
Option
2

PRESERVE OUR DEMOCRATIC VALUES

America today stands at a crossroads. Along one path, we can continue to follow the wisdom of our founding fathers and make further strides toward peace and prosperity. Along the other, we can join the militaristic governments of the Old World and fall into the ruinous trap of imperialism.

In our hearts, we know what is right. We know that ruling over another people without their consent is tyranny, whether the year be 1776 or 1898. Imperialism flies in the face of our core values of individual freedom and self-government. The Filipinos do not want to be governed by us. To impose our will on them will put our young soldiers in the position of the British redcoats, depriving others of liberty. Is this a worthy cause for shedding American blood? Is this the spirit of '76?

The authors of our Constitution recognized the folly of acquiring overseas colonies and did not address the issue in our country's most precious political document. Since then, America's expansion westward has followed a logical course. We have gradually extended our control across the continent, opening new lands to settlement by American citizens and eventual statehood.

This is hardly the case in the Philippines. Rather, the imperialists are asking us to annex a far-flung collection of islands half a world away with nearly ten million people. There is no thought to giving the Filipinos citizenship or granting the islands statehood. Rather, we are being asked to step into the role of colonial master, just as the Spanish before us.

The Filipinos are not like us. They speak a different language, they practice a different religion, and they know little of our civilization. Our country already suffers from serious racial problems. America's blacks have barely begun to rise from the depths of slavery. Millions of alien immigrants from southern and eastern Europe are pouring into our cities and threatening the stability of our institutions. To aggravate the situation by adding the Filipinos to the mix would be madness.

Imperialism is a contagion that, if permitted to enter our system, would eventually infect our entire society. Acquiring a colonial empire would inevitably plunge America into distant conflicts with Japan, Germany, France, Britain, and other imperialist powers. We would soon find ourselves sucked into the intrigues and squabbles of the Old World. Two vast oceans have protected us from the senseless wars of Europe and Asia. To acquire a far-flung empire would be to throw away the splendid isolation with which God has blessed us.

The burden of administering an empire would swell the power and cost of our central government at the expense of individual liberty. As an imperialist power, the United States would be compelled to enlarge the navy and maintain a large standing army. As our founding fathers rightly feared, we would be setting the stage for the emergence of an American Caesar. Do we want our young men to be seduced by the lure of military glory abroad rather than productive work at home? Do we want to exchange the values of a democratic republic for those of a military dictatorship?

We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by the false promise of imperialism. America's focus belongs at home, not on seizing distant colonies. We must grant the Philippines independence and walk away from the dangerous illusion of empire.

FROM THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Senator George Hoar, Massachusetts

"A democracy can not rule over vassal states or subject peoples without bringing in the elements of death into its own constitution. The great doctrine of constitutional liberty and of political morality is that government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed.... When you raise the flag over the Philippine Islands as an emblem of domination and acquisition you take it down from Independence Hall. "[The power to conquer and create colonies] is not among the express powers granted in the Constitution. This power our forefathers and their descendants loathed and abhorred. They would have cut off their right hands, every one of them, sooner than set them to an instrument which should confer it. The power to conquer alien peoples and hold them in subjugation is nowhere implied as necessary for the accomplishment of the purposes declared by the constitution.

"You can not subjugate them and govern them against their will because you think it is for their good, when they do not; because you think you are going to give them the blessings of liberty. You have no right at the cannon's mouth to impose on an unwilling people your Declaration of Independence and your Constitution and your notions of freedom and of what is good."

Senator Ben Tillman, South Carolina

"You are undertaking to annex and make a component part of this government islands inhabited by ten millions of the colored race, one half or more of whom are barbarians of the lowest type. It is to the injection into the body politic of the United States of that vitiated blood, that debased and ignorant people, that we object."

Senator George Hoar, Massachusetts

"We want to know what rights of citizenship these people are to get by this treaty. The question whether those Malays and Mohammedans and others can go anywhere in the United States to compete with American laborers is an important practical question to all of our workingmen."

Senator Stephen White, California

"When our Constitution was made it was supposed that the United States would never extend its domain save over those who were not only within the equal protection of the laws, but who were competent to participate in...the benefits of representative civilization.... If the Filipino knows enough to govern himself, we should let him alone. If he does not know enough we do not desire to associate with him.... When we place our giant foot upon those islands, we will seek new scenes for aggression and conquest and will consider that it is our duty to encircle the earth."

Senator Alexander Clay, Georgia

"If we undertake to cross the oceans and to establish colonies, we will be driven to an alliance with England, Russia, Japan, or some other foreign power in order to hold and defend our newly acquired possessions.... Should we annex and permanently retain those islands, and attempt to force a government on the Filipinos against their will, such action will doubtless meet with the determined opposition of those people and a bloody, cruel, and expensive war will necessarily follow between our soldiers and the inhabitants of the Philippines. The United States has heretofore been solid, compact, contiguous, and impregnable. Remaining in this condition, the naval forces of the world dare not attack us. When we go out into the seas beyond the Western Hemisphere and acquire other countries, we increase our responsibilities, weaken our defenses, and enormously increase the expenses of our Army and Navy."

Carl Schurz, newspaper editor

"I warn the American people that a democracy cannot deny its faith as to the vital conditions of its being—it cannot long play the king over subject populations without creating within itself ways of thinking and habits of action most dangerous to its own vitality."

General Emilio Aguinaldo, leader of the provisional Filipino government

“American precepts and examples have influenced my people to desire independent government. They established and for seven months have maintained a form of government resembling the American in that it is based upon the right of the people to rule.... It would seem to follow that the present recognition of the first republic of Asia by the greatest Republic of America would be cognizant of right, justice and precedent.”

William Jennings Bryan, Democratic presidential nominee

“Trade cannot be permanently profitable unless it is voluntary. When trade is secured by force, the cost of securing it and retaining it must be taken out of the profits, and the profits are never large enough to cover the expense.... If we have an imperial policy we must have a great standing army as its natural and necessary complement. [This] is a menace to a republican form of government. The army is the personification of force, and militarism will inevitably change the ideals of the people and turn the thoughts of our young men from the arts of peace to the science of war.”

BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING OPTION 2

1. Imposing our will on a foreign country violates the spirit of America’s most fundamental values.
2. As American leaders have known from the earliest days of the republic, the United States should steer clear of the evil intrigues of the Old World.
3. The American form of democratic government grew out of our country’s unique experience. It is not something that can be transplanted into the soil of an alien culture.

ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING OPTION 2

1. Establishing overseas colonies will be a drain on our government and offer few economic or military advantages in return.
2. Bringing nearly ten million Filipinos under U.S. control will aggravate our country’s racial problems and undercut the position of American workers by opening up a new source of cheap labor.
3. Pursuing an imperialist policy will require a drastic increase in the size of the U.S. Army and Navy, and will give rise to a new set of anti-democratic, militaristic values.
4. Protecting an overseas empire will entangle the United States in alliances with other imperial powers and eventually draw us into war.
5. Annexing territory for the purpose of colonialism rather than statehood will corrupt our political system by creating a new class of subjects denied the benefits of citizenship.