Patriotism For All Causes: How American Veterans of the Philippine-American War Were Used to Influence Imperial Policies in the Early Twentieth Century

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Patriotism For All Causes: How American Veterans of the Philippine-American War Were Used to Influence Imperial Policies in the Early Twentieth Century

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Abstract

Following the end of the Spanish-American War the United States gained several overseas territories which enabled them to extend their influence overseas. However, before taking on more direct imperialist actions, the United States would quickly be drawn into it a colonial conflict with its new holdings in the Philippines. While the conflict itself is not widely recognized by the contemporary American public it left several impressions upon the United States during the course of the conflict. One of the overlooked influences that would arise after the conflict would come from the veterans who served during the war. Veterans of the Philippine-American War, and its drawn-out insurrection, were vital members of a new pool of veterans returning to the public sphere. As my research details, through their veteran organizations, veterans would, both actively and inadvertently, help maintain public support for pro-imperialist policies proposed and sustained in the early Twentieth Century by the United States government. The support and process the United States government developed with the veteran organizations would be quickly dismantled following the Great Depression of 1929 and the Bonus Army March of 1932.

Key Terms:

Philippines, Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), and American Midwest.
Those who experience and remember dramatic and historical events hold within themselves an immense level of responsibility. These accounts bear with them not only the historical significance of an event or period, but the personal reactions and perspectives to such events. Nearly every footnote in history can be attributed to an individual who was present, and experienced, listened, felt, tasted, or saw what was occurring, enabling generations to come to utilize their accounts in order to understand the greater picture of events unfolding or of those as yet to unfold. Many, however, are largely unaware of the significance that their accounts hold amongst their peers and for the future. One of the more interesting and often sought-after genres are those of military veterans. These accounts provide us with a more personal and direct understanding of what the individual or group had felt during the conflict, how they perceived it and their foes, and what their reactions were to the terrors of combat.

There has been an area, however, in which veterans of a conflict have not received as much immense attention from the wider historical field: When the veteran returns home to truly become a veteran. Whenever a veteran figure emerges his prior service is often mentioned but not much more is detailed about what exactly this constituted. This is not to say that historians have been actively ignoring or subverting the accounts of veterans once they return home from conflicts; in many situations, once a veteran returns home, he is simply a veteran. He is recorded for having served in a conflict and, unless he goes on to gain prominence amongst the general public, typically folds back into society. Similar to the field of archeology, there is likely an untold wealth of information from firsthand accounts that have been lost to time from veterans passing away and never having their story told or written down and saved for future generations to study. What we are left with are accounts that often paint the perspective of a leading figure, such as a monarch or general, on their own battle plans and thoughts about a particular conflict.
While this enables us to examine the experiences of those from a more elevated position, it can distract us from the conditions and emotions of the lower ranking unless the former explicitly mentions them.

This is changing, however, as historians realize how this leads to intentional and unintentional manipulation and blurring of histories. Often, whenever a smaller conflict erupts - during or even after the cessation of hostilities – the newer engagement is often combined into or briefly mentioned when discussing the overall encounter. This is not to say that historian do not actively discuss or research these events. However, when in discussion or reviewed alongside a larger event these smaller and short-lived conflicts tend to be mentioned more in passing without providing greater context to their occurrence. This is not to declare that each historian must focus on the pedantism of a period. It is understandable that in order to remain on the topic of their research or study academics are forced to limit the scope of detail to prevent their work to become sidetracked by the side topic. While the limited scope is understandable for a topic that is not the focus of a paper, what the author does discuss or the manner in which they address it will leave an impact on the reader who is given only a cursory understanding. This is evident for accounts relating to the conflict known variously as the Philippine-American War and the Philippine Insurrection. Even the name by which a historian chooses to call the conflict shapes how a reader might view it. While both titles refer to the same war, some see the former as referring to the initial conflict with the Philippine Independence fighters led by Emilio Aguinaldo in 1896. Yet the entire conflict itself was for some time conflated with the Spanish-American War of 1898 and remains practically unknown by the wider public. Yet the former is, if not as important, more influential to the United States in the early twentieth century.
Alongside the issue of being consolidated with a war narrative that emphasizes a larger conflict rather than individual ones that may be quite distinct, often the voices of those who experienced such conflicts are not as widely recognized compared to those fighting in the primary conflict. Even today, veterans are often looked upon as esteemed and respected members amongst the United States citizenry, nearly to the point of outright hero-worship.

However, many who return from a conflict, even those today, simply wish to return to their prior lives, or improve their own communities. Yet soldiers act as conduits, not only for their personal experiences of war, but for public understanding of the regions in which they fought. Veterans act as walking encyclopedias; people seek them out for information regarding the cultures, conflicts, and regions they experienced.

This idea began to resonate more deeply within me when I myself returned from a deployment at the tail end of the Afghanistan War. Many people were more willing to listen to and believe my personal experiences than what was being reported at the time during the withdrawal. This led me to understand and consider how public understanding of conflicts is developed through media sources and veteran personal accounts. This revelation is what led me to my current research topic. Having previously researched American interventions in the age of New Imperialism I was interested to see the disparity of how little the conflict in the Philippines is discussed, both by the general public and those who served in the conflict as well. Veterans remain a point of pride for Americans, with many looking to them to dispense any knowledge they might have gained from their experiences. However, outside of the conclusion of a conflict or a patriotic rally, veterans return to their lives amongst the citizenry. During a time of conflict a great deal of rhetoric is produced by supporters of policies noting the sacrifice and patriotism of soldiers in tandem with the necessity for the preservation of imperialism or expansionism. This
rhetoric is carried on by those who return to their communities. The veterans of the Philippine-American War played an important role in inadvertently propagating pro-imperialist policies, both during their time serving overseas and later in the communities to which they returned.

The Philippine-American War would in many ways represent a shift away from many of the standards of American policy up to that point and would cut deep into the ideals and notions that many at the time believed the United States was founded on. The Philippine-American War acted as a prelude to the national shock and moral questioning that the American public would face when it would enter into World War I. While we have an understanding of what a veteran is today, it is necessary to understand how the public and federal stance towards veterans and their demands shifted in time and how links to this can be seen today. Examining the lives and interactions that veterans experienced once they returned home also sheds light on the sense of nationalism across the United States that was often coopted by advocates for imperialism who faced repeated attacks by opposition groups. With this in mind, I intend to demonstrate how veterans and the organizations they created for themselves laid the ground work for how local communities supported veterans and how they were, in turn, influenced by the pro-imperialist viewpoints of these organizations.

There is some disagreement amongst academics over the correct title of the conflict. Some argue that the ‘Philippine-American War’ was the original conflict that occurred with Aguinaldo’s nationalist forces immediately after the end of the Spanish-American War and the ‘Philippine Insurrection’ began once Aguinaldo surrendered. Others argue that the United States was in essence fighting an insurrection the moment they occupied the islands and thus label the entire conflict as the ‘Philippine Insurrection.’ In order to avoid confusion I will be referring to the conflict as the ‘Philippine War.’ This will include both the conflict with Aguinaldo’s
independence movement all the way until the end of the last major insurrection within the Philippine archipelago. Others may divide events into two sections (militia and insurrectionist), but I will be referring to the circumstances as one comprehensive conflict. While I will be merging these two terms together, I will be more selective about the regions in which I will be in examining soldiers and their lives once returning home from the conflict. In this case I will be focusing on soldiers who returned to the American Midwest, namely the states of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and Indiana. Some of these states sent individuals; others, entire regiments comprised of soldiers originating in one state were serving in the Philippines. I hope to identify the influence on local and state perceptions of the Philippines that veterans had upon their return from serving.

Cognizant of the fact that all veteran Illinois volunteer units for the Philippines were then deployed to Cuba as part of the occupation force in 1906, I began to expand my collection of veterans and their accounts to neighboring states. Due to the limitation of access to documents in archives across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic from early 2020, my ability to collect archival materials was made more difficult than I had initially surmised when designing the project. The onset of the pandemic also prevented any potential collaboration or assistance from archives in neighboring midwestern states. It is my hope that I will be able to return to the topic at a later date and develop a more national perspective to understand and identify any regional difference between veterans and their organizations.
The Spanish-American War and the path towards the Philippines

In order to best understand the cause and influences that had led up to the Philippine War we must first examine the initial conflict, the reasoning behind United States involvement, and the public imagination and perception of events. Leading up to the turn of the twentieth century, the world had seen a surge in imperialist action. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, powers such as Britain and France worked to outmaneuver others. This was to maintain a balance of power and prestige. Over successive decades, this resulted in several crises in which imperialist powers came close to conflict over disputes involving their colonies. Nationalistic fervor rose as each looked to increase the prestige of their metropole through exploration, scientific achievement, and military conquest. The imperialist mode of thought, however, was not isolated to the European continent. Many academics and elected officials began to see the United States as a state that was lagging behind the major powers in the world. While the United States enjoyed having a buffer of two major oceans between it, some congressional leaders believed the United States should look towards protecting its interests from the increasing encroachment of European powers such as Great Britain. Indeed, the period would see several crises and affairs from the United States attempting to prevent greater European influence throughout the Americas. The United States was beginning to feel the increasing pressure to not only protect what it saw as its own sphere of influence, but to match the naval and greater military capacity that the imperial powers in Europe wielded.

Military and political leaders who stoked the influx of imperialism and nationalism focused much of their energies on Central and South America and the Caribbean. Throughout the

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2 Ibid., 13-16.
late 1800s the independence movement in Cuba had been gaining increasing support from the local population which faced increasing crackdowns, including detention, by the Spanish military on the island. During this time, Americans were receiving a stream of news from Cuba detailing some of the atrocities that were perpetrated by the Spanish. While some of these newspaper reports contained grossly exaggerated and even falsified details, they nonetheless began to drum up a rising storm of nationalism amongst the American general public and members of Congress. Many such individuals saw the events unfolding in Cuba as a great injustice to a people who sought the same aspirations of liberty and democracy that the United States had achieved from Great Britain, at least theoretically, following the Revolutionary War of 1775-1783. Many politicians took on a hawkish approach to the situation, advocating for the United States to intervene militarily and assist the Cubans in their struggle for independence. Some drew parallels to their revolutionary forefathers and the timely assistance provided by the French toward the end of the conflict³.

The United States, however, continued to maintain a more interventionist style of diplomacy, repeatedly warning and even threatening the Spanish for their actions against the Cuban population. This would come to a head in early 1898 when riots would breakout in Havana, Cuba. The United States, in an effort to demonstrate strength and protect American business interests, sent the USS Maine to harbor in the city. While docked, the ship would explode, killing a majority of the crew and scuttling the vessel itself⁴ (fig. 1). Even though the incident would be initially reported as an accident and would be supported by subsequent investigations decades later, many newspapers lauded the notion that the battleship was

³ Ibid., 79-82, 84.
destroyed by a Spanish mine and argued for retribution and revenge against Spain\(^5\). The hawkish congressional members utilized the surge in American animosity towards Spain to draft and pass a formal declaration of war if Spain would not withdraw its forces from Cuba by late April.

Spain, seeing this ultimatum as a declaration of war itself, declared war against the US before the deadline\(^6\). Only days prior to the official declaration of war, anti-imperialist members of congress, in a bid to prevent subversive actions by imperialist members, pressed for the passing of the Teller Amendment. The amendment guaranteed that the United States would not annex Cuba and would allow the island to be governed independently\(^7\). However, while not entirely annexed, the amendment would not prevent the United States from exercising its influence and weight over Cuba and the surrounding Caribbean.

![Figure 1. The wreckage of the USS Maine.](image)

\(^{5}\) Ibid., 33-34.
\(^{6}\) Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 185-188, 190.
\(^{7}\) Ibid., 186-87.
After the formal declaration, the American forces enacted the battle plan that they had worked out prior in the build of towards hostilities. In the Caribbean, American forces quickly overwhelmed the defending Spanish army across the islands of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Prior to conflict in the Caribbean, a dispatch of the US Navy with regiments of volunteer and regular army elements, were already headed off to the Philippines. Under the command of Admiral Dewey the Naval fleet would occupy the island of Guam before arriving in the Philippines. There they would encounter and overpower the smaller Spanish fleet in the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1st, 1898. Manila Bay would in fact be the first battle of the Spanish-American War and earned an endearing mark within the American population for the bravery of the navy and the steadfast command of Admiral Dewey (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Poster commemorating the Battle of Manila Bay.

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8 Berner, Spanish American War, 231-234.
Once the fleet was defeated Admiral Dewey began landing soldiers and initiated a short-lived siege of Manila itself. Filipino insurgents joined in the siege and the subsequent battle for the city believing that the Americans had come to help them in their own efforts for independence similar to the Cubans. With their fleets destroyed and territory occupied, the Spanish sued for peace. A settlement was eventually reached and peace was declared on December 10th, 1898, with Spain relinquishing the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands to the United States and selling other overseas territories they could no longer maintain.

Through this victory over Spain, the United States had now established itself no longer as a regional but an international power. The United States would lead the former Spanish colonies in the Pacific seeking to affirm their new found influence in the world by purchasing new territories for naval bases and becoming utilizing them to project their strength through the Pacific. The United States would later utilize the Roosevelt Corollary in order to prevent any outside influence from reaching Central and South America. A region the United States was beginning to consider its own political and economic backyard. Within the public sphere the United States felt itself truly established as a force for good and a beacon of liberty as they helped free the Cubans from Spanish tyranny while also working to bring greater equality and “civilization” to the Philippines (Fig. 3). While the reality of the situation would begin to sour the expectations of supportive Americans, the conflict had nonetheless instilled a feeling of pride and patriotic fervor amongst Americans leading to many being more supportive of imperialistic

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9 Ibid., 548-550.
10 Ibid., 626-628.
actions by their government and military abroad and even at home. The federal government utilized this new found support for imperial action, both near and abroad, to rapidly expand and integrate its imperial influence to protect and expand the interests it held in the various

Figure 3. A political cartoon celebrating victory in the Philippines and postulating the acquisition of the islands.

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states while also propping up and establishing governments that were supportive to American interests.

The Philippine War and Its Veterans

Figure 4. Map of the Philippines, dated 1899.
The conflict with Spain having been concluded, the United States government now faced the question of what the Philippines should become. In the case of Cuba, anti-imperialist actors had been able to pass the Teller Amendment in order to prevent the total annexation of the island by pro-imperialist forces. This was not universally successful; the Platt Amendment later conceded that while the United States would not annex Cuba, it would be able to control Cuba’s political and economic sectors, both directly and indirectly. This amendment, passed more than two years after the Spanish-American War, demonstrated the underlying goals that a significant portion of the American government was pursing. This agenda is often attributed to the growing influence of European policies of the time. While the US already had business interests in the Caribbean and overseas countries prior to the conflict, the Spanish-American War provided the United States with a taste of how imperialism could greatly benefit regional influence, and with it financial dominance. Thus the United States had to be careful when deciding their course of action in the Philippines. While the US government knew they would likely use the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam as naval bases, there government still lacked a general consensus on how they would classify the archipelago. Some believed the ambiguous territory status would be enough while others, including President McKinley, argued for full annexation and possible statehood\(^\text{12}\). However, before such proper arguments could be presented and a civil government established on the islands, the Filipinos wanted to have their own say in the matter.

Before the fall of Manila to the Americans, Aguinaldo and other Filipino leaders who returned to the islands from exile in Hong Kong formally declared the independence of the Philippines on August 1, 1898. This declaration, however, was not recognized by either the USA or Spain, hinting at the underlying goals and aspirations the US had for the region. This would be

\(^\text{12}\)Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 615-616.
reinforced further following the surrender of Manila on August 13, 1898. After a brief mock battle and surrender the United States’ military occupied the city as they argued the Spanish had surrendered the city to them and not to Aguinaldo and his Filipino forces, even though they had made themselves present at the mock-turned-real battle against the American commander’s discretion. After the city’s capture, the islands were placed under martial law subject to an interim military government. Before the Treaty of Paris would be formally signed and declared to officially end hostilities between the US and Spain, American military leaders were meeting with Aguinaldo and other Filipino leaders in order to hash out the future of the Philippines. Aguinaldo and his supporters were adamant about Philippine independence, the US leadership, meanwhile, argued that they needed to ensure all of the necessary governmental structures were in place before the Filipinos could assume them. After the Treaty of Paris was signed, however, there was no mention of any independence. Instead, the United States purchased the archipelago from Spain for a sum of twenty million dollars. Aguinaldo and other Filipino leaders saw this as an affront to their efforts for independence. They detested the purchase of the islands and repeatedly denied American sovereignty over the islands. American military officials, though, continued to claim that they were working on creating a stable government structure for the Filipinos to assume in time. While it could be debated whether or not these were honest statements, the situation on the ground would evolve rapidly.

Less than a year after the Spanish handed over control of the Philippines to the United States government, the forces loyal to Aguinaldo were becoming restless under the new American authority and their repeated delays to create or hand over any kind of local autonomy of government. Aguinaldo had made it clear in his negotiations with the United States that they must recognize the independence and sovereignty of the Philippine Republic. While the
occupying US forces attempted to continue placating the demands Filipinos had set forth, Aguinaldo’s control over his assembled force was beginning to slip. After the Treaty of Paris had been announced there had been minor scuffles, shootouts, and incidents between the two forces. Both sides had attempted to keep a loose calm between either side which eventually resulted in Filipino forces occupying the areas outside of Manila. The tension between the two groups would come to a head on February 4, 1899 when Filipino forces occupied a village that was considered part of the neutral zone between the American occupied city of Manila and the Philippine militia. American generals then gave the order to clear out the soldiers and retake the village. This resulting in a gunfight between the two sides and erupted into a wholesale battle where Filipinos attempted to rouse the Manila population to their side by burning government buildings in the city. The rioting in the city failed to drum up the support Aguinaldo had hoped for as the US and Filipino forces were now in open conflict with one another which would become the Philippine War.

In the initial battles between the Americans and Filipinos forces, the Americans utilized new tactics developed in the late nineteenth century. Instead of holding line formations as done during the American Civil War, army units would work together in separate squads with one proving covering fire and the other rapidly advancing a short distance before taking cover and then covering the other squad. This process would be repeated, with direct artillery support, until the units were within charging distance of the enemy position. Such tactics were used in the first major movements during and right after the Battle of Manila in order to force the surrounding Philippine army away from the city and deeper into the interior of the island of

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14 Ibid., 9.
Luzon\textsuperscript{15}. This battle would be the only time Filipino forces would be able to truly match the American forces in conventional upfront battle. Following the battle the Philippine military took on a guerilla war against the Americans, attempting to strike them on patrols and residing in the hinterland of the islands. American soldiers and their commanders were now forced to quickly adapt and face an enemy that could ambush them in one moment and blend into the community the next. While the Philippine insurgents could not hold back the march of American forces towards the insurgent capital of San Fernando and various hideouts their ambushes and sporadic defense along their route began to wear down on the soldiers as they suffered from the heat of the region and rampant sickness. It could be argued that the Philippines was not the first location of the US facing guerilla tactics. As they had been fighting with native American tribes for nearly its entire history and had some level of experience long after the end of the American Civil War with the ongoing Indian Wars. General Henry Ware Lawton would, in fact, utilize his experience and tactics from the Indian Wars to great affect during the initial stages of the Philippine War. However, the Philippines represented a new twist on the issue. The conflict they were fighting was on islands thousands of miles away from the continental United States and risked creating an international incident if the US was unable to handle and subdue the insurrectionists. By entering into the field of imperial politics the United States had inadvertently committed itself to defending the islands from other imperialist powers and their own ambitions. The situation was also made more difficult when General Lawton himself would be killed from a Filipino sharpshooter at the Battle of San Mateo\textsuperscript{16}. It can be difficult to say how long the Philippines would have lasted as an independent nation in the midst of the early twentieth century as even Japanese leaders were initially intending on assisting the insurgents by providing

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 48-52.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 160-162.
them arms. In any case, with the conflict having already cost the lives of American soldiers and a notable general the United States government felt an increasing pressure to maintain and even strengthen its position in the Philippines and against the Insurrectionists.

The loss of American soldiers was not limited to combat though. The greatest threat to soldiers came in the form of tropical diseases. More soldiers would die of disease during the conflict than in actual combat against the Filipino insurgents (see Fig. 5). The US military attempted to prepare adequate medical services to those serving in the Philippines. While American soldiers often commended the efforts and accomplishments of the medical staff treating them the doctors assigned to the islands were limited in their capacity to treat all those who came before them (See Fig. 6). The conditions and quality of camps did little to improve the situation in the early stages of the war. Besides the use of local huts and buildings, several camps flooded during the rainy season contributing to deaths and the spread of more diseases. In the final year of the conflict, a major Cholera outbreak would occur resulting in the death of over two hundred thousand Filipinos. Americans were not spared from this devastation though. As Dr. Zeller describes in his time attempting to combat it: “One morning I went out and saw them pushing in the body of one of the prison guards with whom I had talked two days before. He was a former soldier who had taken a position with the civil government after being mustered out.”

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In addition to losing soldiers to combat and disease, there was also the issue of desertions amongst American soldiers. Many of the units that were fighting in the conflict were from volunteer units quickly formed for the Spanish-American War. With the conflict came callous and gruesome orders for soldiers to fan out and “kill anything that moved” leading some to feel dishonorable for the wanton killing of a people that some even recognized as having a similar culture and democratic spirit. There are even accounts of soldiers deserting and joining the insurrectionists as recorded in the bibliography of an Iowa volunteer company.

Suddenly they heard a decisive laugh from the enemy’s center, followed by a loud American voice urging the insurgents to close on them. While waiting for the charge a spell of quiet came and an American traitor taunted them about the desperate position he had them in and said that this was his revenge for getting a dishonorable discharge from the United States service. … From a wounded man they learned that the traitor soldier was now a lieutenant colonel in the insurgent army. This is not the only case of the kind.

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Among the enemy’s killed have been found half a dozen Americans wearing insurgent officer’s uniforms. A just and timely end for their worthless lives.²⁰

As many of the original contracts for the volunteer units soon ending after a year, military commanders offered a bonus for an extension of their contract. Those that did not accept the offer were replaced by both regular army units and other volunteer units. American military commanders had requested more regular army units from the government as they argued the volunteers were more eager to return home than to finish the conflict they were embroiled in. However, the US government shorted the amount of regular army units the commander’s requested. Thus, more volunteer units were formed in order to shore up the men deemed necessary to finish the conflict and bring security to the various islands. While the original volunteer units were formed with state designations the new units were labeled as “federal volunteers”. Among these new volunteer units were the 48th and 49th all African-American units that were recruited from across the country²¹. The issue of actually maintaining such stability was an initial issue. Before conflict broke out with the insurgents, American military commanders were already dispatching landing parties of soldiers to the islands in order to inform locals of the regime change and ensure both their loyalty and security. In some cases, American soldiers were prevented from landing. The local leaders stated they would not permit their landing until they received word from the civilian government. While such situations would be resolved without violence, in other cases the US forced the submission of other islands or at least

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expected the cooperation of local leaders to abide by the military and later civil government operating from Manila.

While this war is often thought of as a conflict fought solely by white soldiers, it drew upon other members of American society. Prior to the initiation of the Spanish-American War, African-Americans were already chaffing under the increasing discrimination of Jim Crow laws during the nadir of race relations within the US. Many attempted to fight against such laws to little and no avail. When tensions were ratcheting up against Spain in the lead up to the Spanish-American War many black activists were opposed to the conflict, seeing it as a break away from the ideals of isolationism and partaking in European influenced imperialist actions. Many also argued they would prefer the US government to provide more attention to their own plight as they did to the Cubans. While many of these activists viewed their fight as a worthy cause, they still felt conflict should be avoided.

However, when war was declared and the call for volunteers was announced many of these activists saw an opportunity to further their own goals. By joining the military the activists and others like them hoped that they would be able to prove to the American public their own patriotism for the United States through their service overseas and courageous efforts. While Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders are well known for their charge on San Juan Hill in Puerto Rico, as mentioned before, two all black volunteer regiments would be formed and sent to the Philippines from African-Americans across the country. As mentioned before, the units were formed by volunteers who believed that their efforts would be recognized as patriotic and equal citizens of the United States. The soldiers would find the situation no less welcoming in the Philippines than back home. African-American soldiers

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22 Ibid., 210-12.
23 Ibid., 203.
continued to be the target of bigotry and prejudice amongst the white soldiers. Some of which viewed them as equal or less than the Filipinos, this would create an interesting situation where several African-American soldiers sought to remain in the Philippines since they experienced less daily discrimination from the local population\(^{24}\). Some soldiers, seeing the plight of Philippines, felt sympathy for their own cause and drew comparisons from their own experiences back home. This resulted in soldiers like David Fagan to desert the American forces and join the insurgents and training them to better combat the advancing Americans\(^{25}\). Another demographic that is not often mentioned in the conflict is the influence and work of female nurses working in the Philippines. While military service still largely limited to males, many women nurses were recruited or volunteered for service overseas during the conflict. Through their efforts, the US army realized their inadequacies in the field of military medicine and care which led to the creation of the US Army’s Nurses Corp. in 1901. This division of the military would help provide the ground work in the United States’ understanding of how to properly react and manage disease outbreaks which it would deal with for the duration of the conflict\(^{26}\). Through the efforts of those that served in the Philippines, women and African-Americans attempted to push the bounds of what their society expected of them and what they wanted in return for their service. While women would go on to gain greater respect amongst other service members, African Americans struggled to garner the support that they had sacrificed themselves towards in the Philippines.


\(^{25}\) Russell, ““I Feel Sorry For These People,”” 207-209.

Before the conflict would turn in favor for the US in 1901, the American forces were still having to deal with dedicated and isolated pockets of insurgents who could easily hide amongst the local population without issue. Once it was determined that the some of these groups were unwilling to surrender themselves, the American forces adopted new methods in order to break the will of the remaining insurrectionists. Similar to the need to adopt new tactics to face the guerilla style of warfare being waged by the insurgent, the US forces and their commanders believed it necessary to undermine not only the support the insurgents received from some communities but the will of those insurgents to continue fighting and in supporting their fellow comrades. Across the Philippines, American soldiers were beginning to interrogate insurgent prisoners via a variety of methods. In a hearing by congressional members, one soldier reported that an insurgent was tied to a post and severely beaten by another soldier\textsuperscript{27}. By far the most prolific and well known example is the use of the so called “water-cure.” This method is what we often refer to as water-boarding today and involved restraining an insurgent while having water poured onto their face which induces the feeling of drowning. This leads to the activation of the gag reflex and risks asphyxiation if the water is not applied intermittently but done through an open tap\textsuperscript{28}. The use of torture methods was not the only source of extreme violence perpetrated by soldiers and commanders on the islands. In several recorded instances soldiers ordered the burning of villages suspected of housing or supporting insurgent forces (see Fig. 7).

\textsuperscript{27} Henry F. Graff, \textit{American Imperialism and the Philippine Insurrection} (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 80-83.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 72-78.
As the authorization of more crude and destructive methods to bring about an end of the insurgency increased, Americans also exhibited their own callousness when it came towards the insurgents and Filipinos themselves. Some soldiers took a more pseudo-scientific approach in describing their enemy:

The Filipinos fought with the desperation characteristic of the Malay race. They had no regard for the customs of civilized warfare. Red Cross nurses and the wounded were fired on whenever the opportunity presented… The natives show all the brutality learned from the Spaniards with the added cruelty suggested by their own savage nature.

Other soldiers were more callous in their description of the Filipino insurgents, as Markey related:

The enemy, devoid of all order, had only the instinct of flight. They scurried out in bunches pairs and singly. From a cane field our boys gave them a regular old-fashioned

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Iowa rabbit hunt...[Entering the city of San Fernando] As is customary, the niggers fired all the public building before leaving...  

As well as utilizing a more brutal strategy in combating the support for the insurgents and locating their strongholds, the US also utilized new technological advancements to assist their soldiers on the Philippine battlefield. A common complaint amongst soldiers during the early stages of the conflict was of their inability to engage the Filipino insurgents at equal distance. Many of the insurgents had acquired Spanish made Mauser rifles that were able to reach farther than the smaller caliber Springfield rifles the Americans had. The bolt-action mechanism of fire for the Mauser also enabled the insurgents to fire off shots in quicker succession than the single shot trapdoor action of the American’s Springfield rifle. On top of these issues the Springfield rounds were not smokeless, meaning soldiers were momentarily blinded by the smoke produced from their shot while simultaneously giving away their own position. In an attempt to overcome the difference in ranges, the US military began issuing more powerful smokeless rounds to the soldiers. These rounds, however, were meant for the newly purchased Krag-Jorgensen rifles as the Springfield rifle was not designed to handle such a powerful cartridge and would often result in the breach of the Springfield rifles exploding from over pressure. While the Krag-Jorgensen rifles would assist in the short term, the Krag still proved unable to match the effectiveness of the Mauser. With the experiences learned from the conflict the US army worked to adopt a more modern and standardized firearm similar to the Mausers encountered in the Philippines and in the Caribbean during the Spanish-American War. This would result in the creation of the M1903 Springfield rifle, which would see limited used in the Philippines following the primary period of the conflict as well as in Mexico during the Punitive Expedition and in World War One. Another

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30 Ibid., 237-238.
31 Ibid., 211-12.
firearm that would prove its effectiveness in the Philippines was the infamous trench gun or Winchester Model 1897. Unlike the issues that the early Springfield and Krag rifles faced the Model 1897 shotgun proved an effective firearm against insurgents in clearing out buildings and hideouts. It was deemed an essential firearm by American forces when combatting rebels of the ongoing Moro Rebellion. It would go on to earn its infamous reputation in WWI alongside the M1903 rifle. With conflict comes innovation for new and more effective ways in killing the enemy. For the United States military, it had learned valuable lessons in the need to update its military arsenal. Such advancements help demonstrate that the US realized in inefficiencies within its military. By making these improvements the US is able to work on catching up to European powers in not only colonial holdings and economic weight, but in military achievement and technological advancement.

These small but impactful changes and advancements were occurring from the US army’s experience in the Philippines, back in the mainland United States, the perception of the Philippine War was met with a variety of responses. A vast majority of the public was rallied behind the war in the idea that it was another righteous conflict of patriotic duty to uplift and civilize the inhabitants of the Philippines. Newspapers reported of the various skirmishes and efforts being made by American forces to bring the insurrectionists to heel for their perceived “own good.” This also tied in with the ongoing notion from European states of the “white man’s burden” to uplift and bring so called civilization to the isolated lands they now called colonies. However, while the American public initially saw the islands fit for this type of “civilizing mission” there issues that ran against this methodology. The first problem that supportive Americans faced was the issue of religion. Attached to the idea of civilizing mission was the belief that proper maintenance and development of a society could only occur within the Judeo-
Christian faith. However, the Philippine islands had been under the control of the Spanish colonial authority for decades and the majority of the population was already catholicized. Regardless, American protestant missionaries arrived on the islands in an attempt to convert the population towards the “correct path” to find God\(^\text{32}\). They found little to no major success while overseas and, in some aspects, deepened the idea that the Philippines were a strange land of contradictions.

![Figure 9. a political cartoon depicting Americans bringing “civilization”.

The other issue that was preventing more widespread acceptance for annexation of the Philippines by the public and members of pro-imperialist members of Congress were tied with the rising racial prejudice within the United States. Within the US, the Jim Crow era was coming into full swing as discriminatory laws against African-Americans were becoming more

widespread. The increasing public discrimination against African-Americans contributed to the increasing notions and themes of racial purity. Many believed those who descended from mixed backgrounds as being socially and mentally inept that were more prone to violence. This led many to view the Latino populations of Latin America as being more violent and lacking the austerity to properly govern themselves and benefit from the abundance of their lands. This theme of racial impurity leading to stunted intelligence and anarchic societies were also applied to the Philippines. This application had a twofold effect. The first being that the insurrection and general lawlessness of the islands demonstrated that the United States needed to remain in the archipelago since the Filipinos lacked the proper insight of how to properly govern themselves and needed the US to educate and demonstrate proper governance over general anarchy and “savagery.” While not leaning into the idea of racial impurity, later military and civilian governors of the islands would recommend during congressional hearings that the Philippines were not ready for their own independence. Largely due to continued lawlessness on the islands and the lack of a substantial infrastructure of individuals that could effectively operate an independent government. However, while this enabled pro-imperialist forces to argue for the continued occupation of the archipelago the second effect of this rationale runs counter to this. The Philippine archipelago has, though its history, been occupied and conquered by various peoples. Each of these, including the Spanish, have left their own mark on islands regarding the racial intermingling of the populations. For those within the US who lofted the idea of racial purity the notion of gaining the Philippines horrified them. For them, the idea of the US gaining a territory with such a racially mixed and culturally diverse population would have devastating consequences upon American society and likely lead to societal and cultural degradation,

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decrease the nation’s overall intelligence, as well as reduce the country’s overall nationalistic pride\textsuperscript{34}. While this was not the majority reason for some to oppose the annexation of the Philippines it still represented how racism played its own part in the influence of US foreign policy and the public’s nationalistic pride.

While the conflict found a wide support base from the American public there were still those who opposed the occupation and conflict in the Philippines. Many anti-imperialists took the information on the torture and indiscriminate violence on villages to ramp up their dialogue against the occupation of the islands and the actions taken by the military. These individuals, however, had to walk a tightrope when doing so in order to maintain their political support. For the most avid imperialist or nationalist voices of government often accused them of being unpatriotic and not accounting nor appreciating the sacrifice that the soldiers in the Philippines had been making in order to pacify the region. Because of these accusations and the more outspoken anti-imperialists, such as Williams Jennings Bryan, lacking major public support, the attempts to hold the military commander’s responsible floundered and those who were convicted had their sentences appealed and overturned by the president in order to ensure the public did not view the current administration as being harsh or disrespectful to the military (see Fig. 10).

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 79-82.
From here we can see how the Philippine War was in many ways changing the way the US military operated as well as how the United States would go on to perceive itself in the wider Pacific region as well as the international stage. What was thought and expected to be cunning underhanded politics to placate and satisfy the Filipinos in accepting American occupation and rule in replacement over Spanish rule, turned into a dragged out and grueling guerilla war. A war in which exposed the United States’ flaws and weaknesses in attempting to establish themselves on the world stage in a rapid and less than methodical course of action. Had there not been such an extreme push back by the Filipino population and the American military not begun to use more destructive tactics imperialist supporters might have been able to make a greater case for the archipelago’s annexation to a population that was more supportive of its soldiers and their victories than where the Philippines actually were and how the Filipinos themselves felt of American occupation. As we shall see in the upcoming sections, similar to how the conflict itself
would shape the American public perception of imperialism, so to shall the soldier returning help shape local communities.

**The Veteran’s Return**

While some volunteer soldiers had chosen to return home at the end of their initial contract with the government the majority of those who stayed would finally return after the official end of hostilities and announcement of amnesty for Filipino insurgents. Their return would be met with great pomp and circumstance for the success in maintaining the ideals of the United States over what were seen as “savage” lands. After the welcome home, though, many of these veterans were now left to their own devices. For those members of the short lived and final set of volunteer units in American history, it can be argued that the joyous welcome from their communities was a gift unto itself as many were eager to return home. As is unfortunate with the passing of time, there remains limited resources and accounts of the everyday lives of those who returned from the conflict. From the documentation gathered for the American Midwest, at least, it can be inferred that many of these individuals would return to the livelihoods they were previously occupying before the call for volunteers. While there is no consistent record for the activity these veteran’s took part in after the conflict, we can see that, through some selected individuals and group activities, that those who had a combination of prominence, capital, and simple desire made themselves a focal point of their community and associations. It is from these individuals, their actions, and the associations they were members of that would go on and greatly influence the American public on matters relating to the wider American foreign policy.

While there is not a clear database for all of the activities of the veterans after they returned home, we are able to understand home some of the outliers were able to establish themselves. From a collection of records following a period of peace after the conflict we can
find several individuals who became noted figures within their community. From these collections of individuals we can gain a sense of who each individual pursued their own goals and desires while still being linked through one or another means. The Midwest, itself, for example, would have its own fair share of individuals who played a part in the Philippines greater history. Examples of this can be seen in a collection from Hennepin County, Minnesota dated 1914. The book notes several figures who served within the Philippines. Among them is Charles McCormick Reeve (see Fig. 12), who served as a colonel in the Philippines and later return during the civil administration to serve as its first chief of police\textsuperscript{35}. From a general biography of Illinois, a Dr. George Zeller (Fig. 11) can be found who served as a doctor in the Philippines and would return home and open up a mental health asylum in his state\textsuperscript{36}. And from a collection of Michigan individuals we can find John William Smith (Fig. 13), who served from the start of the Spanish-American War to the end of the Philippine War. He would return to his home in Michigan and become a senator for his local district and eventual Mayor of Detroit\textsuperscript{37}. While each of these men would return home to complete their own personal goals, there is one aspect that links them together. Each of these men were members of a local or national club. These clubs ranged from national political parties to their regional business society. Indeed, across each of the state biographies many of the veterans were members of some type of club. These clubs were foundational to many of the aspiring politicians and entrepreneurs to establish connections with possible campaign contributors or business partners.


\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Notable men of Illinois & their state} (Chicago: Chicago Daily Journal, 1912), 21.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Michigan biographies, including members of Congress, elective state officers, justices of the Supreme Court, members of the Michigan Legislature, Board of Regents of the University of Michigan, State Board of Agriculture and State Board of Education} (Lansing, MI: The Michigan Historical Commission, 1924), 304.
However, the conclusion of the Spanish-American and Philippine wars would begin introducing a new type of organization back into the fold of American society. That being veteran societies and organizations such as the United Spanish-American War Veterans, USWV, and the soon to be influential Veterans of Foreign Wars, VFW. Veteran organizations were a major stable of American political society following the end of the American Civil War. The most notable was the Grand Army of the Republic, or GAR. The GAR was known for holding sway over a major veteran voting block who, in turn, also influenced like-minded supported. The group was highly sought after in support during election season and governments would compensate the group often times through continued legislation regarding pensions for them and their families. Even during the Philippine War some of the initial veterans who returned from the Spanish-American War faced some backlash from members of the veteran community, specifically those from the Civil War chapters. As described in detail by Barbara Gannon from the *Journal of the Civil War Era*, Civil War vets had a near monopoly on veteran activities and affairs. Early on, many GAR members prevented Spanish-American vets from joining their
ranks, as well as those from the Philippine-War for a number of reasons. One of which was the notion that organizations segregation of chapters for black members and the notion that the Spanish-American War had lasted less than half a year\(^\text{38}\). While some veterans argued that the war in the Philippines was still ongoing and should be considered, many GAR representatives believed their sacrifice great in the sense of uniting the country while veterans of the Spanish-American and Philippine Wars were fighting a brief engagement for new colonies. Gannon notes that much of the GAR’s defensiveness applies to what can be described as the memory of place, where, in this case, the members of the GAR see the Civil War as something that is there and to be part of their organization is to be part of the experience\(^\text{39}\). Indeed, the USWV would struggle to welcome in new members as even they faced competition from the growing VFW and eventually faded into obscurity. However, as time progressed the GAR realized that they would need to accommodate for the new wave of veterans\(^\text{40}\). In the general public, this was seen with local positions of importance amongst communities being held by younger veterans and the GAR recognized their own dwindling numbers\(^\text{41}\). This shift created the opportunity for veterans of the Spanish-American and Philippine Wars to finally hold the national spotlight which would enable them to garner the attention of the American public. Thus leading them into the path of government officials looking to acquire public support for their own pursuits and policies.

Similar to how the GAR assisted in levying their demands for increases to pensions, veteran organizations formed by Spanish-American and Philippine veterans would utilize the support they receive from the public and prior praises from the government to press for increases


\(^{39}\) Ibid., 530, 532-3.

\(^{40}\) “Soldiers Gather in South,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 10, 1900.

to their own pensions. While members of the GAR had argued that the latest conflict and its battles were short lived, many thousands of soldiers were stricken with debilitating sickness and diseases that left many with lingering issues and disabilities that left them reliant on a pension.\footnote{Gannon, “‘They Call Themselves Veterans’”, 543-44.}

In order to maintain a presence in the public and political mindset these organizations held annual rallies in order to drum up and attract regional and national attention towards their issues and complaints. In order to demonstrate their patriotic will and continued service to their country, some of these rallies were celebrated with great parades and splendor.\footnote{“Spanish War Veterans Invade Chicago,” Chicago Daily Tribune, September 5, 1916.} From such gatherings politicians often arrived to declare their admiration and gradualness for the service the soldiers had completed. In a similar fashion to the GAR, these new veteran organizations became the newest influential group where politicians could speak about their own platform and the policies they support or seek support for. One such example was the future senator J. Hamilton Lewis speaking before a gathering of veterans in Chicago, Illinois where he argued that the US will soon need to annex the entirety of Central America.\footnote{“Annex All Central America,” Chicago Daily Tribune, February 10, 1910.} While this was an extreme example in our current day and age, the risk of foreign intervention into American spheres of influence were weighing on many minds at the time. Themes of nationalism and imperialism were thus very much still alive even some time after the conclusion of the Philippine American War. In order to follow along with themes of patriotic duty and appreciation for government support, these organizations would often throw their support behind government actions regarding military interventions abroad. Indeed, while the GAR opposed including Spanish-American and Philippine veterans, the themes of imperialism and supporting the nations were evident in their ranks when it announced its support for President McKinley’s actions in the Philippines and
China during the Boxer Rebellion with even the mention of his name bringing rousing applause. Four years later in 1904 President Roosevelt would write a letter to a gather of the GAR in Boston detailing his utmost appreciation for the veterans of the GAR and from the Spanish-American and Philippine wars. The final section reads,

What President McKinley wrote then is true now. Under the lead of your comrades the Philippine Islands were won for the cause of civilization, of civil liberty, and of peace and justice. At this time it is only under the American flag that the people of the islands can preserve the public order, the individual freedom, and the material well being which have come to them as the direct consequence of the deeds of your brothers in arms of a younger generation. The work which has thus been done will not be undone, for the nation remains true to the memory of your own great deeds.

Roosevelt’s final words on ensuring the work of the veterans will not be undone and will be “remaining true to the memory of your own great deeds” are likely referring to the GAR veterans themselves, the statement as a whole can be applied and impressed upon, as Roosevelt label’s them, “brothers in arms of a younger generation.” For while Roosevelt and McKinley before him extoled the great virtues and courage that imbued every American soldier, they did so under the guise that if American forces are committed to a conflict, the government must see it through to its end and maintain or strengthen whatever goal or presence it had before the conflict. In the case of the Philippines, the American government was now wholly committed to occupation of the archipelago once the first American soldiers fell from Filipino insurgents. This demonstrates the trap that American politicians and the government itself found itself in. American soldiers were both willing and unwittingly contributing to the advancement of pro-imperialist and expansionist policies pursued by members of the government who they trusted.

45 “Grand Army to Meet in Denver,” Chicago Daily Tribune, August 31, 1900.
46 “President to G.A.R. Veterans,” Chicago Daily Tribune, August 18, 1904.
and supported in return for them addressing the concerns and complaints veterans had towards their own pensions and benefits.

Not long even after the conclusion of the Philippine-American War veterans of the conflict were beginning to submit requests for benefits that had either been promised to them or were not initially included with their benefits. Similar to how the various veteran organizations like the VFW, American Legion, and even the GAR worked to promote and benefit elected officials, many of its members now called upon these same officials to press forward with passing the same benefits and pensions they supported. Several of these officials were more than willing to speak on their behalf to support such pension raises and extending the coverage to include more veterans. Many of these efforts were done so through a piecemeal process so that veterans waited for sections of the benefits they desired. While not entirely intentional this proved to be effective in two manners. The first, elected officials that were backing these bills and proposals were able to appear patriotic to the general public and on the side of the veterans themselves. Making them believe they were making active progress on their demands. The second, elected officials struggled to pass large more encompassing legislation for veterans of all conflict at the time, including Philippine War veterans. This resulted on some benefits passing up those such conflicts and required Congress to habitually return and extend definitions and regulations relating towards veteran benefits. The hindsight of this action enabled congress to appear engaged and actively listening to veteran demands, while not passing more broad or encompassing legislation for veterans.

Soon enough, however, this piecemeal approach began struggling to meet the demands that were put forth by veterans of the conflict. Including those from the Spanish-American War and the Chinese expedition during the Boxer Rebellion. The piecemeal approach created by
congressional members was beginning to wear thin on not only the veterans but among members Congress as well, as detailed in a excerpt from a report on veterans in public service.

Looking over the debates of the Congresses there can be found many kind words spoken for the soldier and sailor, but absolutely nothing in way of statutory law insuring to those who enter the military or naval service in times of war-serving until the end of their terms of enlistment or the close of hostilities, being honorably discharged-a reasonable preference in the public service in times of peace. Pensions, yes. Will any American urge that any meager pittance as a pension doled out compensates loss of manhood-the manhood that was ready to sacrifice life itself, voluntarily, in battle, in order that the Republic might survive-and the inherent desire to earn bread by labor? Perish the thought! We will not believe it.47

With the United States government already chaffing under the continued requests of a fairly small pool of veterans any larger of a pool was expected to bring newfound stress to the government and the unsaid system of appeasement between the elected officials and the veterans. This is made especially clear in the years following the end of World War One. During this time many veterans had coalesced into one or two of the main organizations that were around, such as the VFW and the new American Legion, formed following WWI to welcome veterans of all conflicts. Other more specific conflict organizations still existed but were not as notable as the VFW or the emerging American Legion. While the United States was recovering economically from WWI the number of soldiers who had entered into service from the war was not the low 125,000 that was seen in the Philippines, but was more than four million service members48. With a significantly increased number of individuals to care and meet their demands, the United States government began to struggle with the influx of cases. In a letter to the editor of a


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newspaper, Leo Coty, a VFW post commander, described the frustration and callousness of the
government handling the cases for disabilities.

Every citizen’s patriotism is offended at the sight of one of our own people forced to beg
for his existence. And how much more so is it debased and humiliated when he
discoverers it is one of the men who was forced to beggary because of wounds or disease
brought on by war service. … It does not matter how much these cases were aggravated
by war service so long as our beneficent government can show that a man had some pre-
war ailment: he is cut off from all help49.

While the US government was attempting to catch up to the growing demands issued by
the latest generation of veterans the world economic system would put a halt to those goals. The
Great Recession would bring the US economy to a grinding a halt in 1929. While the US worked
to get the economy into a steadier growth rate, many pensioners became worried for their own
financial livelihoods. This included veterans, many of whom had been promised a bonus that
would be paid out by 1945. By 1932, already racked with unemployment and fearing the money
might never come, many veterans formed a march to occupy Washington D.C. to demand an
early release of their bonuses. One of the primary groups that supported the march and demand
for their bonuses was the VFW which saw its membership rise exponentially once it backed the
movement. This march was soon termed as the Bonus March with the veterans being referred to
as the Bonus Army with approximately more than twenty thousand veterans in attendance50.

When the Bonus March had finally reached D.C. when began an occupation in order to pressure
the government to release their bonuses early. A measure was brought up within Congress to
have the bonuses dispensed early had failed though, and the military was called in to forcibly
remove the veterans from the National Mall, resulting in the injury of many attendants and the

50 Stephen R. Ortiz (ed.), Veterans’ Policies, Veterans’ Politics : New Perspectives on Veterans in the Modern United
recorded death of two veterans. After the event the Attorney General for President Hoover would later release a report claiming that, while the majority of those who participated in the march were law-abiding citizens, the subsequent riot against the police was integrated by criminals and radicals among their ranks. Hoover himself responded by saying the report demonstrated actual veterans had returned home after the dismissal of the original proposal.

In giving out the report which shows the character of many of the persons assembled, the incidents and character of the instigators of the riots, I wish to state emphatically that the extraordinary proportion of criminal communist and nonveteran elements among the marchers as shown by this report, should not be taken to reflect upon the many thousands of honest, law abiding men who came to Washington with full right of presentation of their views to the congress.!

While providing context to the event and deaths of those involved in the riot, the report would in many ways work to mitigate the impact of the march while also attempting to praise and respect the more “honorable” veterans who had returned home after they were unable coax lawmakers to release their bonus. The reaction of the government to the Bonus Army and the subsequent report would send an eerie message to veterans across the country. That being that no matter a veteran’s distinguished service or the support a government official would be willing none of them would be able to sway the majority of congress to maintain the decades of support they had before so readily upheld.

Conclusions

The conclusion of the Spanish-American War marked a new and substantial shift in general American Foreign policy. The United States had immersed itself into the imperialist styles of their European counterparts and was riding a patriotic and nationalist expression for the

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victory it had earned from the conflict. The country had been able to demonstrate on several levels to the wider world that the United States could stake out where its sphere of influence was and would back up its words with a swift and powerful military. With imperial conquest, however, comes its related consequences. The largest of which would be found in the Philippine War the United States was embroiled in soon after the conclusion of hostilities with Spain. A conflict that had ended in three months was followed on by one that would drag out to more than three years. This threw a wrench into the greater plans than many nationalist and pro-imperial actors had in store for the islands and the United States itself. In order to overcome this slowdown of public support, they began to argue that the Philippine War needed to be won for the sacrifice that was already made by the soldiers on the ground. These rousing and uplifting words not only brought public support behind this movement, but also brought the veterans themselves into the fold. With such grandiose praise being lauded at those who served in the war and had returned home maimed or infirm for life, the returning veterans repaid the support by having their regional and national veteran organizations repeat or defend the rhetoric that was being espoused by political leaders for greater nationalistic actions. This support for elected officials continued so long as the needs of the veterans were met. However, this ad hoc system of the government and veterans scratching each other’s backs would fall apart once the Great Recession demonstrated that the government could not back up its words of praise with equal action for veteran benefits. In summary, this demonstrates that the US government, following the end of the Spanish-American War and beginning of the Philippine War, was largely focused on maintaining general public support for their own imperialist policies which were often tied into praising the patriotic feats and courage of American soldiers while not considering the long term implications of the conflict and effects on the US military and general public.
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