

CAREFULLY CALCULATE OUR INTERESTS

America today faces a crucial decision. Our victory over Spain has presented us with both opportunity and danger. The United States must again draw on its proven ability to resolve difficult issues from a practical point of view. A careful assessment of our national interests will surely lead us to the conclusion that the United States should acquire the harbor of Manila and establish a temporary protectorate over the Filipino people.

While many have been dazzled by the prospect of empire, few of the enthusiasts for foreign adventure have thoughtfully considered the costs and risks. Plunging headlong down the path of reckless imperialism would inevitably bring us into conflict with the imperial powers of Europe and Japan. Huge sums would have to be spent on expanding America's army and navy. This is money that would be much better invested in railroads, schools, and businesses at home. Imperialism would also threaten our political system. In the past, the United States has fought to advance the cause of liberty. To take up the sword as a conqueror in the Philippines and to wield it permanently as an overlord would change the character of America.

At the same time, we can no longer retreat into our earlier isolation from international affairs. We are a great nation, and with greatness comes responsibility on the world stage. Our continued economic prosperity depends on our success in exporting American goods overseas. Leaving the international arena exclusively in the control of the imperial powers would only heighten the competition for colonies. Trade would be stifled and hostilities would deepen. America must act as a force for peace and moderation in international relations. We must be wise and deliberate in our policies, but we cannot afford to be indifferent.

In the economic sphere, we should press for an "open door" to trade in Asia. All nations should be allowed to compete in the Asian market without restrictions. Given an equal chance, American exporters will earn their fair share of trade. To that end, the harbor of Manila would be an important asset for the United States. We should be thinking in terms enhancing our position in world commerce, not in acquiring colonies. Our values and our people are best suited to trade and industry, not to conquest and empire.

Our only duty is to provide the newly freed Cuban and Filipino peoples with an opportunity to develop without foreign interference. They are welcome to learn from us, but we will not impose the American system on them. We have done our part to bring liberty to the Cubans and Filipinos. The rest is up to them.

By the same token, the United States cannot turn its back on the former Spanish colonies, especially the Philippines. Without U.S. protection, another power would be sure to seize the Philippines. Likewise, the Filipinos themselves would almost certainly slip into chaos and even civil war if they were suddenly deprived of U.S. guidance. The leader of the new Filipino government, Emilio Aguinaldo, himself admires our country's political ideals and recognizes the need for continued American assistance.

By serving as a protector and a friend in the Philippines, the United States can further both our own national interests and those of the Filipinos. As we take our first steps onto the world stage, we can make our experience in the Philippines an example for future generations to follow.

FROM THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Thomas B. Reed, Speaker of the House of Representatives

"The greatest aim of a nation should be to use all the appliances for advancing knowledge, to assimilate its peoples to a common standard. To that end we must not hasten. Not every opportunity for aggrandizement should be seized. Too much food may mean indigestion.... The middle of our empire [continental United States] lies undeveloped. There is no need to hurry. As we grow, we will spread fast enough. Our strength grows with our years.... Empires which hope for eternity can wait."

Walter Hines Page, editor of The Atlantic Monthly

"Today we are face-to-face with the sort of problems that have grown up in the management of world empires.... Shall we still be content with peaceful industry at home, or does there yet lurk in us the adventurous spirit of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers?...The continued progress of the race in the equalization of opportunity and in well-being depends on democratic institutions, of which we, under God, are yet, in spite of all our shortcomings, the chief beneficiaries and custodians. Our greatest victory will not be over Spain but over ourselves—to show once more that even in its righteous wrath the republic has the virtue of self-restraint."

Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, naval historian

"Three things are needful: First, protection of the chief harbors, by fortifications and coast defense ships.... Secondly, naval force, the arm of offensive power, which alone enables a country to extend its influence outward. Thirdly, no foreign state should henceforth acquire a coaling position within three thousand miles of San Francisco."

Senator Alexander Clay, Georgia

"I do not pretend to say that these people [the Filipinos] are as capable of self-government as the Americans, and where will you find a population that will compare with ours? They are capable of putting in operation a government suitable to their taste, surrounding, and conditions, and one that will bring to them much more happiness and satisfaction than a government established by a foreign power against their will.... Let us declare that it is our purpose to give aid and direction to the people of those islands to form such a government for themselves."

William Jennings Bryan, Democratic presidential nominee

"A war of conquest is as unwise as it is unrighteous. A harbor and coaling station in the Philippines would answer every trade and military necessity and such a concession could have been secured at any time without difficulty. It is not necessary to own a people in order to trade with them. We carry on trade today with every part of the world, and our commerce has expanded more rapidly than the commerce of any European empire."

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Massachusetts

"It is not the policy of the United States to enter, as England has done, upon the general acquisition of distant possessions in all parts of the world. Our government is not adapted to such a policy; but at the same time it must be remembered that while in the United States themselves we hold the citadel of our power and greatness as a nation, there are outposts essential to the defense of that citadel which must neither be neglected nor abandoned."

BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING OPTION 3

1. Our primary goal in determining U.S. policy toward Spain's former colonies should be to promote American economic interests abroad.
2. Creating an empire simply for the sake of empire runs counter to our country's principal interests and core values.
3. Americans must put aside the childish notion that the purpose of U.S. foreign policy is to spread our country's values overseas. On the contrary, U.S. leaders must carefully choose when and where our country becomes involved in international affairs.

ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING OPTION 3

1. Establishing naval bases and fueling stations in strategic locations overseas, such as Manila, will serve as an important instrument in advancing American commercial and security interests around the world.
2. Controlling Manila's harbor will give American exporters easy access to the Chinese market without burdening our country with the demands of maintaining an empire.
3. Setting up a protectorate over the Philippines will allow the Filipinos to make progress toward self-government without interference from predatory imperialist powers.
4. Asserting America's presence abroad will strengthen U.S. foreign policy efforts to promote an "open door" for international trade in China and elsewhere in Asia.
5. Taking on limited challenges and responsibilities in the world will allow our country to gradually expand its strength and influence.