

American Colonial Empire: The Limit of Power's Reach

By Julian Go*

A brief season of war has deeply changed our thought and has altered, it may be permanently, the conditions of our national life. We cannot return to the point whence we set out. The scenes, the stage itself upon which we act, are changed. We have left the continent which has hitherto been our only field of action and have gone out upon the seas...and we cannot live or act apart.

-Woodrow Wilson, August 1, 1898¹

After September 11th, more than a few commentators have claimed that what is needed around the world is a revived colonialism under America's hand. These commentators accordingly urge us to look to the British colonial empire for guidance: "Afghanistan and other troubled lands today cry out for the enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets."² Yet such calls for cross-imperial comparison elide America's own past, a past clearly reckoned in Woodrow Wilson's statement on America's novel globalism in the wake of the Spanish-American war. Wilson reminds us that the United States has long been an empire. At the turn of the twentieth century, the United States seized Puerto Rico, Guam, Samoa, the Philippines, and the Islamic "Moro Province" of the Philippine archipelago. These acquisitions meant that the United States was not simply an "informal" empire but also a "formal" colonial empire. They meant, as one colonial official at the time put it, that "the United States has definitely entered the class of nations holding and governing over-seas colonial possessions."³ This was an empire that spanned the globe. It encompassed millions of imperial subjects and paralleled, as well as ideologically rivaled, that of England. Do we forget that Kipling's infamous poem, "The White Man's Burden," was written for the United States after the Spanish-American war, not for Kipling's own British compatriots?

Perhaps when we consider questions of empire today, we need not look anywhere else than America's own imperial past. We might look, for instance, at the imaginings and visions that gave America's new overseas empire its meaningful form. We might also look at some of the ways in which that vision was or was not realized on the ground during the first decade of America's imperial career. How did pro-expansionists envision the new empire? And as the United

States faced the realities of ruling a distant peoples deemed alien and foreign, through what ruling strategies was the vision made manifest or perhaps blurred?

A Vision of Empire: Globalism and Exceptionalism

It has been noted in existing scholarship that the United States accidentally stumbled upon its overseas empire in 1898. But for many thinkers at the time, there was nothing accidental about it. Immediately after the Spanish-American war, countless intellectuals, statesmen, and colonial officials made haste to claim that overseas empire—and more specifically, the direct domination of the "lesser races" by the "superior races"—was inevitable. The inevitability arose not from the threat of terrorism but from the forces of increased globalism and presumptions of racial superiority. Bernard Moses, who later served in the Philippines, claimed that because of "modern means of communication" and the ever-present "commercial motive," the world was becoming one. Any notion that the "lesser races" could develop autonomously, therefore, was simply "utopian." The "superior races" were bound to empire.⁴ Wilson (then a professor at Princeton whom colonial officials often cited) likewise spoke of European political and commercial expansion, as well as advances in technology, that had created a "new world order." In the new order, "no nation can live any longer to itself" and the West would necessarily dominate the East. "The East is to be opened and transformed, whether we will it or no; the standards of the West are to be imposed upon it."⁵

But if the United States was bound to empire, what kind of empire should it be? Pro-expansionists took up this issue as well, and in doing so they arrived at a racialized camaraderie with the British. The United States, land of Anglo-Saxons, should become an overseas empire not unlike the British empire. In fact, scholars such as Franklin Giddings asserted that Americans and Britons should together form a joint Anglo-Saxon empire, fending off the Chinese and Slavs. He also took Kipling's urgings seriously, claiming that together Britons and North Americans would not only fend off competing empires but also use empire to civilize the world. As members of the "Teutonic races," the United States and England were to be "co-workers in the tasks of civilization."⁶ John Burgess, Giddings' colleague at Columbia, added: "The teutonic races are instructed...with the mission of conducting the political civilization of the modern world."⁷

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¹Woodrow Wilson, "What Ought We to Do?" in Arthur Link, ed. *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 10 (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 574-5.

²Max Boot as quoted in the *Boston Sunday Globe*, March 23, 2002, p. H1.

³William F. Willoughby, *Territories and Dependencies of the United States* (New York: The Century Co., 1905), p. 7.

⁴Bernard Moses, "Control of Dependencies Inhabited by the Less Developed Races," *University of California Chronicle* 7 (1905): 3-18.

⁵Woodrow Wilson, "Democracy and Efficiency," *The Atlantic Monthly*, LXXXVII, 1901.

⁶Franklin H. Giddings, "Imperialism?" *Political Science Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1898): 601.

⁷Burgess quoted in Julius Pratt *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1936), p. 8.

Accordingly, policy-makers and colonial officials quickly read up on the colonial endeavors of England to find more precise models for forging colonial governance. Some of the officials who administered the Islamic provinces of the Philippines even visited London's colonial office to find inspiration in the kind of colonial government that the British had constructed in Malaysia. Racial rapprochement thus fed an inter-imperial isomorphism. The hitch, however, is that nationalist sentiment soon tempered and eventually overrode it. While scholars, statesmen, and officials looked to the British empire for guidance, and while they agreed upon the idea of a racially-underpinned civilizing mission, they also proposed that the United States was better suited to the task. After reviewing the history of British colonialism in Asia and Africa, Bernard Moses claimed that British colonialism had been "reckless and tyrannical," failing to meet up to the civilizing ideal. England's own history of monarchy was the culprit, instilling in the British a conservative attitude that had been extended to their colonialism overseas. The United States, however, was special. Because it had had a unique history of liberal democracy, Americans were endowed with a political wisdom and a liberalism unmatched by any other. Thus, only the United States would be able to construct a "wise and beneficent governmental authority over a rude people" and offer its imperial subjects an "impulse and guidance toward the attainment of a higher form of life and larger liberty."⁸ Woodrow Wilson added that while imperialism and civilizing was inevitable, the United States was to play a special role in the process. It was to play "a leading part" in civilizing the world. Because the United States had had the privilege of cultivating a perfect liberal democracy, it alone had the "peculiar duty to moderate the process [of imperialism] in the interests of liberty; to impart to the peoples thus driven out upon the road of change...our principles of self-help; teach them order and self-control; impart to them...the drill and habit of law and obedience."⁹

The exceptionalist paradigm for America's empire was thus born. The United States would join its European counterparts in forming a presumably enlightened empire, but its imperial mission was distinct. Rather than ruling overseas colonies for centuries as the British had been doing, and rather than ruling in a "reckless" and "tyrannical" manner, the United States would use colonialism as a mechanism for spreading the gospel of American liberal democracy. "The territories we have obtained from Spain," exclaimed President McKinley, "are ours not to exploit, but to develop, to civilize, to educate, and train in the science of self-government." So added Bernard Moses: "If America has any mission outside of her continental limits, it is not to preserve among less developed peoples such institutions and customs as make for bondage and social stagnation, but to put in their place the ideas that have made for freedom, and the laws by which this nation has been enabled to preserve its freedom."¹⁰

The vision was simple enough, and remarkably resonant with discourses of American empire today: the United States would use its global power benevolently, taking on the task of transforming, uplifting, and democratizing its colonial domains.

"Democratic Tutelage" in Puerto Rico and the Philippines

The idea of using colonial control as a mechanism for training colonial subjects into the "art of self-government" and ultimately transforming them was not ruse. When devising colonial rule for Puerto Rico and the



Memorial to the battleship Maine, Central Park at Merchants' Gate, New York City.

So, whatever is new, it is also clear that there is something here that is old, and where the ghosts and unexorcised spectres of political orders past still haunt the imaginations of both actors and spectators. This is obviously where the historian of empires can see an opening, however far-fetched it might appear at the outset.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam
Oxford University

"Empire" is not merely a form of polity but also a value-laden appellation that as late as the nineteenth century (and even in some usages well into our own) was thought of as the sublime form of political existence (think of New York as the "Empire State").

Ronald Grigor Suny
The University of Chicago

⁸Moses, "Control of Dependencies," p. 7.

⁹Wilson, "Democracy and Efficiency," p. 297-8.

¹⁰Moses, "Control of Dependencies," p. 18.

Just as the Russian Empire was both empowered and constrained by its ideological justifications for empire, just as the Soviet empire was motivated and ultimately thwarted by its “socialist” developmentalist discourses, so the American establishment is both driven and restrained by the ideas and identities to which Americans subscribe as well as the political structures in which they become manifest. In its own self-construction, repeated and reinforced by politicians, government spokesmen, and the media, the United States is a unique country, exemplary in its freedoms, its democratic constitution and values, and its altruistic approach to the rest of the world. It wishes nothing for itself, except to extend the blessings that it enjoys to the rest of the world, blessings summed up by President Bush as “decency, freedom, and progress.” Expressed American values would seem to preclude extended usurpation of the sovereignty of another people, colonialism, or even overt exploitation of the resources of another country. This is not to say that horrors associated with war, profit, racial and religious discrimination, and the self-interest of the dominant do not and will not occur, but they must be disguised, interpreted, and are always subject to challenge from others who will appeal to what they consider the proclaimed core values of American society.

Ronald Grigor Suny
The University of Chicago

It’s the old logic of empire: successful dominion lies not in exercising direct coercive power over them as in turning them into us: Roman citizens, Christians, constitutional parliamentarians.

Sheldon Pollock
University of Chicago

Philippines, the first officials drew upon the exceptionalist theme and gave the tutelary ideal a palpable manifestation. Indeed, once noting that the British empire had been too “reckless and tyrannical,” policy-makers and officials dismissed it as a guide for colonial government in Puerto Rico and the Philippines. They instead proclaimed a mission of “democratic tutelage” and “political education.” Puerto Ricans and Filipinos would be given American-styled elections, local governments, and national assemblies so that, under the “strong and guiding hand” of American officials at the apex of the colonial state, they could learn the ways and means of American-styled self-government. Colonial subjects would vote, hold office, and help to formulate legislation, while American officials would give “object lessons” in the ways of self-government.

The process of state-building in Puerto Rico and the Philippines followed from the plan. The military rulers who first administered the colonies immediately set up local governments and held elections to staff them. This was to be, as one military official put it, a “sort of kindergarten” in democracy, initiating the process of teaching the people “our best American thought and methods.”¹¹ The subsequent civilian administrators continued in the effort. In both Puerto Rico and the Philippines, they set up tutelary colonial states that gave extensive participation in government to the colonized. They instituted ballot systems designed to teach the “sanctity of the ballot” and, making equations between the Puerto Rican and Filipino elite on the one hand, and the corrupt “bosses” of immigrant machines at home, they used a range of techniques drawn from the Progressive movement to discipline the colonized into the ways of liberal democratic governance. Participation in the government by locals below, with supervision by American officials on high, was key. It would “constitute a valuable means of educating and instructing the local officials in the art of government and administration, by pointing out errors [and] encouraging higher ideals.”¹² The overarching idea was that as Puerto Ricans and Filipinos learned their “lessons,” American control would devolve, and the colonized would eventually receive full self-government, either as “a state in the Union or, if they desire it, independence.”¹³

Of course, the tutelary project, manifesting as it did the American colonialists’ sense of exceptionalism, faced various criticisms from their imperial counterparts. British observers, such as Mrs. Campbell Dauncey, found the idea of teaching self-government to Filipinos ridiculous. An expatriate living in Manila, she recorded in her journal:

The [American] Ideal is this you see, that every people in the world should have self-government and equal rights. This means, when reduced from windy oratory to common-sense, that they consider these Malay half-breeds to be capable...of understanding the motives, and profiting by the institutions which it has taken the highest white races two or three thousand years to evolve. [...]

¹¹“Report of the Military Governor of Porto Rico,” in *Annual Report of the United States War Department* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), I, p. 342.

¹²Willoughby, *Territories and Dependencies*, p. 15.

¹³Taft in United States Congress, *Hearings before the Committee on Insular Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), part 3. More on the tutelage project can be found in J. Go, *Transcultural States: Elite Political Culture and US Colonialism in Puerto Rico and the Philippines* (unpublished ms.).

When I come to think of it, America with this funny little possession of hers is like a mother with her first child, who...tries to bring it up on some fad of her own because it is so much more precious and more wonderful than any other child any one else ever had.¹⁴

But the American officials stood firm. In fact, to the project of "practical political education" they hitched a range of other projects. One was public education. The authorities in both colonies constructed extensive public school systems such that, by 1930, funds devoted to public schooling in both colonies trumped expenses for public health, policing, and infrastructure-construction. The idea was to provide technical skills and civics training at once, so that the "ignorant and credulous masses" would come to "know their rights" and exercise them as liberal democratic subjects.¹⁵ The other major program was economic development. The officials constructed extensive public works systems, built central banking facilities offering flexible credit, and tried to reduce existing trade barriers between the metropole and colony. Of course, such measures in part benefited American capital, but in the officials' view, they were critical for civilizational growth. Predating modernization theories of democratization later proposed in the 1950s, officials argued that economic development stimulated by American capital would undo the putatively medieval social conditions in the two colonies and stimulate sociopolitical development. With "Yankee capital," claimed Governor Taft in the Philippines, would come the "moral improvement and the education of the people," promoting "Yankee ingenuity, Yankee enterprise, and Yankee freedom."

In short, tutelage and transformation was more than an ideal in Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The American authorities turned the colonial state itself into a mechanism of uplift, part of a ruling strategy designed to "transform this island and its people into truly American types."¹⁶ Of course, for some scholars, this strategy might not be surprising. Does not the United States have a distinct set of liberal, anti-colonial values, orientations, and traditions that would be reflected in its imperial endeavours?¹⁷

Samoa, Guam, and the "Moro" Province: the Limits of Tutelage

The problem with crude appeals to American values is that they fail to account for other ruling strategies in the empire. In fact, tutelage and transformation were not applied equally. The colonial regimes in Samoa and Guam brushed the tutelage strategy aside and instead opted for a much less

ambitious approach to governance. Colonial authorities in Samoa, for example, structured the government so as to keep Samoan "customs" intact rather than to eradicate and replace them. They divided Samoa into different districts corresponding to what they took to be the "ancient" sociopolitical divisions. Then, rather than holding elections to staff the administrative apparatus, they appointed hereditary native chiefs. Here the expressed model was not tutelage but indirect rule in British Fiji—a form of rule, as one colonial official put it, that would be maintained "without interfering with the deeply rooted customs of the people or wounding their susceptibilities in any way."¹⁸

Authorities in Guam structured their colonial regime similarly. Guam did not have hereditary chiefs, but under Spanish rule it had had native district officials known as *gubernadorcillos* (or "little governors"). The *gubernadorcillos* were typically the leading elite of the island, and the first American governors did not alter the system. They kept the preexisting positions intact without elaboration, merely reappointing the *gubernadorcillos* as "commissioners." Thus, unlike the political system in the Philippines or Puerto Rico, local leaders were not chosen through American-styled elections. There was no talk of "political education" at all; instead, preservation was the expressed goal.¹⁹

Why the difference? The reasons are complex, but one of them has to do with the distinct function that both Guam and Samoa were supposed to serve within America's imperial sphere. Essentially, Guam and Samoa were seized as coaling and naval stations; accordingly they were both put into the hands of the navy. Colonial authorities were also naval commanders and, in turn, their foremost concern was stability and order. Preservation thus became the rule for colonial rule. Policies aimed at transformation or change would do little else than disrupt "indigenous" systems. Fittingly, when calls later surfaced from some circles in Washington to have Congress replace naval administration with civilian rule, the Roosevelt administration urged the Navy to do all it could to prevent Congressional action. "If left alone Congress will probably do nothing about providing a form of government for the Islands," wrote the White House to the Navy secretary; "The inactivity of Congress must be deemed to be an approval of the continuance of the existing government. It is very desirable that this should be so."²⁰

The imperatives of naval rule also impeded other "developmental" projects. Rather than pursuing economic cum civilizational growth, for example, the naval authorities prevented landholdings deemed "traditional" from being sold without their permission. They also restricted exports and imports to prevent islanders from becoming dependent upon external forces and to impede disruptions to what the

¹⁴Mrs. Campbell Dauncy, *An Englishwoman in the Philippines* (London: John Murray, 1906), pp. 134-5

¹⁵William H Taft, *Special Report of Wm. H. Taft Secretary of War to the President on the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908).

¹⁶G.W. Davis to J. Bird, June 1, 1899, Archivo General de Puerto Rico, Fonda Fortaleza, box 181.

¹⁷This is the view presented in Stanley Karnow's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Random House, 1989). I offer an extended critique of the exceptionalism view in my introduction to J. Go and Anne Foster, eds. *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁸US Navy Department. 1901. *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1901. Part 1* (Washington: Government Printing Office), p. 85-6.

¹⁹I discuss Guam and Samoa in further detail in J. Go, "'Racism' and Colonialism: Meanings of Difference and Ruling Practices in America's Pacific Empire," forthcoming in *Qualitative Sociology*.

²⁰Quoted in Philip Jessup, *Elihu Root*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1938), I, p. 349.

authorities took to be "traditional" ways of life. Authorities took the same approach to public education. While the government funded one or two public schools, neither Guam nor Samoa saw the kind of educational program carried out in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Funds devoted to education in Samoa were next to nothing; and in Guam, they took up a sparse 17 percent of the budget. To boot, the curriculum was severely restricted. While school-children in the Philippines and Puerto Rico were given civics classes, students in Guam only learned "habits of cleanliness" and, at most, English. "It is not the intention," wrote the governor, "to carry the instruction of the mass much beyond that."²¹

Still, naval imperatives were not the only factors that limited the reach of tutelage in the empire. Indeed, American authorities brushed the tutelary project aside even in some parts of the Philippines, where naval bases had not been established. Specifically, they brushed it aside when dealing with the Islamic "Moros" in the southern regions of the archipelago (Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan), a group whose numbers reached close to 300,000. Here, colonial discourses of race, ethnicity, and "development" were key. When devising government for these provinces, the American authorities were quick to point out that the Moros, by their religion, were fundamentally distinct from the "Christian tribes" of the islands. Furthermore, they pointed out that the Moros had been left unpenetrated by Spain and that they were of a distinct "civilizational" stage of development. While the Christianized Filipinos had been subjected to Spanish influence, and while the Filipino elite had had some amount of education, the Moros were but a band of "wild" and "savage" tribes. Authorities saw them as akin to "the best North American Indians—[such] as the Nex Perce and Northern Cheyenne."²²

Also important, in the Americans' view, was the fact that the Moros were plagued by internal wars and that they were geographically dispersed over an extended territory. The first American authorities had a difficult time discerning clearly-contained units of sovereignty in the provinces, much less locating "traditional" lines of authority and leadership. All of this, then, demanded a special approach. First, American authorities placed the provinces of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan into the hands of a governing department relatively autonomous from the tutelary regime in other parts of the Philippines. They thus formed a colonial state within a colonial state. Second, they put military commanders in charge, many of whom were drawn from the "Indian wars" on the frontier at home. In turn, the military commanders extended control through a series of treaties and, when necessary, through the violent suppression of resistance.

The end result was that American authorities in the so-called "special provinces" of the Philippines ruled through

²¹*Annual Report of the Governor of Guam*, 1901, p. 14 (Unpublished ms., USNA, Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Record Group 80, microfilm no. 181).

²²"Annual Report of Brig. Gen. W.A. Kobbe" in *Annual Reports of the War Department* 1900, vol. 3, p. 269.

collaboration with Moro leaders, at least when and where they could find them (often confusing, for instance, "Sultans" and local "datus"). And in all, the idea was not to "civilize" but to keep intact—or as it was, reconstruct—the Moros' political system as best the Americans could perceive it.²³ At most, the authorities tried to curb some of the more "barbarous practices" of the Moros (such as debt relationships the Americans classified as slavery), but democratic tutelage or political education was never the goal. As one officer summarized in 1909: "We have not yet built up a state nor reached the mass of the people in any general uplifting movement...The mailed fist is the first law of the land—peace would be impossible without the actual presence of troops—for this country is neither ready nor has it ever known any other form of government."²⁴

So much, then, for the exceptional American empire. The Americans had indeed articulated a lofty goal: they claimed they would use colonial occupation to teach, train, and transform (today we call it "nation-building" or "regime change"). But due to the contingencies of occupation on the ground, American authorities ultimately created an internally-differentiated imperial archipelago of multiple ruling strategies that together belied the singular exceptionalist vision.

The Tensions of Tutelage

This is not to say, however, that just because tutelage was enacted in Puerto Rico and the Philippines it went untroubled. Events on the ground disclose the internal limits and tensions of tutelary transformation even in these colonies. To be sure, in the Philippines, not all of America's imperial subjects responded positively to the Americans' designs. Revolutionaries in Luzon took up arms against American occupation, resulting in a protracted war that cost no less than 400,000 Filipino lives. America's benevolence was predicated upon violence—ballot boxes and elections were insinuated through guns and bullets. The irony was not lost on anti-imperialists at home. "It appears, gentlemen," quipped Williams Jennings Bryan, soon after news of the Philippine war reached the States, "that our destiny is not as manifest as it was two weeks ago."²⁵

The Philippine-American war gave tutelage on the ground a troubled tone. Even as the war waned and as most revolutionaries surrendered, other revolutionaries persisted in the hills and in the countryside. Furthermore, the threat of a renewed uprising remained ever-present, and Filipino elites did not hesitate to use the threat against their American mentors. The result was a politics of patronage and concession. Whenever the Americans proceeded too swiftly or openly against the elites' political and socioeconomic power, the elite in turn conjured the specter of revolution, and the

²³Quoted in Donna Amoroso, "Inheriting the 'Moro Problem': Muslim Authority and Colonial Rule in British Malaya and the Philippines," in Go and Foster, eds. *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives*, p. 136.

²⁴"Report of the Governor of the Moro Province" in *Report of the Philippine Commission* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), p. 3-4.

²⁵Williams Jennings Bryan, "What Next?" *New York Journal*, Feb. 12, 1899.

Americans had to retract. Facing the threat, American authorities could not easily dismantle the elites' entrenched position, nor could they discipline and democratize to the degree they had initially hoped. To make matters worse, the American authorities did not obtain the necessary legislation from Congress at home. They had initially hoped for economic policies that would help fund developmental projects, but Congress, working from its own interests, failed to enact them. This too fed the politics of patronage and concession: in order to fund their developmental projects in the absence of proper Congressional legislation, American authorities had to enact new taxation policies that were dependent upon the full cooperation of the Filipino elite. In exchange for that cooperation, the Americans had to maintain rather than undermine the Filipino elites' traditional political power.²⁶ This contributed to the creation of what Benedict Anderson has called a "cacique democracy" in the Philippines.

Even in Puerto Rico, where the people did not resist American sovereignty, the tutelage project ran into trouble. This time the trouble had to do with translation. On the one hand, the Americans announced and enacted the project of teaching the people "self-government" and "democracy," but, on the other, the Puerto Rican elite prior to American occupation had already constructed their own distinct meanings of the categories. The elite had equated democracy with *autonomía*, which in turn meant the unrestrained power of the political elite and single-party rule. By local conception, democracy as *autonomía* meant that the party which best represented the people was the party that should take up the reigns of the state and dole out patronage as party leaders saw fit, regardless of formal legal codes. This was not the kind of democratic self-government that the Americans had hoped to impart, and so they stood befuddled as the Puerto Rican elites accepted tutelary rule but then used the colonial state as a site to cultivate their own patronage power, not as a "school of politics" to be disciplined into the Americans' preferred forms of democratic government. Political education was soon plagued by what the Americans called "political corruption," marking an excess of meaning uncontained by the Americans' tutelary signs.

For their part, the Puerto Rican elite had little sense that they were doing anything wrong. Hadn't the American authorities stated that tutelary rule would bring "self-government"? And didn't self-government mean democracy as *autonomía*, hence single-party rule and patronage? Of course, the Americans, insistent upon giving lessons in what democracy "really" meant, took measures to uproot the elites' corrupt practices. They centralized the state as never before. But this merely created an additional problem. In reaction to the Americans' educating measures, the elite responded with an indignation unprecedented. Seeing in the Americans' measures evidence of a promise betrayed, they

The strength and durability of the Chinese empire may well have depended on some recognition of its limitations and the core's interest in the material success of its peripheries. To create a plausible parallel today for America's "empire," we might want to see an ability to rethink the logic of negotiations between political actors over interests and beliefs in ways that allowed those in subordinate positions to gain greater voice and encouraged those in positions of superiority to take the measure of their limitations and promoted a rethinking of what their interests are in places geographically distant but politically central to their exercise of power. To the extent that this seems highly implausible, we can appreciate how different the strategies of empire in Chinese history have been from the political principles and policies that can even be imagined, let alone promoted, in today's world.

R. Bin Wong

University of California, Irvine

soon became disillusioned with tutelary occupation. In fact, while they had initially accepted tutelage on their own cultural terms, and while they had therefore responded positively to it, many began demanding something that they had not demanded from Spain (or from the United States) previously—national independence.²⁷ These unprecedented calls for independence set the basis for various "terrorist" activities against the United States in later decades. In Puerto Rico, the price paid by the United States for tutelary occupation turned out to be unexpectedly high.

In all, what began as an ambitious attempt to fashion a distinctly benevolent and tutelary empire wound up as an empire like any other—an empire marked by strategies of accommodation and concession forged on the cheap and on the spot; an empire plagued with problems of (mis)translation and local resistance, unexpected indignance and unwanted violence. The Americans at the turn of the century had indeed "gone out upon the seas" (as Wilson put it) to extend American power abroad, but what they found there was the limit of power's reach. ■

Julian Go is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Illinois and was recently an Academy Scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies. He is the co-editor of *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Duke University Press, 2003) and various articles on the United States colonial empire in the early twentieth century.

²⁶J. Go, "Chains of Empire, Projects of State: Political Education and US Colonial Rule in Puerto Rico and the Philippines," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 2 (2000): 333-362.

²⁷J. Go, *Transcultural States: Elite Political Culture and US Colonialism in Puerto Rico and the Philippines*; for the same translation issues in the Philippines, see J. Go, "Colonial Reception and Cultural Reproduction: Filipino Elite Response to US Colonial Rule," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1999): 337-68.