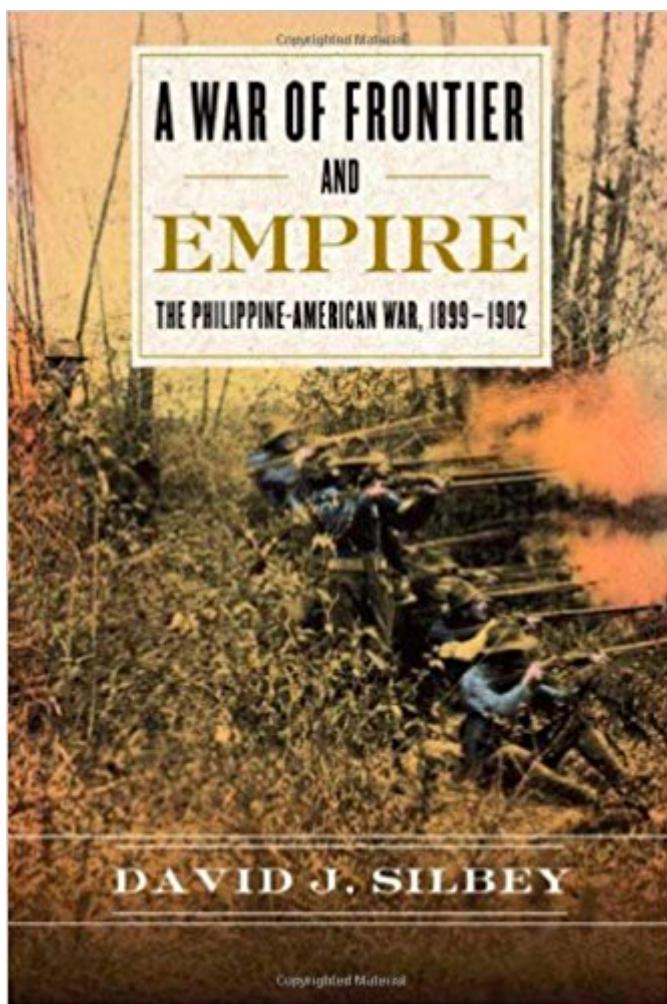


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A War Of Frontier And Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902



Synopsis

It has been termed an insurgency, a revolution, a guerrilla war, and a conventional war. As David J. Silbey demonstrates in this taut, compelling history, the 1899 Philippine-American War was in fact all of these. Played out over three distinct conflicts--one fought between the Spanish and the allied United States and Filipino forces; one fought between the United States and the Philippine Army of Liberation; and one fought between occupying American troops and an insurgent alliance of often divided Filipinos--the war marked America's first steps as a global power and produced a wealth of lessons learned and forgotten. In *A War of Frontier and Empire*, Silbey traces the rise and fall of President Emilio Aguinaldo, as Aguinaldo tries to liberate the Philippines from colonial rule only to fail, devastatingly, before a relentless American army. He tracks President McKinley's decision to commit troops and fulfill a divinely inspired injunction to "uplift and civilize" despite the protests of many Americans. Most important, Silbey provides a clear lens to view the Philippines as, in the crucible of war, it transforms itself from a territory divided by race, ethnicity, and warring clans into a cohesive nation on the path to independence.

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Customer Reviews

Yes, the subject of the Philippine-American War has not been sufficiently treated. Yes (p.xv), "Too much of Philippine history has been ... framed from an outsider's perspective." And yes (p.219), "the literature on the Philippine-American War is not of particularly high quality, with a number of important exceptions." Regrettably, I wouldn't make this book an exception. An associate professor

of history, the author was in position to contribute some insights into the connections between the Philippine-American War and both European history and domestic American politics. If he has actually accomplished that with any skill, it is negated by the numerous errors permeating the book which cast doubt on the credibility of almost every pronouncement. Distractions caused by those errors sometimes made it difficult for me to follow analysis in the text, and I found myself wincing. Personal and geographic names are often wrong. Sorsogon is almost unrecognizable as Sargosan, Dagupan is Pagupan, Banaue (or Banawe) is Banane, Cagayan is Cagayen, Mariguina (or Marikina) is Mariquini, Santo Tomas is San Tomas, Gen. Henry Lawton is misnamed William, Gen. Mariano Trias is Antonio, Gen. Vicente Lukban is Vincente Lukhban, Apolinario Mabini is Apollinaro, Reynaldo (Rey) Illeto is Raymond, etc. Strangely wrong statements abound. Guam is in the Carolines and Batangas is a plural which appears as The Batangas. The crucial category of mestizo is overlooked in the analysis of Philippine society. Aguinaldo was said to have been in Europe in the Spring of 1898, and his family owned a plantation. Andres Bonifacio was an ilustrado, which is defined as upper-class or educated in Europe.

Previously, historians have framed the American-Philippine War in the context of an insurgency. David Silbey, however, argues that even though "at the time of the conflict, the Philippine nation was barely formed," to label the war as an insurgency disregards the fact that "the two sides were both states substantially sovereign, using conventional armies, fighting conventional battles, with conventional lines and weapons" (xvi, 215). It was indeed a war of revolution and freedom from imperial rule from the Philippine perspective and a war that inaugurated the United States as a "Pacific power" under the auspices of "a new manifest destiny that saw the United States as too powerful to confine itself to one continent or hemisphere" (213, 215). Silbey's tome provides a brief military and political analysis of the American-Philippine War, arguing that the war itself can be separated into three separate conflicts: The Filipino struggle against Spanish rule, the formal struggle against the U.S. military and the ensuing guerrilla war. Moreover, Silbey argues that the U.S. was not as brutal in the conflict or as an imperial power as is often portrayed. The transition to Philippine independence following WWII was eased due to the relationships that formed with Filipino elites who "came to an accommodation with the Americans," and "in essence agreeing to integration rather than submission" (208). Filipinos, although still viewed as "inferior" in American eyes, were still held in higher esteem than other races. Overall, Silbey's book provides a solid introduction and overview of the war. In his first two chapters, Silbey lays out the relationship between the Philippines and their centuries old colonial masters, the Spanish, by the dawn of the

twentieth century.

Most people have forgotten about the Philippine war. That is a shame. That little known war has shaped policy for the US for a lot of the 20th century. The war also has some valuable lessons for US military policy in the 21st century. This book is a good story of the first two years of the war. It is written in an easy to understand format. It flows very well in an entertaining way. If you are looking for an in-depth book on the subject this isn't that book. There are seven or eight more years of the conflict he doesn't address. Also the US Army stayed in the Philippines for the next 40 years or so. Our ties there lead to large numbers of the US Army being lost there early 42 and later when we invaded in 44. How the war was fought then helped form the nation of the Philippines as it is today. Some of the books stories or the war stories have lessons for us today. In some ways the war sounds like the Iraq war. The war wasn't popular back home either. The question of why we were there echoed across the country then much like the issue about Iraq does now. People forget that war was a guerrilla war which we won. How we won might have lessons that help us today. Of course as you read about the how you will ask yourself if we want to win. The hard stick approach then definitely works. However with 24/7 news coverage we have to ask if we have the stomach for that approach. The book also briefly talked about a critical thing the Army did. This technique was priceless to the war effort. That thing was how they rebuilt the culture. US garrisons became city government. They set up schools to educate the population. Over time the Army introduced the locals into running things. This technique gave the land some strong institutions.

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