Senator Defends America's Imperial Ambitions

ALBERT BEVERIDGE, "The March of the Flag" Speech (1898)

In a speech before Republicans in the fall 1898 campaign season, Albert Beveridge, the party faithful in support of an ambitious international role for the United States, encouraged his audience to look forward to the future. After being elected to the Senate from Indiana, he served two terms as a member of the more progressive Republican Party, supporting policies he would later renounce, such as expanded internal regulation. By the time he delivered his speech, the War of 1898 was over. Spain had capitulated to the United States, ending what John Hay called the "splendid little war" that bolstered advocates for American expansion.

There is noble land that God has given us; a land that can feed and clothe the world; whose coasts would inclose half the countries of Europe; a land set like a jewel between the two imperial oceans of the globe, a greater England with a destiny.

is a mighty people that He has planted on this soil; a people sprung from noble stock, masterful blood of history; a people perpetually revitalized by the virus of working-folk of all the earth; a people imperial by virtue of power, by right of their institutions, by their Heaven-directed s—-the propagandists and not the misers of liberty.

is a glorious history our God has bestowed upon His chosen people; a history of faith in our mission and our future; a history of statesmen who the boundaries of the Republic out into unexplored lands and savage wilds; a history of soldiers who carried the flag across blazing deserts and through the ranks of hostile mountains, even to the gates of sunset; a history of saviors who overran a continent in half a century; a history of prophetic vision that saw the consequences of evils inherited from the past and of martyrs to save us from them; a history divinely logical, in the process of whose unfolding reasoning we find ourselves to-day.

Therefore, in this campaign, the question is larger than a party question. It is a question of freedom. It is a question of liberty. Shall the American people continue to march toward the commercial supremacy of the world? Shall free institutions, the children of liberty wax in strength, until our very principles are established over the hearts of all mankind?

Shall we have a mission to perform, no duty to discharge to our fellow-men? Is it not true that God endowed us with gifts beyond our deserts and marked us as the people's peculiar favor, merely to rot in our own selfishness, as men and nations who take cowardice for their companion and self for their deity—as China's India has, as Egypt has?
required that imperial territory which swept from the Mississippi to the moun-
tains, from Texas to the British possessions, and the march of the flag began!

The infidels to the gospel of liberty raved, but the flag swept on! The title to it noble land out of which Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana have been raved was uncertain; Jefferson, strict constructionist of constitutional power to which he was, obeyed the Anglo-Saxon impulse within him, whose watchword was and whose watchword throughout the world to-day is, “Forward!”: another empire was added to the Republic, and the march of the flag went on!

Those who deny the power of free institutions to expand urged every argument, and more, that we hear, today; but the people’s judgment approved the demand of their blood, and the march of the flag went on!

A screen of land from New Orleans to Florida shut us from the Gulf, and further the Everglades Peninsula waved the saffron flag of Spain; Andrew Jackson seized both, the American people stood at his back, and, under Monroe, Floridas came under the dominion of the Republic, and the march of the flag went on! The Cassandras prophesied every prophecy of despair we hear, to-day, it the march of the flag went on!

Then Texas responded to the bugle calls of liberty, and the march of the flag went on! And, at last, we waged war with Mexico, and the flag swept over the southwest, over peerless California, past the Gate of Gold to Oregon on the north, from ocean to ocean its folds of glory blazed.

And, now, obeying the same voice that Jefferson heard and obeyed, that Jackson heard and obeyed, that Monroe heard and obeyed, that Seward heard to obeyed, that Grant heard and obeyed, that Harrison heard and obeyed, our resident to-day plants the flag over the islands of the seas, outposts of commerce, citadels of national security, and the march of the flag goes on!...

The ocean does not separate us from lands of our duty and desire—the oceans join us, rivers never to be dredged, canals never to be repaired. Steam joins us; electricity joins us—the very elements are in league with our destiny. Cuba not contiguous! Porto Rico not contiguous! Hawaii and the Philippines not contiguous! The oceans make them contiguous. And our navy will make them contiguous.

But the Opposition is right—there is a difference. We did not need the western Mississippi Valley when we acquired it, nor Florida, nor Texas, nor California, or the royal provinces of the far northwest. We had no emigrants to people this hitherto wilderness, no money to develop it, even no highways to cover it. No trade awaited us in its savage fastnesses. Our productions were not greater than our trade. There was not one reason for the land-lust of our statesmen from Jefferson to Grant, other than the prophet and the Saxon within them. But, to-day, we are raising more than we can consume, making more than we can use. Therefore we must find new markets for our produce.

And so, while we did not need the territory taken during the past century at the time it was acquired, we do need what we have taken in 1898, and we need it now. The resources and the commerce of these immensely rich dominions will be proved so much as American energy is greater than Spanish sloth. In Cuba, alone, there are 15,000,000 acres of forest unacquainted with the ax, exhaustible mines of iron, priceless deposits of manganese, millions of dollars’ worth of which we must buy, to-day, from the Black Sea districts. There are millions of acres yet unexplored.

The resources of Porto Rico have only been trifled with. The riches of the Philippines have hardly been touched by the finger-tips of modern method. And they produce what we consume, and consume what we produce—the evidences of reciprocity—a reciprocity not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” They sell hemp, sugar, coconuts, fruits of the tropics, timber of a mahogany; they buy flour, clothing, tools, implements, machinery and all that we can raise and make. Their trade will be ours in time. Do you indorse this policy with your vote?...

Our trade with Porto Rico, Hawaii and the Philippines must be as free as that between the states of the Union, because they are American territory, while every other nation on earth must pay our tariff before they can compete with us. Until Cuba shall ask for annexation, our trade with her will, at the very least, be included in the preferential trade of Canada with England. That, and the excellence of our goods and products; that, and the convenience of traffic; that, and the kinship of interests and destiny, will give the monopoly of these markets to the American people.

The commercial supremacy of the Republic means that this Nation is to be the sovereign factor in the peace of the world. For the conflicts of the future are conflicts of trade—struggles for markets—commercial wars for existence. And the golden rule of peace is impregnability of position and invincibility of preparedness. So, we see England, the greatest strategist of history, plant her flag and her cannon on Gibraltar, at Quebec, in the Bermudas, at Vancouver everywhere.

So Hawaii furnishes us a naval base in the heart of the Pacific; the Ladrone Islands another, a voyage further on; Manilla another, at the gates of Asia—Asia, to the trade of whose hundreds of millions American merchants, manufacturers, farmers, have as good right as England and France or Russia or England; Asia, whose commerce with the United Kingdom alone amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars every year; Asia, to whom Germany looks to take her surplus products; Asia, whose doors must not be shut against American trade. Within five decades this bulk of Oriental commerce will be ours...

There are so many real things to be done—canals to be dug, railways to be laid, forests to be felled, cities to be built, fields to be tilled, markets to be won, ships to be launched, peoples to be saved, civilization to be proclaimed and the flag of liberty flung to the eager air of every sea. Is this an hour to waste upon triflers with nature’s laws? Is this a season to give our destiny over to word mongers and prosperity-wreckers? No! It is an hour to remember our duty to our homes. It is a moment to realize the opportunities fate has opened to us. And so it is an hour for us to stand by the Government.

Wonderfully has God guided us. Yonder at Bunker Hill and Yorktown His providence was above us. At New Orleans and on ensanguined seas His hand
stained us. Abraham Lincoln was His minister and His was the altar of freedom: the Nation's soldiers set up on a hundred battle-fields. His power directed every in the East and delivered the Spanish fleet into our hands, as He delivered the elder Armada into the hands of our English sires centuries ago. The American people cannot use a dishonest medium of exchange; it is ours to set the world's example of right and honor. We can not fly from our world duties; it is ours to execute the purpose of a fate that has driven us to be greater than our mall intentions. We can not retreat from any soil where Providence has unfurled its banner; it is ours to save that soil for liberty and civilization.

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Analyze Beveridge's language for evidence of his understanding of race and its role in defining "civilization." How does he define the "mission of our race"?
2. To what extent does Beveridge draw on nineteenth-century notions of Manifest Destiny that had supported antebellum territorial expansion? How did he and other pro-expansionists adapt that language to the geopolitical needs of the turn of the century?
3. How does Beveridge answer critics who opposed American imperialism in the latter nineteenth century?

Answer these ?'s

1-2 | Deposed Queen Pleads for Her Island Kingdom
LILIUOKALANI, Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen (1898)

In 1898, when the United States entered a war with Spain over Cuba and the Philippines, Congress passed a resolution annexing the Hawaiian Islands, part of a growing colonization interest among many policymakers to extend the power and influence of the United States around the world. Hawaii was key for its strategic position in the central Pacific and for its trade, promoted by American business interests who in the early 1890s engineered the overthrow of the island's Queen Liliuokalani. Her 1898 memoir, published amidst failed efforts to obviate American politicians to oppose annexation, presented her island's plea for its restored sovereignty.

I have felt much perplexity over the attitude of the American press, that great vehicle of information for the people, in respect of Hawaiian affairs. Shakespeare has said it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant. It is not merely that, with few exceptions, the press has seemed to favor the extinction of Hawaiian sovereignty, but that it has often treated me with coarse allusions and flippancy, and almost uniformly has commented upon me adversely, or has declined to publish letters from myself and friends conveying correct information upon matters which other correspondents had, either wholly or through being deceived, misrepresented. Perhaps in many cases libellous matter was involved. Possibly the press was not conscious of how cruelly it was exerting its strength, and will try, I now trust, to repair the injury.

It has been shown that in Hawaii there is an alien element composed of men of energy and determination, well able to carry through what they undertake, but not scrupulous respecting their methods. They doubtless control all the resources and influence of the present ruling power in Honolulu, and will employ the tirelessly in the future, as they have in the past, to secure their ends. This annexationist party might prove to be a dangerous accession even to American politics, both on account of natural abilities, and because of the training of an autocratic life from earliest youth.

Many of these men are anything but ideal citizens for a democracy. That custom of freely serving each other without stipulation or reward which exists as a natural among our people has been even exaggerated in our hospitality to our teachers and advisers. Their children, and the associates they have drawn themselves, are accustomed to it. They have always been treated with distinction. They would hardly know how to submit to the contradictions, disappointments, and discourtesies of a purely emulative society.

It would remain necessary for them to rule in Hawaii, even if the American flag floated over them. And if they found they could be successfully opposed, would they seek no remedy? Where would men, already proved capable of withstanding the conservativeness of the United States and defeating its strongest traditions, capable of changing its colonial and foreign policy at a single coup, stop their schemes?

Perhaps I may even venture here upon a final word respecting the America advocates of this annexation of Hawaii. I observe that they have a prettier success: fully striving to make it a party matter. It is chiefly Republican statesmen and politicians who favor it. But is it really a matter of party interest? Is the America Republic of States to degenerate, and become a colonizer and a land-grabber?

And is this prospect satisfactory to a people who rely upon self-governor for their liberties, and whose guaranty of liberty and autonomy to the whole western hemisphere, the grand Monroe doctrine, appealing to the respect and the sense of justice of the masses of every nation on earth, has made any attack upon it practically impossible to the statesmen and rulers of armed empires. There is little question but that the United States could become a successful rival of the European nations in the race for conquest, and could create a vast militar; and naval power, if such is its ambition. But is such an ambition laudable? Is such a departure from its established principles patriotic or politic?

Here, at least for the present, I rest my pen. During my stay in the capital, suppose I must have met, by name and by card, at least five thousand callers. From most of these, by word, by grasp of hand, or at least by expression of countenance, I have received a sympathy and encouragement of which I cannot fully. Let it be understood that I have not failed to notice it, and to be grateful.
lattered by its universality, but further very grateful that I have had the opportunity to know the real American people, quite distinct from those who have assumed this honored name when it suited their selfish ends.

But for the Hawaiian people, for the forty thousand of my own race and blood, descendants of those who welcomed the devoted and pious missionaries of seventy years ago,—for them has this mission of mine accomplished anything?

Oh, honest Americans, as Christians hear me for my down-trodden people! Their form of government is as dear to them as yours is precious to you. Quite as warmly as you love your country, so they love theirs. With all your godly possessions, covering a territory so immense that there yet remain parts unexplored, possessing islands that, although near at hand, had to be neutral ground in time of war, do not covet the little vineyard of Naboth’s, so far from your shores, lest the punishment of Ahab fall upon you, if not in your day, in that of your children, for “be not deceived, God is not mocked.” The people to whom your fathers told of the living God, and taught to call “Father,” and whom the sons now seek to despise and destroy, are crying aloud to Him in their time of trouble; and He will keep His promise, and will listen to the voices of His Hawaiian children lamenting for their homes.

It is for them that I would give the last drop of my blood; it is for them that I would spend, nay, am spending, everything belonging to me. Will it be in vain? It is for the American people and their representatives in Congress to answer these questions. As they deal with me and my people, kindly, generously, and justly, so may the Great Ruler of all nations deal with the grand and glorious nation of the United States of America.

Answer these?

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What strategy does Liliuokalani use in her memoir to convince Americans to resist annexation? What does she imply will be the consequences for America of its overreach into the Pacific?

2. Whom does she blame for the political crisis in Hawaii? What inferences about American foreign policy can you draw from her assessment of Hawaii’s experiences?

21-3 Filipino Protests America’s Foreign Policy

SEMPER VIGILANS, Aguinaldo’s Case Against the United States (1899)

The War of 1898 toppled Spain’s control over the Philippines and encouraged American expansionists like Senator Albert Beveridge to advocate for an overseas empire. Subduing the Philippines was not as easy as many had expected, having assumed its population to be of an “inferior” race. Emilio Aguinaldo, a Filipino independence leader, initially sided with the Americans to oust Spain, but after U.S. policy turned to occupation, not liberation for the Filipinos, he led the resistance movement against American imperialism. Published in the North American Review, this letter, written anonymously by Semper Vigilans (or “always alert”), appeals to the American people.

We Filipinos have all along believed that if the American nation at large, exactly as we do, what is daily happening in the Philippine Islands, they will rise en masse, and demand that this barbaric war should stop. There are o methods of securing sovereignty—the true and lasting sovereignty that its foundation in the hearts of the people. . . . And, did America recognize fact, she would cease to be the laughing stock of other civilized nations she became when she abandoned her traditions and set up a double standard government—government by consent in America, government by force in Philippine Islands. . . .

You have been deceived all along the line. You have been greatly deceive the personality of my countrymen. You went to the Philippines under the impulsion that their inhabitants were ignorant savages, whom Spain had kept in subjection at the bayonet’s point. The Filipinos have been described in seri American journals as akin to the hordes of the Khallifa; and the idea has prevails that it required only some unknown American Kitchener to march triumphantly from north to south to make the military occupation complete. We have been represented by your popular press as if we were Africans or Mohawk Indians. We smile, and deplore the want of ethnological knowledge on the part of our errant friends. We are none of these. We are simply Filipinos. You know us now part: you will know us better, I hope, by and by.

Some clear-headed men in the United States Senate knew the facts; but, a genius and correct thinking are ever in the minority.

I will not deny that there are savages in the Philippine Islands, if you designate by that name those who lead a nomad life, who do not pay tribute acknowledge sovereignty to any one save their chief. For, let it be remembered Spain held these islands for three hundred years, but never conquered more than one-quarter of them, and that only superficially and chiefly by means of craft. The Spaniards never professed to derive their just powers from the consent of those whom they attempted to govern. What they took by force, they lost force at our hands; and you deceived yourselves when you bought a revolution for twenty million dollars, and entangled yourselves in international politics.

“Non decipitur specie recti.”1 You imagined you had bought the Philippines for the Philippines for this mess of potage. Your imperialism led you, blind-fold, purchase “sovereignty” from a third party who had no title to give you—a confidence trick, certainly, very transparent; a bad bargain, and one we have had sufficient perspicacity and education to see through.

1Non decipitur specie recti (“we are not deceived by the appearance of right”): A play on a line from the Roman poet Horace, meaning in this context that the Filipinos are not deceived.
In the struggle for liberty which we have ever waged, the education of the races has been slow; but we are not, on that account, an uneducated people, as records show. Your Senators, even, admit that our political documents are worthy of a place in the archives of any civilized nation. It is the fittest and the last of our race who have suffered the vile oppression of the Spanish Government, on the one hand, and of their priests on the other; and, had it not been for their tyrannical “sovereignty” and their execrable colonial methods, we would have been, ere this time, a power in the East, as our neighbors, the Japanese, have come by their industry and their modern educational methods.

You repeat constantly the dictum that we cannot govern ourselves. Macaulay in his equal reason, you might have said the same thing some fifty or sixty years ago of Japan; and, little over a hundred years ago, it was extremely questionable, then you, also, were rebels against the English Government, if you could govern yourselves. You obtained the opportunity, thanks to political combinations and sanguinary assistance at the critical moment. You passed with credit through the ring period when you had to make a beginning of governing yourselves, and you eventually succeeded in establishing a government on a republican basis, real, theoretically, is as good a system of government as needs be, as it fulfills just ideals and aspirations of the human race.

Now, the moral of all this obviously is: Give us the chance; treat us exactly as you demand to be treated at the hands of England, when you rebelled against autocratic methods. Deal only with facts in a rational and consistent way.

You declared war with Spain for the sake of Humanity. You announced to the world that your purpose was to set Cuba free, in conformity with your constitutional principles. One of your ablest officials gave it as his opinion that the Filipinos were far more competent to govern themselves than the Cuban people were. You entered into an alliance with our chiefs at Hong Kong and at Singapore, and you promised us your aid and protection in our attempt to form a government on the principles and after the model of the government of the United States.

You went to Manila under a distinct understanding with us, fully recognized Admiral Dewey, that your object and ours was a common one. We were your accepted allies; we assisted you at all points. We besieged Manila, and we prevented the Spaniards from leaving the fortified town. We captured all the provinces of Luzon. We received arms from you. Our chiefs were in constant touch with your naval authorities. Your envoys vied with each other in their efforts to arrange matters according to the promises made to us by your officials. We hailed our own as the long-prayed-for Messiah.

Joy abounded in every heart, and all went well, with Admiral George Dewey as our guide and friend, until the arrival of General Merritt. Either on his own responsibility, or by orders from the Government at Washington, this general substituted his policy for that of Admiral Dewey, commencing by ignoring all promises that had been made and ending by ignoring the Philippine people, their personality and rights, and treating them as a common enemy.
Your scheme of military occupation has been a miserable failure. You have gained practically nothing. . . . Our forces are manufacturing thousands of cartridges and other improved means to continue the struggle, and it will continue until you are convinced of your error. . . .

Be convinced, the Philippines are for the Filipinos. We are a virile race. We have never assimilated with our former oppressors, and we are not likely to assimilate with you.

**Answer these questions:**

**READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Based on this source, what can you infer about the ordinary American's interest in U.S. foreign policy? What does the author suggest about Americans' knowledge of the Philippines?

2. How does the author use America's own history in his appeal on behalf of the Filipino resistance movement led by Aguinaldo? What reaction do you think he was expecting his letter to have on Americans and their elected representatives?

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**21-4 | Antiwar Song Stirs Peace Movement**

**ALFRED BRYAN AND AL PIANITADOSI, "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier" (1915)**

Despite overseas adventures in the War of 1898 and subsequent interference in Latin American affairs, many Americans embraced the tradition of isolationism. With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, peace advocates resisted the interventionists' cry for the beginning of war preparations. A song by Alfred Bryan and Al Piantadosi, published in 1915, captures the spirit of the peace movement.

Ten million soldiers to the war have gone,
Who may never return again.
Ten million mothers' hearts must break
For the ones who died in vain.
Head bowed down in sorrow
In her lonely years,
I heard a mother murmur thro' her tears:

I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy.
Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder,
To shoot some other mother's darling boy?
Let nations arbitrate their future troubles,