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U.S. – Philippine War

Colonialism is an overlooked part of American history. Of course, there will be stories of the American patriots overcoming British colonial rule, however, rarely is told of the United States active participation in overseas colonialism. One such example is the Philippines, and their story of gaining independence from foreign powers.

The Philippines officially came under U.S. control at the signing of a treaty during the conclusion of the Spanish-American War of 1898. The Philippines saw the weakness during the exchange of foreign influence on their nation, started to fight back. “On February 4, 1899, just two days before the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty, fighting broke out between American forces and Filipino nationalists led by Emilio Aguinaldo who sought independence rather than a change in colonial rulers” (Office of the Historian). This sparked the beginning of the U.S. – Philippine War.

Aguinaldo quickly formed a militia and attempted fighting the war on all fronts. At the start, the war was fought traditionally, with battle fields in which the Americans dominated. Not only did the U.S. have a larger and more capable army, but they were also not limited by the production of war time materials. The Philippines could not readily make hefty amounts of ammunition, and the world was not on their side, back with America. This meant trading for guns, and ammunition were near impossible. The only thing that Philippines had was their remoteness and sheer distance from the United States.

Out of desperation, the Philippine militia switched tactics. They went from a traditional army to a guerilla force, attempting to weaken and terrorized the Americans into leaving. “It began in November of 1899, lasted through the capture of Aguinaldo in 1901 and into the spring of 1902, by which time most organized Filipino resistance had dissipated. President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed a general amnesty and declared the conflict over on July 4, 1902, although minor uprisings and insurrections against American rule periodically occurred in the years that followed” (Office of the Historian).

To begin building relations, the newly elected William Taft, began the “policy of attraction”. This entailed promising more amity and self-governance, to appease those that wanted freedom. It also included economic and social rebuilding which the nation desperately needed as the war destroyed the island. This started the momentum for, “in 1907, the Philippines convened its first elected assembly, and in 1916, the Jones Act promised the nation eventual independence. The archipelago became an autonomous commonwealth in 1935, and the U.S. granted independence in 1946” (Office of the Historian). In total, the war and fighting were brutal on both ends, the U.S. burned villages and tortured suspected members of the militia, while the Philippines tortured Americans and those that were deemed to not be for the revolutionary cause. In total due to the war, famine, and disease, nearly 200,000 deaths occurred.

Currently, the U.S. – Philippine relationship is strong, with annual meetings to discuss aid, and trading futures. Because both have been close due to the occupation, there is a cooperative mindset to the relationship, with nearly 300,000 Americans living in the Philippines and over 4,000,000 Philippines-Americans in the United States currently. In total, the United

States has invested over 5 billion dollars in the country, helping maintain infrastructure and trading relations of that part of the globe.

Works Cited

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