight. Equally telling, the pattern of habitation had become sufficiently uniform that no connected line could separate the unsettled regions from the settled. Intellectuals, led by historian Frederick Jackson Turner, would make much of the passing of the frontier. Yet those individuals struggling to earn a living in the wheat country of North Dakota, in the high basins of Wyoming, or in California's central valley needed neither the census director nor academics

to tell them how population pressure drove up land prices and drove out marginal—usually small—operators.

The census meant even less to America's first tenants, who felt the pressure of the country's growing population more directly. Demands from speculators and homesteaders to open Oklahoma to white settlement led Congress in 1889 to withdraw most of the protection it previously had extended over this Indian Territory. The land rush of April of that year summarized all the greedy banality of American treatment of Indians. Within twenty-four hours of the starting-pistol's shot, two million acres once reserved to Indians were seized by fifty thousand whites. During the next four years Washington expropriated and opened to settlement an additional ten million acres.

Farther north the Indians' 1890s commenced with greater brutality. Earlier, after half a decade on the run in the border country along the 49th parallel, Sitting Bull and his followers had surrendered to the American army. The Sioux leader served two years in prison before being released to the Standing Rock reservation in the Dakotas. Known as one who communicated with the spirit world, Sitting Bull became the object of official American suspicion when the millenarian cult of the Ghost Dance spread among the Sioux during the late 1880s. The army arrested him in December 1890, and in the resistance that followed he was killed. Two weeks later the cavalry moved to crush the Ghost Dancers. At the misnamed Battle—it was not a battle at all—of Wounded Knee, soldiers massacred two hundred freezing, starving Sioux.

The end of Indian resistance seemed of a piece with the vanishing of the frontier and with the diminution of the individual's chances to get ahead as an individual. Both signaled the erosion of American exceptionalism, of all that made America different from Europe and allowed Americans to believe they stood outside the normal course of history. Contributing further to this declension were the ever-mounting waves of immigration that yearly washed hundreds of thousands of Old Worlders to American shores. These latest arrivals were distressingly un-American. When immigrants had originated chiefly in the British Isles and Scandinavia and Germany, they blended fairly quickly into the American population. But this group called Italy, Greece, Poland and Russia home. Many had darker skins. Most spoke exotic tongues. Further, to a country that remained overwhelmingly Protestant and traced its origins to a rejection of the excessive influence of Rome in the religious affairs of England, the fact that the new immigrants were predominantly Catholics provoked troubling questions about America's future. The strong admixture of Jews simply made matters worse.

The concern the new immigrants aroused reflected the American obsession with race. The darker the complexion of the recently arrived the less assimilable they seemed to be. Precedent existed for such thinking. In nearly three hundred years American society had failed utterly to assimilate its largest racial minority—

Africans and their descendants. Indeed, during the 1890s the trend was in precisely the opposite direction. The abandonment of the former slaves by the federal government that marked the end of Reconstruction had begun a period during which the southern states sorted out their methods of dealing with their black underclass. As the end of the century approached, most were settling on a variant of what South Africans would call apartheid. In 1890 Mississippi required voters to read and understand—to the satisfaction of a white registrar—selected passages from the state constitution. Other states followed the example, erecting a system of restraints on the activities of blacks that eliminated them from political participation and condemned them to subordinate social and economic status. When the Supreme Court, in the 1896 Plessy case, upheld a Louisiana law mandating segregated railway facilities, what little hope blacks retained of national interest in their plight vanished.

Like most attempts to legislate superiority, the Jim Crow system betrayed a lack of confidence on the part of those doing the legislating. Their relative status no longer assured by the institution of slavery, white southerners erected new barriers to the advancement of blacks. The growing nativist trend similarly demonstrated a failure of faith. For three centuries America had generally embraced immigrants, who supplied transfusions of intellect, culture and energy that invigorated American society. Now the transfusions seemed to promise not invigoration but infection. The themes of racism and nativism twined with the sense of narrowed opportunity and with the broader feeling that America's best days lay in her past. Not everyone shared the sentiment, yet even those who rejected it had to confront its implications. Some would attempt to disprove it by supporting bold new adventures, dramatic demonstrations of the country's continued vigor.

## II. The revolt of the masses

Amid the overall ambience of decline, specific groups had particular grievances. For two decades farmers had confronted falling prices for the produce they sold, and although these were balanced to some extent by lower costs for goods they purchased, deflation increased the burden of debt on a class chronically owing. Farmers also felt the pinch of monopoly most acutely, whether in the form of railroads, commodity brokerages or farm-equipment trusts. While manufacturers battened on profits swollen by the protective tariff, farmers faced the severity of an unprotected and increasingly competitive world market. That hayseed and rube had replaced salt-of-the-earth and backbone-of-the-republic as popular impressions of farmers added wounds to the soul to match the injuries to the wallet.

The pain on the farm elicited attempts to alleviate it. Some sought the solace of the Grange, which began as a secret society before branching out into coop-

erative marketing and purchasing endeavors. Others favored the Greenback party, the principal exponent of that nostrum of debtors, inflation. But the most important amplifier of farmers' grievances was the Populist party, formed in 1892 of Grangers, Greenbackers and members of the Farmers' Alliance. The Populists nominated James B. Weaver, an Iowa Creenbacker, for president, and ran him on a platform of government ownership of railroads and other utilities, a soak-therich income tax, free coinage of silver at 16 to 1 to gold and, in a largely unsuccessful effort to gain the support of urban labor, curbs on immigration and an eight-hour day. Needless to say, the powers-that-were denounced nationalization of the railroads and an income tax as pure socialism. Yet society's respectables saved their special wrath for free silver, which they deemed nothing short of theft. Theft it was, for with silver actually trading at closer to 32 to 1 against gold, minting silver at 16 would amount to a 50 percent devaluation in the currency. Farmers and other debtors would gain as the notes they held depreciated by half, while bankers and their creditor friends would lose commensurately. Of course the creditors had been profiting for years from falling prices, but this the polite classes left unsaid.

Had the farmers succeeded better in reaching out to workers in the cities, their challenge to the status quo might have progressed further. In the event, the workers had their own agenda. Some items were peaceful, especially those advocated by the Knights of Labor, whose Grand Master Workman Terence Powderly spurned strikes and preached the conversion of workers into capitalists by the agency of employee-owned industrial enterprises. Peaceful or not, Powderly's methods were denounced by management as communistic. Meanwhile his more radical comrades-in-toil castigated him as a stooge of the owners and launched a class war in the country's mines, railyards and factories. The direct-actionists began their assault on the citadel of capitalism in the 1870s, when the Molly Maguires waged guerrilla campaigns in the coalfields of western Pennsylvania. Unrest spread to the nation's railroads. One strike on the Baltimore and Ohio line expanded across several states before President Hayes called out federal troops. Amid fighting in several cities some three dozen persons died. In 1886 a bomb exploded at a rally in Haymarket Square in Chicago, called to show solidarity with strikers at the McCormick harvester works. Seven police and four workers were killed in the blast, while seventy individuals were wounded. In the minds of many observers the bombing presaged anarchy and revolution.

The situation deteriorated in the 1890s, which produced the worst labor violence in the nation's history. Hundreds of strikes idled tens of thousands of workers during the first half of the decade, and although most of the stoppages did not lead to bloodshed, many did. In July 1892, steelmen at Andrew Carnegie's Homestead plant put down their tools to protest reductions in pay and demand union recognition. Carnegie, who later would call for tolerance of dissent among Filipinos, extended no such privilege to the hands in his mills and rented an army

of Pinkerton agents to break the strike. After pitched battles yielding ten deaths and scores of casualties, the hired guns, supplemented by the local militia, succeeded in quelling the disturbance, although the anti-union forces were compelled to occupy the area for three months to ensure its pacification.

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The summer of 1892 also witnessed eruptions of labor unrest in the silver mines of Idaho, where state authorities resorted to martial law to suppress radical agitation. In 1894 a strike shut the Pullman Palace Car Company near Chicago, leading to widespread attacks on persons and property. Eugene Debs, head of the American Railway Union, called a sympathy walkout that eventually blocked rail traffic all across the Middle West. Over the protests of Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld, President Cleveland sent in federal troops to crush the strike and reopen the roads.

Cleveland's display of force succeeded in suppressing the Pullman strike, but it also exacerbated the feeling that America was at war with itself. An Ohio Populist, Jacob Coxey, concluded that if the government could raise an army against the people, the people could mobilize against the government. Coxey mustered an "army" of out-of-workers, and he led his legions to Washington where they tried to petition Congress for unemployment relief and looser money. The expedition failed farcically. The police herded the marchers into camps, ostensibly to safeguard public health, and arrested Coxey for walking on the government's grass. But this anticlimax detractedly only slightly from the message the movement conveyed: that the country had some screws loose and might soon fall to pieces.

## III. The compulsion of depression

Intensifying the distress of the 1890s and exacerbating the various forms of protest was the most serious economic depression the country had ever experienced. In 1893 a large adverse shift in America's balance of payments precipitated a failure of confidence on the part of foreign investors, which in turn triggered a run on the country's gold reserves. The panic that followed brought a collapse of much of the banking system, a shakeout of the corporate sector, a paralyzing contraction of credit, a plummeting in demand and a rapid spread of unemployment. The United States had witnessed economic depressions before but not of this magnitude. Coming as it did in conjunction with the other evil portents of the age, the depression seemed one more indication of American decline.

The panic broke many captains of industry to lower ranks, cashiering some entirely. Those who survived plotted a counterattack. Noting the connection of the collapse to the growing gap between what America purchased abroad and what it sold, business spokesmen advocated a strategy of expanding America's exports as the way to recapture prosperity. To some, Latin America seemed a

likely prospect for absorbing the surplus production of the United States. Banker's Magazine asserted, "There is no reason why our manufactures should not find an enlarged market in the southern half of this hemisphere." The Atlanta trade journal Dixie encouraged exporters to show their products at an industrial fair in Mexico City. The National Association of Manufacturers, formed in 1895 with the express purpose of promoting American wares abroad, sponsored a tour by representatives of American companies to Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil and pressed Washington for assistance in enabling American firms to compete with Britain in Central and South America.<sup>2</sup>

Yet if the markets of Latin America enjoyed the advantage of propinquity, the Far East possessed the allure of magnitude. For a century American merchants had plied the China trade, and although China's failing government had managed to keep the foreign devils at arm's length, confining their activity to Shanghai and other treaty ports, the notion of hundreds of millions of consumers in the hinterland hungering for American products only gained attractiveness with the passing decades. The depression of the 1890s focused the attention of the American business community on China as never before. The economics editor for the New Orleans Times-Picayune characterized American trade interests in China as "immense." The New York Tribune described America's stake in the China market as "now great" and promising to be "enormous." The Chicago Inter-Ocean looked hopefully to a "tenfold" increase in America's business with China. The National Association of Manufacturers waxed enthusiastic over "the great trade" destined to arise in the Orient.3

Washington's agents also joined the quest for markets. From the days of Alexander Hamilton the federal government had demonstrated consistent solicitude for the welfare of American business, and American consuls made it their business to seek out favorable opportunities for the expansion of American exports. Yet until nearly the end of the nineteenth century this service, while useful, had not been of overriding importance, since the growth of America's domestic demand generally sufficed to clear the country's markets. The depression of the 1890s changed the situation dramatically. Many observers now despaired of the nation's ability ever again to purchase all it could produce. From the state department came the warning: "Every year we shall be confronted with an increasing surplus of manufactured goods for sale in foreign markets if American operatives and artisans are to be kept employed the year round."4

While the micro-economic impact—upon individual firms—of the shortfall in demand would by itself have spurred Washington to action, the macro-economic ramifications—upon the country's finances as a whole—made the expansion of exports a priority. As the run on the treasury had demonstrated, the negative tilt in the trade balance threatened America's entire credit structure. In such circumstances it became a matter of high policy to find a fix. Treasury Secretary John Carlisle put the issue bluntly. Americans, Carlisle said, had two alternatives in trying to cover the deficit. They could either "export and sell their commodities in foreign markets" or they could "ship gold." The latter course had touched off the panic. Recovery required the former.<sup>5</sup>

Pursuing Carlisle's recommendation, America's official representatives abroad redoubled their efforts to spur American exports. Like the strategists of the private sector, the public servants found the trading possibilities in the Far East tantalizing. The state department, reviewing business prospects around the world, accounted China "one of the most promising fields for American enterprise, industry, and capital." Charles Denby, the American minister to China, advocated quick action to seize the opportunity the China market afforded the American economy. Identifying a theme others would elaborate, Denby asserted that while America's past resided with the nations across the eastern sea, the country's future lay in the illimitable west. "The Pacific Ocean," Denby predicted, "is destined to bear on its bosom a larger commerce than the Atlantic."

## IV. The ideology of jingoism

If the world across the Pacific promised to relieve the economic suffering of the 1890s, it also held hope for assuaging the social and psychological stresses of the decade. Even while the closing of the frontier heralded the end of the age of American uniqueness, and the revolt on the farms and the war in the factory-yards indicated that the New World was becoming increasingly like the Old, many Americans refused to accept the evidence of decline. Some developed a counter-ideology of continuing American exceptionalism. Belligerently self-assertive, this ideology placed the United States at the apex of historical development and predicted the imminent Americanization of the earth.

Most prominent among ideologists of exception were the Social Darwinists, who revived the traditional doctrine of Manifest Destiny in the guise of social science. The Social Darwinists—mostly Anglo-Saxon types—contended that the success of the Anglo-Saxon race in subduing the lesser peoples of the planet resulted from the greater adaptive value of Anglo-Saxon culture and institutions. The argument was seductive and safely circular. Those groups at the top of the ladder of political and social evolution deserved preeminence by the very fact of their preeminence, while those lower down owed their inferiority to their inferiority. Prescriptively the formula proved even more potent. The mitigation of the disparities between rich and poor, between those who did what they would and those who did what they must, would tamper with nature and jeopardize the future evolution of the species as a whole.

John Fiske cut his intellectual teeth at Harvard, where he thrilled to the philosophy of the English Social Darwinist Herbert Spencer. Fiske afterward wrote, "To have lived when this prodigious truth was advanced, debated, established,

was a rare privilege in the centuries. The inspiration of seeing the old mists dissolve and reveal the convergence of all branches of knowledge is something that can hardly be known to the men of a later generation." What Fiske discerned especially in the parting mists was the bright future lying before the United States. In a widely read 1885 essay entitled "Manifest Destiny," Fiske wrote, "The work which the English race began when it colonized North America is destined to go on until every land on the earth's surface that is not already the seat of an old civilization shall become English in its language, in its political habits and traditions, and to a predominant extent in the blood of its people." Fiske held that the success of the Anglo-Saxon race owed partly to its physical fecundity and hardiness and partly to its mastery of modern technology. But in greatest measure past victories had arisen and future triumphs would follow from the governing genius of the race, embodied most clearly in the American constitution. "If the Roman Empire could have possessed that political vitality in all its parts which is secured to the United States by the principles of equal representation and of limited state sovereignty, it might well have defied all the shocks which tribally organized barbarism could ever have directed against it." Fiske predicted with supreme confidence that the United States would, a century hence, embrace "a political aggregate immeasurably surpassing in power and in dimensions any empire that has yet existed."7

Josiah Strong was no less convinced than Fiske that the future of humanity rested with the United States. But Strong granted a larger role for Providence as an ally of America. Strong, whose best-selling Our Country also appeared in 1885, headed the American Evangelical Alliance, and his tract accomplished the improbable feat of tailoring Darwinism to fit the preconceptions of evangelical Protestantism. Strong asserted that history hung upon certain "great focal points," among which three stood out: the incarnation of Jesus, the Cerman Reformation, and the "closing years of the nineteenth century" (Strong's emphasis). The present period, he declared, at once held great dangers and extraordinary promise for Americans, and through Americans for the world. Among the dangers Strong identified immigration, which he labeled an "invasion by an army more than four times as vast as the estimated number of Goths and Vandals that swept over Southern Europe and overwhelmed Rome." A related peril was "Romanism," whose principles were "diametrically opposed" to those of the American republic, whose practitioners received an education "calculated to make them narrow and bigoted" and whose threat to the United States was summarized in the words of the immortal Lafayette—who, having been born a papist, knew whereof he spoke: "If the liberties of the American people are ever destroyed, they will fall by the hands of the Romish clergy." Strong cited other dangers, some more prosaic but nonetheless baleful: intemperance, wealth, city life, socialism and Mormonism.8

Yet Strong believed that Americans, by placing their faith in the Protestant

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God, could overcome these hazards in glorious fashion. The Anglo-Saxon race, he declared, represented two seminal ideas of world civilization: individual liberty and "pure spiritual Christianity." The two were connected. "It was no accident that the great reformation of the sixteenth century originated among a Teutonic, rather than a Latin people. It was the fire of liberty burning in the Saxon heart that flamed up against the absolutism of the pope." With this singular religious and political heritage, the Anglo-Saxon was "divinely commissioned to be, in a peculiar sense, his brother's keeper." Like Fiske, Strong foresaw Anglo-Saxons multiplying rapidly and filling the earth, with the American branch of the family assuming the place of honor. "We are to have not only the larger portion of the Anglo-Saxon race, but we may reasonably expect to develop the highest type of Anglo-Saxon civilization." The benefits of Anglo-Saxonism would spread, as a result not only of the demographic expansion of the race but also of its "instinct" for colonizing. The Anglo-Saxon possessed "unequaled energy" and "indomitable perseverance." "His personal independence made him a pioneer. He excels all others in pushing his way into new countries." And no wonder. "God, with infinite wisdom and skill, is training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world's future." In his call to arms—and to alms, ever necessary for the work of the Lord—Strong perorated:

Men of this generation, from the pyramid top of opportunity on which God has set us, we look down on forty centuries! We stretch our hand into the future with power to mold the destinies of unborn millions. . . . It is fully in the hands of the Christians of the United States, during the next ten or fifteen years, to hasten or retard the coming of Christ's kingdom in the world by hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of years. We of this generation and nation occupy the Gibraltar of the ages which commands the world's future. 9

Not all social theorists of the time took such an optimistic view of the decades ahead. Brooks Adams was distinctly gloomy. Of Adams' 1896 work, The Law of Civilization and Decay, Theodore Roosevelt remarked that "few more melancholy books have been written." Like brother Henry, Brooks Adams felt directly the decline of American civilization. While the contemporaries of great-grandfather John and grandfather John Quincy had recognized and rewarded the intellectual and political gifts of the Adams clan, the present generation bestowed the prize of the presidency upon mere Harrisons, Clevelands and McKinleys. Notwithstanding his pessimism, Adams contributed to America's outward thrust of the 1890s by extolling the heroic virtues he claimed had built the great empires of the past. Borrowing from Newtonian mechanics, Adams described the evolution of human society in terms of a "law of force and energy" positing that "the velocity of the social movement of any community is proportionate to its energy and mass" and that "its centralization is proportionate to its velocity." Readers who waded through this theoretical froth got to the firmer ground of Adams' fun-

damental point: that in the course of cultural development the initially predominant martial character gave way to the economic. This led society into a dead end, since economic traits tended to be derivative and parasitic, in contrast to the originality and vigor of the martial temperament. Adams mourned civilization's decay, and he doubted that the degeneration could be reversed. <sup>10</sup>

Alfred Thayer Mahan agreed with Adams on the merits of the martial character, although Mahan refused to accept Adams' bleak prognosis. The first of a breed that would proliferate in America half a century later—the defense intellectual—Mahan interpreted Social Darwinism in military terms. Like the nuclear-war theologians of the 1950s and after, Mahan dealt in strategic weaponry, which in his day meant capital ships. Yet Mahan cast his net more widely, interpreting naval rivalries as a manifestation of the endless struggle for survival among nations. In his 1890 opus The Influence of Sea Power upon History, Mahan wrote that peoples began using the oceans by exploring upon them, progressed to trading across them and ended by fighting over them. As in the past, Mahan predicted, likewise in the future. The lessons of Lepanto and Trafalgar applied to any country that aspired to greatness.

The most obvious of these lessons demonstrated the requirement for a strong fleet. Mahan's work provided the intellectual underpinning for an expansion during the 1890s of the American navy, which only recently ranked twelfth in the world. But Mahan placed equal significance on the infrastructure required to support a country's maritime efforts.

As a nation, with its unarmed and armed shipping, launches forth from its own shores, the need is soon felt of points upon which the ships can rely for peaceful trading, for refuge and supplies. In the present day, friendly, though foreign, ports are to be found all over the world; and their shelter is enough while peace prevails. It was not always so, nor does peace always endure.

Examining the historical record, Mahan asserted that colonies afforded the surest security to a country with international interests. In 1890, however, he felt compelled to grant that the United States would not likely soon acquire colonies. Failing this, Washington must make other arrangements for the safety of its overseas commerce. The acquisition of rights to coaling and repair stations was "one of the first duties" of a responsible federal government.<sup>11</sup>

Intellectuals like Mahan required the assistance of practicing politicians to convert such schemes into policy. In 1887, when Theodore Roosevelt first met Mahan at the Naval War College, Roosevelt was not practicing, having retired from New York politics to mourn his deceased wife and the moribund reform wing of the Republican party in the state. But Roosevelt intended to resume practice at a suitable opportunity. And having written on the naval war of 1812 he shared Mahan's interest in sea power. When Mahan's book appeared in 1890, Roosevelt lauded it in the highest terms. "Captain Mahan has written distinc-

tively the best and most important, and also by far the most interesting, book on naval history which has been produced on either side of the water for many a long year," Roosevelt asserted in a review in the Atlantic Monthly. Roosevelt was especially taken with Mahan's elucidation of "the practical importance of the study of naval history in the past to those who wish to estimate and use aright the navies of the present." Glossing the text somewhat, Roosevelt credited Mahan with pointing out the deficiencies in America's naval posture: the need for a large merchant marine, for adequate fortifications and repair facilities along the nation's coasts and especially for a fighting fleet. Speaking more clearly in his own voice, Roosevelt declared,

Our ships should be the best of their kind—this is the first desideratum; but in addition there should be plenty of them. We need a large navy, composed not merely of cruisers, but containing also a full proportion of powerful battleships, able to meet those of any other nation. It is not economy—it is niggardly and foolish short-sightedness—to cramp our naval expenditures, while squandering money right and left on everything else, from pensions to public buildings. 12

Roosevelt was not a profound thinker, but he was alert to the intellectual currents of his day, and this alertness—together with his lack of profundity, rare in any age—made him in significant respects a spokesman for his era. Of equal importance, the political posts Roosevelt successively held placed him in positions to act upon his convictions. Roosevelt shared the optimism of Fiske and Strong, and he took Mahan's analysis as a challenge to American patriotism. While rejecting Adams' dismalism, he deemed Adams' work a spur to action. "If our population decreases; if we lose the virile, manly qualities, and sink into a nation of mere hucksters, putting gain above national honor, and subordinating everything to mere ease of life; then we shall indeed reach a condition worse than that of the ancient civilizations in the years of their decay." Needless to say, T.R. did not intend to concede to history a monopoly on manliness.<sup>13</sup>

Roosevelt deemed a day without a demonstration of strength—personal or national (he tended to equate the two)—a day lost forever. A friend from college remarked that Roosevelt "wants to be killing something all the time." This individual continued, "He would like above all things to go to war with some one." Roosevelt considered it a point of pride to cultivate a thin skin in matters touching the country's affairs. "I am not hostile to any European power in the abstract," he explained at a time of transatlantic tension. "I am simply an American first and last, and therefore hostile to any power which wrongs us."

Roosevelt interpreted wrongs broadly. After the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 he heard that the pope had expressed displeasure with members of the American clergy for not trying to stop the fighting against Catholic Spain. Roosevelt flashed indignant at the mere thought. "I would resent as an impertinence any European, whether Pope, Kaiser, Czar or President, daring

to be angry with an American because of his action or nonaction as regards any question between America and an outside nation." He added, for good measure, "If any man, clerical or lay, Bishop, Archbishop, priest, or civilian, was in any way guilty of treasonable practices with Spain during our war, he should be shot or hung."<sup>14</sup>

Although Roosevelt believed that the British could act as thick-headedly as other Europeans, he subscribed with enthusiasm to the notion of Anglo-Saxon cultural superiority. Roosevelt was not a racist in quite the same sense as many of his contemporaries, for while he often used the term "race" loosely he usually referred to the acquired attributes of a people rather than their inherited characteristics. He admired the Japanese for their military and political successes as much as he disdained the Chinese for their weakness. "What wonderful people the Japanese are," he wrote at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. "They are quite as remarkable industrially as in warfare. . . . I believe that Japan will take its place as a great civilized power of a formidable type." But Japanese success, Roosevelt judged, owed to Japan's emulation of the great nations of the West, especially Britain and the United States. He considered it peculiarly the mission of Anglo-Saxons to carry culture to the barbarians. "It is to the interest of civilization," he wrote in the period of the Boer War, "that the English speaking race should be dominant in South Africa"—exactly as it was to civilization's gain that the United States "should be dominant in the Western Hemisphere."

While many leaders throughout history have desired the fruits of war for their countries, Roosevelt valued war for its own sake. Such a taste not even he would announce too openly, although he came close on more than one occasion. In 1889, when Berlin was making difficulties, he told a friend, "Frankly I don't know that I should be sorry to see a bit of a spar with Germany. The burning of New York and a few other sea coast cities would be a good object lesson in the need of an adequate system of coast defenses, and I think it would have a good effect on our large German population to force them to an ostentatiously patriotic display of anger against Germany." Two years later he condemned the Harrison administration for not declaring war on Chile. His close associate John Hay remarked of Roosevelt, then civil service commissioner, "For two nickels he would declare war himself—shut up the Civil Service Commission and wage it sole." In 1896, as strain with Spain over Cuba increased, Roosevelt commented, "If it wasn't wrong I should say that personally I would rather welcome a foreign war." A short while later he added, "I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one." Reviewing one of Mahan's later books, Roosevelt declared, "There is no place in the world for nations who have become enervated by soft and easy life, or who have lost their fibre of vigorous hardiness and manliness." In a widely remarked lecture before the Naval War College he asserted, "All the great masterful races have been fighting races." If a race lost "the hard fighting virtues," then "no matter how skilled in commerce and finance, in science or art, it has lost its proud right to stand as the equal of the best." He concluded, "No triumph of peace is quite so great as the supreme triumphs of war." <sup>15</sup>

Anglo-Saxonists like Roosevelt, Fiske and Strong took heart from the spread of Anglo-Saxon institutions consequent to the expansion during the 1880s and 1890s of the British empire, though they naturally thought America could do a better job of the spreading. Not alone was Britannia expanding: in this period nearly all the colonial powers were scrambling for Africa, Southeast and East Asia and whatever else had not been locked away. The example reinforced expansionist tendencies in the United States, at two levels. At the idealistic level, the European cult of the imperial mission encouraged those Americans who would regenerate the world. If Britain, France, Germany and the others had a mission to civilize humanity, all the more did America. At the practical level, the rush for colonies indicated that if the United States did not join the race soon, there would be no prizes left. On this point navalists like Mahan and commercialists like Charles Denby joined hands with the Anglo-Saxonists. Coaling stations, export markets, benighted souls and backward societies all were going fast.

## V. The diplomacy of distraction

The ideology of American superiority catalyzed the general unrest of the decade into a combustible form of belligerent nationalism. America swaggered through the 1890s, daring the world to cross it. In 1891 a civil war in Chile found Washington backing the government of President José Balmaceda against Congressionalist rebels. The Congressionalists viewed Harrison's secretary of state James G. Blaine with particular distrust, for ten years earlier, as Carfield's chief diplomat, Blaine had taken Peru's part against Chile in the War of the Pacific. In the 1891 case, however, "Jingo Jim" was, if anything, more conciliatory than Harrison. When the American legation in Santiago granted asylum to eighty refugees from the fighting and the by-now victorious Congressionalists responded by surrounding the American compound, Harrison dispatched an indignant message to the new government. Shortly thereafter the commander of the U.S.S. Baltimore unwisely authorized shore leave in Valparaiso for more than a hundred sailors who drank their pay and triggered an ugly riot. Two tars were killed and seventeen wounded, while the local police looked on. Harrison adopted the novel position that while God might watch over children and the insane, Chile must take care of inebriated Americans. As an American officer put it, the Americans "went ashore, many of them, for the purpose of getting drunk, which they did on Chilean rum paid for with good United States money. When in this condition they were more entitled to protection than if they had been sober."

Harrison also insisted on treating the attack on men in American uniform as an attack on the United States itself. He demanded satisfaction. The Chilean

government, still smarting from Washington's support for the losers in the civil war, replied by publicly calling Harrison a liar. Harrison added an apology and reparations to his demand. Otherwise, he intimated, the United States would certainly sever diplomatic ties and might declare war. The president went so far as to send the American Congress a message inviting a declaration of belligerency. At the last minute Chile gave way. Warned by European envoys to expect no help in the event of hostilities, the government in Santiago apologized and offered an indemnity. Washington accepted.<sup>16</sup>

American assertiveness took a territorial turn twelve months later. At the beginning of 1893, American expatriates in Hawaii fomented a revolution against the government of Queen Liliuokalani, overthrowing the monarchy and calling for annexation to the United States. The American minister in the islands, John Stevens, thought the coup a grand idea and guaranteed its success by ordering the landing of a squadron of marines from the conveniently close U.S.S. Boston. Expansionists in America cheered the energy of the men on the spot and began pinning Old Clory halfway across their maps of the Pacific. But the revolutionists had timed their action badly, for the White House was now occupied by Grover Cleveland. The Democratic president was not opposed to expansion per se. During his earlier administration he had declared Hawaii an "outpost of American commerce and the stepping-stone to the growing trade of the Pacific." Yet Cleveland, who had made his name in politics as a reformer, objected to the means by which the annexationists had operated. The United States, he said, did not go around overthrowing foreign governments. He criticized the "false pretexts" under which Stevens had called the American marines ashore, and he asserted that the United States could not annex the islands "without justly incurring the imputation of acquiring them by unjustifiable methods." He rejected the request for annexation.17

The annexationists would have their day once Cleveland left office. In the meantime the Democratic administration had to deal with the perception that it was weak on international affairs. Had he been able to point to victories on domestic matters, Cleveland could have ignored criticism of his foreign policy. Americans have never demanded much of their leaders regarding matters abroad while life flows smoothly at home. But as the depression deepened, as workers fought Pinkertons and farmers turned socialist, as Roosevelt ranted and other Republicans joined him, and as members of his own party began defecting, evidenced by the Democrats' loss of both houses of Congress in 1894, Cleveland began searching for issues to take Americans' minds off their troubles. He found one in an obscure location.

For half a century Britain and Venezuela had engaged in a desultory dispute over the location of the boundary between the latter country and the British colony of Guiana. For most of that time no one had much cared where the frontier lay, since it ran through jungle of which both sides had plenty. Then prospectors

struck gold, changing the nature of the debate entirely. Venezuela suspended diplomatic ties with Britain in 1887 and called for international arbitration. Britain refused. Washington expressed mild interest in the subject, but it lay essentially quiescent until 1895.

In June of that year Cleveland shifted his attorney general, Richard Olney, to the state department following the untimely death of Secretary Walter Gresham. Olney provided the perfect reinforcement to Cleveland's sense of propriety, having responded to a daughter's indiscretion by banishing her from his home, never to see her again, although they lived in the same city for thirty years. Olney also knew how to count votes, and he seized the Venezuela issue at once. He dictated a memorandum to the British government insisting that London accept arbitration. Giving the lion's tail an added twist, he reaffirmed the Monroe Doctrine in breathtaking fashion. "Today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent," Olney wrote, "and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition." Why did America enjoy such eminence?, he asked rhetorically.

It is not because of the pure friendship or good will felt for it. It is not simply by reason of its high character as a civilized state, nor because wisdom and justice and equity are the invariable characteristics of the dealings of the United States. It is because, in addition to all other grounds, its infinite resources combined with its isolated position render it master of the situation and practically invulnerable as against any or all other powers.

Theodore Roosevelt could hardly have puffed the American chest out farther than this.<sup>18</sup>

The British, who had never acknowledged the legitimacy of even the narrowest interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, had no intention of accepting Olney's sweeping extension. Lord Salisbury, the prime and foreign minister, did not consider the American note worthy of a prompt reply. He conspicuously spent the next four months on other matters. When he got around to responding he denied that the Monroe Doctrine had any standing in international law. Even if it did, he said, "the disputed frontier of Venezuela has nothing to do with any of the questions dealt with by President Monroe."

Cleveland bristled at Salisbury's flippancy, and in a public message to Congress the president insisted that the Monroe Doctrine assuredly was international law and that it did apply to the present controversy. Because Britain refused to arbitrate the matter, the United States would nominate a commission to investigate. Should Britain refuse to accept the commission's report and persist in flouting decency and justice, the United States would consider such action "a willful aggression upon its rights and interests" and would be obliged "to resist by every means in its power." 20

These were fighting words. The jingoes thrilled. Congress voted \$100,000 to fund the boundary commission. The Irish National Alliance promised 100,000 troops for an invasion of Canada. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, a Roosevelt crony

who had urged a firm line from the beginning, wrote with satisfaction, "I first alone in the wilderness cried out about Venezuela last June and was called a Jingo for my pains. Jingoes are plenty enough now." Roosevelt said, "Let war come if it must. I don't care whether our sea coast cities are bombarded or not; we would take Canada." Roosevelt added hopefully, "If there is a muss I shall try to have a hand in it myself! They'll have to employ a lot of men just as green as I am even for the conquest of Canada." The British ambassador in Washington, observing the scene, wrote home that the American capital was in an "extraordinary state of excitement" and that the whole country appeared to be in "a condition of mind which can only be described as hysterical."

American hysteria alone might not have caused Salisbury to reconsider. But at the same time Britain faced an incipient war in southern Africa, where British colonials and the German kaiser were doing their best to foment trouble, and friction with Russia over difficulties in Turkey and the Far East. Under the circumstances London needed no more enemies. Cleveland similarly thought again when the war scare disrupted financial markets in the United States and threatened to provoke another run on the nation's gold reserves. The British agreed in principle to arbitration, and the Americans consented to discuss what would be arbitrated. The talks moved slowly, which was all to the good. By the time an international commission awarded Britain most of the disputed territory, American passions had found another outlet.

## Dewey . . . or Don't We? 1898-1899

## I. Coup de Maine

John Seeley, the nineteenth-century historian of British imperialism, claimed that Britain acquired its empire in "a fit of absence of mind." Seeley was wrong about Britain, and Americans who ascribed a similar accidental quality to their country's colony-gathering were equally in error. Empires do not happen by accident. America, like Britain, gained an empire because Americans wanted one and went out and got it.

This is not to say that all Americans wanted an empire, or that America got precisely the empire American imperialists sought. Plenty of Americans objected, and the anti-imperialists' objections limited the reach and graspingness of the empire-builders. The fight between the two groups, conducted in the popular press, in journals of opinion, in Congress and on the hustings, set the pattern for a debate that would continue until the present. Each side professed adherence to high ideals and to general principles of democracy, of service to humanity and of America's mission to the world. Yet the arguments that really told, then as later, were those that appealed to interests—:o the interests of the listeners and readers and voters as individuals, as groups and as a nation. Different individuals and groups possessed competing individual and group interests and offered contradictory interpretations of the national interest. Hence the debate.

In 1895, in the midst of the war scare with Britain over Venezuela, when America remained mired in depression and chaos threatened on all fronts, nationalists in Cuba launched another in a long series of freedom fights against their Spanish rulers. Spain displayed particular inertitude suppressing the revolt, and although Madrid committed more than 100,0(1) troops to the conflict the Spanish succeeded only in brutalizing the populace and swelling insurgent ranks. The Cubans claimed few victories on the battlefield, but in the arena of world, or at least American, opinion they accomplished much more. Cuban publicists tapped into the American press, recounting and exaggerating Spanish abuses, including the infamous reconcentrado policy, which uprooted peasants and placed them in disease-ridden camps and converted the countryside into a free-fire zone. The new American president, William McKinley, publicly denounced the reconcentrado policy as "extermination."1

Although McKinley was neither a jingo nor an enthusiast of expansion, his party contained many of both, and with the penny papers outbidding each other in atrocity stories and fire-eaters in Congress demanding American intervention, a rebellion in Republican ranks seemed a genuine possibility. McKinley often showed more shrewdness than character, and in this instance he calmed the uprising by joining it. In June 1897 he informed Spain of America's conviction that human rights for the Cuban people took precedence over the prerogatives of Spanish sovereignty, and he demanded that the Spanish government terminate its reconcentrado policy and implement permanent reforms in the island.

Spain naturally refused, with a haughtiness guaranteed to goad. The Spanish minister in Washington subsequently penned a nasty letter about McKinley that leaked. At the beginning of 1898 the American navy department sent the U.S.S. Maine to Havana, ostensibly to protect American nationals, implicitly to pressure the Spanish. When the ship exploded under mysterious circumstances, killing hundreds of American sailors, an international collision became unavoidable. This time the jingoes, Mahanites and expansionists would not let opportunity pass. At their urging Congress appropriated \$50 million for war preparations and directed the president to intervene on behalf of the insurgents. McKinley issued an ultimatum effectively demanding Cuban independence. Spain sneered and broke relations. McKinley and Congress replied in kind. In the fourth week of April, Washington and Madrid exchanged war declarations.

By this time the pro-war faction had done its work well enough that a majority of the country almost certainly favored the idea. Spain seemed the clear villain in this morality play, and after a decade of discouragement at home Americans were more than willing to seek success abroad. The fact that success would probably come quickly and easily made the conflict the more appealing. The country needed a victory, not a challenge, and heroes, not necessarily heroism.

But the war America actually fought was different from the one most Americans believed they were getting into. Although Cuba was the cause of the war, Spain was the enemy. Spain held territories around the globe. With the war declaration these territories—which included the Philippines—became potential prizes. From the time tension with Spain over Cuba had begun ratcheting, the navy department had prepared contingency plans. One of June 1896 specified that in the event of hostilities American ships in the Far East should proceed to Manila, there to engage and if possible destroy the Spanish fleet and capture the