



# Killing the Third World: civilisational security as US grand strategy

Randolph B. Persaud

American University, NW Washington, DC, USA

## ABSTRACT

This article disputes explanations of American expansionism that are based on the requirements of national security or more abstract theories such as the balance of power. In contradistinction to the imperatives of defence and survival, the article shows how civilisational factors weighed heavily on the emergence of US grand strategy at the turn of the nineteenth century. In particular assumptions about the peoples of the Third World being lesser played an important role in the conception and legitimisation of imperial expansion. During this period, the US Navy went through a dramatic build-up. The article shows the ways in which the worldviews of many of the key players (such as Alfred Mahan and Theodore Roosevelt) contributed to the militarisation of global racism, a development that led to widespread killing in the Philippines and elsewhere.

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## Introduction: the ongoing defence of empire

'On the whole, the white administrator and the Christian missionary have exercised a profound and wholesome influence for good in savage regions.'

President Theodore Roosevelt, January 18, 1909

(<http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/speeches/trwhiteraces.pdf>)

This article examines the late entry of the United States into the politics of empire from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> The focus is on the emergence of American grand strategy in the context of intense racialisation of global politics, the rise of scientific theories of race, and the consolidation of an Orientalist global division between the worlds of the 'civilised' and the 'dammed'.<sup>2</sup> This was the period and set of circumstances under which W. E. B. Du Bois noted that the emerging problem in the twentieth century would be a global colour line.<sup>3</sup> It was also the time when men like Theodore Roosevelt felt that God had commended the upliftment of the 'darker corners' of the earth to the 'White race'. Realists, liberals and their 'neos' generally agree on the need for an American grand strategy, even if they disagree on its primary aims and objectives, or how it should be organised. Broadly speaking, although some mainstream international relations (IR) theorists, such as Christopher Layne,<sup>4</sup> are sceptical about a US grand strategy geared *only* towards

**CONTACT** Randolph B. Persaud ✉ [persaud@american.edu](mailto:persaud@american.edu) 📍 American University, NW Washington, DC, USA

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hegemony, they all agree on its existence (regional or global) as well as its embeddedness in US strategic thinking.<sup>5</sup> Strategic thinkers also have a variety of perspectives on American primacy. For Stephen Walt, the main reason for pursuing primacy is that the world is 'dangerous'.<sup>6</sup> Hegemony and primacy are remarkably similar in that they both articulate positions of maximum power. The difference between the two is that the former, which comes out best in Mearsheimer's offensive realism, theorises that the *natural propensity* of rational states is to grab as much power as possible. Primacy, however, though also based on rational self-interest, is the outcome of strategic *policies*. In the imagined world of rationalist IR, humanity and its most sophisticated form of political organisations – states – are plagued by anarchy, danger, fear and a never-ending lust for power. Even the neo-liberal institutionalists who believe in structured cooperation assume some of the key attributes of the famous Hobbesian aphorism – 'life is nasty, brutish, and short'. In a nutshell, rationalist IR is built on the assumption that states act to protect themselves (and the nation), to seek security and thus to guarantee *survival*.

I argue that while rational self-interest expressed in economic calculations, balance-of-power politics and projection of military power for geostrategic reasons did factor heavily in the American gambit on the world stage, civilisational considerations played an equally important role. The civilisational component itself is made up of several elements including race and racism,<sup>7</sup> Christian expansionism, and a duty to intervene in the Third World to teach self-governance, and, more broadly, to guide the supposedly backward peoples from assumed savagery or barbarism to modernity. Robert Vitalis has shown that, in fact, the very founding of American IR was linked to racial assumptions, combined with a grand strategy of cultural, political and economic 'upliftment' of the 'coloured world'. Moreover, Vitalis' *White World Order, Black Power Politics* shows that the first grand strategy debates in the United States were around problems of global race management, and in fact global race wars.

The rational and cultural/civilisational aspects of foreign policy and security are not separate practices or differential historical developments. Rather, as I show here, the economic, military and political aspects of foreign engagements were intimately imbricated in larger cultural/civilisational assumptions. The fit was at once so tight and comprehensive that the rational aspects might be explained as a *continuation* of what I see as *geocivilisational universalism*, meaning imperial *subsumption* of non-European societies in much the same way that commodity capitalism was at the time drawing in societies based on pre-capitalist and proto-capitalist forms of production relations.<sup>8</sup> In contradistinction to Kim's position that economic interests were the driving force behind imperialism, while race was a legitimising factor, I take the position that the economic and the racio-civilisational were part of the same historical structure configured around ideas, institutions,<sup>9</sup> and material factors (economic and geopolitical interests).<sup>10</sup> Beckert's 'war capitalism' captures this historical unity between the rise of capitalism, racial domination and war.<sup>11</sup> And Jeremy Black demonstrates that the rise of geopolitics as a subject matter and as a way of thinking about strategy came directly out of consideration of both state competition and civilisational concerns.

The postcolonial perspective employed in this article is influenced by the counterhegemonic and postcolonial literature at large, and also by the specific work done on security by scholars working in the same tradition. Barkawi and Laffey have rightfully noted IR is profoundly Eurocentric.<sup>12</sup> Eurocentrism, a term coined by the Egyptian–French scholar Samir Amin, is a matter of perspective, in this case meaning that the 'story' of IR is always told from the side of the powerful West. For Barkawi and Laffey, the 'West' is not an internal space, but

one that is relationally constituted through its multiple forms of connections to the various Others.<sup>13</sup> For Krishna, Eurocentric IR is caught up in abstractionism and amnesia.<sup>14</sup> Laffey and Nadarajah stress violence against the colonised, but also affirm the importance of structural violence in the administration of colonial and imperial power.<sup>15</sup> More recently, Muppidi has focused on mass destruction and wanton killing, and the ways in which atrocities have become only passing moments in and of popular culture.<sup>16</sup>

### **Teddy Roosevelt, Alfred Mahan and company**

Individuals hardly make history by themselves. Yet historical development cannot occur outside of human agency, including individuals who have a demonstrable impact on society. American foreign policy at the turn of the nineteenth century was tremendously influenced by a group of men, most of whom knew and influenced each other, and who often acted together. Among the most notable who occupied state office were Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, Elihu Root, Alfred Beveridge and William Jennings Bryan. Others, though not policymakers *per se*, were also decisive in the extant developments. These included Alfred Thayer Mahan and Josiah Strong. While each man made his distinctive contribution, the one thing that they shared and acted on were forms of civilisational supremacy, meaning quite literally that their actions were, in part, guided by an assumption that people of European ancestry were superior human beings to all others.<sup>17</sup> Common beliefs never reached unanimity of perspective or policy, but all worked with forms of civilisational theologies where 'white intellect and power' was an internal propellant of a Euro-centred historical humanity. Manifest Destiny was thought of as historical *will* embedded in the dialectic of History, an expression of Plato's *Demiurge* and of the intellectual and scientific achievements of Christian Europe.

Two of the men mentioned above, Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred T. Mahan, had a decisive impact on the American understanding of the place of the United States in world politics. They had formidable knowledge of naval warfare in both theory and practice. Roosevelt wrote a thesis on the subject at Harvard while still an undergraduate. After graduating in 1880, he completed the manuscript which was published as *The Naval War of 1812*.<sup>18</sup> Mahan was a captain in the US Navy and then President of the Naval War College. His book – *The Influence of Sea Power on History* – was then, and still is today, universally accepted as one of the most important books on naval warfare.<sup>19</sup> In addition to being recognised historians of naval matters, both Roosevelt and Mahan were ardent supporters – actually leaders – in agitating for building a bigger and stronger American navy (ably supported by Lodge and Root). Of the two, Mahan was the more renowned naval strategist, but Roosevelt regularly invoked Mahan once he (Roosevelt) became Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1897.

The Roosevelt–Mahan partnership had three broad elements, and while this is not the place to elaborate on each, a brief outline is necessary to establish one of the major claims here, namely that the prosecution of war against the Third World cannot be understood simply as the outcome of geopolitical or geostrategic considerations. The evidence that Roosevelt and Mahan were *geocivilisational* theorists can be derived from their voluminous writings, speeches and policies. T. F. X. Varacalli perhaps put it best when he argued that Mahan was a 'progressive expansionist' where national interest and 'moral responsibility' were fused in the dialectic of historical unfolding.<sup>20</sup>

Mahan himself was of the belief that land power, and the army, were limited for the requirements of the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century. For him, the US had reached an end point, both physically in terms of geography and in terms of economic opportunity. In geographical terms, the United States had reached what could be seen as the terminal stage of Manifest Destiny on the continent. In economic terms, America was proving to be an industrial economy to be reckoned with. Manufacturing in Great Britain fell dramatically from 31.8% to 14.0% of the world's total between 1870 and 1913. And while France also showed long-term decline, Germany inched up a bit from 13.2% to 15.7% during the same period. The real story, however, was the massive rise of the United States, from 23.3% to 35.8%, or more than a third of the world total manufacturing output.<sup>21</sup> Jacobson has detailed some of the consequences of what was then known as 'overproduction' in America. This overproduction led the National Association of Manufacturers to the conclusion that 'foreign trade was the only promise of relief.'<sup>22</sup> The American economy went through stepwise growth in the period under consideration. For instance, whereas the Gross National Product 'for the period 1869–1883 was \$9 billion; for the five-year period 1897–1901, [it was] over \$37 billion.'<sup>23</sup> The sectorial share of capital formation in the US demonstrates the dramatic rise in manufacturing of durable goods; 1834–1843, 21%; 1869–1878, 31%; 1884–1893, 43%; 1889–1898, 45%; 1894–1903, 51%; and 1899–1908, 57%.<sup>24</sup> Importantly, this 'overproduction' crisis of US manufactures also dovetailed with the dramatic rise of US exports of goods in this sector. Irwin has shown that, led by iron and steel, US exports grew from 20% in 1890 to 35% in 1900, and then quite dramatically by 50% in 1913.<sup>25</sup>

Production and trade data, however, is not sufficient to demonstrate the tight fit among the new strategic thinking based on sea power, economic growth, exports and civilisational assumptions of America's place in the world. The need for the economy to be more export driven did not *cause* the naval expansion. Nor is the argument that civilisational assumptions caused US geostrategic and commercial policies correct. It is best to see the fit described above as a kind of historical structure, where ideas, institutions and material capabilities either constitute a stable international structure, or where (as in our case) a new configuration was needed to facilitate emerging developments. In this case, rapid changes in the production structure, combined with new geostrategic thinking (themselves partially linked to ideas of America's global responsibility), condensed with new institutional forms as expressed in the Open Door policy, and greater stress on *laissez faire*. McCormick, who does not agree on the spiritual side of the argument is, nonetheless, clear that the American political, economic and intellectual elites roundly accepted that securing Chinese trade was central to American prosperity, and that Hawaii and the Philippines were important waystations to that end. For him, McKinley wanted to make the Philippines an 'American Hong Kong', and transform it into a 'commercial entrepôt to the China market and a center of American military power.'<sup>26</sup> Mahan took stock of the rise of American industrial output and the increasing need to find external markets, and in fact Varacalli correctly notes that for Mahan, 'sea power' was an *economic term*.<sup>27</sup> Mahan argued that the future of the United States faced east, towards Asia, and especially China with 400 million customers. Commerce, however, was intimately tied to the capacity to secure markets in a world that was dominated by colonial powers. Not only did all the Great Powers have colonies, but these same nations were seeking to carve out China in spheres of influence.

Further, the long-term economic decline of Great Britain coincided with the rise of German military capability, and not least the massive expansion of the German Navy. Mahan's

contribution to naval theory, strategy and US policy was extraordinary and well beyond this article. The issue now is how to connect his naval perspective with his cultural and civilisational worldview. On numerous occasions Mahan made the case that offensive naval power is central to both the defence and the advancement of US commerce. Now, given that Mahan also thought Asia would be the 'next frontier', the question became how a naval strategy would be structured. Since US ships could not reach Asia without refueling, Hawaii, long under siege from US commercial interests, would be gobbled up to enable the US Navy's new strategic posture. The commerce-defence strategy also pushed Mahan to advocate for cutting a canal through Nicaragua in order to connect the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the US. This vision led to the dismemberment of Colombia, and the creation of Panama, largely to facilitate the Panama Canal. In the meantime, insurrections – actually wars of liberation, as postcolonial scholars would argue – had broken out against the Spanish Empire in Cuba and the Philippines, both of which would figure into the grand calculations.<sup>28</sup> It was in this context that Mahan advanced the idea of taking Hawaii and using it as a coaling station. The essence of the theory was based on both defence and offence in which secure coastlines would not only prevent enemy incursion, but most importantly free up the larger assets of the navy for offensive action, including offshore operations. While Mahan was without doubt in the mould of what we know as classical realism, he also had a good deal of nation-building idealism. This is why he quite often wrote about the power of the navy as an instrument of defending the national interest *and* meeting American *duties*. As Black observed, 'Mahan sought naval power for the United States to effect his view of the national destiny of international power expressed through naval strength'.<sup>29</sup> Black labels these developments 'geopolitical navalism'.

Further, for Mahan 'the strategic value of any position, be it body of land large or small, or a seaport, or a strait, depends upon the (1) situation (with reference chiefly to communications), (2) upon its strength inherent or acquired, and (3) upon its resources (natural or stored).'<sup>30</sup> While strength and resources could be manipulated in the short term, there was nothing any state could do about location. It is in this context that Mahan made the case for the annexation of Hawaii. Part of the rationale was that Japan might do the same. Yet the case for annexation of Hawaii was located in a much broader, long-term, historical impulse, one where Mahan is not only a naval strategist, but also a 'philosopher' and 'anthropologist'. Thus, in an article in *Forum* (March 1883) Mahan called on Americans to take up America's destiny. He averred: 'In our infancy we boarded upon the Atlantic only; our youth carried our boundary to the Gulf of Mexico; today maturity sees us upon the Pacific. Have we no right or no call to progress farther in any direction?'<sup>31</sup> Mahan constructed his discourse in the language not only of empire, but of a 'calling'.<sup>32</sup>

*The Influence of Sea Power on History* (1890) did not go unnoticed,<sup>33</sup> and not least by Theodore Roosevelt. In fact, he wrote an extensive and thoughtful review of the book. The review actually points to Roosevelt's sense of a larger purpose for the navy other than defence of the nation. According to Roosevelt, the book went beyond the technical aspects of naval power, specific battles, or strategy and tactics. Rather, for Roosevelt, Mahan had shown 'the exact points and the wonderful extent of the influence of sea power on the various contending nations upon their ultimate triumph or failure, and upon futures of the mighty races to which they belonged'.<sup>34</sup> In the same review, Roosevelt went on to make an impassioned case for a robust American navy, a cause that he would fight for relentlessly.

## Race and civilisation as strategy

There were two powerful historical forces embedded in the thinking of Euro-American statesmen at the time: firstly, a colonising will, meaning here a material expansion of Western power, and secondly, a total-global expansion of the Western cultural values and practices of modernity.<sup>35</sup> The former took the form of imperialism, and the latter what I see as *immanent responsibility*, meaning a fusion of *expansion and providence*.<sup>36</sup> As a matter of lived history the two components were inextricably linked at the turn of the nineteenth century. This admixture of what I previously conceptualised as an admixture of primitive and benevolent hegemony was evident in the works of numerous influential writers who generally called on the leader of the United States to keep on with the westward march of History.<sup>37</sup>

Josiah Strong (1847–1916) was an ‘organic intellectual’ of material expansion and immanent responsibility. Strong, a clergyman and Christian leader, implored Americans to take cognisance of the uniqueness of the time in which they were living. He felt that the prosperity of the times and the peace that existed for the United States was an opportune moment for the US to grab the mantle of global leadership, to take ‘its own place in history.’<sup>38</sup> This was the same sentiment expressed in another part of the world as the White Man’s Burden. American immanent responsibility was seen not only as a matter of philosophical thinking, but also as a general logic or systematic unfolding of History.<sup>39</sup> In this story, the Anglo-Saxon race (so constructed in various turn-of-the-century texts) had discovered the most fundamental principles of civilisation, which are liberty and the right of the individual. This individualism is indivisible from Christianity and thus ‘it is chiefly to the English and American peoples that we must look for the evangelization of the world.’<sup>40</sup> Most emphatically for Strong, the responsibility ‘is divinely commissioned, in a peculiar sense, his brother’s keeper.’<sup>41</sup> Fifteen years after the publication of *Our Country*, Strong published *Expansion Under New World-Conditions*<sup>42</sup> in which he boldly, and without a hint of compunction, attacked George Washington’s admonition about meddling in foreign lands. More remarkable than that was his grateful acknowledgement of Mahan’s influence on his thinking.<sup>43</sup> Strong had no monopoly on the contiguity between the US Navy, imperialism and *immanent responsibility*.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana offered a tighter amalgamation among the seemingly disparate instances. In September 1898, in a speech intended to defend President McKinley’s annexation of Hawaii and incursion into Cuba, Senator Beveridge ascended to the highest peak of civilisational patriotism, stating with unmitigated clarity that Americans ‘are God’s chosen people’, and that the navy is integral to the project. Pushing back against anti-imperialist sentiments, he thundered that ‘the ocean does not separate us from the lands of our *duty* and desire; the ocean joins us’ (author’s emphasis). In one fell swoop he reprimanded the anti-imperialist who would rather stick to a contiguous territory and went on to fashion a perfect fit between violent (primitive) hegemony and immanent responsibility. In his own words:

Cuba not contiguous! Porto Rico not contiguous! Hawaii and the Philippines not contiguous!<sup>44</sup> Our navy will make them contiguous. [Admiral] Dewey, [Rear Admiral] Sampson and [Rear Admiral] Schley have made them contiguous and American speed, American guns, American heart and brain and nerve will keep them together forever.<sup>45</sup>

Senator Beveridge was not to be outdone. There was also Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, an ardent advocate of a naval build-up, and a close ally of Theodore Roosevelt (before and during his presidency). Senator Lodge delivered a speech in the Senate in April 1898, just



about when the Roughriders were getting ready for their Cuban mission. He chastised that had Congress listened to him and built a larger and stronger navy with 20 battleships, and a hundred torpedo boats, there would have been no need for war because the navy would simply have tapped Spain on the shoulder and told them to stop.<sup>46</sup> It was not long before in the same speech that the illustrious Senator from Massachusetts embarked on the civilising aspect that the US Navy would (have) empowered. He attacked Spain as corrupt, 'still in mediaeval [period of history], cruel, dying'; and that 'this process of Spanish decay began far back, three hundred years ago'.<sup>47</sup> Much like Beveridge and Josiah Strong, Lodge attributed the superiority, the right to intervene and the chance of success to the fact that 'in our veins runs the blood of Holland and the blood of England'.<sup>48</sup> If Mahan's principal concern was the navy followed by civilisational defence, Senator Lodge's was the reverse: civilisational expansionism demanded a great navy.

### **Common themes in imperialist thought**

The common themes of imperialist thinking in the late nineteenth century were indivisible from the massive resistances that were substantially developed in Cuba and the Philippines in their respective wars of liberation. Hawaii, on the other hand, saw its sovereignty captured by American private (including corporate) citizens, and by the US Navy, but only after a long struggle led by the indefatigable Queen Liliuokalani.<sup>49</sup> It is well to remember that the strength of this same resistance by Hawaiians forced President Grover Cleveland to desist from annexing it. A common theme among influential imperialists in late nineteenth-century America was the inability of 'Asiatics' to govern themselves. Somewhat similar to today's nation-building projects, the thinking then was not only that Asians lacked the means to deliver what today we would call state capacity, but rather that only Euro-America knew what *is* freedom. The Asians, Africans and Latin Americans have been bereft of liberty. Actual freedom has been impossible because these Others did not have even a concept of freedom in any aspect of life including the right of the individual, the right of property, or the concept of national sovereignty. Lodge himself held the view that 'there never has been ... the slightest indication of any desire for what we call freedom or representative government east of Constantinople'.<sup>50</sup> Theodore Roosevelt often characterised any place that Europeans or their descendants did not hold as 'wasteland'; this idea being significantly influenced by assuming that non-Europeans did not have ownership of their land because they did not have any concept of ownership. An associated implication of the absence of the concept of private property was that any land, anywhere, that is not developed would be considered abandoned, and if so, then it was available to those who had the power to take it and to develop it.

Related to the assumed absence of the concept of freedom was the thematic of the inability of non-European peoples to self-govern. This is perhaps the most common spiritualisation of Euro-American colonialism and imperialism. Some of the most eloquent statements ever delivered in the United States Congress were grounded on the God-appointed duty of the 'White Man' to teach governing. In order to facilitate this principle of duty, and of intervention, imperial thinkers had to produce multiple forms of what Chatterjee has called the colonial exception.<sup>51</sup> By this we should understand that (Euro-American) political practice in the colony (or occupied country/territory) is exempted from the universal benefits articulated with Western philosophy, theology, political theory, economic theory and cultural

principles. According to Chatterjee, 'the most reliable definition of an imperial practice remains that of the privilege to declare the exception to the norm.'<sup>52</sup>

The most overarching of all strategic intersections at the turn of the nineteenth century was the US Navy and American *duty* to those deemed in need of spiritual, political, economic and technological upliftment. The weight of Christian duty was so powerful and so pervasive that it must be added as a corrective to the standard understanding of national interest defined on the basis of purely secular beliefs. The evidence for this is so overwhelming that it compels a rethinking of the very nature not only of interest but also of imperialism. Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy specify the American spiritual impulse under three rubrics. Firstly, Americans have a powerful sense of being a chosen people, a people who are exceptional in identity and destiny. The second element 'has to do with how to deal with dissent, how to deal with people whose views differ from your own.'<sup>53</sup> The options for Americans, according to Augelli and Murphy, are to 'isolate yourself from them ... , convert them, or destroy them.'<sup>54</sup> Finally, it is the 'limited American idea of charity'<sup>55</sup> which reflects notions of the exceptional character of the American people. Duty, however, functions not only as spiritual conversion and charity, but also through coercion as a form of transformative discipline.

For Theodore Roosevelt, these two dimensions, the spiritual and the coercive, of America's calling were inseparable. His world was also nurtured in the womb of a virile, militaristic and racial masculinity. No one exemplified the combination of US naval power, and foreign intervention more than this 26<sup>th</sup> President (1901–1909) of the United States.

Teddy Roosevelt had a wide and interconnected conception of duty. First, Americans have a duty to themselves to be hardworking and efficient; a duty to family where parents must raise their children to be rough, bold, brave, manly and courageous; women have the duty to give birth to as many (white) children as possible, failing which would be a dereliction of duty to the race; all Americans have a duty,<sup>56</sup> a higher duty to the state, including always being available to fight the 'Red Indians' (so described), to be ready to conquer 'wastelands', and to die for the race/nation in the struggle against inferior races and their wild barbarism. For Roosevelt, the American patriot becomes a real 'man' when he is prepared to die in foreign lands to raise the American flag, for this is the greatest symbol of the march, the duty of civilised peoples.

'Such is the record of which we are so proud', he wrote in *The Strenuous Life*.

It is the record of men who greatly dared and greatly did; a record of wanderings wider and more dangerous than those of the Vikings; a record of endless feats of arms, of victory after victory in the ceaseless strife waged against wild man and wild nature. The winning of the West was the great epic feat in the history of our race.<sup>57</sup>

If Roosevelt felt, as he did, that the greatest duty to the nation on American soil was to tame the West through violent conquest and wanton destruction of Native American lives, all the while thinking of it as a noble, moral and God-inspired gift to the 'wild man', then his impulse for American expansionism was informed by a more expansive sweep. There was no limit to what the United States should do, where it should do it or how it should be done. While his conquest of the West could be accomplished by horseback, his global millenarianism required far more robust force. His quest for a world-class American navy and his views about American (racio-civilisational) immanent responsibility were indivisible. Thus, in numerous speeches and writings, as well as in the practice of war, the US Navy was a sort



of armored extension of the American racial supremacy, a point systematically developed by Singh.<sup>58</sup>

We see the contiguity of rugged man and naval power, and civilisational duty tightly sutured. To those like William Jennings Bryan and Mark Twain who were anti-imperialist, Roosevelt offered the most humiliating scorn. They were not true Americans, real Americans, and history will judge them harshly. Biographer Nathan Miller notes that upon arriving at the Navy Department in April 1897, Roosevelt immediately set upon a course of naval expansion, and along with that, policies of intervention and imperialism about which President McKinley was a bit more hesitant. Within the space of a little over a year of him taking office in the US Navy, the United States annexed Hawaii, intervened in Cuba, and commenced a long a bloody war in the Philippines, a war that Mark Twain had no hesitation in labeling imperialist.

### Conquest of the Philippines

'I am in my glory when I can sight my gun on some dark skin and pull the trigger'.

A.A. Barnes, 3<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Infantry, 20 March 1899.<sup>59</sup>

The war in the Philippines is particularly indicative of the practice of racial imperialism, brutality against the people of that country, and more broadly the Third World, and the assertion of the goodness of conquest for the conquered. Roosevelt was certainly not alone in this imperial cause. Lodge, Root, Hay, Beveridge, Henry and Brook Adams, 'all educated, cultivated, and patrician in outlook',<sup>60</sup> shared an 'aristocratic code' combined with an imperial idealism, their 'superiority taken for granted' and their privilege to be 'paid in duty'.<sup>61</sup> The fiercer the debate about the war in the Philippines, the more duty, manhood and American power were asserted in tandem.<sup>62</sup> As we see below, however, the duty to teach the 'natives' about self-government and all the other accoutrements of civilised life not only fell well short of the tutor's own principles, but were often fantastic inventions that would have been impossible without a racial epistemology.<sup>63</sup>

General Emilio Aguinaldo and his army of over 40,000 had fought against the Spanish colonisers in a war of liberation that began in 1895. The United States entered the picture only in May 1898, just about when the Spanish were on the brink of defeat. The US Navy made quick work of the wooden vessels of the Spanish. On 10 December 1898, the US and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris, in effect terminating the war.<sup>64</sup> The Filipinos, however, would have to wait nearly half a century for their independence because the United States asserted claims over the Philippine Islands. On 4 February 1899, war again broke out, this time with General Aguinaldo and his men fighting what would turn out to be a bloody war against the people of the Philippines. By the time the war was finished in 1902, some 250,000 (a minimal estimate) Filipinos were killed, compared to 4165 Americans, a ratio of about 50:1.<sup>65</sup> This killing would be repeated many times more in the Third World throughout the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first.

The war visited an unspeakable level of cruelty against the Filipinos, including numerous massacres, waterboarding, torture, destruction of entire villages, mass burning of crops, and killing of the vanquished 'natives' for what can only be described as a spectator sport. The magnitude of the killings, combined with the techniques through which they were executed,

had very little to do with military strategy or tactics, and more to do with the definition of the Filipino as less than human, which in the first place is partly why the conquest took place – that is, to teach civilisation. In the language of Judith Butler, they were not grievable lives.<sup>66</sup> In an act of retaliation against Filipinos who had killed 48 American soldiers at Balangiga in 1901, General Jacob Smith, the US commander on the scene, ordered the killing of anyone who could pose a threat. The general ordered the utter destruction of Samar: 'I wish you to kill and burn, the more you kill and burn the better it will please me.'<sup>67</sup> Estimates of the number of Filipinos killed in that act of retaliation are as high as 50,000.<sup>68</sup>

In *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating & Empire-Building*, Richard Drinnon details the extraordinary new knowledges that had to be produced as a part of the strategy of complete pacification. In this regard, the work of University of Michigan professor Worcester is most relevant. The main strategy of the American professor was to deny that such a thing as a Filipino *people* existed, because if there were a *people* of the Philippines, then the 'good-works' of Christian-American duty would be much more difficult. If the Philippines had a people, it would also mean they had a nation and a country, which in turn would have the right to independence – that is, national sovereignty. Instead of a country or nation, they were called the Philippine Islands – that is, a *people* are transformed into a geographical unit. What the war could not quite do, therefore, anthropology accomplished. Worcester employed a taxonomical system in which he broke up the Filipinos into eighty-four *tribes*, one of which was reduced to 'little woolly headed, black, dwarf savages'.<sup>69</sup> Secretary of War Elihu Root boldly proclaimed: 'There is no Philippine people'. Regardless of the juridical or ontological status of a Philippine people, the first formal instrument of governance of the country was etched in explicit imperial supremacy. The first of the 11 clauses of the Schurman Commission which set out the governing architecture of the country upon US occupation read: 'The supremacy of the United States must and will be enforced throughout every part of the Archipelago, and those who resist it can accomplish no end other than their own ruin'. This was a directive issued directly by President McKinley.<sup>70</sup> In his second State of the Union address (4 March 1901), the president wove an extraordinary text in which he combined elements of tutelage, threats of violence, and what amounted to immediate erasure of what was happening on the ground. He spoke about allowing self-government when the 'inhabitants of the islands' were 'ready' for it. In a stunning reversal of what was observable to the naked eye, McKinley declared that 'We are not waging war against the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands. A portion of them are making war against us'.<sup>71</sup>

Notwithstanding Roosevelt's voluminous writings and speeches delivered, none captures the fit between his *realpolitik* grand strategy and his civilisational *weltanschauung* so well as the one delivered in Washington on 18 January 1909. Quite aptly, the title of the speech was 'The Expansion of the White Race'.<sup>72</sup> Teddy Roosevelt spoke to the matter with great clarity. He acknowledged that (although not very 'frequently') there was 'wanton, brutal, and ruthless inhumanity by the white intruders', that global white expansion had been for the benefit of the 'darker corners of the earth'. In his view, those in the so-called dark corners who complain are able to do so because they 'have learned enough to feel discontented' and have 'prospered enough' to show their 'ingratitude'. The president's long obsession with population, a topic of concern to eugenicists during his time, led him to acknowledge that there were millions of whites spread around the world, and wherever they were in contact with natives, the natives also increased. Wherever native populations died out it was because they could not compete, or 'simply because their grade of culture is so low that nothing can be done with them'.<sup>73</sup>

Roosevelt's definition of white/European included Russia and Spain. Whiteness went outside the Anglo-Saxon cartography. Thus, he praised the just-defeated Spain for uplifting the Philippines, noting that the 'islands owe their present possibilities to the fact that the Spaniards took possession of them'.<sup>74</sup> For Roosevelt, imperialism and empire were a matter of moral duty, one commanded by Christianity, something 'larger than either government or trade, and that is the moral well-being of these vast millions who have come under the protection of modern government'. 'Christianity alone meets these fundamental requirements', and it does not matter if the Christians are French, Dutch, English, Russians, Germans, or Americans. Africa deserved special attention because it had 'lain for thousands of years in darkness'.<sup>75</sup> History had commended the Christian world to take up the task of all humanity to liberate the coloured world from itself.

The concatenation of strategy, culture, civilisation, religion, race and economic development did not exhaust the field of imperial possibilities. Roosevelt felt that the wild, 'darker corners' of the world did have something to offer Euro-Christian males. Colonial service and imperial encounters were sure ways of making the European into a *real man*, one less effeminate, less protected by Western comfort. Whereas 'the army and the navy are the sword and the shield',<sup>76</sup> the tough Christian man was but the inner moral strength of the West. The masculinist thesis was widespread in the inner circle of Roosevelt. It was often expressed as a combination of conquering the West, then foreign lands, hunting, and the fierce fighting spirit of the 'white race'. The Christian dimension entered both as justification for action and also as divine appointment. Secretary of War Elihu Root made just such a case in a speech on the Philippines in Canton, Ohio, in 1900. He surmised that 'the self-respect of manhood' had never been more advanced in human history. Secretary Root also reduced Aguinaldo's 'army' to a band of half-breed brought from China with 'Oriental treachery in their hearts'.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

Of course, the strategic thinking, geopolitical conception and concomitant actions in intervention, imperialism and empire building were at the time of their occurrence resisted not only by the peoples of Hawaii, Cuba, the Philippines and elsewhere (in the colonial world), but also in the United States. Some of the resistance, such as in some strands of the Anti-Imperialist League, were culturally diabolical because the basis of the resistance was to keep the 'lesser hordes' out of the United States. Empire could be a way in! The particular unfolding of US expansionism has led to the conclusions that follow.

Firstly, race, being one of the most powerful social forces and structural elements of American society and of the American 'mind', was reconfigured in the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century into a faraway but real threat to the white world, and thus to civilisation as a whole. The rise of eugenics, social Darwinism and neo-Lamarckian ideas framed the threat in terms of a pending global demographic disaster, much of it due to the supposed hypersexual pathology of the coloured world to outdo the white world in fertility. The white race, it was felt, was on the decline, a long-term decline. Recognising that supposed 'fact', which was articulated by the organic intellectual of global racial ideology at the time, was the first step in dealing with the threat.

Secondly, there were long-term developments in terms of the global balance of power, especially with the decline of British power, the rise of Germany and Japan, and – most importantly for this article – that the course of Manifest Destiny had reached its geographical

limit when the United States reach the Pacific Ocean. There was no necessary geopolitical imperative as such. Yet the organic intellectuals of geostrategic imperialism, such as Mahan and Roosevelt, developed a framework of geographical logic fused with geocivilisational imperialism in order to fashion a new politics of American empire building.

Thirdly, the new geopolitics had very little to do with proximate American security interests, protected as the US was by massive expanses of water and great distances from the nearest competitors. There were no compelling national interests that warranted the offensive militarisation of the American worldview. The impulse rather was to take the fight to the rest of the world, that part of the world that was weak in terms of military power and that could be conquered at will. As Gary Gerstle has put it, 'Roosevelt's nationalism expressed itself as a combative and unapologetic racial ideology that thrived on aggression and the vanquishing of savage and barbaric peoples.'<sup>78</sup> The fusing of the new geopolitics of global aggression, combined with a thesis of carrying out the Christian duty to civilise, necessitated a global military reach, a world-class navy. Gearóid Tuathail's analytical infusion of culture into geopolitics, arguing empire is built by more than military power, comes to the fore here.<sup>79</sup> If anything, the intervention of late nineteenth-century America is most indicative of the militarisation of American racial ideology, a new kind of racial militarisation that took the form of a new geopolitics.<sup>80</sup>

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## Notes on Contributor

**Randolph B. Persaud** is an Associate Professor of international relations at American University in Washington DC. At American University, he has served as the Interim Director for the Council on the Americas and Director of Comparative and Regional Studies. He writes on race and international relations, postcolonialism, human security, counterhegemony and the politics of identity. Recent publications include the co-edited volume *Race, Gender and Culture in International Relations: Postcolonial Perspectives* (Persaud and Sajed, New York: Routledge, 2018).

## Notes

1. Kim argues that critical scholarship on US expansionism is too bogged down with its temporal unfolding. He suggests a more spatial approach. See Kim, "Empire's Entrails and the Imperial Geography."
2. For an excellent volume on orientalism and international relations, and especially on orientalism and war, see Barkawi and Stanski, *Orientalism and War*. See also Porter, *Military Orientalism*.
3. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*.

4. Layne argues that there is no such thing as a 'benign hegemon'. For him, 'A hegemon is a threat to the security of others simply because it is so powerful', see Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*.
5. For an excellent review of approaches to American grand strategy see Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy." For a clear presentation of the natural drive towards hegemony see Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.
6. Walt, "American Primacy," 11.
7. Race and racism are differentiated on the basis that the former is an ambiguous concept with considerable elasticity due to its socially constructed character, while racism refers to the measurable or observable practices in which race is invoked.
8. For more on production relations see Cox, *Production, Power and World Order*.
9. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders."
10. Kim, "Empire's Entrails and the Imperial Geography," 63.
11. Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*.
12. Barkawi and Laffey, "Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies."
13. Ibid.
14. Krishna, "Race, Amnesia, and the Education of International Relations."
15. Laffey and Nadarajah, "Postcolonialism."
16. Muppidi, *Colonial Signs of International Relations*.
17. Galton's eugenic science had in the early twentieth century been legitimised and institutionalised. There were numerous eugenic theorists who were influential in American society at the very moment that the United States was getting more involved in world affairs. Many of the big names would eventually form the American Eugenics Society in 1926. See <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/html/eugenics/static/themes/14.html>
18. Roosevelt, *The Naval War*.
19. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power*.
20. Varacalli, "National Interest and Moral Responsibility," 109.
21. <http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Mod/indrevtabs1.asp>
22. Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 18.
23. Ibid., 20.
24. Dorothy S. Brady, ed., *Output, Employment, and Productivity in the United States after 1800*, 1966, 11, <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c1565.pdf>
25. Irwin, Explaining America's Surge, 364.
26. McCormick, "Insular Imperialism and the Open Door," 158.
27. Varacalli, "National Interest and Moral Responsibility," 109.
28. Colonial wars, according to Pham and Muppidi, "Colonial Wars, Postcolonial Specters," 110, have two logics, namely the logic of extermination and the logic of domination. While the logic of extermination is practically self-explanatory, the logic of domination is complicated, not least because of the will to resist. The result of this is that domination is both enabled and hampered by a paradoxical dependence, not on its own desire and will alone, but on that of the other'.
29. Black, *Geopolitics and the Quest for Dominance*, 40.
30. Mahan, The Strategic features of the Gulf of Mexico 684.
31. Mahan, "Hawaii and our Future Sea-Power."
32. The relationship between American greatness and western expansion, though not spelled out beyond the west coast, is perhaps best articulated by Turner, *Significance of the Frontier in American History*.
33. The renowned geographer, or more accurately military geographer, H. J. Mackinder was deeply influenced by Mahan. See Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History" republished in *The Geographical Journal*, 170, no. 4, December 2004, 298–321; originally published by the Royal Geographical Society. London: No. IV – April, 1904.
34. Theodore Roosevelt, Review of *The Influence of Sea Power on History. The Atlantic Monthly (Vol. LXVI) Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1890*, 564.
35. For a more immediate sense of the ways in which race, imperialism, and expansion were combined, see the speeches by Beveridge, 1898, 1899, 1900; Lodge, 1895, 1898; T. Roosevelt, 1910, 1901, 1894; Root, 1912, 1904, 1900.

36. The notion of 'immanent responsibility' has survived until today. It was most eloquently expressed by US Secretary of State Madeline Albright as America as an 'indispensable nation'. Immanent responsibility also operates at the civic level through religious and NGO practices.
37. Persaud, "Shades of American Hegemony."
38. Strong, *Our Country*, 1.
39. *Ibid.*, 28.
40. *Ibid.*, 160.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Strong, *Expansion Under New World Conditions*.
43. He put it this way – "I desire ... to acknowledge the courtesy of Captain A. T. Mahan, the eminent writer on naval subjects, who read several chapters of the book which traverse the field in which he is acknowledged to be the highest authority, and who was so good to give me the benefit of his valuable criticism"; Strong, *Expansion Under New World Conditions*, 10.
44. Although the United States did not colonise Japan it did in fact, at least through the middle of the nineteenth century, think of it as another Asian, inferior race. In 1853, for example, the US Navy Secretary wanted Japan to recognise 'its Christian obligations to join the family of Christendom'. Bradley, *Imperial Cruise*, 176.
45. Beveridge, "March of the Flag."
46. Lodge, "Speech to the Senate on the Subject of Intervention in Cuba, April 13, 1898."
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. In what must be considered a peculiar statement of record, the US Navy currently (as of February 2017) omits the Queen Liliuokalani from the US intervention in Hawaii. The Naval History and Heritage Command website makes the following astounding claim: 'With the election of a new king, King Kalakaua in March, 1874, anti-American factions helped to precipitate a number of riots which were regarded as sufficiently disturbing to have bluejackets landed from the USS *Tuscorora* and the USS *Portsmouth*. The British warship, HMS *Tenedos*, also, landed a token force. It was during the reign of King Kalakaua that the United States was granted exclusive rights to enter Pearl Harbor and to establish 'a coaling and repair station'. The website states that the views expressed on the US Navy in the nineteenth century, and especially concerning the annexation of Hawaii, are the views of the 'author' and not necessarily those of NHHHC. See <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/u/the-us-navy-and-hawaii-a-historical-summary.html>
50. Lodge, "Speech in the US Senate," March 7, 1900.
51. Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire*.
52. *Ibid.*, 337.
53. Augelli and Murphy, *America's Quest for Supremacy*, 37.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*
56. The thesis of race perpetuation is a fundamental aspect of Roosevelt's worldview. On 23 April 1910, he delivered a lecture at the Sorbonne under the title "Citizenship in a Republic" where he boldly stated that 'The greatest of all curses is the curse of sterility, and the severest of all condemnations should be visited upon willful sterility. The first essential in any civilization is that the man and woman shall be father and mother of healthy children, so that the race shall increase and not decrease'. Roosevelt, "Citizenship in a Republic," 15.
57. Roosevelt, *Strenuous Life*, 117.
58. Singh, *Race and America's Long War*.
59. Quoted in Drinnon, *Facing West*, 314.
60. Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life*, 259.
61. *Ibid.*
62. The idea of American, Western and Christian duty for civilisation had an expansive resonance within the American elite in the late nineteenth century. Thus for John Barrett (formerly the United States Minister to Siam), 'The United States, acting with charity and equity, and in no spirit of vengeance, should employ all its moral and material influence in prescribing just punishment and indemnity for loss of life and property sustained at the hands of fanatical and



insurrectionary mobs; in adjusting the true moral responsibility of the overwhelmed government; in establishing permanent order and honest progressive administration of government throughout the Empire; in safeguarding, both for the present and the future, the lives, rights, and holdings of missionaries, merchants and other foreign residents; and finally, in so preparing the way for peace, order and prosperity, to be followed by liberty, justice and freedom under the guiding direction of Christian civilization, that we shall win the lasting gratitude of the countless blameless Chinese and make them forever our disciples in moral and material progress.

63. By inventions I mean claims that are at odds with basic facts, but which reflect a mentality of paternalism and civilisation arrogance. The following quote from a speech by Secretary of War Elihu Root in 1900 captures the point. Speaking about the Philippines, he said: 'our soldiers are conspicuous in the arts of peace. Where they go, law and order and justice and charity and education and religion follow. ... They have been feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and protecting the weak and cleaning the foul cities and establishing hospitals and organizing commerce and teaching people how to take the first steps in self-government, with cheerful industry and zeal'. See Root, *The Military and Colonial Policy*, 59.
64. Mark Twain made the following observation of the treaty: 'I have read carefully the treaty of Paris [between the United States and Spain], 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 .... And so I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land'. Quoted in the *New York Herald*, October 15, 1900, <http://www.internationalist.org/marktwain3.html>
65. The horrors and erasures of violence against the Third World have a long history in Eurocentric international theory and history. For postcolonial critiques of this silencing see Krishna, "Race, Amnesia and the Education of International Relations."
66. Butler, *Frames of War*.
67. Paddock, "US Set to Return Philippines Bells", A6.
68. Ibid.
69. Drinnon, *Facing West*, 293.
70. The First Philippine Commission consisted of five members, two of whom were academics. Jacob Schurman was President of Columbia University, and Dean C. Worcester of the University of Michigan was actually listed as Expert of Philippine Affairs. Other members were Admiral Dewey of the US Navy and Major General Elwell S. Otis of the US Army. The fifth member of the Commission was Charles Denby, who had served as US Ambassador to China. Incidentally, his brother Edwin Denby was had served as Secretary of the US Navy.
71. McKinley, Second Inaugural Address.
72. Roosevelt, *The Expansion of the White Race*.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, 8.
77. Root, Speech by the Hon. Elihu Root.
78. Gerstle, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character", 1281.
79. See Tuathail, "Understanding Critical Geopolitics."
80. For an excellent discussion on Tuathail's critique of traditional geopolitics, see Dalby, "Imperialism, Domination, Culture."

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