

Race-Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire: The Philippine-American War as Race War**By Paul A. Kramer**

Speaking on May 4, 1902 at the newly-opened Arlington Cemetery, in the first Memorial Day address there by a U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt placed colonial violence at the heart of American nation-building. In a speech before an estimated thirty thousand people, brimming with "indignation in every word and every gesture," Roosevelt inaugurated the Cemetery as a landscape of national sacrifice by justifying an ongoing colonial war in the Philippines, where brutalities by U.S. troops had led to widespread debate in the United States. He did so by casting the conflict as a race war. Upon this "small but peculiarly trying and difficult war" turned "not only the honor of the flag" but "the triumph of civilization over forces which stand for the black chaos of savagery and barbarism." Roosevelt acknowledged and expressed regret for U.S. abuses but claimed that for every American atrocity, "a very cruel and very treacherous enemy" had committed "a hundred acts of far greater atrocity." Furthermore, while such means had been the Filipinos' "only method of carrying on the war," they had been "wholly exceptional on our part." The noble, universal ends of a war for civilization justified its often unsavory means. "The warfare that has extended the boundaries of civilization at the expense of barbarism and savagery has been for centuries one of the most potent factors in the progress of humanity," he asserted, but "from its very nature it has always and everywhere been liable to dark abuses."¹



President Theodore Roosevelt addresses a vast Memorial Day crowd at Arlington Cemetery in May 1902 before assembled veterans and a journalist. In his “indignant” speech, he defended the U. S. Army against charges of “cruelty” in the ongoing Philippine-American War by racializing the conflict as one being fought between the forces of “civilization” and “savagery.” (Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library.)

As did Roosevelt, this essay explores the Philippine-American War as race war: a war rationalized in racial terms before U.S. publics, one in which U.S. soldiers came to understand Filipino combatants and non-combatants in racial terms, and one in which race played a key role in bounding and unbounding American violence against Filipinos. My concern with race is far from new in and of itself. Most of the war’s historians—whether writing the more traditional, campaign-driven U.S. literature or more recent and more nuanced local and social histories of the war—make passing reference to the racism of U.S. soldiers without thorough exploration.² Stuart Creighton Miller, in his critical account of the war, places racism at the center of U.S. troop conduct.³ This essay begins from Miller’s starting assumption—that race was essential to the politics and conduct of the war—but also emphasizes the contingency and indeterminacy of the process by which these racial ideologies

took shape, against the assumption that these ideologies were reflexive “projections” or “exports” from the United States to the Philippines. Rather, as I will show, while race helped organize and justify U.S. colonial violence, imperial processes also remade U.S. racial formations.⁴

Exploring this contingency requires attention to two dynamics which have up to now been largely ignored in existing literatures. The first of these is the contested character of race during the war. By 1898, Filipinos had been engaging the Spanish colonial racial precepts that undergirded the Philippine colonial state for at least two decades; they would continue to do so, in different ways, from the prewar Republic into the war's conventional phase and ultimately in guerrilla struggle. These engagements often took the form of elite quests for recognition, especially the affirmation of civilizational status as the criteria first for assimilation and political rights and, ultimately, for political independence. As I suggest, similar Filipino campaigns for recognition from Americans—before, during and after the war—fundamentally shaped both U.S. racial ideologies and Filipino nationalism.

The second source of contingency is the war itself. Racial ideologies and changing strategies and tactics moved together in a dark, violent spiral. Within both Filipino and Euro-American political cultures, patterns of warfare were themselves important markers of racial status. “Civilized” people were understood to wage “conventional” wars while “savage” people waged guerrilla ones. Filipino guerrilla warfare eventually marked the entire population as “savage” to American soldiers: rather than merely a set of tactics undertaken for military purposes, guerrilla war was the inherent war of preference of “lower races.” This racialization of guerrilla war raised the central question of whether Filipinos, in waging a “savage” war, were owed the restraints that defined “civilized” war. Ultimately, I will suggest, many U.S. soldiers and officers answered this question negatively. In many parts of the Archipelago, the war in its guerrilla phases developed into a war of racial exterminism in which Filipino combatants and non-combatants were understood by U.S. troops to be legitimate targets of violence.⁵ The heart of the emerging U.S. imperial racial formation was rich in contradictions: the people of the Philippines did not have sufficient “ethnological homogeneity” to constitute a nation-state, but possessed enough to be made war upon as a whole.

Questions of Recognition

By 1898, Filipino elites had been struggling against Spanish racism, as a key element of Spanish colonialism, for at least two decades.⁶ An expatriate propaganda movement in Europe had help up Hispanicized “civilization,” advanced education and bourgeois sophistication as arguments for greater rights within the Spanish colonial system.⁷ A common editorial stance in the pages of expatriate journal *La Solidaridad* faulted some Spaniards—especially the Philippine friars—for relentlessly denigrating Filipino “advancement” along these lines.⁸ This was the strategy of a cosmopolitan, ilustrado elite with cultural capital to spare, one that reached its consummation with the triumph of the Philippine Revolution under Emilio Aguinaldo and the installation of the Philippine Republic in mid-1898. When

the Malolos Congress formed, it was done in the name of an emerging “civilization” finally capable of expressing itself as an independent state. The more radical, millenarian politics that had animated mass participation in the revolution’s Katipunan societies were marginalized in Aguinaldo’s Republic.⁹

The taking of Manila by U.S. troops following the Battle of Manila Bay introduced a tense six-month period characterized by Filipino-American interaction and competitive state-building, in which the stakes of recognition had never been higher. On the ground, relations between Filipinos and American soldiers in and around Manila during this transitional period were varied. U.S. soldiers found themselves in an enticing, disturbing and incomprehensible Filipino urban world; Filipinos unsure of the invading army’s status were wary of the Americans but eager for their business. Americans and Filipinos encountered each other in commercial interactions, especially those involving liquor and sex. As U.S. soldiers consolidated military control over Manila and its municipal government—from sanitation to law enforcement—and Filipino soldiers extended the Republic’s control in the wake of Spanish defeats, they also met as members of rival states-in-the-making.¹⁰

During this period, colliding interests, failed translations, mutual suspicions and questions of jurisdiction easily boiled into animosity and conflict, especially where U.S. soldiers became drunk and disorderly or failed to pay their debts. Soldiers commonly characterized Filipinos as a whole as filthy, diseased, lazy and treacherous in their business dealings, sometimes applying the term “nigger” to them. One anonymous black soldier reflected back on this period that the subsequent war would not have broken out “if the army of occupation would have treated [Filipinos] as people.” But shortly after the seizure of Manila, white troops had begun “to apply home treatment for colored peoples: cursed them as damned niggers, steal [from] them and ravish them, rob them on the street of their small change, take from the fruit vendors whatever suited their fancy, and kick the poor unfortunate if he complained...”¹¹

At the same time there was a striking amount of mutual recognition in the interval between wars, as U.S. soldiers came to know individual Filipinos or their families and visited their churches and homes. Up until the very brink of war, American soldiers frequented Filipino concerts, dances, ceremonies and dinners, often recording their admiration for Filipino grace, hospitality and artistic achievement in their diaries and letters. One striking example was a poem presented at a Thanksgiving dinner thrown by the 13th Minnesota in Manila in November 1898, which recalled the recent fall of Manila and expressed the soldiers’ thanks:

We’re thankful that the City’s ours, and floats the Stars and Stripes;
We’re thankful that our cause is one that from these Islands wipes
The degenerate oppressors of a brother human kin
Who now—beneath ‘Old Glory’—a nation’s place may win.¹²

To be sure, there were dark signs here: the U.S. flag as the sole guarantor of liberty; passive Filipinos as objects of U.S. redemption; the sense that Filipinos still had a "nation" to win ahead of them "beneath 'Old Glory.'" What was striking in light of future developments was that Filipinos were still "brother human kin."

In the last months of 1898, as the Treaty of Paris was being negotiated, Filipinos sought recognition by launching legal and historical arguments for the sovereignty of the Philippine Republic and the impossibility of the Islands' legitimate transfer from Spain to the United States. These claims were subtly and forcefully expressed by Felipe Agoncillo, representative of the Philippine Republic sent to the United States to lobby on behalf of Philippine independence before U.S. politicians and the general public. As expressed in his January 30, 1899 "Memorial to the Senate of the United States," Agoncillo's claim was that U.S. formal recognition of the Philippine Republic had already been established by U.S. consular and naval dealings with Emilio Aguinaldo's government. The army of the Philippine Revolution had advanced sufficiently against Spanish forces by the time of the U.S. declaration of war, he claimed, that Spain had no legal title or right to cede Philippine territory to the United States. Indeed, Christian Filipino rebellions against Spain had broken out "continuously with greater or less fury for the past hundred years," while "a large number of my countrymen," namely Muslims and animists, had "never been subdued by Spanish power." Agoncillo also appealed to U.S. history and political institutions, inviting American attention "to several notable and exact American precedents" and urging "the Republic of America" to "adhere to the teachings of international law as laid down by some of its founders."¹³

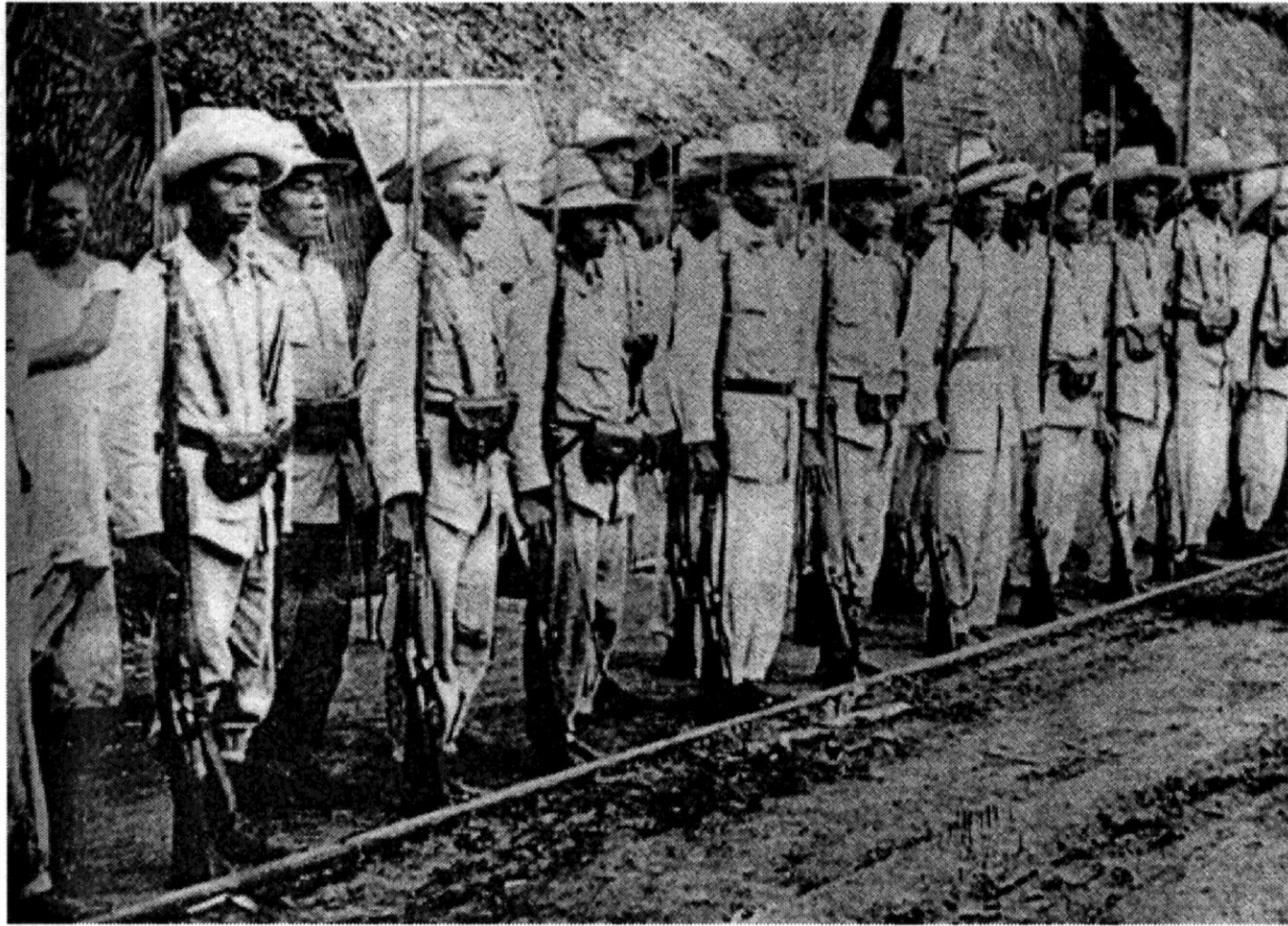
At the same time, the Republic sought recognition for its sovereignty in "civilizational" standing. This brand of argument was particularly common in the Republic's official newspaper, *La Independencia*, itself meant to be a concrete and mobile representation of the Philippine Republic's "civilization" and sovereignty before imagined audiences both within and outside the archipelago.¹⁴ In their first issue, the editors described "Our Program" as: "demonstrating the ideal and the supreme aspiration of the country; publicizing the priorities of our government; requesting recognition of our independence from other nations, grounding ourselves in the capacity of the race, in the deeds that outwardly reveal our culture and in the vitality that we demonstrate in governing 26 provinces with more than 3 million inhabitants..."¹⁵ Advertising correspondents in "all the provinces of the Archipelago, London, Paris, Madrid, Singapore, Hong-Kong and Saigon," its pages in late-1898 and early 1899 highlighted erudite treatises on "modern" government, including civil service reform, municipal budgeting, public instruction, moral reform, public hygiene and "the spirit of association."¹⁶

One fascinating window onto Filipino efforts at recognition and their reception was the inland expedition of Luzon taken by two naval officers, William Wilcox and L. R. Sargent, in November and December 1898. While the two men's task was "of a very indefinite nature," it was fundamentally a project of recognition: to determine whether the institutions controlling the Filipino countryside constituted a state and, if a state, whether it was hostile or not to two wandering U.S. naval officers. As

Sargent put it, they were "to proceed as far to the northward as the character of the country and the attitude of the natives would permit, and to return only when forced to do so." ¹⁷

If border control was a state's measure, then the Philippine Republic was up and running. Aguinaldo offered the two friendship and verbal consent but no written passports. As a result, the two relied on local *presidentes*, who provided them passports, carriers and safe passage between towns, although at least one had hesitated to give assistance in fear that "any incident" might "create a wrong and injurious impression of the good faith of the Philippines..." ¹⁸ Some members of the rural elite may have seen great advantage in winning over two naive Americans; others may have seen in them only the opening wedge of an invasion. At one town they might be greeted "by the ringing of the church bells and the music of the band, and at the next by the critical cross-questioning of the local authorities." ¹⁹

In either case, local officers of the Republic lost no chance to represent to visiting Americans their authority and popular support. Wilcox and Sargent were regularly treated to elaborate Filipino patriotic celebrations, stirring declarations of independence, and impressive military drills. "At that time the enthusiasm of the people was tuned to the highest pitch," reported Sargent. "In every village, every man was training in arms. Companies were formed of boys, from eight years of age upward." A new civil governor "declared the purpose of the people to expend the last drop of their blood, if necessary, in defending the liberty thus gained against the encroachments of any nation whatsoever." Many times villagers had gathered in the large room of the *Presidencia*, where they were quartered, and "put their whole hearts into the songs in which their patriotism found vent." ²⁰ When asked about the Philippines' status, "leading townspeople" had answered in unison that they would "accept nothing short of independence." ²¹



This photograph of soldiers of the Philippine Republic shows the efforts of the newly inaugurated state to convey the uniform, organized, “civilized” character of the republic’s army and its warfare. Wilcox and Sargent encountered many such forces on their late 1898 trip through Luzon (From Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother: How the United States Purchased and Pacified the Philippines* (Garden City, NY, 1961)), photographs after p. 49).

But even as Wilcox and Sargent worked their way across Luzon, the unstable political window through which they were traveling began to close. As steamers and telegraph lines brought word of the Treaty from Hong Kong newspapers, Wilcox and Sargent faced stiffer restrictions. “Already the hope was fading that freedom from Spain meant freedom of government,” wrote Sargent. “The feeling toward Americans was changing, and we saw its effect in the colder manner of the people, and in their evident desire to hustle us along the most direct road to Manila.”²² As they reached the Western coast of Luzon, and the U.S. Commissioners at Paris moved towards formal acquisition of the Philippines, the party came under greater scrutiny and was detained or forced back. They were subject to a new regulation that travelers not “carry arms, nor approach within 200 meters of a fortification, not make any plans, or take photographs of them.”²³ Their final report, written upon their return in December, contained tactical data appropriate to war but also

recognized the fervor of Filipino revolutionary aspirations and the varied capacities of the Filipino people. Perhaps on these latter merits—perhaps due to bureaucratic inertia—it was issued into the public record as a Senate Document only in 1900, a year and a half after it was originally filed.

Even as they lobbied abroad and performed locally, Filipinos were highly suspicious of American capacities to recognize them in light of circulating rumors of race. Prior to the outbreak of the war, one of the chief Filipino suspicions of Americans had been their reputation for racial oppression. "One of the stories that received universal acceptance," reported General McReeve of the pre-war interlude, "was that ever since the Americans had liberated their negro slaves they had been looking around for others and thought they had found them at last in the Philippines." ²⁴ Filipinos that Wilcox and Sargent encountered had been "prejudiced against us by the Spaniards," charges "so severe that what the natives have since learned has not sufficed to disillusion them." ²⁵ Two points in particular had stood out regarding "our policy toward a subject people":

... that we have mercilessly slain and finally exterminated the race of Indians that were native to our soil and that we went to war in 1861 to suppress an insurrection of negro slaves, whom we also ended by exterminating. Intelligent and well-informed men have believed these charges. They were rehearsed to us in many towns in different provinces, beginning at Malolos. The Spanish version of our Indian problem is particularly well known. ²⁶

Correspondent Frederick Palmer blamed the outbreak of war on these suspicions. "All prominent Filipinos" that Palmer had spoken with had agreed: "If the status of the negro, as they understood it, was to be theirs in the new system, they would have to leave the islands anyway, and they had concluded to make a fight before going." ²⁷

While Wilcox and Sargent traveled in the Luzon highlands, U.S. and Spanish commissioners at Paris settled the disposition of the Philippine Islands, on December 10, 1898. McKinley had at first supported only the acquisition of coaling stations and naval bases, but had been persuaded over time to press for the entire archipelago. While the politics of recognition had been ambiguous in Manila and its environs, they would be stark and definitive at Paris, where Filipinos had been excluded from treaty negotiations. McKinley effectively closed the first chapter in the recognition debate in his statement of December 21, with Wilcox and Sargent scarcely out of the woods. Authored by Elihu Root and later known as the "Benevolent Assimilation" proclamation, it narrated the American destruction of the Spanish fleet and the Treaty of Paris and laid a claim to U.S. sovereignty over the entire archipelago. The proclamation was a sketch of bare-bones military government, laying out improvised ground rules for the maintenance of property rights, taxation and tariffs. McKinley seemed most concerned, however, with the Filipino recognition of U.S. sovereignty. In an effort to extend U.S. power "with all possible despatch," U.S. military commanders in place were to announce "in the most public manner" that the Americans had come "not as invaders or conquerors,

but as friends, to protect the natives in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights." It should be the military's "paramount aim" to win the confidence, respect, and affection of the inhabitants of the Philippines by assuring them in every possible way that they would enjoy a full measure of individual rights and liberties which is the heritage of free peoples, and by proving to them that the mission of the United States is one of benevolent assimilation, substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule.²⁸

Most significantly, however, the proclamation was a formal derecognition of the Philippine Republic and established the relationship between the U.S. and Filipinos as sovereign state to passive, individual subjects. The term "assimilation," by which the address would come to be known, held more than a hint of malice: the very fact that it required the adjective "benevolent" to soften it implied that there were kinds of "assimilation" that were not.

Race-Making and Colonial Warfare

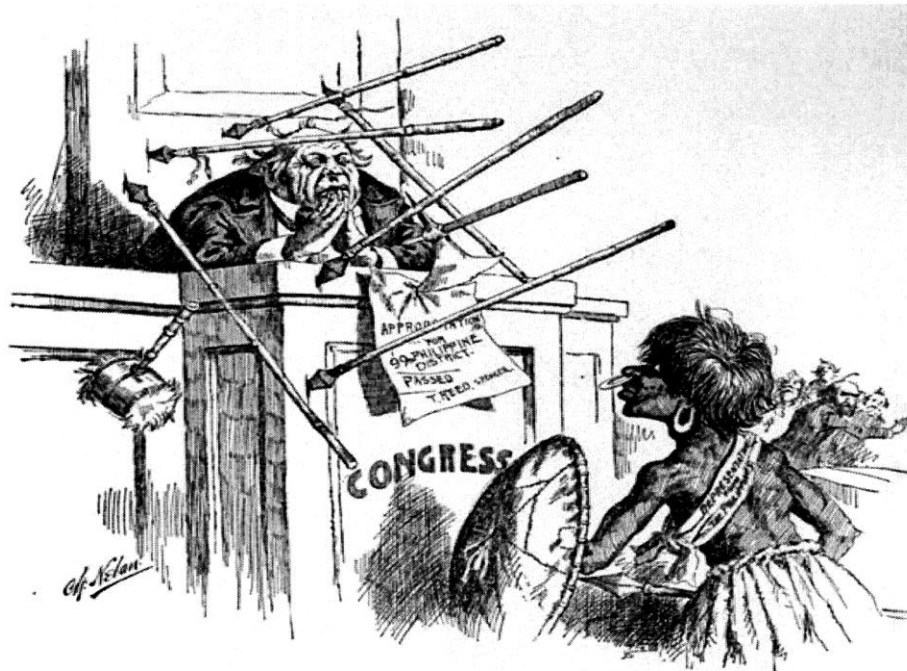
The much-anticipated outbreak of war in early February 1899, just before the U.S. Senate's confirmation of the Treaty of Paris, did not end the Filipino struggle for recognition. Long into the fighting, Filipino spokesmen revealed a continued preoccupation with promoting Filipino "civilization" to the wider world as a central rationale for claims to independence. "We, the Filipinos, are a civilized, progressive and peace-loving people," stated Galiciano Apacible in the Spanish-language pamphlet, "Al Pueblo Americano" [To the American People] translated into English and published by the Anti-Imperialist League. The pamphlet praised Filipinos' education, literacy, art and political and religious leadership, urging Americans to "weigh our statements against the misrepresentations under which Imperialism seeks to conceal its designs." Following its defeat of Spanish forces, the Republic, rather than giving in to revolutionary excess, had established an orderly governing infrastructure, one whose hallmarks of science, technology and education conveyed its "civilization."

[T]hey reorganized the administrative machinery which had been disturbed by recent struggles: telegraphs, railroads, and means of communication began to work regularly; we had adopted the electric light in some of our towns; and we had established a new university, four high and several primary schools. In brief, the new nation had entered upon a path of progress which already promised a bright future.²⁹

Along with demonstrating their "civilization," some Filipino leaders conceived of their struggle as explicitly anti-racial. One anonymous address "To the Filipino People," captured by the U.S. Army in pursuit of Aguinaldo in March 1900, affirmed Filipino bravery and sacrifice and laid claim to divinely-granted freedoms. "We are living on one planet under the same celestial vault," it stated, "and if we differ in color, it is because of the distant latitudes in which we are, and this difference in no way signifies any superiority of the one over the other."³⁰

From its start, the war was challenged by U.S.-based anti-imperialist societies that had organized together into the Anti-Imperialist League in November 1898. The organization, which organized in Boston, Washington, Chicago and many smaller cities, drew on diverse political roots, many of them in earlier reform movements, from civil service reform leagues to single-tax leagues to abolitionism. In party terms anti-imperialism leaned toward independents and reformers, but brought together a loose coalition of conservative and white-supremacist Democrats with an older generation of liberal Republicans. Their initial hope was to turn U.S. public opinion against Philippine annexation in negotiations with Spain, using extensive lobbying and educational campaigns; following the outbreak of war in February 1899, they criticized the U.S. invasion as unjust in both ends and means.³¹

Not all anti-imperialist argument hinged on the recognition of the Philippine Republic in national terms (as a state) or Filipinos in racial terms (as civilized). Indeed, many anti-imperialist claims, especially prior to outbreak of war, had been “internal,” focusing on the negative consequences of “empire” for the United States itself, especially the erosion of domestic republican virtue and freedom through imperial corruption, tyranny and militarism.³² Many of these concerns were explicitly racial: annexation of the Philippines would lead to the “corruption” of the U.S. body politic itself through Filipino citizenship and the “degrading” of U.S. labor by additional waves of “Asiatic” immigrants.³³



TROUBLES WHICH MAY FOLLOW AN IMPERIAL POLICY.

This anti-imperialist cartoon by Charles Nelan seeks to illustrate the risks of “incorporating” the Philippines into the U. S. republican body politic by casting the Philippine population as a whole as “savage” and incapable of exercising political rationality. It suggests that because of Filipinos’ “incapacity for self-government,” imperialism could threaten the United States’ own political institutions. (Charles Nelan, *Cartoons of Our War with Spain*, New York, 1898)

But some anti-imperialists recognized the Philippine Republic, even after the outbreak of the war. Embracing a transnational strategy described by Jim Zwick, they assisted representatives of the Republic lobbying in the United States, translated and published their articles in the United States; and eventually carried out investigations into the conduct of the war.³⁴

McKinley's strategy to counter anti-imperialist claims of authority was to appoint the first of two "Philippine Commissions," the first arriving in the Islands in early 1899. Also operating on a transnational political terrain, the Commission had two primary goals. First, within the Philippine context, it was to serve as the crux of the War Department's "policy of attraction," the effort to draw ilustrado and principal elites away from the Republic. Once settled into the Audiencia, former home of the Spanish supreme court, the Commission's daily sessions became the central ritual of urban, wartime collaboration, where informants exchanged testimony favorable to U.S. sovereignty for political patronage.³⁵ As early as May, this arm of the Commission's work was showing results. There were key ilustrado defections and political placements—especially those of Benito Legarda, Felipe Buencamino, T. H. Pardo de Tavera and Cayetano Arellano--the inauguration of Pardo de Tavera's pro-annexation newspaper *La Democracia* and the displacement of Mabini's irreconcilable faction within the Republic by Pedro Paterno's more conciliatory one. The Commission's second project, however, was aimed at the domestic U.S. public: to produce an authoritative record of events in the Islands that would justify U.S. aggression and undermine anti-imperialist argument.

The task of rationalizing the war in its ends and means before the American public led to the active production of a novel, imperial racial formation by the war's defenders. This formation had a dual character, simultaneously and reciprocally racializing Americans and Filipinos in new ways. Its first half racialized the U.S. population as "Anglo-Saxons" whose overseas conquests were legitimated by racial-historical ties to the British Empire.³⁶ Opponents of the Treaty and war frequently argued that while U.S. continental empire had involved the legitimate unfolding of republican institutions into empty (or emptied) space, the Philippine annexation constituted a disturbing "imperial" departure from the U.S.'s exceptional and exemplary traditions, one that would ultimately undermine the nation's moral and political foundations. This apparent violation of U.S. historical laws was answered with extra-legal claims of racial essence. Specifically, the war's advocates subsumed U.S. history within longer, racial trajectories of "Anglo-Saxon" history which folded together U.S. and British imperial histories. The Philippine-American War, then, was a natural extension of Western conquest, the organic expression of the desires, capacities and destinies of "Anglo-Saxon" peoples. Americans, as Anglo-Saxons, shared British genius for empire-building, a genius which they must exercise for the greater glory of the "race" and to advance "civilization" in general.³⁷ Unlike other races, they "liberated" the peoples they conquered, indeed, their expressions of conquest as "freedom", proliferated as the terrors they unleashed became more visible. Anglo-Saxonist racial-exceptionalism was given its most resonant expression in February 1899, when, Rudyard Kipling published "The White Man's Burden." The

poem condensed race and humanitarian martyrdom, recasting Americans as a "race" with an inevitable imperial destiny.³⁸

If the first half of the double-sided imperial racial formation "Anglo-Saxonized" Americans, its second half "tribalized" Filipinos. Contemporary social evolutionary theory held that societies, in evolving from "savagery" to "civilization," moved in political terms from "tribal" fragmentation to "national" unity." [39] Successfully identify "tribes"—marked by language, religion, political allegiance—and one had disproven a nation's existence. Enumerate a society's fragments, and what might otherwise have looked like a nation became merely the tyranny of one "tribe" over others; what might have appeared a state became a problem of imperial "assimilation." The "tribalization" of the Republic would rhetorically eradicate the Philippine Republic as a legitimate state whose rights the United States might have to recognize under international law.⁴⁰

This argument was forcefully advanced by the Philippine Commission's Report, its first installment issued in January 1900, which represented the most influential effort to reduce the Philippine Republic to what came to be called the "Single Tribe" of the Tagalogs. The Report's section on "The Native Peoples of the Philippines," written by zoologist Dean C. Worcester, began by admitting disputes over the "civilization" of the Filipino people.

The most diverse and contradictory statements are frequently met with concerning the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands, at present collectively known as 'Filipinos.' Some writers credit them with a high degree of civilization, and compare them to the Pilgrim Fathers or the patriots of '76, while others regard even the more highly civilized tribes as little better than barbarians.⁴¹

The Commission set out to "reconcile views which are apparently contradictory" based on their investigation of Philippine conditions. After a brief review of opposing views, they presented their conclusions: the Philippine population consisted of "three sharply distinct races," the Negrito, the Indonesian and the Malayan. Early migrations by the Negritos, a group "near the bottom of the human series," had been displaced by invasions of Indonesians and Malaysians with superior racial constitution and civilization. Out of these three races had sprung "numerous tribes, which often differ very greatly in language, manners, customs, and laws, as well as in degree of civilization."⁴²

The argument of "tribal" pluralism became the centerpiece of arguments against Filipino self-government. "The most striking and perhaps the most significant fact in the entire situation," began the Commission's report on "Capacity for Self-Government," "is the multiplicity of tribes inhabiting the archipelago, the diversity of their languages (which are mutually unintelligible), and the multifarious phases of civilization--ranging all the way from the highest to the lowest--exhibited by the natives of the several provinces and islands."⁴³

While Worcester admitted it was "extremely difficult to arrive at anything approaching a correct estimate of the numbers of even the more important civilized

tribes," the report was a powerful representation of the Commission's ability to encapsulate the Philippine population by scientific means, one that gave birth to one of its most widely-employed "facts": the number "84" as the total number of Philippine "tribes."⁴⁴ In future debates, the figure, meant to convey impossible plurality, would echo through imperial argumentation in defense of the Commission's central ethnological and political conclusion: "The Filipinos are not a nation, but a variegated assemblage of different tribes and peoples, and their loyalty is still of the tribal type."⁴⁵

Worcester would be followed quickly into the "tribes" question by anti-imperialist and Filipino nationalist publicists. In 1900, for example, Filipino nationalist Sixto Lopez was asked by the New England Anti-Imperialist League to produce "a brief statement of the facts" on the "tribes" question, "as a native of the country, and as one who has given some attention to the ethnography of the Archipelago, both by personal research and by a study of the best works on the subject..." For Lopez, the Commission's findings had been "entirely incorrect." The number eighty-four had been the product of "imagination, bad spelling, translation, subdivision, and multiplication." The Commission had badly transcribed already inaccurate Spanish records, mistaken the mountain peoples for lowland villagers, confused racial groups for language groups, and exaggerated the differences between these languages. "It would be just as absurd to regard the Americans as one tribe and the 'Yankees' as another," he wrote, "and then to increase these two tribes into four or more by misspelling the word 'Americans,' or by translating it into French." He claimed that the "so-called 'tribes'" were actually a small minority of the Philippine population, analogous to "the uncivilized or semi-civilized remnants of the Indian tribes still inhabiting certain parts of the United States."⁴⁶

Even as the administration "tribalized" Filipinos in its campaign to rationalize the war at home, U.S. soldiers on the ground racialized their opponents with striking speed and intensity. In the war's early months, what had been diffuse and fragmented pre-war animosities quickly congealed into novel racial formations at the very center of U.S. soldiers' popular culture, capable of defining a wartime enemy and organizing and motivating violence against that enemy. "A lively hatred of our newly declared enemy was the one enthusiasm of the camp," wrote a corporal in the Montana regulars in July 1899.⁴⁷ This race-making process is vividly illustrated by terminological shifts in the diaries and letters home of U.S. volunteers during the early months of the war. Although the linguistic starting-points and end-points differed, many soldiers progressively racialized their terms for the insurgents specifically, and Filipinos generally, although in few cases did these terms entirely replace other terms like "insurgent" or "native."

Andrew Wadsworth, for example, a twenty-eight year old sergeant in the First Nebraska Volunteers, had observed shortly upon arrival in Manila that "the natives are bright and intelligent as the average run of people," and admired their art, musicianship and industriousness.⁴⁸ Writing home from "the Field" two weeks after the beginning of the war, he wrote that "it was a hot time going over some of the

ground... [it] swarmed with the indians but we didn't do a thing to them..."⁴⁹ Within another two weeks, his racism was more matter-of-fact. "[H]ave forgotten whether I have written any of you folks since we commenced to chase niggers," he wrote off-handedly, "have no doubt read in the papers what we are doing..."⁵⁰ Despite rising tensions, Earl Pearsall of the same unit had recorded in his diary on January 5th, with some regret, that "the insurgents have not been as friendly lately as they have been for they have not visited our camp for three or four days."⁵¹ The day war broke out, he imagined that "the dusky fellows don't care for any more of this warfare with the Americano."⁵² Less than three weeks later, however, he thrilled that U.S. artillery had "put the black rascals over the hills."⁵³ Early in March, he reported being "attacked by the 'Gugos'" on the Mariquina road.⁵⁴

South Dakota volunteer Louis Hubbard, a leader in his unit's regimental band, had accepted the gift of a sword from "one of Aguinaldo's sergeants" in December 1898 and recruited a Filipino musician, "the finest clarinetist I ever heard in my life."⁵⁵ Two weeks into the combat, he wrote that it was "lots of sport to hunt these black devils." [56] Angered by reports of Filipino atrocities against U.S. troops, he wrote that "[t]hey are just like any savage."⁵⁷ In mid-March he recorded the hope for a speedy charge on Malolos, "for the quicker we get there and get these 'gugos' of [sic] the face of the earth the quicker we will be ready to start for home."⁵⁸



Photographs of dead Filipino soldiers lying in trenches were often taken by U. S. soldiers and journalists and included in commemorative albums. Albert Sonnichsen wrote in his memoir of the “heaps of dead and dying natives... photographed by our people, and exhibited with such mottoes as: ‘Can the _d Regiment boys shoot? You bet they can. Count the dead niggers.’” (F. Tennyson Neely, *Fighting in the Philippines: A Photographic Record of the Philippine-American War* (London, 1899); Sonnichsen, quoted in Russell Roth, *Muddy Glory: America's “Indian Wars” in the Philippines, 1899-1935* (West Hanover, MA, 1981)

This racialization process attracted the attention of U.S. journalists and soldiers on the ground. Some understood rising pre-war hostility as the inevitable surfacing of latent “race differences” on all sides. “After the first glamour which surrounded our troops,” soldier-correspondent John Bass reported to Harper’s in mid-October 1898, “a glamour due to an exaggerated and almost childish idea of the liberty and freedom we were bringing to the Philippines, the race differences have made themselves felt, which antagonize the natives and exasperate our men.”⁵⁹ Many journalists were struck by increasingly widespread use of the term “nigger” by U.S. troops. “Our troops in the Philippines... look upon all Filipinos as of one race and condition,” wrote Henry Loomis Nelson, “and being dark men, they are therefore ‘niggers,’ and entitled to all the contempt and harsh treatment administered by

white overlords to the most inferior races.”⁶⁰ Frederick Palmer, sympathetic to the war effort, was amused by the soldiers’ “good-natured contempt” toward “the little brown man,” but regretted the use of the term “nigger,” which “too often” included groups that were above it, however marginally:

If a man is white; if he speaks English; if he knows his lines as we know them, he is as good as anybody on earth. If he is white and yet does not understand our customs, we insist that he shall have equal rights with us. If he is any other color too often we include him in one general class called ‘nigger,’ a class beneath our notice, to which, as far as our soldier is concerned, all Filipinos belonged.⁶¹

H. L. Wells similarly noted that U.S. troops saw the enemy in racial terms. “Undoubtedly, they do not regard the shooting of Filipinos just as they would the shooting of white troops...” he wrote in mid-1900. “The soldiers feel that they are fighting with savages, not with soldiers.”⁶²



The race-making process of the early phases of the war was revealed in the U. S. press in changing images of Emilio Aguinaldo. The first, from May 1898, is in the nature of a portrait; the caption refers to Aguinaldo as “the president of the republic of the islands,” and calls him “brainy,” “patriotic,” and “self-sacrificing,” while the image notably Europeanizes his features. The second, from March 1899, is a cartoon

that represents him as a childish, ostentatious dictator being crushed by U. S. force; his skin tone is darkened here and his features are distinctly "Orientalized." (Left image from Bonnie Miller, "The Spectacle of War: A Study of Spanish-American War Visual and Popular Culture," Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2003, 368; right image from Abe Ignacio, Enrique de la Cruz, Jorge Emmanuel, and Helen Toribio, *The Forbidden Book: The Philippine-American War in Political Cartoons* (San Francisco, 2005), ²⁵

This "lively hatred" was not, however, simply a "projection" or "export," but a new racial formation developing on the ground. ⁶³ Its novelty was evidenced by the consistency with which reporters—imperialist and anti-imperialist—felt compelled to explain it to their domestic readerships. It was strikingly illustrated by the appearance of a new term, "gu-gu" or "goo-goo," in U.S. soldiers' discourse, almost certainly the linguistic ancestor of "gook." ⁶⁴ Veteran Charles A. Freeman, writing in the 1930s, noted that "[o]f recent years the world [sic] has been shortened to gook, but gu-gu persists in Philippine fiction and fact written by Americans, and applies to the lower class Filipino." ⁶⁵ If the term had a sinister future, its origins remain speculative. The first of two plausible explanations—far from incompatible with each other—roots the term in local dynamics: the term came from the Tagalog term for a slippery coconut-oil shampoo, pronounced gu-gu, which may have caught on a sense of the enemy's elusiveness. ⁶⁶ A second account suggests the term was born at the intersection of immediate sexual tensions and racialized U.S. popular culture, as older idioms were reworked to suit volatile new surroundings. According to Freeman, among the songs sung by U.S. troops on the long voyage from San Francisco had been a minstrel tune "'Just because she made 'dem goo-goo eyes.'" When American soldiers first "gazed into the dark orbs of a Filipino dalaga" on arrival, they had commented to each other "'Gee, but that girl can make goo-goo eyes.'" Filipino men had taken the term as an insult; when American soldiers learned this, "it stuck, and became a veritable taunt." ⁶⁷

Whatever its specific origins, "gu-gu" formed part of a distinctive, new Philippine-American colonial vocabulary that focused hatreds around a novel enemy and lent American troops a sense of manly, insider camaraderie. The newness, immediacy and localism of U.S. soldiers' racial formation were suggested by the quotation marks and parenthetical explanations soldiers commonly included near terms like "gu-gu" in their letters and diaries, especially early in the conflict. On occasion, soldiers explained these terms to what they imagined to be befuddled family members at home. Peter Lewis, for example, promised in November 1900 to write home again about his "fights with the 'Guggoes' as the Filipiones [sic] are called." ⁶⁸ Race-making and colonial warfare were developing together as intimately linked projects.

Racializing Guerrilla Warfare

If one way to rationalize a war of aggression was to declare the enemy state a "tribe," one way to end it was simply to declare it over by fiat. November 1899 saw the war's first end by U.S. proclamation. General MacArthur reported that there was "no organized insurgent force left to strike at," and declared that all future

resistance be characterized as outlawry and the killing of U.S. soldiers murder.⁶⁹ General Otis cabled Washington stating that the revolutionaries had been dispersed and that "claim to government by insurgents can be made no longer under any fiction."⁷⁰ In fact, Filipino tactics had undergone a dramatic shift toward a guerrilla strategy. Disbanding the regular army in the wake of defeats, Aguinaldo divided the country into military zones each under a guerrilla commander, preparing for a regionally dispersed set of smaller campaigns through locally-raised sandatahan units. It was hoped that in these new settings, tropical disease, impassable roads and unfamiliar conditions would weaken the American advance, while geographic knowledge and village-level support would sustain guerrilla ambushes and surprise attacks against isolated American patrols.⁷¹

This guerrilla campaign, in turn, altered the command structure, tactics and knowledge requirements of the U.S. Army. General Otis decentralized his forces to match the Filipino army, splitting the army into four departments, his plan to advance outward into the hinterlands, fighting back Filipino rebels and garrisoning the towns that supported them.⁷² In these regional settings (eventually over 600 scattered posts), often cut off from Manila contacts, local commanders would by necessity take on greater autonomy, and be forced to adapt their tactics to local crises.

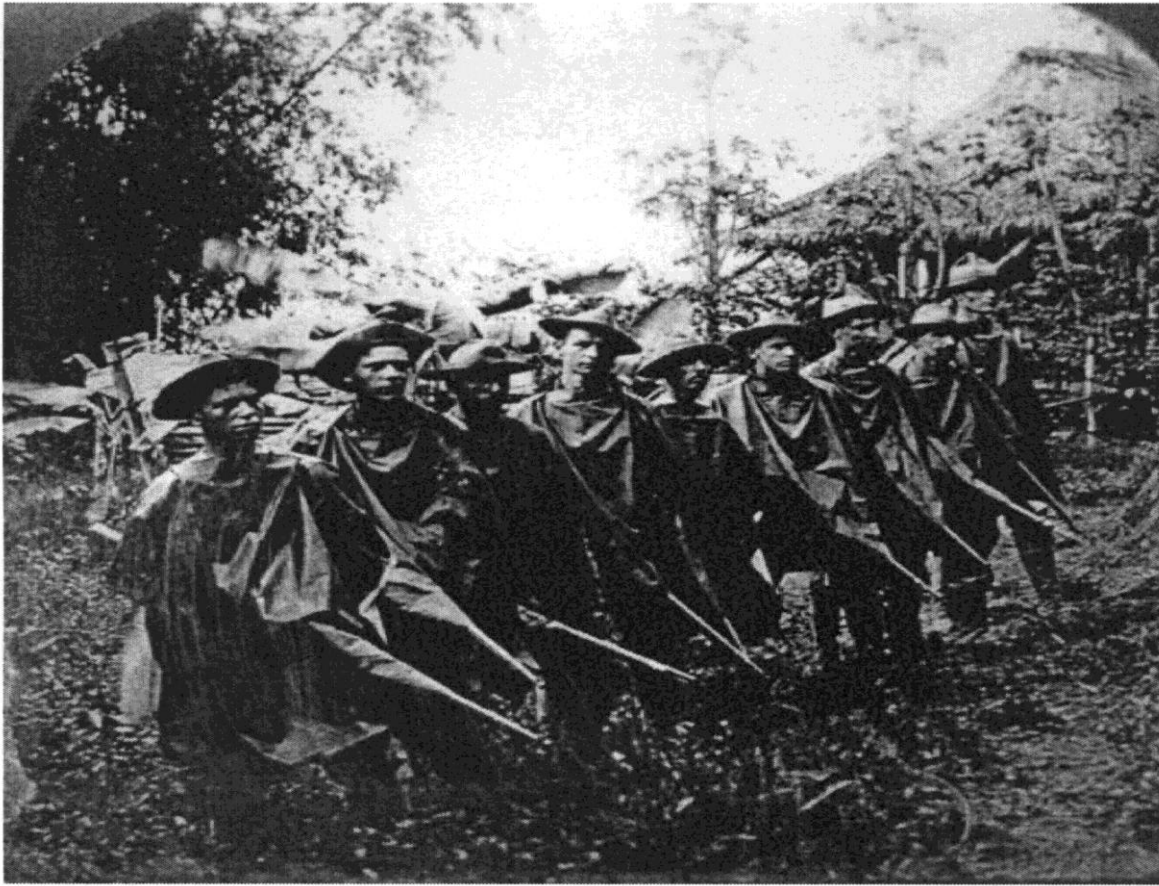
Guerrilla war involved not merely a set of tactics but a set of understandings: about the meanings of combat, about the means to victory, about oneself as a combatant, about the nature of the enemy. Although each side perceived it as a radical break, it held different meanings for Filipino and American troops. For Filipino officers, schooled exclusively in European conventional warfare, guerrilla warfare was largely unfamiliar, although at least some Filipino soldiers had encountered it first-hand while collaborating with the Spanish army against Muslims and animists. Filipino strategists were compelled to explain it using anti-colonial guerrilla struggles elsewhere. Filipino commanders, for example, took inspiration (most likely, unreciprocated) from the struggle of the Boers against the British Empire. Juan Villamor, advising General Antonio Luna in Ilocos, claimed to have taken his guerrilla model from the war in South Africa, probably learned through Hong Kong newspapers. In a speech to raise troops in February 1900, Villamor apparently noted that this warring style, "such as we are starting today," was "characteristic of a small nation when fighting a big one," and had produced "the most surprising successes" in South Africa.⁷³

One possible explanation for Aguinaldo's delay in adopting guerrilla strategies and tactics may be the symbolic politics of war and preoccupations with expressions of "civilization." But there were other political reasons for the delay in adopting guerilla warfare. As the Republic's officials knew well, guerrilla war was a decentralized war that empowered local commanders at the expense of the center; it could also involve mobilizing the energy of, and handing power to, a rural base. This base was largely mistrusted by Aguinaldo's cadre and was itself often ambivalent about the question of whether Republican "independence" and *kalayaan* were the same thing.⁷⁴

But it was particularly difficult to relinquish the quest for recognition. In its bid for international esteem and recognition, the Republic's self-representations to the world had nervously held itself to a standard of "civilization" in which war played a significant part. Officials of the Republic agreed with the Americans that, among many other things, "civilized" societies adhered to the laws of "civilized" warfare. The military drills witnessed by Wilcox and Sargent had drawn on a vocabulary of republican martial order imbued with notions of a "civilized" fighting force; Republic newspapers of 1898 had foregrounded the organized, hierarchical character of the Filipino army and the favorable condition of its Spanish prisoners as advertisements for its broader "civilization."

Guerrilla warfare, by contrast, meant scattered organization, loosely-disciplined troops little distinguishable from "savages," the securing of rural supplies inseparable from looting, a reliance on concealment and deception that violated European-American standards of masculine honor in combat.⁷⁵ Emilio Concepción, for example, a captain fighting in Namatay, later recalled that he "was vacillating for some time" before he reorganized his troops into guerrilla units, for reasons of honor. "In reality, when I took that step, I had thought about it well for some days before, because in principle I believed that if I made myself a guerrilla fighter, I would stop being a revolutionary, and at that time for me the title of revolutionary was much more glorious."⁷⁶ By winning a conventional war, the Philippine Army would win the world's support for independent Philippine statehood; victory in guerrilla battle, however, might mean losing the war for international recognition.

If on the Filipino side, guerrilla war was international politics by other means, on the American side, guerrilla war was both novel and disturbing. It meant dispensing with hopes for gallant rushes at the enemy and hunkering down for a protracted campaign that was both boring and anxious, with soldiers isolated from other units, in unknown terrain, unable to recognize the line between "amigos" and hostile peoples. It was little surprise that the term the war introduced furthest into American English was "boondock," drawn from a Tagalog term for mountain or remote area.⁷⁷



For U. S. troops, guerrilla-style warfare in tropical settings was unfamiliar and disturbing, subjecting them to exposure and disease and making it impossible to tell the “enemy” from “amigos.” The term “boondock” in American English would emerge from this disorientation. Filipino villagers and revolutionaries took advantage of American ignorance and their own local knowledge in prolonging resistance. (Library of Congress.)

"Uncle Sam's cohorts, set down in the Philippines at the beginning of the century, saw in everything something new, strange and utterly incomprehensible," recalled one veteran years later. "The enemy existed unseen in the dripping jungle, in the moldering towns and in the smoky clearings on the hillsides, and since a natural prudence bade him not risk any open encounter, the enemy was not to be found. But they existed nonetheless." ⁷⁸ Even as U.S. soldiers relied on Filipinos as guides, translators, carriers and providers of food and intelligence, they found the task of distinguishing Filipino soldiers from “friendly” villagers in garrisoned towns, who declared themselves “amigos,” a frustrating and dangerous one. As Jacob Isselhard recalled, “[t]he natives of the towns in which these small bodies of our men were placed... with that particular faculty of all Orientals to say one thing and meaning another, professed to be ‘mucho amigo’ (good friends) to our faces, while secretly aiding the insurrection with all the means at their command.” Those who stepped

forward as guides, for example, "would invariably and purposely get lost on a trail which led either to nowhere or into well prepared death traps." ⁷⁹ Erwin Garrett put the problem succinctly in verse: "'Amigo' to your face, forsooth, / Or when you spend the dough, / But a red-handed 'katipunán' when / You turn around to go." ⁸⁰

The collision between Filipino revolutionary and U.S. Army perspectives on guerrilla war can best be witnessed in a brief written exchange in late-August 1900 between Mabini and General James Franklin Bell. ⁸¹ Bell had written to pressure Mabini to reconcile himself to U.S. rule and to declare himself against continued resistance, as had an increasing number of revolutionaries. His argument hinged on the difference between "civilized" war and its opposites. War, he began, could only be justified by a combatant where success was possible; as soon as defeat was certain, "civilization demands that the defeated side, in the name of humanity, should surrender and accept the result, although it may be painful to its feelings." Combatants who strayed from this principle "place themselves in a separate classification" as "incompetent in the management of civil affairs to the extent of their ignorance of the demands of humanity." In this specific case, the end of conventional war and the dispersal of the Philippine Army meant that continued Filipino resistance was not only "criminal" but was "also daily shoving the natives of the Archipelago headlong towards a deeper attitude of semicivilization in which they will become completely incapable of appreciating and understanding the responsibilities of civil government." Civilization meant "pacification" and the acceptance of U.S. sovereignty: "The Filipino people can only show their fitness in this matter by laying down their arms..." ⁸²

Mabini countered with a brilliant riposte. ⁸³ Bell's starting point, he noted, was simply the claim that might made right, that the U.S. war was "just and humanitarian" because its army was powerful, "which trend of reasoning not even the most ignorant Filipino will believe to be true." If in real life, he noted, "the strong nations so easily make use of force to impose their claims on the weak ones," it was because "even now civilization and humanitarian sentiments that are so often invoked, are, for some, more apparent than real." No one deplored more deeply the "guerrilla and ambush system" the Filipinos had been "forced to adopt"; Mabini had always considered "the fight that offers equal risks to both combatants more noble and more worthy of men." But the Filipinos had been left no choice. The very laws of war that authorized strong nations' use of "powerful weapons of combat" against weak ones were those that "persuade[d]" the weak to engage in guerrilla war, "especially when it comes to defending their homes and their freedoms against an invasion." ⁸⁴

Guerrilla war was, in other words, tactical rather than ethnological: in this "extreme case," the laws of war "implacably order the weak people to defend their threatened honor and natural rights under pain of being called uncivilized and incapable of understanding the responsibilities of a proper government." Civilization meant neither capitulation nor conciliation, but resistance in the face of domination. Indeed, for Mabini, resistance to submission itself—even through guerrilla war—was the only mark of a "civilized" people. The Filipinos, he wrote, "fight to show to

the United States that they possess sufficient culture to know their rights even where there is a pretense to hide them by means of clever sophisms.”⁸⁵ Earlier Mabini had written, along the same lines, that “[a] humiliating peace is tolerated only in uncivilized countries.”⁸⁶ Asserting the logic of recognition, Mabini hoped the Revolution would in this way “remind the Americans of the struggle borne by their ancestors against the Englishmen for the emancipation of the colonies which are now the free States of North America.” At that moment, the Americans had been “in the same place which the Filipinos are in today.” Contrary to some, Filipino resistance was “not motivated by hatred of race, but by the same principles sealed with the blood of [the Americans’] own ancestors.”⁸⁷

Mabini was right that, in waging guerrilla war, Filipinos risked “the pain of being called uncivilized.” Throughout the colonial world, races were characterized by the way they made war. The General Orders No. 100, the Civil War-era regulations that were the U.S. Army’s principal reference-point on questions of “irregular” warfare in the Philippines, relied heavily on racial-historical dichotomies between “civilized” and “savage” war. While “barbarous armies” and “uncivilized people,” for example, offered no protection to civilians for example, the “inoffensive citizen” was protected in “modern regular wars of the Europeans, and their descendents in other portions of the globe.” While the Orders authorized retaliation by “civilized nations,” taken too far this principle quickly led nearer to “the internecine wars of savages.”⁸⁸

By these lights, those who waged guerrilla war were, by definition, “savage”: Filipino warfare did not take this form out of ignorance or strategy but out of race.

Conventional wisdom to this effect issued from the top of the U.S. military hierarchy in the Philippines. “War in its earlier form was an act of violence which, from the very nature of primitive humanity and of the forces employed, knew no bounds,” General MacArthur declared in a December 1900 proclamation. “Mankind, from the beginning of civilization, however, has tried to mitigate, and to escape, as far as possible, from the consequences of this barbarous conception of warlike action...”⁸⁹ The Filipinos, in refusing these boundaries, had shown themselves to be less than “civilized.” “The war on the part of the Filipinos,” wrote Secretary of War Elihu Root, “has been conducted with the barbarous cruelty common among uncivilized races.”⁹⁰

This sense of race as the root cause of guerrilla war was also useful in explaining the guerrillas’ mass support as the U.S. effort ground to a halt in mid-1900. In his October 1, 1900 report, MacArthur sought to account for what he called, with begrudging respect, the “almost complete unity of action of the entire native population.” His conclusion was that Filipino participation was neither rational nor political. “[T]he adhesive principle comes from ethnological homogeneity,” he stated, “which induces men to respond for a time to the appeals of consanguineous leadership, even when such action is opposed to their own interests.”⁹¹ General Young concurred. “The keynote of the insurrection among the Filipinos past, present and future is not tyranny,” he stated in an April 1901 address, “for we are not tyrants. It is race.”⁹²

U.S. soldiers also increasingly defined the entire Filipino population as the enemy. Race became a sanction for exterminist war, the means by which earlier distinctions between combatants and non-combatants—already fragile—eroded or collapsed entirely. As long as popular support for the rebellion was conceived of as “political”—as a matter of decisions, interests and incentives—within an ultimately pluralistic Filipino polity, the task of the U.S. Army was to “persuade” Filipinos of various sectors to accept U.S. sovereignty. That this “persuasion” might take terrible, total forms was something that U.S. officials readily acknowledged. But no such persuasion was possible where “ethnological homogeneity” governed over reason. The Filipinos were one united “race”; its “savagery” placed it outside the bounds of “civilized” warfare: the two explanatory halves converged, pincer-like, into racial exterminist war as the only means to “peace.”

Close ties between race and exterminist warfare can be found in the ever-present racial terms employed by U.S. soldiers’ in their descriptions of violence against prisoners and civilians. In 1902, for example, Albert Gardner, in Troop B of the 1st U.S. Cavalry, composed a would-be comic song dedicated to “water-cure” torture—in which filthy water was poured into the mouths of Filipino prisoners, drowning them—sung to the tune of the Battle Hymn of the Republic:

1st

Get the good old syringe boys and fill it to the brim
We’ve caught another nigger and we’ll operate on him
Let someone take the handle who can work it with a vim
Shouting the battle cry of freedom

Chorus

Hurrah Hurrah We bring the Jubilee
Hurrah Hurrah The flag that makes him free
Shove in the nozzel [sic] deep and let him taste of liberty
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.⁹³

Racial terms were employed in accounts of the shooting of Filipino prisoners, often disguised as failed “escapes.” William Eggenberger reported hearing at one point that the “niggers” would “all the am [sic] prisoners they capture from now on, and of corse [sic] we will ring [sic] all the damn necks of the ones we capture too...”⁹⁴ He recorded several occasions of shooting prisoners attempting to “escape,” but later confessed that

When we capture a suspicious nigger, we generally loose him in the swamps, that is he is lost and he isn’t lost but he never shows up any more. Turn about is fair play. They do it to us and we do it to them, they killed three of our fellows with out mercy but we have taken a very sweet revenge and a very clear revenge to them too.⁹⁵

One of the most banal and brutal manifestations of racial exterminism was U.S. soldiers’ imagination of the war as hunting. The Manila occupation and early conventional warfare had frustrated U.S. soldiers’ martial masculinity; the metaphor

of the hunt made war, at last, into masculine self-fulfillment.⁹⁶ All at once, a language of hunting animalized Filipinos, made sense of guerrilla war to American troops, and joined them in manly fraternity. "I don't know when the thing will let out," wrote Louis Hubbard one week into the war, "and don't care as we are having lots of excitement. It makes me think of killing jack rabbits."⁹⁷ Earl Pearsall jotted in his diary on the third day of the war that "[o]ur boys kept them on the run and shot them down like rabbits."⁹⁸ John F. Bright described one advance near San Juan Bridge: "As we advanced they would jump up like rabbits only a few feet from us, dead game ready to sell their lives as dearly as possible, but we shot them down before they could do any damage."⁹⁹

Racial terms explicitly linked hunting to exterminism. "There is no question that our men do 'shoot niggers' somewhat in the sporting spirit," admitted Wells. "It is lots of sport to hunt these black devils," wrote Louis Hubbard just three weeks into the war.¹⁰⁰ Private George Osborn of the 6th Infantry wrote home from Negros on January 15, 1900: "Just back from the fight. Killed 22 niggers captured 29 rifles [sic] and 1 shotgun and I tell you it was a fight... we just shot the niggers like a hunter would rabbits..."¹⁰¹ In April 1899, Lieutenant Tefler wrote from Marilao that night-time scouting raids were his men's only relief from the boredom of guarding a railroad, that it was "great fun for the men to go on 'nigger hunts.'" ¹⁰²

Racial-exterminist sentiment of this kind was not uncommon in U.S. soldiers' songs, diaries and letters. It was at the very center of the most popular of the U.S. army's marching songs, which marked the Filipino population as a whole as the enemy and made killing Filipinos the only means to their "civilization."

Damn, damn, damn the Filipino
Pock-marked khakiac ladrone;
Underneath the starry flag
Civilize him with a Krag,
And return us to our own beloved home.¹⁰³

One Nebraskan soldier boasted to his parents of his comrades' bold, aggressive fighting spirit, restrained only by officers' reticence. "If they would turn the boys loose," he wrote, "there wouldn't be a nigger left in Manila twelve hours after."¹⁰⁴ Henry Hackthorn explained to his family that the war, which he regretted, had been avoidable but "the niggers got in a hurry." "We would kill all in sight if we could only receive the necessary orders," he wrote.¹⁰⁵ A dramatic monologue entitled "The Sentry" written and published by a U.S. soldier, features a sympathetic portrayal of a lonely U.S. sentry on watch-duty. "If I catch one of those bolo-men slinking around me, I'll just plug the son-of-a-gun full of holes," he says, just before he is treacherously killed. "I hate the very sight of their black hides."¹⁰⁶ Eggenberger reported happily in March 1900 that Macabebes had killed 130 "ladrones" without one escape. "[L]et the good work go on we will have the damn bug eaters sivilized [sic] if we have to bury them to do it," he wrote.¹⁰⁷ The year before, he had casually urged his family to have an old friend write to him. "[T]ell him if he don't rite [sic] to me when i get back i will take him for a nigger and bombard him, tell him no

Amegoes (friends) will go then, ha ha." ¹⁰⁸ A war of "no amigos" was a war without surrender.

Race and Atrocity

Just as imperialists had mobilized racial ideologies to defend the war's ends, so too was race made to defend its means, undermining moral and legal claims against American soldiers accused of "marked severities" in the halls of U.S. governance, in press debates and in courts-martial. ¹⁰⁹ When Senate hearings between January and June 1902 raised the question of U.S. atrocities, the U.S. Army's defenders repeatedly held that abuses were rare; that where they occurred they were swiftly and thoroughly punished; and that testimony to the contrary was characterized by partisan and cowardly—possibly traitorous--exaggeration. But racial arguments, in at least three varieties, were central to the administration's defense.

The first variant claimed that the Filipinos' guerrilla war, as "savage" war, was entirely outside the moral and legal standards and strictures of "civilized" war. Those who adopted guerrilla war, it was argued, surrendered all claims to bounded violence and mercy from their opponent. Captain John H. Parker employed this line of argument in a November 1900 letter to President Roosevelt complaining that the U.S. Army should not "attempt to meet a half civilized foe... with the same methods devised for civilized warfare against people of our own race, country and blood." ¹¹⁰ This point was also made at Senate hearings in 1902, when General Hughes described the burning of entire towns by advancing U.S. troops to Senator Rawlins as a means of "punishment," and Rawlins inquired: "But is that within the ordinary rules of civilized warfare?..." General Hughes replied succinctly: "These people are not civilized." ¹¹¹

In their effort to depict Filipino combat as "savage," the war's defenders made much of what they considered Filipino "race war" against whites. Racial exterminism by whites, it seemed, was merely the inevitable, progressive working out of history; race war took place only when non-whites resisted white domination, in violation of the natural order. ¹¹² Evidence of a Filipino "race war" was found in what was represented as an early 1899 military order by General Teodoro Sandiko, a document reputedly captured by U.S. soldiers. ¹¹³ In it, Sandiko allegedly commanded Filipinos inside the U.S.-occupied city of Manila to revolt in preparation for an invasion of the city from the outside by the army of the Republic: not only U.S. soldiers, but all "whites" inside the city were to be killed. While evidence of U.S. racial extremist atrocities was cut off by censorship, the "Sandiko order" was widely promoted in the U.S. press as early as April 1899 as signs of Filipino "savagery." "The war has developed into a race war," wrote John F. Bass of the Sandiko order in Harper's Weekly. "After this let no one raise his voice to favor Aguinaldo's government or army." There was "no choice of methods" ahead, only the need for a "strong military government, untempered by mercy." ¹¹⁴ Use of the "Sandiko order" intensified with the Presidential race of 1900, finding its way into Vice Presidential candidate Theodore Roosevelt's speeches, and even into the

Republican platform.¹¹⁵ The Filipinos' "race war," it appeared, contrasted sharply with the war of "civilization" waged by the United States.

If the first argument defined U.S. actions as outside of the moral and legal framework of "civilized war," the second explained American atrocities in a way that distanced them from U.S. initiative. "Civilized" men might reluctantly adopt "savage" methods to defeat savages, but they could do so without surrendering their civilization; guerrilla war was tactical for whites, "ethnological" for non-whites. This argument required emphasis on racial solidarity between domestic U.S. audiences and American soldiers. Maj.-General S. B. M. Young accused those who had claimed "that our soldiers are barbarous savages... and not fit to be considered as civilized," as "abusing their own flesh and blood" for political advantage. He found the anti-imperialists more traitorous even than the Civil War's Copperheads had been; the latter, at least, had been defending "kindred," where the current war had been "against a cruel and vindictive lot of savages, who were in no way related to us."¹¹⁶ Henry Cabot Lodge expressed similar sentiment in an address before the Senate. "One would suppose from what has been said here in debate," he stated, "that it was an army of aliens and mercenaries; that we had out there in the Philippine Islands some strange foreign force which we had let loose upon that helpless people." But this was not the case. "Why, Mr. President, those soldiers are our own. They are our flesh and blood, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh." If U.S. atrocities were not a matter of "race," they must be a matter of emulation: Americans appropriated what little "savagery" they had undertaken from their immediate surroundings. "What is it which has led them to commit these atrocities which we all so much regret and over which we sorrow?" Lodge asked.

I think I know why these things have happened. I think they have grown out of the conditions of warfare, of the war that was waged by the Filipinos themselves, a semicivilized people, with all the tendencies and characteristics of Asiatics, with the Asiatic indifference to life, with the Asiatic treachery and the Asiatic cruelty, all tintured and increased by three hundred years of subjection to Spain.¹¹⁷

The third argument attributed U.S. atrocities entirely to Macabebe collaborators organized into Scout units. If the "emulation" argument suggested that Americans were merely imitating "savages," the third argument was that atrocities had been committed almost entirely by cooperating Filipino troops over which American officers had little or no control.¹¹⁸ Call it a policy of outsourcing "savagery": where the Macabebe Scouts had been earlier hailed as "Filipinos in Uncle Sam's Uniforms," they were represented during atrocity investigations as a kind of mad unconscious that could neither be dispensed with nor fully harnessed. In response to reports that certain Macabebe units had looted the town of Magallanes and raped women there, for example, General Wheaton noted that they were "in these outrages, conducting themselves in their usual and customary manner."¹¹⁹ Brigadier-General Frederick Funston strongly denied his own troops had committed the "water cure," but it was "common knowledge" that Macabebes had done so "when not under the direct control of some officer" and it was "utterly impossible to prevent a few offenses of

this kind." Responsibility went only as far as race. Funston had "never heard of its having been administered to a native by a white man."¹²⁰

The last act of the administration's political counter-offensive was an (almost) final declaration of the end of the war. As one *Washington Post* editorial noted, the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations had attempted, and failed repeatedly, to end the war by fiat; indeed, it observed, the conflict had been "brought to an end on six different occasions" since the first declaration of U.S. victory. "A bad thing cannot be killed too often," it stated. Two months after his address at Arlington, President Theodore Roosevelt attempted to "kill" the war yet again, declaring the Philippine-American War officially over on July 4, 1902, as if cued by John Philip Sousa himself.¹²¹ Returning U.S. soldiers, freed up by the transfer of military power to the Scouts and police power to the newly-formed Philippine Constabulary, were perhaps the most potent if illusory signs to American audiences of an "insurrection" well-ended.¹²² But this was a continually beleaguered fiction that sometimes resulted in unflattering reversals: between 1901 and 1905, parts of the provinces of Batangas, Cebu, Bohol, Samar, Cavite and Albay would be returned to military authority in response to persistent "ladronism."¹²³ The war's phantom life after mid-1902 was best indicated by the Commission's *Bandolerismo* Statute of November 1902, which even more than Roosevelt's declaration, ended the war by fiat, defining any remaining Filipino resistance to American authority as "banditry" rather than "insurrection." Second was the *Reconcentration Act* of 1903 which, to the contrary, extended the war in tactical terms by authorizing use of wartime measures where necessary under civilian authority; liberal use would be made of this in subsequent years, in Albay and Bicol in 1903 and Batangas and Cavite in 1905.¹²⁴ The Commission would pass specific, separate acts shifting authority from the military to civilians, officially "ending" the war in these regions in silent, piecemeal fashion until 1913.

As power shifted from the U.S. Army to civilian administrators, a process that was tense and reversible, so too did the racial formation that would organize U.S. colonialism in the Philippines. On the face of it, the new regime's racial terms—"tutelage," "uplift," "evolution," "assimilation"—were dramatic departures from the depths of racial-extermism, departures that closely corresponded to the needs of an emerging Filipino-American collaborationist state whose "internal frontiers" would emerge as the next ground of struggle.



This cartoon from *Public Opinion* of June 1902 offers civilian colonial rule, in the form of the Philippine Bill, as a favorable alternative to war. It does so by dividing the Philippine population into the “savage” population still resisting, and the “civilized” population collaborating peacefully with U. S. colonial state builders. Images like these paved the way for a postwar racial state predicated on notions of “tutelage” and “assimilation” and illustrate the political dynamism of race.

If the U.S. military’s distrust of the new administrators, and the frequent refusal of officers to take part in its new, inter-racial rituals, suggested conflict, there were also continuities: students needed to be tested and disciplined, children were to be supervised, controlled and punished. “Benevolent” assimilation could always, implicitly, be withdrawn for the other kind.¹²⁵

During the Philippine-American War, U.S. soldiers had borrowed and adapted a Tagalog word to create “boondock,” a term for a liminal, border region, with connotations of bewilderment and disorientation. The “boondocks” emerged where older maps failed, where prior patterns and relationships could no longer be recognized. Making sense of colonial war required Americans to develop a novel racial formation that could reorient the United States at a crucial transition in its imperial career. Filipino revolutionaries had attempted to achieve American recognition through their “civilization” and even in their fighting, but as combat and race-making became entangled, the two processes fused into racial-extremist warfare with devastating human consequences.¹²⁶ The legacy of colonial violence

would continue to haunt both societies as empire building drew the United States and the Philippines together in the 20th century.

Paul A. Kramer is an associate professor of history at Johns Hopkins University and is currently a visiting professor at the University of Michigan. He is the author of [The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines](#) (University of North Carolina Press, 2006). His web site can be found [here](#).

Notes:

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, Address of President Roosevelt at Arlington, Memorial Day, May 30, 1902, (United States: 1902).

² Traditional historiography on the war minimizes U. S. racial animus and atrocity and emphasizes the "benevolence" of the U. S. campaign. See John Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krag's: The U. S. Army in the Philippines, 1898-1902* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973); Brian McAllister Linn, *The U. S. Army Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Linn, "Taking Up the White Man's Burden: The U. S. Military in the Philippines, 1898-1902," in Luis E. González Vales, ed., 1898: *Enfoques y Perspectivas* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Academia Puertorriqueña de la Historia, 1997), 111-142. For more nuanced accounts, see Resil B. Mojares, *The War against the Americans: Resistance and Collaboration in Cebu, 1899-1906* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999); Glenn Anthony May, *Battle for Batangas: A Philippine Province at War* (Quezon City: New Day, 1993); For a recent collection of historical essays and artworks relating to the war, see Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, eds., *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

³ Stuart Creighton Miller, "Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

⁴ On the political dynamism of race, see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York, 1994), esp. chaps. 1—5; Thomas C. Holt, "Marking: Race, Race-Making, and the Writing of History," *American Historical Review*, 100 (Feb. 1995), 1—20; Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism," in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, eds., *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London ; New York: Verso, 1991); Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York, 1982), 143—78. For the argument that U. S. Indian policy was the "origin" of Philippine policy, see Walter L. Williams, "United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation: Implications for the Origins of American Imperialism," *Journal of American History* Vol. 66, No. 4 (1980). On the broader reconstruction of race in the context of U. S. colonialism in the Philippines, see Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[5] For the purposes of this essay, exterminist warfare is warfare in which non-

combatants are viewed as legitimate targets during the duration of combat but co-existence is imagined as a postwar goal; I distinguish this from genocide, in which violence is organized around the deliberate elimination of all members of an “enemy” society. I refrain from the use of the category of “total war” due to the category’s vague boundaries. On the concept of exterminism, see Dirk Bönker, “Militarizing the Western World: Navalism, Empire and State-Building Before World War I,” (PhD thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, 2002). On “total war” during the Philippine-American War, see May, “Was the Philippine-American War a ‘Total War’?” in Manfred F. Boemeke, Roger Chickering, Stig Förster. eds., *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871-1914* (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute; Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1999). For an intriguing comparative perspective on these questions see Helmut Walser Smith, “The Logic of Colonial Violence: Germany in Southwest Africa (1904-1907); the United States in the Philippines (1899-1902),” in Hartmut Lehmann and Hermann Wellenreuther, eds., *German and American Nationalism: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: Berg, 1999), 205-231. On other U. S. race wars, see John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, 7th printing (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); Mark Grimsley, “‘Rebels’ and ‘Redskins’: U.S. Military Conduct toward White Southerners and Native Americans in Comparative Perspective,” in Mark Grimsley and Clifford J. Rogers, eds., *Civilians in the Path of War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, c2002), 137-161.

⁶ On racism in Spanish colonial policy, see Josep Fradera, “Raza y Ciudadanía: El Factor Racial en la Delimitación de los Derechos de los Americanos,” in *Gobernar Colonias* (Ediciones Península, 1999).

⁷ John Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement, 1880-1895* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1973).

⁸ *La Solidaridad, 1889-1895*, Translated by Guadalupe Fores-Ganzon, vol.s 1-5; Luis Matheru, Vols. 6-7 (Manila: Fundacion Santiago, 1997). For the case of Rizal, see Paul A. Dumol, “Rizal Contra European Racism: An Autobiography of Jose Rizal Embedded in Blumentritt’s Obituary of Rizal,” in *European Studies: Essays by Filipino Scholars* (Diliman: University of the Philippines, 1999).

⁹ Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic* (Quezon City,: University of the Philippines, 1960); Cesar Adib Majul, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution*, rev. ed. (New York; Oriole Editions, 1974 [1967]).

¹⁰ On the U. S. Army’s attempt to regulate prostitution in the interests of venereal disease control, see Paul A. Kramer, “The Darkness that Enters the Home: The Politics of Prostitution During the Philippine-American War,” in Ann Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Race and Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹¹ [unsigned], from *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, May 17, 1900, in Willard Gatewood, “Smoked Yankees” and the Struggle for Empire: Letters from Negro Soldiers 1898-1902 (Urbana, Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 279.

¹² Quoted in Lewis O. Saum, “The Western Volunteer and ‘The New Empire,’” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Jan. 1966), 22.

¹³ Felipe Agoncillo, “Memorial to the Senate of the United States” (Washington, DC, 1899), 2, 7.

¹⁴ On the links between "print-capitalism" and nationalist "imagined community," see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Press, 1991). On the press during the Philippine-American War, see John Lent, "The Philippine Press During the Revolution and the Filipino-American War," *Asian Thought and Society*, Vol. III, No. 9 (December 1978), 308-321; see also Jesús Valenzuela, *History of Journalism in the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Published by the Author, 1933).

¹⁵ "Nuestro Programa," *La Independencia*, Year 1, No. 1 (September 3, 1898). All quotations from *La Independencia* are translations from the original Spanish by the author.

¹⁶ Advertisement for *La Independencia*, Year 1, No. 2 (September 5, 1898); See, for example, "El Espíritu de la Asociación," *La Independencia*, Year 1, No. 5 (September 9, 1898); "De Higiene Pública," *La Independencia*, Year 1, No. 36 (October 17, 1898); "Los Presupuestos," *La Independencia*, Year 1, No. 41 (October 22, 1898); "Apuntes Sobre Enseñanza," *La Independencia*, Year 1, No. 47 (October 29, 1898); "Moralización," *La Independencia*, Year 1, No. 63 (November 18, 1898).

¹⁷ L. R. Sargent, "In Aguinaldo's Realm," *The New York Independent*, Sept. 14 1899, 2477.

¹⁸ U. S. Senate, Senate Document No. 196, Report of Tour through the Island of Luzon, 56th Congress, 1st Session, Feb. 23, 1900, 13.

¹⁹ Sargent, "In Aguinaldo's Realm," 2479.

²⁰ Sargent, "In Aguinaldo's Realm," 2480-1.

²¹ Report of Tour through the Island of Luzon, 20.

²² Sargent, 2481.

²³ Wilcox and Sargent, 16.

²⁴ "General McReeve's Interview," reprinted in *The Anti-Imperialist*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 4, 1899), 18. On discourses of slavery and anti-slavery in Philippine-American colonial politics, see Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

²⁵ Wilcox and Sargent, 20.

²⁶ Wilcox and Sargent, 20.

²⁷ Palmer, "White Man and Brown Man in the Philippines," 79.

²⁸ William McKinley to the Secretary of War, December 21, 1898, in "Message from the President of the United States," Senate Document No. 208, 56th Congress, 1st Session (1899-1900), 82-3.

²⁹ G. Apacible, *Al Pueblo Americano/To the American People* (Anti-Imperialist League, 1900).

³⁰ "To the Filipino People," Exhibit 992, J. R. M. Taylor, ed., *The Philippine Insurrection*, Vol. V, 96. Taylor speculates that its author was Emilio Aguinaldo; a likely candidate is Apolinario Mabini.

³¹ For the best account of the domestic U. S. politics of the war remains Richard E. Welch Jr., *Response to Imperialism. The United States and the Philippine -American War, 1899—1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979). On U. S. anti-imperialism, see Daniel Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972); Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve against*

Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898—1900 (New York, 1968); Jim Zwick, ed.,
Sentenaryo/Cenennial,

Posted at Japan Focus on June 2, 2006.