

Homework 8 Reading Response

In his article “Race-Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire: The Philippine-American War as a Race War” of *Diplomatic History*, Paul A. Kramer examines colonial violence and racialization as entangled processes in the Philippine-American war.¹ Specifically, he argues that US colonial violence was shaped by US perspectives on Filipinos and the latter’s attempts to reform those perspectives. Also, that the US’s racialization of Filipinos was a result of the racialization of guerilla warfare. He asserts that the intertwining of these processes culminated in a war centered upon race. ~~Kramer himself states that combat and race-making “spiraled together into racial-extremist warfare.”~~² He explains that war began to turn into a race war when Filipinos sought recognition as a sovereign, “civilized” nation. The US, because of their imperialistic interests and ignoring Filipinos’ attempts for recognition, annexed the Philippines and justified war by arguing Filipinos were “uncivilized,” “tribal” people—the construction of racial ideologies. Faced with a much stronger military force, Kramer argues, Filipinos were forced to resort to guerilla warfare—deemed “savage” and racialized by the US—further intensifying racial ideologies and hence entangling colonial violence and racial ideology in the Philippine-American War. In sum, Kramer’s view is that the nature of US colonial violence along with the US’s racialization of Filipinos resulted in a racial-extremist war.

¹ Paul Kramer, “Race-Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire: The Philippine-American War as a Race War,” *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 2 (2006): 210.

² Kramer, 210.

Kramer's argument is quite effective because he uses both American and Filipino sources as evidence for his argument. An instance of this is when he makes his claim that Filipino "tribal" pluralism was part of the construction of the US's racial ideologies. He first quotes a report by the McKinley-appointed Philippine Commission that gave rise to the widely believed "fact" that there were 84 Filipino "tribes"—an attempt to prove that Filipinos were a "tribalized" group instead of a real nation.³ He follows this up with a primary source account from Filipino Sixto Lopez who argued that the conclusion that there were 84 "tribes" was completely false and misguided.⁴ Here, Kramer's inclusion of both an American and Filipino perspective shows his credibility as an author. By acknowledging both perspectives, he is not just taking a one-sided view of the topic; instead, he considers multiple views to provide more context. This makes his argument more effective as it becomes clearer that there were not in fact 84 Filipino "tribes"—this was the US's racialization of Filipinos through "tribalization." Another example of when Kramer's argument is effective is when he includes a conversation between US General James Bell and Filipino revolutionary Apolinario Mabini. In the exchange, Bell argued that "civilized" warfare meant surrendering after losing in conventional warfare; Mabini argued that Bell was right in that it was more noble, but Filipinos had been left no choice but to resort to guerilla warfare to defend their freedom.⁵ When providing both the American and Filipino perspective, Kramer shows that even while guerilla warfare was considered "uncivilized," he acknowledges the Filipino perspective that they simply had no other choice but to resort to it. By doing this, he shows his reliability as an author, as he does not consider only the US side of the story. Overall, Kramer's use of both American and Filipino sources as evidence makes his argument effective.

³ Kramer, 186, 187.

⁴ Kramer, 187.

⁵ Kramer, 198, 199.

