Imperialism

The Roman splendor of the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893 (described in Selection 8) advertised America’s new imperial ambitions. At the end of the nineteenth century, the United States became a world power whose economic and military might vied with industrialized Europe for influence around the globe. Between 1889 and 1904, the United States divided Samoa with the Germans; annexed Hawaii; wrested the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico from Spain; and separated the Panama Canal Zone from Colombia.

Americans are uncomfortable calling their nation imperialist, not just because the term has become a charge that developing countries customarily level against the industrialized West. To label the United States “imperialist” is to place it in the company of the modern British, French, and German empires or even the empires of ancient Greece and Rome. The concept implies an end to America’s alleged exemption from the troubles of other nations and suggests its affinity to the bullying “Great Powers” of its era and previous ones. How similar or different was turn-of-the-century America’s acquisition of foreign territories from the European imperialism of its day? What political, economic, and racial theories were used to support American expansion? Was American colonial administration unique, and what impact did it have upon subject peoples? Could imperialism be reconciled with America’s own colonial past and its republican commitment to the consent of the governed?

The essays in this chapter raise these important questions and use comparative analysis to address them. In the first selection, Robin W. Winks broadly compares American imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the European powers’ scramble for colonies in Asia and Africa. Winks finds that Americans used many of the same arguments to justify their takeover of foreign lands, but he notes that their way of governing those lands was quite distinctive. In the second selection, Vince Boudreau takes a close look at the workings of American imperialism in a specific setting: the Philippine Islands, which
the United States controlled from 1899 to its independence in 1946. Boudreau's analysis can be read as a "case study" testing Winks's generalizations about the American brand of imperialism. To what extent does Philippine history support Winks's claim that democratic values tempered the U.S. commitment to colonial rule? Taken together, these essays are fine examples of breadth and depth in comparative history, and they provide you with ample context and information to assess the nature of America's momentous imperial move in the 1890s.

### American Imperialism in Comparative Perspective

**ROBIN W. WINKS**

After reaching the Pacific and consolidating domestic control by conquering the South and the West, the United States turned outward. Somewhat haltingly but unmistakably, an American empire came into being through the conquest, purchase, or annexation of far-flung territories, from the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean to Hawaii and the Philippines in the Pacific. This flexing of American muscles abroad coincided with the second phase of European imperialism, during which the British took over parts of North and South Africa as well as Southeast Asia, Germany claimed Southwest and East Africa, the French dominated West Africa and Vietnam, and all sought "spheres of influence" in China. When Dutch, Italian, and Belgian claims as well as Russian expansionism are included, European states and their descendants (such as the United States) succeeded in establishing control, directly or indirectly, over almost every part of the world by the eve of World War I.

All this did not happen without fierce resistance from indigenous peoples, or even controversy at home. "I think," declared Mark Twain in 1900, "that England sinned when she got herself into a war in South Africa which she could have avoided, just as we have sinned in getting into a similar war in the Philippines." The debate over imperialism had begun the previous year when the United States decided to annex the Philippines and Britain invaded the Boer republics in South Africa. It has raged ever since. On one side, the search for foreign markets or national glory, the Social Darwinist idea that only the fittest would survive the global "struggle for existence," and the movement (however misguided) to spread
Christianity and "civilization" to "backward" peoples all seemed to justify empire. On the other side, there were charges of hypocrisy in professing democratic values but denying them to others, fears of contact with "nonassimilable" races, and warnings about the evils of a military state. A British critic of imperialism, John Hobson, believed that it stemmed from an excess of capital seeking profitable investment overseas because it could no longer find high dividends at home — an explanation that the Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin extended into the dictum that imperialism was "the highest stage of capitalism." Whatever its roots and its moral claims, in practice imperialism involved the undeniable exploitation and oppression of colonial peoples, often through brutal violence.

Like Mark Twain, historian Robin Winks adopts the language of sin to describe imperialism. His approach is to admit that we (the United States as well as Europe) are all imperialist "sinners" — not an easy confession for many Americans to share — but then to substitute analysis for confession: in Winks's words, "to see whether and how our sins have differed." Which motives and rationales did American imperialists share with their European contemporaries? How did American imperialism compare in practice to British, French, and Russian colonizing? Roving expertly around the world, Winks finds that, despite Americans' professions to the contrary, their justification for imperialism featured essentially the same ethnocentric and moralistic arguments put forth by European rulers. What made American imperialism different, says Winks, was its commitment to republican institutions, which gave a distinctive flavor to American overseas rule. As a former colony itself, the United States was more reluctant than its mother country or other European nations to take on colonies and to keep them for long. But while they ruled, says Winks, the Americans were, paradoxically, far more intent on imposing their language, customs, and institutions upon the natives than were the British, who governed through an alliance between the imperial bureaucracy and a tiny native elite.

Winks's concise essay offers important distinctions and interpretations to test against the actual historical record. It is a good starting point for the comparative study of imperialism. You will notice, though, that Winks refers to several persons and concepts in the history of imperialism, especially British imperialism, without describing them for you. Be sure to check the Glossary for assistance in identifying these terms. Finally, since the next selection presents a more detailed look at the American venture in the Philippines, it would be a good idea to return to some of the larger questions about American imperialism posed by Winks's essay after you have read Selection 10.

GLOSSARY

BOERS Descendants of the original Dutch colonists of South Africa. The Boers resisted British imperial rule by trekking northward in the late 1830s to the interior, where they established three republics. One of these (Natal) the British annexed in 1843; the others, the Transvaal and Orange Free State, they conquered in 1902.

BRYAN, WILLIAM JENNINGS (1860–1925) An American reform politician and spellbinding orator. Bryan won the Democratic presidential nomination in 1896 on a platform that absorbed ideas from the farmer-dominated Populist revolt, but lost the election to Republican William McKinley. Bryan supported the Spanish-American War
but opposed the taking of colonies. Nevertheless, he urged Democrats to ratify the
 treaty annexing the Philippines in order to end the war quickly. He hoped to use the
 issue of Philippine independence to capture the presidency in 1900, but failed.

CHAMBERLAIN, JOSEPH (1836–1914) A radical British Whig Party leader of the
 1880s who, along with Lord Rosebery, broke with the Whig prime minister William
 Gladstone and opposed giving Ireland home rule. Rosebery defended British imperial-
 ism as a way of “pegging out claims for the future” against competing Great Powers.

COOLIES Derived from the Tamil and Urdu words for “hireling,” a pejorative label
 for imported contract workers, especially from India or China.

CROMWELL, OLIVER (1599–1658) A forceful Puritan leader who emerged victo-
 rious in the English Civil War of the 1640s. One of the most controversial figures in
 English history, Cromwell defeated the Royalist forces of Charles I and Charles II and
 proclaimed England a Republican commonwealth. He led an expedition into Ireland,
 where he began a policy of dispossessing the Irish. In 1653 he was named Lord Protector,
 or sole ruler, of England, Scotland, and Ireland, but the monarchy was restored shortly
 after his death.

DISRAELI, BENJAMIN (1804–1881) A British author and statesman who rose to
 leadership of the Tory (now Conservative) Party. His second term as prime minister
 (1874–1880) was noted for its aggressively imperialist foreign policy. Among other ac-
 tions, Disraeli annexed the Fiji Islands, waged wars against the Afghans and Zulus, per-
 suaded Turkey to cede Cyprus to Britain, and purchased controlling shares in the Suez
 Canal. In 1876 he had Queen Victoria crowned empress of India.

GREATER EAST ASIA CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE The rubric given by Japan to
 its domination of trade and territory in China and Southeast Asia in the 1930s. Increas-
 ingly, this arrangement was a cover for brutal imperialism and exclusionist trade policies.

JESUITAL Oversubtle or deceptive.

KIPLING, RUDYARD (1865–1936) A popular English author who celebrated
 British imperialism in his poems, novels, and children’s stories, such as The Jungle Books
 (1894–1895). Kipling believed in the “white man’s burden,” the duty to bring European
 culture and Christianity to the peoples of the “uncivilized” world.

MACKINDER, HALFORD JOHN (1861–1947) An English geographer who
 claimed that Eurasia was the geographical pivot and “heartland” of history, a theory that
 received little attention until it was adopted in Germany to support Nazi imperial
 ambitions.

MAHAN, ALFRED THAYER (1840–1914) An American naval officer and histo-
 rian whose book The Influence of Sea Power upon History (1890) argued that foreign trade
 and overseas bases, and especially a powerful navy to protect them, were the keys to suc-
 cess in international politics. His works had a major influence upon supporters of im-
 perialism in the United States and abroad.

MAORI The native Polynesian population of New Zealand, subjugated by the
 British in 1872 after a century of intermittent warfare.

MCKINLEY, WILLIAM (1843–1901) The Republican president of the United
 States who followed public opinion into the Spanish-American War after the sinking of
 the battleship Maine in February 1898. Faced with the decision to take colonies as spoils
 of war, McKinley declared that Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines should be
 made American territories.
MONROE DOCTRINE  The pronouncement by U.S. president James Monroe in 1823 that from then on the Western Hemisphere was closed to further colonization or intervention by European powers (and that the United States would not interfere in European nations' internal affairs). Initially intended to prevent Europeans from recolonizing the Americas, the doctrine was later used by Theodore Roosevelt and other U.S. presidents to justify American intervention in the Caribbean and Central America for political or economic objectives.

OPEN DOOR NOTES An American attempt to prevent partitioning of the Chinese empire by imperialist powers and to protect the principle of open trade. In 1899 and 1900, Secretary of State John Hay issued two notes, the first declaring that all foreign powers active in China would respect each other's trading rights, the second calling upon Western powers to preserve China's existing territorial boundaries. Although Hay claimed that European powers accepted his proposal, it was the fear of provoking a general European war that kept imperialists from dismembering China.

PAKEHA  Maori word meaning “white man” and referring to the British colonists who subdued the native peoples of New Zealand.

PAX AMERICANA “American peace”: the maintenance of global peace and stability after World War II through the exercise of American military and economic power.

PAX BRITANNICA “British peace”: the peace imposed by Britain's military and naval supremacy upon its dominions and, by extension, upon the international scene from 1815 to the outbreak of World War I.

POLYGAMY The practice of having more than one spouse at one time. In the form of polygyny (multiple wives), it was common in many non-Western cultures until recent times.

RAJ  From the Hindu word for “rule” or “dominion,” a term referring to British colonial rule in India.

REALPOLITIK The “realistic” and sometimes amoral understanding of politics reflected especially in the statecraft of Germany's imperial chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898). Realpolitik involves the recognition that force is the preeminent way to achieve political success and the willingness to brush aside morality and idealism as unrealistic and hence irrelevant.

RHODES, CECIL (1853–1902) A British imperialist and business magnate who, after making a fortune in the diamond fields of South Africa, became prime minister of the Cape Colony (1890–1896). His British South Africa Company colonized South Africa's northeast frontier, overcame tribal resistance, and claimed the territory (soon called Rhodesia in his honor) for England. Rhodesia is now independent Zimbabwe.

SPENGLER, OSWALD (1880–1936) A German philosopher whose influential book *The Decline of the West* (1918–1922) declared that all civilizations pass through a life cycle from creativity to decline. Spengler believed that Western civilization had peaked and would soon irreversibly decline.

SUEZ CRISIS The crisis precipitated in 1956 when Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser took control of the Suez Canal from its imperialist “protector,” Great Britain, for economic and military reasons. In the next few months, Israel, Great Britain, and France sent armies against Egypt, but the United States and the Soviet Union, acting through the United Nations, condemned these actions and persuaded all three to withdraw.
SUUKARNO (1901–1970) The leader of the Indonesian independence movement against Dutch rule. Sukarno became Indonesia’s first president in 1949, steered its democracy toward one-man rule, and was deposed by a coup d’état in 1966.

SUTTEE A former Hindu practice in which a widow immolated herself on the funeral pyre of her husband.

TOYNBEE, ARNOLD (1889–1970) An English historian whose twelve-volume *A Study of History* (1934–1961) analyzed the cyclical development and decline of civilizations as the result of their responses to successive challenges.

TREATY OF VERSAILLES (1919) The treaty between the Allied Powers and Germany ending World War I. By its terms, Germany’s overseas colonies in China, the Pacific, and Africa were taken over by Britain, France, Japan, and others. The British gained Tanganyika (now part of Tanzania).

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"The depositary of power is always unpopular." Benjamin Disraeli knew this, and so did Theodore Roosevelt. Both contributed to their nation’s power. Disraeli made Queen Victoria the Empress of India, while Roosevelt took Panama and built a canal there, by his own testimony. Both were imperialists.

But imperialism has proved to be an infinitely elastic term, one to be employed against all men who used power for expansion, consolidation, and conquest. Caesar, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Suleiman the First at the walls of Malta, the Abraham Lincoln who crushed the drive for Southern independence (but not the Lincoln who freed the slaves), Dingaan and Shakar of the Zulu nation, even — according to English historian Christopher Hill — Oliver Cromwell, all were imperialists. As a result of such elasticity, the word is one which now carries almost exclusively a pejorative meaning, and since it has come to cover all those sins for which Western man is thought to be responsible, it is a particularly convenient form of verbal shorthand to demonstrate the gulf that separates the two worlds, the world of those who took and have and the world of those who lack and want. No one wishes to be called an imperialist, no nation wishes to admit to having undergone an imperialist past, and the new and emerging nations like to charge much of their current instability to the imperial tradition.

Many Americans have assumed that there was no period of American imperialism. Others admit to a brief imperialist past but prefer to clothe that past in other words. We were an expansionist nation, some historians argue, but not an imperialist one, a distinction more Jesuitical than useful. Yet other apologists suggest that since American growth was the direct result of a unique American sense of mission, of a Messianic

impulse to set the world right which, even if wrongheaded, was sincere, humanitarian, progressive, and in general benevolent, the United States was apart from and above the ventures of the European scramblers for colonies. But most imperialisms have been rooted in a sense of mission, and the American sense differs from that of other nations chiefly in that the United States emphasized different characteristics. The British sense of mission sprang from a conviction of cultural superiority, the Japanese from a racial message thinly veiled in paternal rhetoric, the German from an impulse toward a preordained dialectic, and the Communist sense of mission from what was conceived to be a sure knowledge of the world's ultimate needs and ends. And to say that we all are sinners does not remove the necessity to see whether and how our sins have differed.

Imperialism was not always in ill-repute, of course. In Britain in the 1880's and 1890's, Chamberlain and Rosebery were proud to call themselves imperialists. They were helping unfortunate peoples around the world to come into the light; they were lifting Britain, and not at the expense of nonwhites but at the expense of other, highly competitive European powers. Whatever befell the subjects of imperial control was, on the whole, to their good. . . . [W]hile liberals and conservatives placed different orders of priority upon their respective rationales, they also agreed upon the basic mix: Britain must reform itself at home and make itself fit for an imperial role while expanding abroad in order to extend to the unenlightened the many benefits of a rationalized, ordered society. Improved sanitation and education, the equal administration of the law and the equal application of justice, the stamping out of slavery, debt bondage, suttee, polygamy, nakedness, and bride price — all seemed legitimate goals when viewed from within the liberal framework of the time. Theodore Roosevelt, too, thought that the vigorous Anglo-Saxon should carry forth the torch of progress; and, not unlike that hoary old radical and voice of the people, Walt Whitman, he wanted a race of splendid mothers.

Liberals, like conservatives, are always capable of highly selective indignation, and if they thought that the abolition of paganism and of slavery were of equal importance, if they thought the disruption of centuries of tribal alliances and of family stability was a small price for Africans to pay in exchange for monogamy, good roads, and a dependable market, they can hardly be blamed for thinking in the nineteenth century in nineteenth-century terms. Consider this statement, written at Brikama, in the Gambia, on the west coast of Africa, by a British traveling commissioner late in that century:

There are higher purposes in life than merely living. Perhaps I shall die here, but I shall die a better man for having been here. These people are degraded, ignorant, swept by disease; how low, how low, they stand. Yet, they stand. I can help move them that inch higher, give them that direction they need, tell them of that truth that, once grasped, lived, proved, may one day make them right-thinking Englishmen, men with souls as white as any other, men I will have been proud to have known. Lift them, lift them. If I pass through the Gate before them, one day they too will pass through it, and I, there before them, will welcome them as men.

Such a sentiment may be found expressed by the pakeha among the Maori in the 1840's, by the Dutch in Java in the eighteenth century, by the Australians in New Guinea in the
1960's, and by the Americans in the Philippines in the 1920's. Indeed, one may find the
same sentiment scrawled on postcards sent home from foreign parts by members of that
most idealistic of all American organizations, the Peace Corps. Can we condemn this
sentiment altogether, this amalgam of humanitarianism, of purpose, of drive, of sacri-
fice; this amalgam of arrogance, of self-righteousness, of superiority; this amalgam of
progressivism, of Christianity, of Darwinism, of imperialism?

Imperialism was a practice; colonialism was a state of mind. Whether a powerful na-
tion extended its control, its influence, or merely its advice over another people, those
so controlled or so advised not unnaturally resented the controller. Indeed, we have all
been colonies mentally at one time or another; no one likes, as they say, to be over a
barrel. Much indignity lies in any subservient position, and yet there will always be the
powerful and the powerless, and the people with the most power may not escape being
the nation that is powerless, as Britain learned at Suez and as the United States is learn-
ing today. There is obvious indignity in never being the mover but always the moved,
in waiting to see how a foreign capital or a foreign embassy will decide one's fate.

Behind the practice we call imperialism lay many strands of thought which were
drawn together near the end of the nineteenth century to provide a rationale for ex-
pansive policies. The natural science, like the social organization of the time, empha-
sized selectivity, categories, hierarchies. There were natural orders of being, as there
were natural orders of animal life, and nothing was more natural to political man than
to assume that, as Walter Bagehot wrote, there were parallels between physics and pol-
itics. The new science taught "objectivity" and in the nineteenth century objectivity
meant measurement, not cultural relativism but the opposite, the desire to place races,
peoples, and cultures into classifiable categories. Cranial capacity, the length and width
of heads, body odor, the color of the skin and the nature of the hair, all were measured,
charted, and used to conclude that fundamental differences separated people. The vul-
garization of the theories of Charles Darwin was combined with the romanticist's pen-
chant for finding decadence wherever he looked, and the combination justified seeing
the world as a jungle in which only the fittest might survive. The opening sentence of
Count Arthur de Gobineau's Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines, published in 1853,
spoke for the new pessimism that was, in fact, romantic: "The fall of civilization is the
most striking and, at the same time, the most obscure of all phenomena of history." This
pessimism was to run on through Spengler, through Toynbee, to the present.
Arnold Toynbee was to write of the "natural dysgenic effects" that occur in societies;
he was to find some groups — the Polynesians and the Jews, for example — suspended
on plateaus where insufficient responses to overwhelming challenges had left them.
The best men could hope to do was to turn back animality, or animality would take
over the world. And to these strands of romance and science were added yet others —
the Christian desire to save, to convert, and to enlighten, the commercial impulse to
markets, the geopolitical and military notion of strategic values, the desire for adven-
ture, the national thrust to a place in the sun, the national need for la gloire.

The very language of imperialism was all-pervasive. Neither the Maori in New
Zealand nor the Navajo in America had any name for themselves until Europeans coined
the words. Geographical terms of location — Near East, Middle East, Far East — were
relative to a European map. Latin America became that portion of the New World where Spanish and Portuguese were spoken, because Americans decided this was so, oblivious of the fact that French Canadians considered themselves Latins too. Indonesia's Sukarno acquired a first name because American journalists refused to believe that a man could have but one. The names of the saints of European churches, like the names of European kings, run across the face of Asia, of Africa, and of the Pacific worlds as dictated by the whims of semiliterate men. The very geography of race itself is European, for it was Leclerc de Buffon who first classified the orders of life so that a later generation would have tools for distinguishing between peoples as well as plants. Long before... vine-snared trees fell down in files along the Congo, Europeans had concluded that there, in truth, did lie a heart of darkness in need of both European goods and of European ideas. An imperialism of the mind preceded the imperialism of the gunboat, the adviser, and the investor.

The United States was part of this climate of opinion. American responses to some of the assumptions of European imperialists were bound to be negative, for the United States had grown, after all, out of a former colonial empire. The assumptions that Americans made about imperial responsibility were conditioned by an awareness of distance from the scenes of European conflicts, by a knowledge that the American people were an amalgam of many of the peoples of the world, some themselves representative of the victims of imperial struggles, and from an emotional predisposition to apply the basic tenets of republicanism to the imperial situation.

Perhaps here lies the most significant differences between the American empire and other imperial growths of a comparable time. Most Americans, including their overseas administrators, hoped to make the colonial societies over in the American model so that they could qualify for self-government or for admission into the Union itself. This assumption produced, as Whitney T. Perkins has pointed out, “a safety valve of sorts in an inherent bias toward the extension of self-government.” This bias was more far-reaching than the British bias toward establishing representative institutions on the Westminster [parliamentary] model, for it was there from the beginning, and republican principles were maintained for the so-called subject peoples as well as for the dominant nation. The territories acquired from Mexico whether by conquest or by purchase, became states of the Republic. So too did Alaska and Hawaii; and although the time needed to complete the necessary transformation before statehood became a reality was a long one, the assumption always was present that independence or statehood was the goal. The safety valve thus prevented the buildup within the colonies of a long-term ruling elite imposed from outside. It also decreased the intensity of local nationalist movements. While the British moved slowly toward their concept of indirect rule in East Africa, of governing through the already existing tribal structures, the United States applied a form of indirect rule almost immediately, and especially so in the Philippines, in Puerto Rico, and in Samoa. While the British anticipated that the Indians one day would be an independent people, as late as 1930 otherwise farsighted British spokesmen could suggest that such a day would not come for another century. Impatient, as usual, Americans presumed that their imperial role would be a short one, as indeed it was.
Unwilling to admit that dependency was more than a passing phase, American leaders were slow to think through the implications of having an empire. No permanent overseas civil service or military establishment, no educational system meant primarily to provide a continuing imperial tradition, arose to perpetuate imperial dogma. It is not without significance that American romantic novelists of empire, such as Richard Harding Davis, men of the same cloth as ... Rudyard Kipling, wrote primarily of empires the United States did not hold, seldom using American colonial locales for their adventures. Perhaps the clearest proof that Americans assumed that their empire would be more transient than most may be seen in the fact that there was no Colonial Office, no Ministère des Colonies. The various territories were allocated to the Department of State, of the Interior, the Navy, and War; and when, in 1934, a Division of Territories and Island Possessions was created within the Department of the Interior, Guam and Samoa nonetheless were left to the Navy and the Panama Canal Zone to the Army.

The question is not, therefore, whether the United States or any other nation used power; rather, the questions are, how was this power first mobilized against the less powerful, and how was it ultimately employed? And in the answers to these two questions we may find some areas of contrast between American and, as an example, British imperial experiences.

The facts are clear enough. Most observers would agree in identifying two major periods of American expansion before 1939. The first of these, from perhaps 1803 until 1853, was a period of internal growth, of movement across the land from the eastern seaboard to the west coast, and of two wars — that of 1812–1814 with Britain and the Mexican War of 1846–1848 — which, while not primarily concerned with the acquisition of new territory, nonetheless involved considerable and admitted expansionist interests. When in 1853 the United States purchased an additional corner of land from Mexico for ten million dollars, expansion within contiguous areas was complete.

Was this first period of expansion imperialistic? Perhaps. Certainly the rhetoric that accompanied it was so, and some of the same genuinely held and humanitarian if arrogant views were present in 1812 and in 1846 as sustained the British, for example, during their forward movement in Southeast Asia and Africa after 1870. In 1859 a Congressman from Mississippi envisioned the incorporation of the whole of Mexico, Central America, South America, Cuba, and the West Indies into the Republic, just as Cecil Rhodes later wished to see the entirety of at least the eastern sweep of the African continent painted red on the imperial maps. If the same Congressman also suggested that France and England might be annexed as well, while permitting them to retain their local legislatures for the regulation of local affairs, his hyperbole can be matched by much that [British imperialists] ... wrote or said about various African kingdoms and reasonably viable Indian states.

Certainly the roots of the later period of American expansion overseas lie in the pre–Civil War past, for it was then that the American idea of a national mission developed. The secularization of the earlier Puritan concepts, the growing sense of the covenant the American people had made with themselves during the Revolution and within their Constitution, and the heightened awareness of and belief in a unique American destiny, led many Americans sincerely to support any of several arguments
for expansion. Many believed they were liberating Canadians from British despotism in 1814 and freeing Mexicans from harsh and undemocratic rule in 1847. The doctrine of natural right, the European idea of natural boundaries to which a nation or a people naturally must expand, the desire to extend the “area of freedom” to those less fortunate, the thought that energetic, egalitarian Americans could better use the soil, even that they might regenerate people who too long had lived under effete and declining European institutions, including European churches — all these impulses toward reform lay behind the expansion of the pre–Civil War years.

Because the United States had a continent to conquer, it developed its first empire internally, incorporating territory into the body politic in a way that European nations having to seek overseas outlets for their energies, their people, their goods, their investments, and their doctrines, could neither understand nor attempt. If Britain’s third empire lay in Africa, America’s first empire lay at hand, merely across the wide Missouri. An imperial democracy might grow within the continent. Thus continentalism, not imperialism, occupied the driving American energies until near the end of the century. As Frederick Jackson Turner was to point out in his essay on the significance of sections in American history, the South and the West at differing times were to think of themselves as colonies of the North and the East. The South was, after all, a conquered territory under military occupation between 1865 and 1877; and the West was, in its eyes and often in the eyes of Wall Street as well, a subject land. Further, Americans did not need coolies or castes in order to create an American raj. There always was the Negro to stand at the bottom of the social and economic scale, and there were the Indians to be pressed onto reservations.

The idea of mission was reinforced by the Federal victory in the Civil War. In 1867 the United States purchased Alaska from Russia. Following a period of internal concern for reconstructing Southern state governments, for reshaping the machinery of business, and for general domestic economic and social growth, Americans turned outward. The second major period of American expansion, and the first to propel America overseas, coincided with the world-wide wave of imperial annexations associated with the British, French, and German empires and with the awakening of Japan. If the earlier period were merely expansionist, as some contend, the growth between 1898 and 1920 was genuinely imperialist.

When Cubans renewed their periodic rebellion against the Spanish government early in 1895, insurrectos pillaged the land, destroying American and Spanish property indiscriminately, hoping to draw the United States into the conflict. The American Congress passed a concurrent resolution favoring recognition of Cuban belligerency, and anti-American rioting followed in Spain. Rioting in Cuba led the American government to send the battleship Maine to Havana Harbor to protect American lives and property; and on February 15, 1898, the Maine was sunk with the loss of over 250 lives. A month later a court of inquiry announced that an external submarine mine had caused the explosion, and the American public concluded, probably wrongly, that Spain had been responsible. War followed.

But war might have followed even had there been no incident in Havana Harbor. A generation of Americans that had known no war was seeking adventure. Prosperity had
returned to the land following the panic of 1893, and the nation’s self-confidence returned with good times. Talk of regenerating Cuba, of driving European powers from the American hemisphere, and of the white man’s burden mingled with the pseudoscience of the time. Populist frustrations arising from the defeat of William Jennings Bryan at the polls in 1896 were channeled toward the Cuban adventure, where reforms that had been blocked at home might have at least some compensatory outlet abroad. Free silverites thought that the war might bring remonetization. Businessmen saw the opening up of Eastern markets where, as one noted, if every Chinaman would buy but a single box of matches, the entire match industry would become rich. Unable to resist the many pressures upon him, President McKinley allowed the nation to be swept into war.

From the Spanish-American War flowed a train of events with a logic of its own. The United States won the war with ease; it acquired Cuba, under a pledge to make it free; it became the imperial overlord in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. In the

*THE WHITE (?) MAN’S BURDEN.—From Life (New York).*

This anti-imperialist political cartoon was published in the United States one month after the U.S. Senate approved the treaty annexing the Philippines and ending the Spanish-American War. Mocking Rudyard Kipling’s poem, which urged Americans to “take up the white man’s burden,” the cartoon portrays Uncle Sam travelling with John Bull (representing England) and other European imperial lords, carried by their respective colonial subjects. (Life, March 16, 1899/Culver Pictures.)
midst of the war, the United States agreed to a petition from the Hawaiian Islands to annex that kingdom. In 1899, Americans took Wake Island as a link with Guam; and, in 1900, Tutuila in the Samoan group was added. The Open Door Notes of Secretary of State John Hay followed.

Since a direct link with the Pacific was now needed for the Atlantic-locked American navy, Theodore Roosevelt hurried Panama toward independence from Colombia. Without question he connived at the Panamanian revolution, encouraging a puppet state which, in 1904, sold a strip of land across its isthmus so that the new imperial power might build a canal. Caribbean stability thus became important, and Roosevelt added his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine by asserting that America could intervene in any Central American or Caribbean state where financial or political instability threatened European actions. Haiti virtually became an American protectorate in 1915, and the corollary would be used to justify intervention in Nicaragua, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic. In 1917 Denmark sold her Virgin Islands to the United States, a clear example, even though by purchase, of the preventive annexation to which Britain had felt forced to resort in the Pacific and Indian oceans. The Corn Islands were leased from Nicaragua to protect the Caribbean entrance to the new Panama Canal, and tiny coral atolls in the Pacific were claimed for potential communications stations. The Caribbean became an American lake.

To say that these annexations were tempered by the American commitment to republicanism is not to say that they were not a form of imperialism. Clearly they were. But to say that the American empire that resulted was identical or even necessarily similar to other empires is to put one's premise before one's conclusion. At first glance one may find parallels between the cant of an Alfred Thayer Mahan and the pseudoteories of a Halford John Mackinder, between the pledge made by President Lyndon B. Johnson in Honolulu in 1966 to use American power to defend the freedom of Southeast Asia and the promises made by Japanese leaders in the 1930's to create a Great East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, between the pax Britannica and the pax Americana. But as pat as these parallels may seem, one cannot deny the presence of some differences between the British and American imperial experiences that are of significance. Mahan, after all, found his chief use not by the American but by the Japanese Imperial Navy, and Mackinder's geopolitical theories were most used not by Britain but by Nazi Germany.

However administered, three differences stand out between the American and other empires. Most British acquisitions between 1870 and 1920 were for the purpose of stabilizing already held possessions, arising from turbulent frontiers lying across some unoccupied and intermediate hinterland, turbulence that created vacuums into which the British feared other nations would rush. American annexations, largely consisting of islands, shared the strategic and preventive aspects of European imperialism, but in terms of scale alone the American holdings were relatively insignificant, and each acquisition did not to nearly the same extent create an ever-widening circle of new conflicts. Second, there was no grand design to American expansionism, no overall world strategy, no forward movement as in British Malaya, tied either to a containment policy, as Britain's island acquisitions were in part, or tied to an assumption of semi-permanence.
The American occupations of both Haiti and the Dominican Republic were short-lived, seen from the outset to be temporary, with limited objectives in mind. This makes the occupations no less imperialistic, of course, but it does illustrate the makeshift nature of the American empire.

Most important, perhaps, is the by no means complimentary fact that the American imperialism was more culturally insidious than that of Britain or Germany, although perhaps not more so than that of France. To qualify for self-government among American states, colonial dependencies had to be utterly transformed, and the Americans often showed very little respect for Spanish culture in Puerto Rico, for Samoan life in Tutuila, or for the structure of the old Hawaiian kingdoms. The French, with their mission civilisatrice, were equally willing to insist that, to be civilized, the colonized must learn the language and customs of the conqueror. The British, ever more pragmatic, were content to administer through an elite, creating classes of Anglo-Indians and other cultural hyphenates but leaving the fundamental nature of the indigenous culture unchanged. Since they never anticipated the day when India would become part of the United Kingdom, and not until the 1920's did responsible officials give serious thought even to the loose linkage now involved in Commonwealth ties, wholesale Anglicizing was unnecessary. Precisely because the Americans did anticipate rapid progress toward assimilation did they insist upon such brutally fast Americanization.

As a British historian of empire David K. Fieldhouse has pointed out, what set the American empire apart, then, was the attempt to fit colonial possessions into [the mold of . . . republicanism. No one provided a theoretical base for permanent colonialism, for the new territories were to be ushered into the United States on the basis of the same machinery, already established by the Constitution, that was used for Kentucky and Tennessee in the 1790's, for Colorado in 1876, and for Arizona in 1912. Congress extended full citizenship to the dependencies — to Puerto Ricans in 1917, to the Virgin Islands in 1927, to Guamanians in 1950. Representative government came quickly, responsible government slowly, and Congress exercised over the legislative bodies within the colonies the same kind of ultimate veto that lay in Britain's Colonial Laws Validity Act of 1865.

A difference of considerable importance lay in the fact that the American empire was the only one, other than the Russian, which formed a single economic system. Alaska and Hawaii were brought under the American tariff upon annexation, Puerto Rico in 1900, and the Philippine Islands in 1909. The advantages of such a system accrued almost entirely to the colonies, for all were primary producers who would have found their chief markets in the United States in any event. That the colonies felt more economically benefited than exploited may be seen from the Philippines' rejection of an offer of independence in 1933 because it meant gradual exclusion from the American protective system. Nor did the United States gain economically from the colonies. In 1925, a high point, only 4.9 per cent of American exports went to any of the colonial areas, including those Caribbean states bound to the United States by treaty. Nor did the colonies become important for capital — by World War II, Puerto Rico and the Philippines together held only 2.5 per cent of total overseas American investment, a figure ridiculously tiny compared to the sums placed in independent nations such as Mexico and Canada.
Perhaps here we discover a large area of comparability between American and European imperialisms. France, still primarily concerned with agricultural problems, stands apart from many generalizations, but Britain assuredly also realized little direct economic gain from her colonies. The British also preferred to place investment capital in areas that need not be annexed. The British informal empire, an empire of trade, investment, and influence, extended into the Middle East, to Argentina, and to the Baltic states, just as an American informal empire existed in Latin America, in Canada, and in parts of China. But such nations also gained from such contacts, as any study of the growth of Canadian industry or of Argentine rails would show. Informal empires were a mixed blessing, but mixed they were, doctrinaire ideologies notwithstanding.

The American empire may be contrasted to those of the European powers in another way, however. The United States had grown out of an earlier empire, and having fought a revolutionary war to gain its independence of Britain, it continued to hold to certain principles which, as we have seen, injected republican assumptions into colonial relationships. Further, all of the colonial possessions acquired by the United States, with the exception of Hawaii, had belonged to another nation before. They were not formerly independent states, they had not experienced a recent period of local autonomy, as Natal did under the Boers, as the Indian princely states had done before the British East India Company arrived upon the scene, or as the Malay States did under their sultans. Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam had been under Spanish control, the Virgin Islands under Danish, Alaska under Russian, Samoa under German and British, and the Canal Zone under Colombian. Former concepts of independence were not silenced and, in some cases, were introduced for the first time. The American imperial acquisitions might thus be best compared to those areas added to the British Empire at the Treaty of Versailles, as the spoils of war, not the spoils of trade. In effect, the American empire was not unlike the new colonial holdings of Australia and New Zealand—a ricochet empire, picked up as the by-product of other events, and ironically acquired by nations which themselves had grown out of former dependency status.

No European power gave any colony independence before the end of World War II. But the United States released Cuba from its administrative embrace in 1934 and promised in the same year to give the Philippines independence after a decade’s transition period, a promise kept immediately following World War II. Puerto Rico was offered independence or statehood and chose neither, so that today it is a unique commonwealth, within the American nation, self-governing, and in part untaxed.

The United States rejected empire in 1945. Victorious, wealthy, clearly the most powerful nation on earth, the United States could have insisted upon retaining much, had nineteenth-century doctrines of power been operative. Perhaps it did not, as some of its critics say, because it recognized that through military occupation in Germany and Japan, through advantageous treaties with war-torn nations, and through the pervasive presence of American capital, there no longer was any need to build an empire in the old ways. Perhaps so; but if so, this was another kind of imperialism than was usually meant. It may be that American commitments overseas which arose in connection with Cold War diplomacy constituted another form of imperialism. But... whatever imperial
content the diplomatic and military events of the 1960's may hold, that content is not comparable with the events of the classic period of world imperialisms that fell between 1870 and 1920.

What, then, have we said of American imperialism? That, like all imperialisms, it was contradictory and that it could make an entire people appear to be hypocritical. When Woodrow Wilson set out to make the world safe for democracy, he spoke for Realpolitik as well as for humanitarianism, for the kind of democracy for which he wished to make the world safe was American democracy. But if he thought that he must teach South Americans to elect good men, he also remembered himself sufficiently not to do so. "We can afford," he thought, "to exercise the self-restraint of a really great nation which realizes its own strength and scorns to misuse it."

We have also said that similarities in motivation do not prove similarities in execution. The imperial experience, whether viewed from the gunboats of the expanding powers or from the beaches of the colonized peoples, must involve more than the first part of the story. Because the United States had no established church, no class of permanent civil servants, no entrenched system of private and privileged education, and no well-established military tradition, the American imperial movement was reinforced by fewer institutions. While G. A. Henry rode Through the Khyber Pass and Henri Fauconnier sought out The Soul of Malaya, American novelists did not write of Samoa, Guam, or Puerto Rico. Racism, romanticism, pseudo-science, and Christianity worked in roughly similar ways in British and American societies but they were projected into the colonies somewhat differently.

There are, perhaps, four questions which one might pose of any imperial relationship. What was the nature of the white settlers sent into the new country? What was the nature of the indigenous people? What was the degree of commitment on the part of the metropolitan power to retention of the territory and for what purposes? Within what geographical compass would the drama be played out? Since the United States sent few settlers into its empire, and since the areas, with the exception of the Philippines and Alaska, were quite small, the American answer to the first and last of these questions usually differed from the British, French, or Russian response. There rise the differences. In the answers to the second and third of the questions rise the similarities. One does not wish to reduce a complex problem to futile simplicities, but nonetheless one suspects that the American imperial experience is comparable to that of other nations only briefly, somewhat incidentally, and then but half the time.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Imperialism, the author says, is "an infinitely elastic term." How does Winks define imperialism in this essay? Is it the same as or different from territorial expansion? conquest in war? economic domination? What is Winks's attitude toward imperialism?

2. What nineteenth-century ideas about religion, race, nationalism, and progress provided justifications for imperialist ventures? What practical considerations fueled the quest for empire? Which of these motives and rationales did the United States share
with other late-nineteenth-century imperial powers? Which, if any, were uniquely American? Is there evidence to support the theory of Hobson in the American case?

3. Using specific examples and episodes, describe the two phases of American imperialism prior to 1920. What elements did they have in common? How did they differ?

4. In what ways did American imperialistic practices differ from those in European empires of the period from 1870 to 1920? How did the U.S. commitment to republicanism and the nation's history as a former colony shape its decisions about its own colonies? In what sense was the American empire small, "makeshift," and temporary? What evidence is there that the Americans, more than the British, imposed their customs and language upon their colonies?

5. Why have many Americans denied that there was such a thing as American imperialism? What features of imperialism, and what aspects of American national ideals, make it hard for Americans to admit that theirs was — and may still be — an imperialist nation?
America’s Colonial Rule
in the Philippines

VINCE BOUDREAU

To see American imperialism at work in a specific setting, we turn from the overview by Robin Winks in the preceding selection to a detailed analysis of the workings of American rule in the Philippines. Few Americans are aware that the nation fought not one but two wars to acquire these tropical Pacific islands. The first, the Spanish-American War of 1898 described by Winks, stemmed from American support for Cuba’s anticolonial rebels and public anger over the sinking of the battleship Maine in Havana harbor, which the “yellow press” mistakenly blamed on Spanish subterfuge. Although the main target of this “splendid little war” (as American pro-imperialist John Hay called it) was the Spanish empire in the Caribbean, halfway across the globe an American naval squadron moved quickly into Manila Bay and destroyed its Spanish fleet, and the squadron was followed by an army expeditionary force that captured Manila itself. American president William McKinley, who had forsworn annexing Cuba, had different ideas about keeping up with European imperial powers in the Pacific. After wrestling with the question of annexing the Philippine Islands, he decided that “there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift, and civilize, and Christianize them.” McKinley apparently did not realize that the Spanish had converted many Philippine natives to Catholicism. He also underestimated how many Americans would oppose his decision. American public opinion was sharply divided between imperialists and anti-imperialists, and the Treaty of Paris (1899), by which Spain ceded the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico to the United States for $20 million, barely survived its struggle for ratification in the U.S. Senate.

A different kind of resistance was put up by the Filipinos themselves, who had not been consulted and had no desire to exchange Spanish overseers for American ones. A popular independence movement led by Emilio Aguinaldo had been fighting the Spanish years before the Americans arrived. When the Spanish surrendered, these rebels declared the islands independent and expected American support. Rebuffed, they waged war on U.S. occupying forces. America’s second, less-remembered Philippine war was a much longer and bloodier conflict than the first. Aguinaldo’s rebels adopted guerrilla tactics, hiding in jungle and mountain retreats from which they conducted hit-and-run attacks. The Americans responded
by herding native villagers into "concentration camps" in order to isolate the guerrillas. By the time the main body of rebels was subdued in 1902, more than seven thousand Americans had been killed or wounded and two hundred thousand Filipinos had died through battle, disease, and famine.

Ironically, after such a bloody beginning, American rule in the Philippines took a very different turn. Mindful of popular misgivings back home and smoldering Filipino resentment, a series of pragmatic American governors-general, including future U.S. president William Howard Taft, worked hard to win the support of the islands' people. Under an orderly "Filipinization" process begun in 1901, the Americans granted the colony increasing measures of self-rule. An elected legislative assembly was created in 1907, then a bicameral legislature in 1916 by the Jones Act, which also promised the Philippines eventual independence. Commonwealth status, proclaimed in 1935, replaced the American governor with an elected president, who presided until the Philippines became fully independent after Japan's defeat a decade later. This systematic transfer of power was a rare case in which an imperial government voluntarily relinquished colonial rule. Furthermore, as Vince Boudreau notes in the following essay, the Philippines' growing political autonomy was supplemented by other American policies, including restrictions on American ownership of plantations and the establishment of an American-style public school system that spanned the islands and reached from kindergarten to the university level.

Boudreau, a political scientist who studies protest movements, is concerned with "methods of [colonial] domination" and "modes of resistance." His inquiry is explicitly comparative. Starting with the question of why popular protests against American rule in the Philippines were less radical and powerful than anticolonial movements elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Boudreau looks for answers not only in Filipino society but also in the distinctive nature of American colonial rule. He places both American policies and Filipino responses in a wider context through comparisons with colonial arrangements in Dutch Indonesia, British Burma, and French Vietnam. You may have some difficulty getting used to his social science jargon (with its "political elites," "bureaucratic corps," and "nationalist mobilization"), and you should use the Glossary to help with references to people and events in Philippine history. But Boudreau's wide-ranging discussion will reward your close reading with new information and insights about American colonial policy, a topic too often left out of U.S. history courses. And his overall emphasis should be clear: a combination of fortunate timing, divisions in Philippine society, and comparatively enlightened U.S. colonial policies created "successful" American rule that enabled the Philippines to make a relatively peaceful transition to independence.

Of course, in what sense American colonialism in the Philippines was "successful" and for whom are complex questions that you should address once you have read Boudreau's essay. Ask yourself, too, whether the evidence presented by Boudreau supports the claim made by Robin Winks in Selection 9 that American imperial rule was tempered by its commitment to republican values and institutions. Finally, lest you emerge from your reading with the impression that American imperialism was an unmixed blessing, you should balance Boudreau's findings with important considerations his essay alludes to but does not highlight. First, recall that American control over the Philippines came only after victory in a prolonged, brutal war against national independence forces. Second, note that, although
American rule brought the apparatus of popular government to the Philippines, it did little to rectify the islands’ economic problems, strengthening the power of large landholders, widening the gap between rich and poor, and creating an economy heavily dependent upon exports to the United States. Third, consider the larger issue posed by domestic opponents of American colonial rule: is it appropriate for the United States, a republic born from a colonial revolt and proclaiming the right of all peoples to self-government, to take on the mantle of empire?

GLOSSARY

AGUINALDO, EMILIO (1869–1964) The nationalist leader who fought Spain and then the United States for Philippine independence. Exiled by the Spanish to Hong Kong, he returned to assist in the U.S. war of 1898 against Spain. During the war, the Filipinos declared their independence and named Aguinaldo president, but after Spain ceded the islands to the United States, hostilities broke out between Philippine and American troops. The “Philippine Insurrection” turned into a brutal guerrilla war. Aguinaldo was captured in 1901, pledged allegiance to the United States, and returned to private life, but organized resistance continued for several years on southern Philippine islands.

ARCHIPELAGO A group of islands; in this case, the roughly seven thousand islands that make up the Philippines.

BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION The second phase of the Russian Revolution of 1917, in which the Bolsheviks under V. I. Lenin seized control of the provisional government that had been established when the czar was overthrown in February. This inaugurated communist rule of the Soviet Union.

CREOLE QUESTIONS Disputes between European (or Europeanized) colonists and the imperial mother country.

FILIPINIZATION The process, begun in 1901, by which American colonial authorities granted expanding spheres of legislative, law enforcement, and administrative action to Filipino elites while maintaining ultimate control.

HUK REBELLION (1946–1954) A communist-led peasant uprising in central Luzon. Begun as guerrilla warfare against Japanese occupation during World War II, it escalated into an attack on large landowners. Banned from the Philippine Congress in 1946, the Huks opened a rebellion against the newly independent government that was suppressed by a combination of U.S. military aid and the promise of land reforms.

ILUSTRADOS Filipino educated elites, based in Manila, who led a disjointed drive for national independence between 1872 and 1898 but accommodated to American rule thereafter.

KATIPUNAN NG BAYAN The Filipino nationalist society, founded in 1892 and led by Aguinaldo, that opposed Spanish rule.

MARCOS, FERDINAND (1917–1989) President of the Philippine Republic, elected on the Nacionalista Party ticket in 1965. The U.S.-supported Marcos pursued a moderate agenda in his first term. After reelection in 1969, he became increasingly authoritarian and corrupt, declaring martial law, jailing political opponents, and taking...
over the army. In 1986 he fled the country after charges that he had assassinated a potential rival and rigged his recent reelection.

MCKINLEY, WILLIAM (1843–1901) The Republican president of the United States who followed public opinion into the Spanish-American War after the sinking of the battleship *Maine* in February 1898. Faced with the decision to take colonies as spoils of war, McKinley declared that Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines should be made American territories.

METROPOLE The parent or ruling nation of a colony: in the case of the Philippines, the United States.

MYOTHUGYIS The local hereditary authorities in Burma who were displaced by British colonial rule.

NACIONALISTA PARTY The Philippine political party, advocating a peaceful path to independence, that dominated colonial politics after its formation in 1907. A shifting coalition of groups, it was shaped by personal rivalry between its founder, Sergio Osmeña, and Manuel Luis Quezon y Molina.

PHILIPPINE SOCIALIST PARTY The leftist party founded in 1929 by the wealthy lawyer Pedro Abad Santos. The Socialists formed a disciplined coalition of tenant farmers and urban workers in the wake of the failed Sakdal uprising. This party made substantial electoral gains in the years before the Japanese takeover of 1942.

QUEZON Y MOLINA, MANUEL LUIS (1878–1944) President of the commonwealth government of the Philippines from 1935 to 1942. A member of Aguinaldo’s independence movement, Quezon entered colonial politics under U.S. rule and in 1909 was appointed nonvoting representative to the U.S. Congress. There he helped to pass the Jones Act (1916), which gave the Philippines an elected bicameral legislature and promised future independence. Returned to Manila, Quezon gained control of the Nacionalista Party and was elected president of the new commonwealth government. As president, Quezon established central control over the military, developed the southern island of Mindanao, and fought government graft and corruption. He formed a government in exile in the United States when Japan occupied the Philippines in 1942 but died shortly before independence was established following World War II.

SAKDAL UPRISING (1935) An agrarian revolt against large landowners and control of the Philippines by the Nacionalista Party and the United States. Named for the opposition newspaper *Sakdal*, this uprising tried to prevent a plebiscite (popular vote) that would ratify the islands’ commonwealth status and delay independence for ten years. It was easily suppressed.

SAYA SAN REBELLION (1930–1932) A peasant uprising against British rule in Burma. Precipitated by heavy taxes and falling rice prices, it was led by Saya San, who sought to restore the Burmese monarchy. Captured by the British, San was hanged in 1931 and more than ten thousand of his followers were killed.
Relative to activity in colonial regimes across Southeast Asia, Philippine protest during the American period was distinct. Although many Filipinos were dissatisfied with the pace or terms of promised independence over the course of the American period, the promise itself sufficed to draw emerging national elites away from mass-mobilizing contention. The absence of national elites in protest movements left a distinct imprint on protest and mobilization during this period; it also shaped broader political alliances that would emerge under U.S. rule and beyond.

Hence, whereas nationalist student activists spearheaded resistance movements in Burma and Indonesia and provided an important push to Vietnamese nationalism, they remained marginal to Philippine nationalist protest from 1898 until the regime of Ferdinand Marcos (1965–1986). Coalitions between peasants and local intellectuals helped focus vast agrarian resistance movements such as the Burmese Saya San rebellion and Vietnam’s 1908 tax rebellion; early-twentieth-century Philippine agrarian revolts, including the comparatively large Sakdal uprising in 1935, were mainly local affairs with weak national alliances and relatively parochial orientations. Whereas the Burmese civil service applied sustained pressure for independence, Philippine bureaucrats seldom produced sharp or radical political demands, except when members of that service lost their positions. Although Philippine labor organizations did mount several important strike and protest waves under U.S. rule, their most important national connections were to electoral parties, and Philippine labor never acquired the large-scale revolutionary stature that Burmese oil workers or the northern Vietnamese proletariat gained in their struggles. [On the other hand,] Philippine protest under U.S. colonialism . . . developed modes of activity, such as suffragist movements and heated electoral contests between recognized political parties, that were unique in the region.

Distinct elements of U.S. colonial rule significantly shaped Philippine protest and resistance. Most particularly, without a coherent national elite leadership, Philippine protest tended toward limited and localized mass expressions or more civil demonstrations to demand broader voice or resources within existing or proposed arrangements . . .

To make this argument, I take a comparative perspective that considers contrasts and comparisons between the Philippines and [European] colonies in Burma, Indonesia, and Vietnam. According to one classic typology, colonists govern either directly, by bringing or creating their own administration, or indirectly through existing local authorities. As will be shown, however, this distinction says comparatively little about how colonialism created and transformed administrative elites, about how such elites positioned themselves in relation to colonialism itself, or about the forces that pushed some toward anticolonial struggles and some toward collaborative interactions . . .

Three aspects of U.S. colonial practice worked unique influences on Philippine society in comparison with other Southeast Asian cases. First, the United States acquired a Philippine colony that had developed some coherence under Spanish rule—and in resisting that rule. More important, Americans could imagine the territory as a single package, defined as that which Spain had governed and the United States acquired by treaty. . . . [Thus,] the U.S. administration regarded the puzzles attendant in acquiring a territory with a resident population differently from earlier colonial regimes. The initial model for the U.S. colonial project could be neither jungle exploration nor [the] rolling conquest of nineteenth-century pre-national colonialism. Rather, it was the pacification of territory already acquired and the subsequent extension of governance over whatever territory the administration decided to retain. Hence, whereas colonial powers in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Burma incrementally established dominion over colonial territory, constructed colonial states and social institutions piecemeal, and confronted questions of governance and representation only when compelled to by pressures against their rule, the United States dealt with these questions up front and arrived more quickly at the construction of integrated political institutions, including local security forces, representative assemblies, and a far-reaching civil service. Municipal governments were rapidly organized in the first years of U.S. rule in the Philippines, and a major consideration before the U.S. Congress in 1901 was the drafting of an “organic law or constitution” for the colonial government.

This orientation, in turn, contributed to distinct ideas about representation, education, and the bureaucracy. Governing the Philippines raised questions about political responsibilities toward the islands’ residents, not least because the question of colonial rule required justification at home beyond the economic exhortations of expansionist Republicans. The United States, as many have noted, approached the construction of governing institutions at least partly as a way to create a tractable political elite positioned and inclined to deflect and temper grievances generated by Philippine society under U.S. rule. These governing policies, discussed in more detail later, prevented potentially explosive nationalist alliances between political elites and the bureaucratic corps; encouraged political elites to recruit, socialize, and tame young college graduates; and placed many contentious decisions about bureaucratic hiring and promotion under Filipino, rather than American, authority.

The contrasts with other Southeast Asian cases are impressive. Dutch reforms in Indonesian educational and administrative policy increasingly placed aristocratic and upwardly mobile students together inside colonial schools and offices and outside them as unemployed, resentful graduates. When French schools in Vietnam began to produce their own Western-trained functionaries, local scholarly elites detached themselves from the larger educational system and provided important political and moral leadership to a nationalist movement of students and a growing class of “new intelligentsia.” The destruction of the old Burmese court (the Hutladaw) in 1888 and of local authorities (Myyothugyis) gave young Burmese graduates of British colonial schools a nationalist mistrust of British intentions (bolstered by the importation of Indian and Tamil bureaucrats) and a relatively free hand to assume leadership of the nationalist campaign. Quite obviously, . . . these policies, and the apparent persistence of colonial rule,
provided nationalism with a more robust political vehicle. But it also produced models of protest and contention that outlasted the nationalist phase and shaped models of collective resistance into the independence period.

A third, ideological peculiarity underpins the distinctive arrangement of U.S. colonial institutions. America's colonial epoch began after its own Civil War helped dispatch the aristocratic ideology on which the U.S. South's plantation economy had rested. In its place, an orientation favoring individual rights and equality before the law linked to Northern industrialization and Western expansion captured Americans' imagination. This orientation produced support for universal education, broad suffrage, and upward mobility, which did not sit well with Philippine agrarian elites who formed the political backbone of the Philippine Assembly: Most of the Philippine members of this new representative institution had far less liberal orientations and relied on more explicitly unequal social and political conventions designed to insure a docile labor force. Not surprisingly, therefore, indigenous elites often labored to preserve their prerogatives against the grain of U.S. policy and inclination. Hence, from the outset, U.S. domination of the Philippines was somewhat at odds with local class domination, and local elites drew more fire and ire than Americans from upward-striving nationalists, particularly during moments of electoral competition and bureaucratic reorganization.

The Philippines at the Dawn of U.S. Colonial Rule

Although distinctive aspects of the U.S. administration set the Philippine regime apart, the entire arrangement also sat atop a society that in many ways was already distinct from the rest of Southeast Asia. In one respect, this distinctiveness consists in the recent Philippine revolutionary climax and the original connection that existed, however briefly, between arriving U.S. forces and elite Philippine nationalists. By 1898, the struggle against Spain had passed from its political to its military phase, and many of the nation's brightest leaders had given their lives in pushing the independence struggle to that point. In addition, by 1898 the logic of the revolution's military phase had placed particular burdens on Philippine society. In moving to open military struggle against a weakened Spain, Filipino revolutionaries shed important tactical and political advantages associated with secret societies, unions, and local mass organizations. For example, although the Katipunan ng Bayan had begun as a decentralized collection of social and secret forces based in Filipino neighborhoods, the war took soldiers out of these neighborhoods, forged them into an army (the revolution's first organization with national scope), and strained the more organic connection between local society and the resistance. After 1898, anticolonial forces faced a vigorous American adversary instead of the worn-out Spanish administration, and the Americans developed new tactics, such as concentration camps in Cavite, Batangas, and Laguna, that isolated revolutionaries from their social base. Differences also began to emerge between the military under Emilio Aguinaldo's Cavite-based leadership and the Ilustrado movement's (a nationalist movement of the elite) Manila intellectuals — triggered largely when Americans offered incentives to the
latter at a time that the revolutionary organization was still mainly unconsolidated. Hence, in important ways the revolution paid for its early victory over Spain through substantial sacrifices in political capacities necessary to defeat the United States.

Moreover, the 1898 revolution took place about twenty years before anticolonialism had developed a substantial global political and organizational infrastructure, and this bit of timing had significant consequences. The decrepitude of the Spanish colonial regime, at war with the United States and already bereft of prime acquisitions in Latin America, accounted in substantial measure for Filipinos' early successes at the nineteenth century's close. But the Philippines' comparatively early revolutionary upsurge also segregated the Philippine struggle from some of the more important events in that global history, such as the impact (especially in Asia) of the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 and of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. These events pushed anticolonialists' resolve toward more resolute demands for self-rule rather than for expanded representation. Filipino nationalists in 1898 were therefore somewhat different from nationalists who soon emerged elsewhere in Southeast Asia. . . . Anticolonial questions in the late nineteenth century were still primarily creole questions, potentially resolved by imperialism's concessions to local elites' aspirations for greater standing within the colonial regime. . . . But the more global anti-imperialism of [the twentieth century] and the supporting institutions of transnational movement and party organizations, had not yet clearly emerged. Hence, elite Filipino nationalists had little in the way of a global movement with which to counterbalance absorption into the U.S. system. If anything, the early conclusion of the revolutionary war against Spain, and clear strategies to supplant Spanish culture with Americanism, left the society plastic and defenseless in the face of U.S. efforts to develop a base in the archipelago.

**Philippine Collective Action Under U.S. Rule**

It is possible to divide Philippine protest and collective action under U.S. colonialism roughly into three periods. The first period . . . divides into two American wars: one against Muslims (Moros) in Mindanao, and the other against Christians in Luzon and the Visayas. Both began in 1899. The Moro wars lasted until 1912, and the Christian wars lasted until 1907. Filipinos at first engaged Americans in artillery battles along the railway corridor from Manila to Pangasinan, but heavy casualties soon forced them to switch to guerrilla tactics. After the switch, the Americans shifted their attention to severing the connection between the guerrilla fighters and their mass base. In Luzon, the United States built concentration camps that held entire provinces hostage to their soldiers' surrender. In the south, the army preferred to pound Muslim population centers into submission with artillery rather than imprison their residents. After brutal tactics in both theaters had killed an estimated 13 percent of the archipelago's population, the United States forced surrender on the resistance.

Even before this killing ended, some Filipinos began new forms of struggle and collective action, designed to secure positions within and under the U.S. regime rather
than to displace that rule. As the Philippine-American War moved out of Manila and into the countryside, rapid capitalist expansion produced new activity among workers in Manila and would shortly do so in important secondary cities such as Iloilo and Cebu. At first, working communities fell back on autonomous forms of self-help organized among a balangay (community) of those practicing a similar trade. . . . Before long, mutual-aid societies gave way to more outward-directed strategies of strikes and union politics. The U.S. regime, transporting ideas of rule and governance to its new colony, began a policy of limited toleration for mutual-aid associations . . . and in 1908 established an institution that would have been unheard of under the Spanish or, indeed, in other colonial regimes across the region: the Bureau of Labor. This bureau, alongside Nacionalista Party efforts to win worker support in 1907 elections, legitimized labor politics and unions within limited economic and electoral parameters. Over the next several decades, workers' strikes largely reflected economic pressures on poor consumers, such as the ebb and flow of rice prices. More broadly, the advent of electoral politics opened the question of suffrage in various ways; encouraged by contact with American women, Filipinos began organizing the suffragist movement to lobby for the women's vote. In both instances, unfolding representative opportunities encouraged urban populations to launch civic demonstrations designed to secure access to and standing in the new regime.

A much different, and more militant, struggle emerged frequently after 1923. A wave of small-scale peasant and worker-based rebellions began in the countryside, initially in reaction to central-state interference in local religious practices . . . and subsequently as capitalist expansion changed agrarian social relations and impoverished farmers in the countryside. In the cities, labor protest radicalized in the mid-1920s and 1930s and benefited from new educated and middle-class allies with axes to grind against Manuel Quezon's efforts to centralize and purge the state. In both agrarian and rural rebellions, new themes entered the struggle. Mobilized and disaffected groups accused elites of betraying Philippine nationalist aspirations — something that suggests a diversification of nationalist perspectives beyond those of the national leadership. But it also suggests something that became increasingly prominent as independence drew near: The primary cleavages inflamed by nationalist debate did not separate American and Filipino adversaries; rather, they divided Filipinos. Practically, the movements left behind the more civil modes of struggle within "pacified" territory during the century's first decades in favor of armed clashes with the constabulary that led predictably to one-sided defeats for activists. Rebellion from 1923 to 1935 were partly the fallout of political centralization that forged an increasingly closed and exclusive national elite. Agrarian rebellions were usually led by fairly parochial elites and tended to attract localized and limited support for violent outbursts rather than sustained struggles. Labor movements, and other, more urban modes of contention, often pulled together under former or aspiring members of the government bureaucracy who had been removed from or denied positions in the government. Urban protests . . . often were more center-directed and sustained, but they still levied their sharpest and most radical criticism against collaborating Filipino elites.
If Philippine collective action under U.S. rule is in many ways distinct from that in other Southeast Asian colonies, the utter absence of a truly integrative and national elite leadership for Philippine collective action is central to this difference. The question is not so much why Filipino elites did not join a more radical nationalist movement against U.S. rule, for their more passive and patient activity makes perfect sense in light of the United States' promise of impending self-rule and the economic advantages elites enjoyed during the U.S. regime. Rather, how did the absence of broad and cross-class nationalist alliances set the tone for other forms of collective action and political contention? Without strong and national elite allies, demonstrations that began in the early 1900s, and continued through their more militant phase in the 1920s and 1930s, remained the limited affairs of small sections of society. Activists in these movements championed the explicitly segmented interests of people organized in bounded groups of women or workers rather than the more integrated demands framed as emanating from a Filipino nation. A reason may be that, beyond U.S. promises of Philippine self-rule, administrative and class divisions wrought on Philippine society by the structure of the American colonial state also greatly influenced mobilization and dissident patterns in the archipelago.

**THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF U.S. COLONIAL RULE IN THE PHILIPPINES**

In terms of world time, it makes sense to begin a consideration of the U.S. colonial state by setting it alongside Japan's burgeoning imperial efforts. Both countries walked onto the colonial stage as colonialism itself began to creak under the weight of its gathering obsolescence. What distinguished the two regimes from each other, however, were their varying orientations and motivations for colonial acquisition. In late developing Japan, the state's competitive haste to enhance industrial production and accelerate national capacities required both vast external reserves of raw materials and a patriotic mission of expansion to deflect increased pressure on local populations. Pushed by these stimuli, Japanese imperialism developed into a strong state-led effort at domination and extraction that in most ways was utterly unconflicted and focused on overcoming competition from established colonial powers expanding through its Asian hinterland.

U.S. contrasts with the Japanese pattern lie rooted in America's comparatively earlier and more self-contained industrialization process. The United States approached its colonial period without a serious shortfall of natural resources to spur a state-led mercantilist expansion and without the need to relieve social pressure from an overworked domestic society. Instead, U.S. business desired a base from which to explore and exploit market opportunities in China, but this position was strongly supported by only a small circle of expansionist Republicans. Thus, the United States' colonial enterprise required domestic justification elaborated in terms of other-directed missions, including a mission to govern justly, rather than as the mere acquisition of resources and markets. Acquisitive races with other large states to obtain a market share of China did not, therefore, strongly attract social support in the United States. America's political
competition with rivals, primarily European rivals, was in fact more popularly expressed in the ironically anticolonial Spanish-American War. Hence, while President McKinley's operatic confusion over the Philippine question never quite rang true, Americans (even powerful and politically involved Americans) did not agree about the purpose the colony would serve. In the pitched debates over retention, therefore, the justification for the Philippine colony was largely made in terms of the character of U.S. rule, and expansionist Republicans had a ready model for Philippine exploitation in the recently completed conquest of the American frontier.

Lacking Japan's imperial drive and armed with its own individualist ideology, U.S. colonialism did not attempt to place economic activities under state auspices. The greatest U.S. colonial presence occurred during the Philippine-American War and fell off sharply immediately thereafter. Having attained military ascendancy over the Filipino anticolonial resistance, the United States soon reduced its troops, and by 1903 the number of American soldiers in the country had fallen to 17,748 from a 1901 high of 71,528. The maintenance of civil law and order passed from the U.S. War Department to a newly created Philippine Constabulary, with more localized staffing, command, and control. By 1904, only 345 American officers led 7,000 Filipino constables. As the American fighting force underwent this transformation, the broader logic of U.S. control in the Philippines emerged. The state would separate colonial administration from accumulation and insure American society's untrammeled access to Philippine markets and productive resources. In setting up this system, the United States strove to establish laws and treaties regulating commerce and trade that insured American ascendancy; to that end, Americans dominated any governing body responsible for drafting these regulations. In contrast, authorities charged with implementing and maintaining the rules were judged to have less discretionary power, and such posts could pass to Filipinos (suitably trained in the new U.S. educational system) through the much publicized Filipinization policy.

The educational system that prepared Filipino bureaucrats for their new responsibilities constitutes one of the most important elements of the American system. Soon after it gained control over the Philippines, the U.S. colonial government began an astoundingly broad effort at non-vernacular [non-native language] education, unprecedented in its number of both students and Americans deployed as teachers. . . . This, and the colonial state's decision to replace predominantly Spanish administrators with Filipinos, rendered educational attainment one of the great engines for upward mobility for middle- and lower-class Filipinos at that time. But perhaps of equal importance to the system's development was that educational institutions stood on a national, rather than international, framework. While young Indonesians, Vietnamese, and Burmese could acquire a passable administrative education in their own countries, those who aspired to advanced university education typically traveled to Europe. In the Philippines, several old Spanish colleges already existed to provide such education, and the Americans soon built others, such as the University of the Philippines (1908) on American University models — that is, not as mere training academies for administrators but as vehicles for providing higher, professional education. Some students still traveled abroad to study, but from the early 1900s, it became possible for local people to obtain advanced,
The Philippines and other colonies and protectorates in Southeast Asia in 1900. As this map indicates, in this region the United States competed with France, Britain, Holland, Portugal, Germany, and Japan for trade and territory. Japan moved southward to annex Taiwan in 1895. Among the colonies mentioned in Selection 10, British Burma lay to the west of Siam (Thailand); Vietnam was the later name for Annam, the coastal region of French Indochina from the Chinese border to Saigon; and Indonesia was the name taken by the Dutch East Indies after independence. Note the Philippines' strategic location near China, whose ports the United States had sought to access since the 1880s.
Americans established a tax-supported public school system in the Philippines that featured English-language instruction, dramatically improved popular literacy, and promised upward mobility to ordinary Filipinos. This class of Filipino students was put on display at the St. Louis World’s Fair of 1904 to show American spectators (in the background) the benefits of their nation’s imperial rule. (Missouri Historical Society.)

professional degrees in the archipelago. Hence unlike their counterparts across South-east Asia, many of the Philippines’ twentieth-century leaders had not studied abroad for any length of time. Rather, they rose within domestic networks that continued to connect them to campus life even as they moved into government.

From 1901 onward, as the coercive American presence declined, the shock troops of U.S. colonialism arrived in robust numbers: Newspapermen, entrepreneurs, bankers, and lawyers flooded Manila and streamed into the provinces. They took charge of a massive effort to meet greatly expanded Western demand for tropical products such as sugar, copra [coconut], and abaca [hemp]. They established the great sugar centrals, mapped out strategies for broader fruit production for export markets, and accelerated timber and mining operations. In these efforts, they worked hand in hand with the landed provincial elite who had been gathering power and productive resources during the last years of Spanish rule — an alliance rendered indispensable by legal restrictions on U.S. participation in the Philippine plantation economy, and ... by some American ambivalence in the metropole about Philippine economic opportunities. For these local elites, it was a time of great opportunity: Credit was readily available; new production strategies energized all types of industry; and formerly tight Spanish export controls were replaced with preferential access to the larger U.S. market and a more open orientation
toward global trade in general. Under the new American regime, local businessmen made a killing both by taking over industrial niches previously dominated by the Spanish and by rapidly acclimating themselves to the more freewheeling and liberal American system of trade and production.

Soon, two important alliances emerged between U.S. colonialism and Philippine society. First, the U.S. colonial state nurtured the new Filipino bureaucrat corps. This upwardly mobile civil service benefited from the comparatively egalitarian and democratic impulse of the United States' colonial administration. Second, the rush of American business planted entrepreneurial seeds among landed provincial elites who were awakening to the new possibilities of a global economy. . . . Such Filipino elites were often as wary of the administrative opportunities afforded their lower-class countrymen as they were eager themselves to participate in more aggressive capitalist accumulation . . . . Hence, a tension existed in the regime's social base between mass-educated and upwardly mobile colonial bureaucrats from a new middle class and a revitalized and aristocratic principalia [landed provincial elite]. These new political elites could take advantage of capitalist opportunities but were neither willing nor compelled (by the need to recruit mass support) to share power with the middle and lower classes.

The Philippine Assembly's institutional arrangement combined with the class tension at colonialism's social base to influence protest and mobilization under the U.S. regime. In part, the idea behind the Philippine Assembly replicated the United States' own bicameral pattern of regional representation: Its Filipino members came from across the archipelago and both protected regional interests and integrated regional elites nationally. But the evolution of the electoral system also insured the hegemony of landed interests over the newer working and administrative classes. Severe literacy and property requirements initially restricted the franchise to roughly 2 percent of the population. Elections began in 1902 with municipal-level contests that the local elite easily dominated, then used to establish patronage machines for larger contests. The Philippine Assembly's lower house was first elected in 1907, and broader bicameral contests followed in 1916 . . . .

The Philippine Assembly's distinct aspect was its position between society and the colonial state in importantly ambiguous relations to both power and national aspiration. Its members accommodated themselves to colonial rule, but its Nacionalista Party grounded recruitment on the demand for immediate independence. The assembly's independence debates, although tamed by their perch inside the U.S. colonial state, nevertheless drew attention from student activists and others who might otherwise have looked elsewhere for political leadership. Moreover, the pageantry of periodic electoral competition gave these debates, demonstrations, and rallies a hothouse radicalism that both channeled dissent in directions that U.S. rule could accommodate and squarely fixed rival Filipino politicians, rather than American colonists, in the rhetorical crosshairs. Because assembly members held elected office, moreover, they constructed specific sorts of relationships with voting segments of Philippine society, and these relationships influenced dissent. In the first two decades of U.S. rule, for instance, workers pursuing mutual aid and socioeconomic unionism expended great efforts to link themselves to electoral machines. Labor militancy outside electoral arenas could neither
attract enough attention from assembly members to influence legislative debates nor
distract national elites from these formal representative institutions. . . .

The relationship between the Philippine Assembly and the broader society, then, ex-
plains some peculiar aspects of political mobilization under U.S. rule. First, the absence of
any significant national anticolonial movement or organization outside the political par-
ties reflects the influence of the Americans' promise of self-rule, and the consequent ef-
forts of Filipinos to concentrate on representative institutions that would secure position
in that new dispensation. Those who may have been expected to construct a national
political movement — such as labor-union members and the students who, by the late
1920s, periodically protested on university campuses — instead drew near party politics
and often demonstrated in the service of party campaigns. Agrarian protest had virtually
no cosmopolitan leadership: The electoral dynamic was overwhelmingly patronage-
based, which quarantined mass communities from national politics and alleviated the
need for national figures to work out a political posture that agrarian society would sup-
port. Even movements that would eventually develop into more national challenges,
such as the Huk rebellion, began as local and mainly parochial collectives and achieved
national stature only in the struggle against the Japanese occupation. . . .

**Comparative Perspectives on the Colonial State and Social Resistance**

. . . Although each [colonial] case [in Southeast Asia] stands apart from the others in im-
portant respects, there is considerable reason particularly to distinguish the engagement
between Philippine society and U.S. colonialism. The combination in the Philippines of
promised independence, economic and political concessions to new elites, and the cre-
ation of separate political and administrative classes early on scattered nationalist ener-
gies. The space for maneuver gained in those first years, at least partly (for the Americans)
a lucky consequence of the revolutionary climax against Spanish rule, allowed the
United States to establish a more responsive approach to governance — or, at least, an
approach that was responsive enough to overcome skeptics in the United States and some
dissidents in Philippine society. At the same time, this particular brand of U.S. colonial
rule . . . made it more possible for U.S. colonists to co-opt Filipino nationalists. Having
attracted important elements of the anti-Spanish movement to the American side, U.S.
colonists needed to outflank not a nationalism running at flood tide but one that had
ebbled considerably.

In contrast, representative institutions in Indonesia, Burma, and Vietnam were a step
behind, and they struggled to overtake, mobilized anticolonialism — and an anticolo-
nialism with new and more powerful global support and precedence that managed to
hold national elites and mass followers firmly together. Dutch, British, and French
struggles with colonial societies therefore encountered adversaries who stood atop so-
cially broader and more powerfully adversarial coalitions. Liberal reforms in each of
these settings never successfully undercut nationalism. Rather, they inspired vibrant and
broadly based counteroffensives. Although it may be true that U.S. colonialism pursued
some exceptional policies in the Philippines, . . . profound differences between Philippine experiences and those of Indonesia, Burma, and Vietnam probably had more to do with the timing and global context of colonial rule, because these conditions influenced the political consequences of colonial practice. It is in this particular global context that the practices of U.S. imperialism exercised their special effect in the Philippines.

Flashpoints of local resistance against Dutch, British, and French rule all resulted from increases in the rate or directness of colonial economic exploitation that were triggered by growing demands for tropical products or the rising cost of empire. Peasant resistance on Dutch plantations after the cultivation system ended, Burmese resistance to increased rice exports to India, and the Vietnamese tax revolts in 1908 all occurred when a statist economic system attempted to raise revenues. In contrast, U.S. colonialism progressed under the cloak of social mission that was necessary in a recently, and still partly anti-imperialist, United States, and this mission motivated explicit restrictions on U.S. business activity in the archipelago. In any event, the most avid imperialists on the American side regarded the Philippines as a base for expansion elsewhere and so were willing to tolerate such restrictions to secure support for retaining the colony. In the Philippines, Americans largely worked to reorganize production, extend greater amounts of credit, and link Philippine agriculture to the world economy — activities that enabled Philippine elites to make a great deal of money. When economically statist colonial regimes created new elites (as in Burma) or worked through existing elites (as in Indonesia), they restricted the elites' economic opportunities. Such elites had comparatively less interest in buffering economic discontent that increased state extraction produced. Indeed, anti-imperialist political elites lent significant support to agrarian rebellions in each case. With rare and individual exceptions — notably, Pedro Abad-Santos's leadership of the Philippine Socialist Party — the Philippine political elite never championed grassroots complaints about colonial extraction.

Much has been said about the broad scope of educational opportunity in the Philippines under U.S. rule. Yet educational-policy changes also opened substantial opportunities for study in Indonesia and Vietnam. The distinctive impact of the U.S. educational system seems to lie in its content and more complete local elaboration. In Indonesia and Vietnam, most colonial schools imparted rather narrow administrative and bureaucratic skills. Those who wished for something more needed to cross over to European schools and, in many cases, travel out of the colony to the metropole. . . . In the Vietnamese case, foreign travel contributed both intellectual and organizational resources to the demand for national self-determination, particularly in the wake of post–World War I negotiations at Versailles. Even for Indonesians (who on the whole traveled abroad in smaller numbers and for shorter durations), the glimpse of a larger world introduced a new language of organizational and revolutionary modernity that invigorated politics. By that time, however, Filipinos were directing themselves more toward new educational opportunities in the Philippines that provided educational opportunities that were less narrowly administrative and more professional. Filipinos were able to attain an approximation of an American education on home soil, and elite political opportunity focused on climbing locally elaborated political networks. Thus, Filipinos were less exposed to anticolonial Marxist discourse than elites elsewhere in
Southeast Asia. Hence, the United States’ educational reforms not only kept many Filipinos apart from global nationalist movements, it also encouraged stronger integrative links between students and established representative institutions, which had broad political consequences down the line.

American economic and educational policies helped establish conditions under which the United States administrative design could work its characteristic effect. First, the United States planned from the outset to set up governing institutions in the Philippines or in those portions of the archipelago that it wanted to control and soon after placed the issues of self-government and representative institutions on the table. Because self-government and prosperity seemed within the grasp of elites early on, national electoral institutions were not saddled with the burden of diffusing an active nationalist movement. Instead, they could provide the framework for a new political and economic elite to emerge and grow strong. In contrast, all three of the other colonial regimes undertook representative reforms only when nationalism was cresting. It helped the Americans that the Philippine revolution divided in 1900 into two groups: wealthy elites willing to participate in American plantation capitalism, and soldiers for whom independence was less negotiable. Yet the initial U.S. framework that colonial control was a problem of governance helped insure that the self-interested collaborating elite would evolve into a political buffer against less satisfied members of colonial society. The recruitment of wealthy Ilustrados to the American side; the creation more generally of broad social opportunities for less powerful people; and the tendency (largely rooted within the Philippine elite) to keep political and administrative classes separate from one another all undercut the scope of subsequent nationalist struggle by converting the strongest potential nationalists into supporters of incremental transitions to independence. When voices rose to demand more comprehensive nationalist advance, they did so without strong national leadership and in patterns of mobilization that favored localized and limited, if often violent, modes of struggle.

Yet U.S. colonial policies did not succeed merely by empowering an elite allied with American interests — for indeed, the French had built a similar group with less political success in Vietnam. Rather, the United States created differentiated bases of support for its colonial regime in Philippine society. In important ways, the class and functional divisions between the civil service and the political elite prevented alliances between the two against U.S. interests. Indeed, by working through a political elite, the Americans were assured that many of the most volatile labor and agrarian movements in the 1920s and 1930s would be directed against Filipino politicians rather than U.S. colonialists. In contrast, Indonesia after educational reform and Burma after the monarchy’s destruction suggest that too great a concentration of power in a state-constructed indigenous elite tends to sharpen the contrast between European and indigenous prerogatives, spurring nationalist mobilization. In Vietnam, by contrast, too large a segment of an autonomous elite existed outside the circle of colonial sponsorship. By creating an internally differentiated elite in the Philippines divided into administrators and politicians, who themselves needed to build constituency support (and, not incidentally, who attacked one another during elections), the United States prevented sharp oppositions between U.S. and Filipino power.
The consequences of interactions among these factors — of the United States’ economic, educational, and administrative programs in the Philippines — should remind us of how vastly world time influenced colonial politics in these cases. By the time the Indonesian, Burmese, and Vietnamese anticolonial movements were gathering steam in earnest, it was virtually impossible to conceive of these struggles without Marxist references. Ideas of a global, scientific workers’ revolution were as inseparable from these later movements as they were alien to the 1898 Philippine revolution. Battles between French and Vietnamese forces raged across Asia, and both Burmese and Indonesians thought about great-power politics and the possibility of Japanese support for their anti-imperialist struggles. By the time these same global and Marxist currents entered Philippine political discussions, U.S. colonialism had already established (and segregated) political and bureaucratic institutions that pushed the likely audience for revolutionary politics a considerable way down the social scale. In most of Southeast Asia, the entrance of an explicitly Marxist framework of struggle attracted significant bourgeois attention and targeted local collaborators and (primarily) foreign occupying forces. By the time Marxism established a foothold in the Philippines, the new elite had gained such control over Philippine society that revolutionary politics concentrated far more on struggles among different Filipino classes.

The consequence of the absence of a Marxist component to nationalist struggles for contentious politics in the Philippines, beyond even its influence on nationalism itself, has been profound. Most strikingly, patterns of rule that emerged under the Americans prevented any serious Marxist discourse from occurring among Filipino political elites and sparked a concomitant failure of leftist politics in general to find sponsorship among mainstream Philippine forces or institutions.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why, according to Boudreau, were popular protest movements against American rule in the Philippines less radical and powerful than anticolonial movements elsewhere in Southeast Asia? How did the two wars against Spain and the United States weaken the Philippine nationalist movement? Why was it difficult for Philippine protesters to form durable national or cross-class alliances? How did U.S. policies and governing arrangements encourage Philippine dissenters to work within the colonial system rather than overthrow it? In what sense was American colonialism “successful,” and for whom?

2. Describe American colonial policies in the Philippines in the areas of political representation, government bureaucracy, law enforcement, economic development, and education. Try to gauge their impact on Philippine society. How did America's commitment to republican ideals and institutions influence its treatment of the Philippines? What effect did “Filipinization” of the army and bureaucracy have? Did the Philippine Assembly successfully demonstrate democratic principles? How did its operation channel opposition to American domination into conflict between Filipinos? To what extent did educational reforms and government bureaucracy
create a rising professional class? Did American policies support or weaken the landed elites who opposed greater economic equality in the Philippines?

3. How does the author contrast American and Japanese imperialist ventures in Asia? How did their economic motives and policies differ? How did Americans' domestic debate over imperialism influence their nation's colonial policies?

4. What differences does Boudreau find between America's imperial rule in the Philippines and European colonialism in Indonesia, Burma, and Vietnam? Be sure to consider the timing and context of colonization, methods of economic exploitation, educational arrangements, and the formation of political elites. What impact did these differences have upon Philippine society?

5. To what extent does Boudreau's evidence support the generalizations about American imperialism that are presented by Robin Winks in Selection 9? Did Americans expect colonialism in the Philippines to be a "passing phase"? Did their promise of independence "decrease the intensity of local nationalist movements"? Did the United States rapidly impose its customs and language upon Filipinos? Were Filipinos "more economically benefited than exploited" by American policies? What implications, if any, does Boudreau's analysis have for later American attempts to build democratic institutions in foreign countries?