**United States History**

**Unit 7 Primary Sources: The Debate over Annexing the Philippines**

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| **Background Story:** After the United States defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War of 1898, one question troubled Americans: should the United States keep the Philippine islands? An American navy had defeated the Spanish in charge of the Philippines and the American President did not want to give them back to Spain. Americans were not sure what would happen if they kept the islands. Would they have to make Filipinos American citizens? Would Filipinos have the right to self-government? |

**SOURCES AGAINST ANNEXING THE PHILIPPINES**

**SOURCE A: John G. Carlisle, "Our Future Policy," Harper's Magazine (Sept. 1898). [edited]**

Our political institutions were not designed for the government of dependent colonies and provinces. America was intended to be a free republic, composed of self-governing States and intelligent, law-abiding, and liberty-loving people; and no one has ever supposed that any territory ... could be rightfully governed by a central authority. The Philippine Islands, with a population of eight or ten millions, must, unless we govern them perpetually as conquered provinces, be made into several States, each with two Senators, and altogether having thirty or forty Representatives.

**SOURCE B: Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, speech, circa. Dec. 1898.**

If the Philippines are annexed what is to prevent the Chinese, the Negritos and the Malays coming to our country? How can we prevent the Chinese coolies from going to the Philippines and from there swarm into the United States and engulf our people and our civilization? If these new islands are to become ours, it will be either under the form of Territories or States. Can we hope to close the flood-gates of immigration from the hordes of Chinese and the semi-savage races coming from what will then be part of our own country?

**SOURCE C: Senator Benjamin Tillman (D) of South Carolina, January 20, 1899. [edited]**

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...

**SOURCE D: Andrew Carnegie, "Should the United States Expand," (1900). [edited]**

It has been said that the Philippines will be to the United States what India is to England. England in India stands today upon a volcano. She has to keep 60,000 British troops there to keep the people under control...Almost every British statesman privately wishes: "Would that we were safely out of India!"

India is the curse of Britain, and the Philippines will be the curse of the United States. If you teach suppressed people at all, you make them rebels. Education is fatal to the government of a superior race. The Declaration of Independence will make every Filipino a thoroughly rebellious subject.

# SOURCE E: Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League, 1900 [edited]

We earnestly condemn the policy of the present National Administration in the Philippines. It seeks to destroy the spirit of 1776 in those islands. We reject the sacrifice of our soldiers and sailors, whose bravery deserves admiration even in an unjust war. We denounce the slaughter of the Filipinos as a needless horror.

**SOURCES IN FAVOR OF ANNEXING THE PHILPPINES**

**SOURCE F: Henry Watterson, interview in New York Herald, June 22, 1898. [edited]**

To surrender territory acquired by the outlay of so much blood and treasure would be a cruel and cowardly abandonment of duties and opportunities literally heaven-sent, for they were not originally contemplated by anybody. We cannot return the Philippines to Spain, or give them to a population incapable of self-government, to become a prey of European powers.... The traditional stay-at-home and mind-your-own-business policy laid down by Washington was wise for a weak and struggling nation. The United States from now on is destined to be a world power. From a nation of shopkeepers we become a nation of warriors. We escape the menace and peril of socialism and anarchy, as England has escaped them, by a policy of colonization and conquest.

**SOURCE G: Charles Denby, "Shall We Keep the Philippines?" Forum (Sept. 1898). [edited]**

There is no reason why we cannot control the Philippines in a manner satisfactory to their people was well as to ourselves....I am in favor of holding the Philippines because I cannot conceive an alternative to our doing so….If we give up the Philippines, we throw away the splendid opportunity to assert our influence in the Far East....It gives us also valuable trade both in exports and imports....We are after markets, the greatest markets now existing in the world. Along with these markets will go our public-spirited institutions; and humanity will bless us.

**SOURCE H:** **Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana, speech before U.S. Senate, January 9, 1899.**

The Philippines are ours forever: "territory belonging to the United States," as the Constitution calls them. We will not reject our part in the mission of our race, trustees under God, of the civilization of the world. And we will move forward to our work ... with gratitude for a task worthy of our strength and thanksgiving to Almighty God that He has marked us as his chosen people, henceforth to lead in the regeneration of the world....God has not been preparing the English-speaking people for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns ... He has made us experts in government that we may administer government among savages and senile peoples.

# SOURCE I: President William McKinley, “Decision on the Philippines,” 1900

When I realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps, I did not know what to do with them. I walked the floor of the White house night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance. And one night late it came to me: that we could not give the Philippines back to Spain, that we could not turn them over to another country, and that we could not leave them alone because they were unfit for self-government. There was nothing left for us to do but to take them and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them. And then I went to bed and went to sleep and slept soundly.

President McKinley bathes the Filipinos in “Civilization”