

many truly mighty, distinctive, and independent nations of the last three millennia are now simply known as "China" or "India", their identities blurred together for the people of today? May we avoid such a fate in the real history's judgment.

Google Books is an excellent place to educate oneself, from original and primary sources, on the Philippine-American War¹⁶ and on historical Anti-Imperialism¹⁷.



- [1] Definition of Big Stick Diplomacy: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_stick_diplomacy
- [2] Text of the Battle Hymn of the Republic:
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Battle_Hymn_of_the_Republic
- [3] *Mare Nostrum* means "our sea" in Latin and it is the term the Romans used for the Mediterranean
- [4] 1953 Iranian coup in which the democratically elected government of Iran was replaced with a regime controlled by the Shah of Iran:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1953_Iranian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat
- [5] Definition of blowback: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blowback_%28intelligence%29
- [6] Definition of hamartia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamartia>
- [7] Definition of casino chips: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casino_token
- [8] Image of the "it's too late for me" Darth Vader scene from *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*: <http://images.wikia.com/starwars/images/d/d0/Anakinredeemed.jpg>
- [9] Definition of Philippine-American War: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine-American_War
- [10] Philippine Organic Act of 1902:
<http://books.google.com/books?id=1k0eAAAAMAAJ&printsec=titlepage#PPA272,M1>
- [11] Definition of Abu Sayyaf: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Sayyaf
- [12] Definition of American Anti-Imperialist League:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Anti-Imperialist_League
- [13] Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1899antiimp.html>
- [14] Text of Mark Twain's "The War Prayer":
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_War_Prayer
- [15] About Neal Stephenson's novel *The Diamond Age or, A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer*: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Young_Lady%27s_Illustrated_Primer
- [16] Google Books search for "Philippine Bill", returning full view texts only
- [17] Google Books search for "anti-imperialism antiimperialism anti-imperialist antiimperialist", returning full view texts only

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ENEMY OF IMPERIALISM

A CALL FOR THE RESURRECTION OF THE AMERICAN ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE

VIS UNITA FORTIOR

There was a time long ago when the national attitude towards lordly hegemony - both corporate and royal - was much less "wink wink, nudge nudge" and ran more along the lines that the United States of America was a breaker of kings and emperors and an enemy of all tyrants. All Americans, even the ones with funny accents and weird family names, considered the opposition to tyranny a literal birthright - a birthright denied in the Old World - and an essential part of their own national character: the very spirit of the frontiersman of the New World.

The prosperity and global politics of the twentieth century changed that. We found ourselves often allied with many of the gravid old imperial nations of Europe who in the preceding century had arrogantly styled themselves the "Great Powers" of the world. We did not emulate them but as power corrupts we gradually became more and more like them.

At first we just spoke softly and carried a big stick.¹ But as the decades wore on we more and more frequently used that big stick with flourish in a manner increasingly at odds with our hardscrabble underdog origins. Like a corrupt and depraved gendarme we used it simply to tweak the noses or twist the arms of those who, innocent or guilty, could not fight back.

The noble battles against the insane masters of Nazism, Fascism, and Communism let us flex our muscles and wield a terrible swift sword² in the name of good. But that sword sat too easily in the hand. Indeed, in the end we even took as our own the blind and hyperbolic nationalism which abetted those ideological errors in Germany, Italy, and Russia.

Before the 20th century was very old the Caribbean had become *Mare Nostrum*³ and South America and Mesoamerica political playgrounds for us where death squads killed or disappeared tens and hundreds of thousands while we looked on, content so long as our "interests" were protected. Our "interests" were eventually sufficient to justify almost any act, anywhere in the world. We became the kind of country that could, without blinking, topple a democratically elected government and install royalty in its place as our puppet.⁴ (And don't we regret that ever so, now? Man oh man, talk about reaping what you have sown. Now there's a situation the term "blowback"⁵ was invented for if there ever was one.)

Like many noble Jedi we fell from the light.⁶ In pride and

weakness and seemingly out of necessity we turned to the dark side, then became its master. Bit by bit the old imperial powers fell down or had the good sense to cash their chips⁷ in, until there was only us and the Soviets. And now there is only us.

Far worse than true evil, which everyone recognizes and knows to stay away from, is the perversion of righteousness. But it is not too late.⁸



A notable cusp in this descent of American national values was what the Filipinos refer to as the “Philippine-American War”⁹ which has various other euphemistic names in many U.S.-published history books. At the end of the Spanish-American War the broken Spanish Empire “gave” us the Philippines as well as many other territories and spheres of influence. The United States decided to annex the Philippines. For the Filipinos' own good, of course.

The ensuing conflict in many ways prefigured the Iraq War of almost exactly one century later: it lasted for a decade after the White House declared “Mission Accomplished”,¹⁰ involved years of intense combat against Muslim insurgents, inspired what would today be called terrorism from the occupied population (by both Muslim and non-Muslim groups), resulted in atrocities being committed by both occupying and insurrectionist forces, required the sacrifice of many voluntary-service military personnel that almost all wars involve, and it eventually came to be opposed by a large percentage of the American populace. (The potential of these parallels was discussed in the U.S., in public, before the debacle in Iraq was embarked upon.)

And by the way, alongside American imperialist values and foreign policy of the 1950's having fostered a militant Islamic regime in Iran, this turn-of-the-century action in the Philippines created a long-lived, hardened core of militant Islam in the Philippines as well. You may be familiar with the Filipino group Abu Sayyaf¹¹ - they participated in the World Trade Center bombings and have both received support from and provided support to Al-Qaeda. They and other terrorist groups are in part, in a very real way, the fruit of seeds planted a hundred years ago by American hands.

One group in which American opposition to the Philippine war was consolidated was the American Anti-Imperialist League¹², whose members included people like Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain, and William Jennings Bryan. (No, I didn't mistype that; that really is an industrialist steel baron, a novelist-poet, and a lawyer working on a political cause together.)

The founding *Platform* of the League¹³ stated:

We deny that the obligation of all citizens to support their Government in times of grave National peril applies to the present situation. If an Administration may with impunity ignore the issues upon which it was

chosen, deliberately create a condition of war anywhere on the face of the globe, debauch the civil service for spoils to promote the adventure, organize a truth-suppressing censorship and demand of all citizens a suspension of judgment and their unanimous support while it chooses to continue the fighting, representative government itself is imperiled.

— *Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League, 1899*

Mark Twain was a founding member of the League. That war and many others had inspired his posthumously-published work “The War Prayer”,¹⁴ a piece as classically sarcastic and undermining of sanctimony as anything our great and quintessentially American Twain ever wrote. But on the subject of anti-imperialist objectives Twain was grave and characteristically articulate:

I have read carefully the treaty of Paris, and I have seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone there to conquer, not to redeem. It should, it seems to me, be our pleasure and duty to make those people free, and let them deal with their own domestic questions in their own way. And so I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land.

— *Mark Twain, New York Herald, Oct. 15, 1900*

I think that it has come to the point when the above sentiments can be said to echo the way the majority of Americans feel about the Iraq War. We should use that sentiment to end the Iraq War and to adopt policies and form institutions to ensure that nothing like these wars is ever authored again by an American government. Let us resurrect the American Anti-Imperialist League and make in this new century a renewed America that returns to its original ways, values, and character; an America that is not willing to make a specious and two-faced sacrifice of democracy on the altar of our own interests; and an America that accepts our brother and sister nations and works for the good of all people. This is a principle not of pacifism, for evil must be opposed at all costs and war is perhaps our fate, but a principle of rationalism and good faith in humanity.



I didn't find any way to stick it into the narrative above but I think it's a clever artistic touch in Neal Stephenson's futuristic novel *The Diamond Age* or, *A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer*¹⁵ that the denizens of Earth two or three centuries in the future know the USA of history simply as “the Second British Empire”. Our prominence on the world stage so far has been a moment's worth compared to that of some other nations, so it seems not entirely unfeasible to me. For example, how