**“Brown Man’s Burden” by Luis Francia**

In 1896, Filipinos rose up against their Spanish overlords, in the first Asian revolution against a Western colonial power. They had largely succeeded in defeating the Spanish when the United States, eager to join the ranks of empire, declared war on Spain in 1898. The two main fronts were Cuba and the Philippines, but the Asian part of the war all but ended with the May 1 Battle of Manila Bay, when American warships, under the command of George Dewey, decimated the decrepit Spanish flotilla, with hardly a loss of American life. It is this short-lived, three-month-long Spanish-American War that Americans are taught to remember.

What they are not taught about is its more vicious sequel, the 1899 Philippine-American War.

Through the Treaty of Paris in December 1898, and for $20 million (or about $3 for each of the country's 7 million inhabitants), Spain had ceded the Philippines to the U.S. rather than to its brown-skinned inhabitants, who had, after all, proven ungrateful for their more than 300 years of colonial tutelage by establishing the Philippine Republic. The new nation, headed by Emilio Aguinaldo, refused to acquiesce to this early instance of U.S.-induced regime change. The resulting war officially ended in 1902 but dragged on in guerrilla skirmishes until 1910.

The costs to the U.S. were much larger than those of the Spanish-American War: by 1902, 4234 American war dead and 2818 wounded; $600 million in military expenditures; and at least $8 billion disbursed in pensions. The burden on Filipinos was enormous: at least 250,000 to 1 million mostly civilian lives (a seventh of the population), indicative of the ferocity of the American campaign—the nature of which is celebrated in the songs of the Military Order of the Carabao, founded in 1900. There were massacres, well known to Filipinos, in such places as Balangiga and Bud Dajo, that foretold My Lai more than half a century later. Many American officers were veterans of genocidal campaigns against Native Americans, with whom the pesky guerrillas were equated.

Vigorous public opposition to the war as morally unjust and to U.S. annexation was spearheaded by the Boston-based Anti-Imperialist League, whose most eloquent spokesman was Mark Twain. At first applauding the U.S.'s seemingly altruistic intervention in the Filipinos' struggle against Spanish rule, Twain later wrote against hypocritical U.S. foreign policy, pointing out the existence of "two Americas: one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive's new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him, with nothing found on it; then kills him to get his land." Rudyard Kipling, on the other hand, penned "The White Man's Burden," exhorting the U.S. to take over the islands. President William McKinley, duly persuaded, said it was America's duty to "civilize and Christianize" the natives, ignoring the fact that they had been largely Catholic for over three centuries.

American colonization of the Philippines lasted until 1946, when formal independence was "given," though "restored" would have been more accurate. By then, the archipelago had become the cornerstone of American imperial dreams in the East, with two of its largest overseas bases there: Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base.