

THE PHILIPPINES AND VIETNAM: ANOTHER FALSE ANALOGY

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Americans seem to have an almost perverse attachment to argument from analogy, and the mystical power and persuasiveness of that particular form of argumentation seems to be immense. The image of falling dominoes has been all too prevalent during the continuing debate over United States involvement in Vietnam, and as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. observed, "the multitude of errors committed in the name of 'Munich' may exceed the original error of 1938."¹ In the wake of the tragedy of MyLai and the trial of Lieutenant William Calley, a new analogy caught hold of the minds of many people opposing the Indochina war. What might be termed the Philippine analogy has been the subject of both extended commentaries and passing references, particularly to the court martial of General Jake Smith in 1902.

One author has been bold enough to state that "rarely do historical events resemble each other as closely as the involvements of the United States in the Philippines in 1899 and Vietnam in 1964,"² and another focused upon the Philippine experience to argue that, as the title of his article made clear, "MyLai Was Not the First Time." This latter work concluded, with help from a quote by a leading anti-imperialist, that "the 'great and deep' lesson to be learned" from the Philippine experience was that "the ultimate responsibility . . . lay with the highest authority of all, 'the people of the United States.'"³

In a typical presentation of the Philippine analogy the basic argument is the traditional one that the American army waged an incredibly brutal campaign against the Filipino revolutionaries between 1899 and 1902 in the face of enlightened opposition to the war by anti-imperialists at home. Usually emphasis is given to the unfeeling and atrocious acts of individual American soldiers, the brutality and destructive nature of the conflict, the merit and value of the anti-imperialist opposition, and, finally, the attempts of the administration to justify its actions and bury evidence of American war crimes. Parallels to the Indochina conflict are made both explicitly and by implication.

¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy, 1941-1966* (Greenwich, Conn., 1966), p. 96.

² Stuart C. Miller, "Our MyLai of 1900: Americans in the Philippine Insurrection," *Trans-action* (September, 1970), p. 19.

³ D. B. Shirmer, "MyLai Was Not the First Time," *The New Republic* (April 24, 1971), p. 21.

Although often quite valuable, such an argument by analogy has many pitfalls. An event can easily become distorted in the process of demonstrating its similarity to a supposedly analogous happening. Perhaps even more significant in terms of the long run consequences of argument by analogy, the similarities, even if real, may obscure more important dimensions of the phenomena under study because those things do not fit into the analogy. Rather than increasing one's understanding, an argument from analogy may actually obscure important lessons to be learned from current mistakes. Unfortunately, the Philippine analogy suffers from all of these failings.

Most commentaries on the American experience in the Philippines invariably contain important oversights that significantly alter the picture of American actions in the islands, and most interpretations are inaccurate enough to make the Philippine analogy they present of questionable value at best. For example, the portraits usually painted of the American military commanders in the Philippines are uncomplimentary in the extreme and, as a result, hide much of the astute leadership given to the Army's pacification efforts in the archipelago. General E. S. Otis, commanding the United States troops during the first year of the Filipino-American War, is commonly shown as an indecisive and overly optimistic antique unfit for command. Nothing could be further from the truth, for in the early stages of the war General Otis was almost alone among high ranking officers in seeing the true nature of the conflict that had developed. He was over optimistic, continually underestimating the size of the force he would need to contend with the Philippine revolutionaries, but significantly, he realized that the basic issue was not military but political. He therefore stressed reform rather than military action and worked to increase American troop strength in the islands before embarking on campaigns to destroy the revolutionary army.⁴

The officers who criticized Otis and counseled immediate offensive action against the Filipino army were certainly decisive in their intent, but they were even more optimistic than Otis in their assumption that such foolish and premature activity could bring an end to the war. General S. B. M. Young's assumption that a force of 2,500-3,000 cavalry and 5,000 infantry under the command of Major General Henry W. Lawton could disperse the Filipino army in 30 days was ludicrous.⁵ General Otis recognized as well as General Young that a large column

⁴ Otis showed his interest in the political dimensions of the conflict both in his regular messages to Washington and in his annual reports. For the former see *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain, April 15, 1898-July 30, 1902*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1902), II. For the latter see *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1899*, House Document 2, 56th Congress, 1st Session, V, and *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900*, House Document 2, 56th Congress, 2d Session, V.

⁵ Young to Theodore Roosevelt, August 7, 1899, Elihu Root Papers, Library of Congress.

of American troops could easily disperse any Filipino concentration, but he also knew that the results of such activity would be temporary at best.⁶ American sovereignty in the islands depended on his ability to hold rather than to clear territory and to gain the support of the Filipino elite and villagers. Cautious advance, the policy Otis was criticized for most, seemed the only course of action open to the Americans that did not court disaster at the hands of a Filipino guerrilla movement. Theodore Roosevelt, originally swayed by the views of Young and other officers, eventually changed his opinion of Otis and wrote that the views he had seen in 1899 were "one-sided."⁷ The administration of President William McKinley supported Otis in the face of growing opposition, allowing him to establish a pacification policy based on an appeal to the political, economic, and social desires of the Philippine revolutionaries rather than an attempt to coerce them by brute force.

Adherents to the Philippine analogy like to cite the dramatic statements of officers such as Captain John H. Parker to the effect that "the fundamental obstruction to complete pacification" was "the attempt to meet a half-civilized foe . . . with the same methods devised for civilized warfare against people of our own race, country and blood."⁸ Of greater significance, however, was the policy of enlightened military government and campaigning that provoked such statements. Many American officers were committed to what their revolutionary enemies identified as a "policy of attraction" based on winning Filipinos to the American government by acts of mercy and reform rather than through the use of military force. This policy, begun under General Otis, emphasized the development of schools, municipal governments, public health facilities, and public works projects. General Arthur MacArthur, who replaced Otis in May 1900, was as committed to the benevolent policy as his predecessor, and he also recognized that severity in the treatment of Filipinos would only work "to impede the policy of the United States and to defeat the very purpose which the army is here to accomplish."⁹

⁶ Otis, annual report of August 31, 1899, in *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1899*, V, p. 162.

⁷ Roosevelt to John Henry Parker, May 16, 1900, Elting E. Morison (ed.), *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 8 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), II, pp. 1078-1079.

⁸ Parker to Roosevelt, October 13, 1900, found in Roosevelt to Elihu Root, November 24, 1900, Root Papers.

⁹ Field Order No. 26, Headquarters 2d Division, 8th Army Corps, April 22, 1899, reprinted in Senate Document 331, 57th Congress, 1st Session, Part 2, p. 893. For similar opinions of other officers see *ibid.*, pp. 982-988; Part 3, p. 2430; Col. Lyman W. V. Kennon to Adjutant General Henry C. Corbin, October 25, 1899, Corbin Papers, Library of Congress; the comments of Capt. Joseph B. Batchelor, Jr., *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1900*, VII, p. 379; James Parker, *The Old Army* (Philadelphia, 1929), p. 342; "Official Reports of the 43d Infantry, U.S. Volunteers," Vol. 1, March 28, 1900, Henry T. Allen Papers, Library of Congress; General William A. Kobbé to Otis, April 3, 1900, Allen Papers.

Although obscured by hundreds of pages of anti-imperialist propaganda, humanity and not brutality was the cornerstone of American military policy in the Philippines. The Philippine revolutionaries saw this at the time, and they were forced to resort to widespread terrorism against their own people to attempt to prevent them from accepting American rule.¹⁰ As one Filipino guerrilla leader observed, "continuous contact with our enemies may cause the gravest damage to our sacred cause" owing, in his estimation, to the American "policy of attraction."¹¹ Significantly, the Filipino revolutionary documents seen by this author contained many references to problems caused by American benevolence and few references to American brutality.¹² One must turn to anti-imperialist propaganda, American history texts, and current recitations of the Philippine analogy to find the latter. Clearly, such atrocities did happen, but they have been greatly exaggerated.¹³ The significant feature of American action and policy in the Philippines was not the brutality but the reform orientation of the Army's commanders that enabled them to end the conflict in a relatively short time through co-option rather than coercion.

¹⁰ In John R. M. Taylor, "The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States—A Compilation of Documents with Notes and Introduction," 5 vols. (unpublished galley proofs, 1906) see Manuel Tinio, proclamation, March 20, 1900, p. 47GV; José Alejandrino, proclamation, July, 1900, p. 53GV; Pecho Caballes, proclamation, July 15, 1900, p. 55GV; C. Gonzales to Sandico, August 3, 1900, p. 57GV; Juan M. Gutierrez to Inocencio Peralta, November 4, 1900, p. 70GV; Mariano Trías, proclamation, November 24, 1900, p. 70GV; and Fullón, proclamation, July 11, 1900, p. 49HK. In Robert H. Noble, comp., "A Compilation of Insurgent Documents consisting chiefly of letters and orders issued by insurgent officials during the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands from 1898 to 1902 pertaining chiefly to the Visayan group, comprising the islands of Panay, Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Leyte, and Samar," 34 vols. (unpublished, 1902) see Honesto Ruiz to Moxica, August 11, 1900, VI, pp. 767-778; unsigned order, August 22, 1900, XVIII, p. 3080; and Arcadio Maxilom, proclamation, March 14, 1900, XXXII, pp. 5077-5079. In the Philippine Insurgent Records, 1896-1901 with Associated Records of the U.S. War Department, 1900-1906 (referred to hereafter as PIR) see Juan Cailles to Presidents of Nagcarlan, Rizal, Saluyan, St. Rosario, San Pablo, and Alaminos, May 6, 1900, No. 220.4; Juan Quesada to Julio Tinio, March 22, 1900, No. 342.3; Manuel Tinio to Pedro Legaspi, March 10, 1900, No. 353.7; Aguinaldo to Trías, August 8, 1900, No. 638.5; Dionicio Papa to Rufo Uyos, May 19, 1900, No. 970.4; and Arcadio Maxilom, "Instructions for the Magdudukuts," June 22, 1900, No. 981.1. All three sources are on microfilm obtainable from the U.S. National Archives.

¹¹ R. F. Santos, Circular No. 21, August 24, 1900, Taylor, p. 58GV.

¹² Evidence of Filipino support of the Americans and guerrilla worry about it can be found in Maxilom to Mabini, May 1, 1899, PIR 144.4, 144.5, and 144.2; Eustasio Malolos to Mateo Almosara, March 24, 1900, PIR 1219.7; Aguinaldo to Julian Pilar, August 2, 1900, Aguinaldo Collection, Minnesota Historical Society. In Taylor see García to Torres, February 10, 1900, pp. 45-46GV; José Alejandrino, unnumbered general order, September, 1900, p. 58GV; Torres, Circular No. 633, September 11, 1900, p. 59GV. In Noble see Pío Claveria to Local Presidents of Tigbauan, November 21, 1900, I, p. 12; Fullón, order, July 11, 1900, IX, p. 1454; Maxilom, proclamation, March 14, 1900, XXXII, pp. 5077-5079.

¹³ Terror was a constant theme in American anti-imperialist writing. See, for example, Moorfield Storey and Julian Codman, *Secretary Root's Record: "Marked Severities" in Philippine Warfare* (Boston, 1902). Significantly, even the witnesses

The so-called "extreme measures" begun in December 1900 should by no means be equated with the shocking atrocities usually associated with the Philippine campaign. One of the "harsher" methods, for example, was the incarceration of captured revolutionaries. Prior to the end of 1900, guerrillas had been disarmed and released as a part of the benevolent policy. The trial of terrorists as war criminals, a perfectly legal process under the military laws of the day, was also one of the new "extreme measures." The policy of population reconcentration, used primarily in regions where recalcitrants refused to surrender even after it was obvious that their cause was lost, is certainly of a more questionable nature from our present perspective, but it too was neither illegal nor unprecedented (Americans had used it during the Civil War). Contrary to the view prevailing in most accounts, General MacArthur consistently rejected the recommendations of some of his subordinates for the adoption of a highly repressive policy. Even William Howard Taft, head of the civilian Philippine Commission, advocated a harsher policy than that developed by MacArthur.¹⁴

Given his reputation for saving his "little brown brothers" from the brutality of military rule, Taft's actions in the Philippines are of interest if only to show how distorted the history of the period has become. Taft, not the military, recommended the deportation of captured rebel leaders to Guam, and Taft, not MacArthur, wanted the Filipinos who refused to lay down their arms "treated as outlaws and subject to the severest penalties."¹⁵ The head of the Philippine Commission was among those Americans in the islands who were convinced that with McKinley's re-election "the time will have come to change our lenient policy," and he even criticized MacArthur for being "much too merciful in commuting death sentences" of convicted terrorists.¹⁶

testifying to having seen acts of brutality in the islands before the Senate investigating committee noted that brutality was not the policy of the military government and that Filipinos not engaged in revolutionary activity were treated well by the soldiers, as were prisoners of war. See Senate Document 331, 57th Congress, 1st Session. Of interest in this regard are the petitions from Philippine villages praising the work of the soldiers garrisoned in them. See Senate Document 331, Part 3, pp. 1799-1853 and pp. 2461-2543.

¹⁴ The new policy is outlined in *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901*, House Document 2, 57th Congress, 1st Session, V, pp. 91-93. According to General J. F. Bell, the new policy did not represent a repudiation of the previous benevolent pacification program. See Bell to the Adjutant General, December 31, 1900, "Diary of Events, 29 Dec. 1900-12 Jan. 1901," AGO 365565, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, U.S. National Archives. For Taft's criticism of MacArthur's leniency see Taft to Root, November 30 and December 27, 1900, Root Papers. On the Army's use of population reconcentration earlier see Charles R. Mink, "General Orders, No. 11: The Forced Evacuation of Civilians During the Civil War," *Military Affairs*, Vol. XXXIV (1970), pp. 132-136.

¹⁵ Taft to Root, September 21, 1900, Root Papers.

¹⁶ Taft to Root, October 10 and October 31, 1900, Root Papers. The very best that can be said for Taft's recommendations is that they were contradictory. See, in addition to the above, Taft to Root, November 14, 1900, Root Papers

In statements of the Philippine analogy General "Howling Jake" Smith is invariably presented as an example of American military leadership and brutality, although in fact he was really an anomaly. His Samar campaign was inept, consisting primarily of futile search and destroy missions.¹⁷ In 1902, while Smith's forces were devastating much of the sparsely-inhabited interior of Samar, a more typical example of American campaigning was taking place in Batangas Province under the direction of General J. F. Bell. Although Bell resorted to population reconcentration and a modified scorched earth policy to deny guerrillas the supplies they needed to exist, he also kept control over his men and provided for the welfare of the reconcentrated Filipino population under his supervision.¹⁸ Of equal significance, both of these operations took place at a time when the revolution had all but ended and under the overall direction of General Adna R. Chaffee, who had replaced MacArthur in 1901. Chaffee seemed to lack the perceptiveness and the commitment to humane campaigning of his predecessor, and it was Chaffee who made the comment that the only way to achieve peace was to pin down the Filipinos "with bayonets for ten years until they submit,"¹⁹ a statement usually erroneously attributed to MacArthur. Fortunately, the majority of Smith's subordinates and the majority of officers throughout the Philippines retained their belief that reform was the road to peace. Bell, for example, had made it quite clear that he was not advocating torture, burning, or other unauthorized severities when he instructed his men to be "firm and relentless in action."²⁰

One can hardly end a discussion of the Philippine analogy without a comment on its picture of the anti-imperialist movement. The anti-imperialists were a courageous and sincerely motivated group. The questions they raised provided a valid challenge to their more imperialistically minded countrymen, but to call the anti-imperialists "antiwar

and, in the William Howard Taft Papers, Library of Congress, Taft to Horace H. Lurton, September 22, 1900; Taft to Henry Cabot Lodge, October 17, 1900; Taft to William R. Day, December 10, 1900; and Taft to Henry M. Hoyt, January 7, 1901.

¹⁷ The Samar campaign is covered in *Annual Reports of the Secretary of War for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1902*, House Document 2, 57th Congress, 2d Session, vol. XII; Senate Document 331, 57th Congress, 1st Session, Parts 2 and 3; Senate Document 213, 57th Congress, 2d Session; and Joseph L. Schott, *The Ordeal of Samar* (Indianapolis, 1964).

¹⁸ The Batangas campaign is covered in *Annual Reports of the Secretary of War for 1902*, vols. VIII and XII; Senate Document 331, Part 2; and *Telegraphic Circulars and General Orders, Regulating Campaign Against Insurgents and Proclamations and Circular Letters, Relating to Reconstruction After Close of War in the Provinces of Batangas, Laguna, and Mindoro, P.I. Issued by Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell, U.S. Army, Commanding Brigade, from December 1, 1901, to December 1, 1902* (Batangas, 1902), AGO 415839, Records of the Adjutant General's Office.

¹⁹ Taft to Root, October 14, 1901, Root Papers.

²⁰ *Telegraphic Circulars and General Orders . . . op. cit.*, p. iii.

radicals," as has one author,²¹ conveys an inaccurate picture of this early peace movement. In reality the majority of anti-imperialist leaders constituted an old, backward-looking and politically ineffective minority that was localized primarily in New England. Elitists like Edward Atkinson, Andrew Carnegie, E. L. Godkin, Charles Eliot Norton, and Carl Schurz made up an important segment of the movement, and the anti-imperialist leagues contained some of the most reactionary men in America. Although a current of racism and a belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority was present in American imperialism, that same stream ran through the anti-imperialist movement as well. In fact, some Southern Congressmen had opposed annexation of Spanish territories because of their desire to prevent the incorporation of more dark-skinned people into the American nation. To call such people radicals is a significant error, and to compare them even implicitly to the more forward-looking and relatively more effective members of the contemporary anti-war movement is misleading to say the least.²²

The foregoing revision of the traditional picture of American operations in the Philippines can easily be misinterpreted. The argument that the American campaign was not unduly brutal is not an apology for the imperialistic policies that provoked the conflict or the war crimes committed by Americans during the course of the war. Even more important, it is definitely not an attack on the motives of authors who, in a sincere effort to assess the present conflict in Indochina, have presented the Philippine analogy to the public. The analysis being presented here has an entirely different purpose. Atrocities of war and American attitudes toward other peoples are an important topic for discussion, and the Philippine analogy highlights them both. For one interested in military affairs, however, there seems to be an even more important area of debate that may be much more significant than a discussion of either American war crimes or imperialistic attitudes.

Vietnam in 1971 or 1969 is not the Philippines in 1901 or 1899, and the differences between the two situations are extremely important. In the Philippines, for example, the revolutionaries had neither a place of sanctuary, free from American attack, nor material support from the outside. Unlike the war in Indochina, the Philippine conflict did not take place in a tense international situation where a small war could easily be a prelude to a much larger and more disastrous one. Furthermore, it was not being fought in the shadow of nuclear weapons or

²¹ Miller, "Our Mylai of 1900," p. 22.

²² Robert L. Beisner, "1898 and 1968: The Anti-Imperialists and the Doves," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. LXXXV (1970), pp. 187-216; E. Berkeley Tompkins, "The Old Guard: A Study of the Anti-Imperialist Leadership," *The Historian*, Vol. XXX (1968), pp. 366-388; and Christopher Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines, and the Inequality of Man," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. XXIV (1958), pp. 318-331.

in the context of an ideologically and emotionally-charged cold war. American military and political leaders had a freedom of action in the earlier conflict that they have never had in Vietnam, where the necessity of cooperating with an indigenous government and other allies has placed some limitations on policy and other decisions. Finally, the technological differences apparent between the two wars are tremendous, not only in terms of weapons, but also in virtually every other dimension of the conflict from communication to medical care. It seems almost absurd to compare the operations of less than 70,000 American troops in an archipelago of approximately 8,000,000 people with the work of over a million men, if one includes Vietnamese and allied troops, in a nation of about 18,000,000. This is particularly true when one compares the weapons available to each group. The rifle and the match of 1899 can hardly be equated with the helicopter gun ships and the napalm bombs of 1972. Thus, the Philippine analogy, as usually stated, has little value.

A more balanced view of the American campaign in the Philippines should lead to conclusions that are far different from those stressed by most adherents to the Philippine analogy. First, although the claim that "MyLai Was Not the First Time" is obviously correct, the implication that that is the significant thing to be learned from a study of the American intervention in the Philippines is not. As long as war exists there will be MyLais, and one certainly does not need to go to the American Philippine experience to learn that war is atrocious or that politicians and military men will go to great lengths to override criticism of their actions. That is apparent enough in the Vietnamese case alone.²³ Second, by focusing on the atrocities committed in the Philippines and by stressing the numerous points of commonality between the American experience there and in Vietnam, authors have done much to obscure the nature of both conflicts. Why, one wonders, must the United States need to have been atrocious in the Philippines to enable Americans to understand the war in Vietnam?

If anything, the Philippine experience probably teaches a lesson exactly the opposite from the one that is usually presented. American soldiers repressed the Filipino revolution because of their careful stress on the political dimensions of the conflict and their implementation of a variety of reforms, not because of traditional military action or combat. The conscious efforts of military leaders to prevent MyLais were much more significant than the occurrence of atrocities in opposition

²³ Two vivid examples have been the government's attempt to prevent the publication of the Pentagon Papers (see *The New York Times*, June, 1971, *passim*) and the Army's harassment of Lt. Col. Anthony B. Herbert after he tried to disclose alleged atrocities in Vietnam (see *The New York Times*, September-November, 1971, *passim*).

to the stated policy. Revolutionary wars are political conflicts. Americans realized this in the Philippines and acted accordingly.

However, although the counter-insurgency theory of the early 1960's recognized the importance of civic action, more conventional military activity has been the primary point of focus in Vietnam, and the lack of results has frustrated military and political leaders alike.²⁴ Thus, if one uses the Philippine analogy at all, experience seems to indicate that part of the failure in Vietnam has been because Americans have done things so differently rather than so similarly from what had been done more than half a century before.

With the widespread destruction of Indochinese society and the region's environment, the time has probably passed in which the Philippine experience might provide useful lessons for would-be counter-insurgents in Vietnam. Bombs, anti-personnel weapons, defoliants, flame, inflation, the displacement of thousands of villagers, and a host of other horrors have moved the situation in Vietnam too far away from what it was in the early 1960's to make a political solution of the problem, even through reform, a realistic option.²⁵ Building schools, clinics, and roads in the midst of such destruction and chaos as exists in Vietnam at present can be of little value as a pacification effort. Instead, it can be no more than sideshow to the destructive firepower displays that are a part of daily life in the Indochina of the 1970's. Consequently, one

²⁴ There have been many interesting assessments of the way in which more conventional military approaches have triumphed over less destructive, more difficult methods of counter-insurgency. Roger Hilsman documented the shift from small unit action on the ground to bombing in *To Move a Nation* (Garden City, 1967), pp. 525-537 for example. See also William R. Corson, *The Betrayed* (New York, 1968), ch. 2 in particular; Eqbal Ahmad, "Revolutionary War and Counter-Insurgency," in David S. Sullivan and Martin J. Sattler (eds.), *Revolutionary War: Western Response* (New York, 1971), pp. 1-47; Daniel Ellsberg, "Laos: What Nixon Is Up To," *The New York Review of Books* (March 11, 1971), pp. 13-17; and Jonathan Schell, *The Village of Ben Suc* (New York, 1967) and *The Military Half* (New York, 1968).

²⁵ The destruction of Indochina has been extensively documented. See, for example, the various reports of hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate Problems connected with Refugees and Escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 91st and 92d Congress. In particular, see "Refugee and Civilian War Casualty Problems in Laos and Cambodia" (1970); "War-Related Civilian Problems in Indochina" (1971); and "World Refugee and Humanitarian Problems" (1971). According to AID sources, since 1964 over 5,000,000 people, "or nearly one-third of the total population, have become refugees or suffered damage to life, limb, and property" ("World Refugee and Humanitarian Problems," p. 49). For a short, but interesting survey of the effects of the war upon the land as well as the people, see John Lewallen, *Ecology of Devastation: Indochina* (Baltimore, 1971). The ecological problems being created in Indochina have been discussed in numerous scientific journals. For a sample of this growing literature see Arthur H. Westing and E. W. Pfeiffer, "The Cratering of Indochina," *Scientific American*, Vol. CCVI (May, 1972), pp. 20-29; "The Destruction of Indochina: Report of the Stanford Biology Study Group," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, Vol. XXVII (May, 1971), pp. 36-40; and Gordon H. Orians and E. W. Pfeiffer, "Ecological Effects of the War in Vietnam," *Science*, Vol. CLXVIII (May 1, 1970), pp. 544-554.

clear lesson of any Philippine study should be that one cannot reproduce the Philippines of 1899 in the Indochina of 1972. The situations, for all their apparent similarity, are just not analogous!

Other lessons of the American experience in the Philippines, if there are any, seem also to lie in the differences between that campaign and the more recent one in Vietnam. Attempts to demonstrate that the United States was as inept in the Philippines as it has been in Indochina are not only false, but also misdirected. Instead, there is a need to emphasize the new and unique dimensions of the struggle in Southeast Asia, for the horror seen there is being caused to a large extent by conditions growing out of the current state of the art of war and not, as the purveyors of the Philippine analogy would have one believe, out of some racist or imperialist stream running deep in the American past.

The dimensions of the Indochina conflict that many people find most abhorrent — the death and mutilation of thousands of noncombatants, the terror, the incredible destruction of the environment, and the disintegration of the societies there — are the direct result of the use of modern weaponry having massive destructive capability but often lacking in effectiveness and decisiveness when used in the type of conflict being waged in Indochina today.²⁶ Debate focusing on specific war crimes and the withdrawal of American ground forces from Vietnam has obscured the more important problem of the type of war being waged in Southeast Asia. The use of weapons of mass destruction is a subtler but much more important issue.

A comparison of the Philippine experience and the Indochina War can help to highlight two significant lessons that Americans must learn and learn rapidly for the good of all mankind. First, the destructive capability of modern weapons is so great that *war in which a great power uses the latest weaponry that its technology can provide may no longer be a legitimate or useful extension of national policy.*²⁷ For over a decade military strategists have recognized that nuclear war is not a feasible policy option,²⁸ but only now has it become apparent that other forms of war may be impossible for states with the resources and weaponry of the United States. The use of fire and airpower has been the direct and major cause of the destruction, mutilation, and death

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ For a short but provocative view of the war crimes question by an expert in the field see Telford Taylor, *Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy* (New York, 1970). See also Richard A. Falk, ed., *The Vietnam War and International Law*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1968, 1969). The question of war crimes has come up in hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate. See, for example, "Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia," 92d Congress, 1st Session (1971).

²⁸ For a quick survey of the change in strategists' views on the value and use of nuclear weapons see Morton H. Halperin, *Limited War in the Nuclear Age* (New York, 1963), pp. 58-63 and his excellent annotated bibliography, pp. 133-184.

that many Americans deplore in Vietnam and the rest of Indochina. The majority of the refugees fleeing to the cities have not been running from either Viet Cong terrorism or the horror of a MyLai. Their displacement has been caused by the relatively indiscriminate use of weapons of unimaginable destructive capability. American airpower has caused a large share of civilian casualties and done the greatest amount of damage to the environment.²⁹ The withdrawal of American combat troops from Vietnam or the argument from analogy that Americans have also fought brutally against Asians before will do little to end this devastating use of air and firepower. Experience has shown that the fewer troops the United States has in the zone of conflict, the more it will rely upon massive fire and airpower to keep the balance of force in the hands of the government of South Vietnam.³⁰

In the Philippines in 1899 war was a useful tool for the extension of national policy, although in retrospect the policy being implemented has been justly criticized. Still, good or bad, the policy could be fostered by military means, providing, of course, that the military leaders carrying the policy forward did so in an enlightened manner. That was exactly what happened at the turn of the century, and the results were decisive. The Philippine revolution was crushed, American imperialism triumphed, and the anti-imperialists were ignored, all with much less destruction and death than has accompanied the much less successful conflict in Indochina. What adherents to the Philippine analogy overlook is that, although American attitudes may have remained relatively constant, war has changed.

Unlike their counterparts in 1899, the modern weapons technology and the military activity undertaken presently in Southeast Asia seem unable to end the war there. The destructive techniques of military force have been perfected considerably since the turn of the century, but their ability to be truly decisive when used seems to have declined. The development of airpower is a case in point. World War II showed that strategic bombing was not capable of the achievements that Giulio

²⁹ Some excellent material on the problems of refugees in Indochina and on the effects of the air war are contained in the published reports of the hearings of Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees. In addition to the other sources already cited here, see Frank Harvey, *Air War—Vietnam* (New York, 1967). The United States government's continued lack of candor when speaking on most aspects of the war make its attempts to refute testimony regarding civilian casualties and refugees somewhat less than convincing. The tendency of secret documents such as the Pentagon Papers to support charges of anti-government and anti-war critics calls public statements of government officials into further question.

³⁰ Neil Sheehan, "Study Shows U.S. Presses Air War," *The New York Times*, November 8, 1971, p. 6 and Herbert Mitgang, "Changing the Color of the Corpses," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1971, p. 2 of section IV. Both articles refer to a comprehensive study of the air war in Indochina by Raphael Littauer *et al* of the Cornell University Center for International Studies.

Douhet and other theorists attributed to it.³¹ Bombing could not destroy the war-making capacity of a belligerent (the peak of German war production came in mid-1944), and it did not destroy his will to fight.³² The war in Korea showed that the supply line of an army that depended primarily on human beings as prime movers could not be interdicted successfully through the use of airpower alone.³³ Both of these experiences have been repeated in the course of the conflict in Indochina, yet some American military officers continue to adhere to a doctrine that has been repudiated by their own experience.³⁴ Bombing and firepower can kill, but they cannot convince. They can make war more destructive than anything that man has heretofore imagined, but they cannot make war a successful extension of policy. This fact seems to have been understood clearly by Americans in the Philippines, and their stress on reform and other political factors gave a more proper guide to their military activities. It is too late, however, for a similarly enlightened policy of imperialism in Vietnam.

The second lesson of the Philippine-Indochina comparison stems directly from the first. If modern war has become so destructive that it can no longer be relied upon as an instrument of policy, then *intervention in any situation where war using weapons of mass destruction is a probable outcome has also lost much of its utility*. In this respect, the situation in Indochina is a far cry from that in the Philippines. Today, the great nation relying on its massive firepower and modern weapons technology cannot really protect its allies from either internal or external subversion, and it certainly cannot intervene in the domestic affairs of another nation against any sizeable opposition. It can only destroy nations and peoples in the name of protecting them. As Daniel Ellsberg has observed, a national leader would be committing "an act of treachery against his society" if he called for American aid in a conflict that he knew would be long and would entail a large American

³¹ See Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, Dino Ferrari, trans. (New York, 1942); William Mitchell, *Skyways: A Book on Modern Aeronautics* (Philadelphia, 1930); and Alexander P. de Seversky, *Victory Through Air Power* (New York, 1942).

³² *United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Summary Report (European War)* (Washington, 1945).

³³ David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (London, 1964), pp. 374-383; Matthew B. Ridgway, *The Korean War* (New York, 1967), p. 244; and J. Lawton Collins, *War in Peacetime: The History and Lessons of Korea* (Boston, 1969), pp. 312-313.

³⁴ The Pentagon Papers showed that throughout the period of the intensive air war over North Vietnam the Joint Chiefs were continually over optimistic in their estimates of the ability of air power to achieve a variety of goals. Their optimism was not borne out by either the response of the North Vietnamese or the assessments of its effectiveness by other governmental agencies, in particular the CIA. See, for example, Neil Sheehan *et al*, *The Pentagon Papers as published by The New York Times* (New York, 1971), pp. 542-554 and 577-585. In *Militarism, U.S.A.* (New York, 1970), James A. Donovan aptly characterizes the air war as "The Great Bombing Hoax" (see pp. 176-190).

military commitment.³⁵ In Vietnam there is clear evidence of what an American commitment means in terms of destruction and waste of human life. It is far removed from the village burning and isolated war crimes of 1899.

As a comparison of the Philippine and Vietnam experience makes crystal clear, the whole nature of war has changed. We have changed it through our emphasis on weapons technology and our reliance on the modern weapons that the technology has produced. Ironically, many Americans have been unwilling to admit the change and act upon it, although the time for a significant reassessment of American military policy is long overdue.

The Philippine analogy seems to have extremely limited value in a debate over American policy in Southeast Asia. It may help to show that war is atrocious, but men have known that fact for centuries. It can highlight American racism, but racism has been a part of American life since the colonial period and one need not study the Philippines or Vietnam to show its deplorable effects on the nation. If free from its usual errors of fact and interpretation, a modified Philippine analogy may help to show that political techniques are more effective than military force in a revolutionary conflict, but that lesson seems to have little application in Vietnam at the present time. Rather, the significant lesson to come from a comparison of the Indochina War and the earlier conflict in the Philippines rests on the important differences between the two wars. In short, it is that great powers can no longer intervene and engage in such conflict except at the risk of severely damaging the people they are seeking to aid. Unfortunately, this is the one lesson that a number of American leaders have yet to learn.

³⁵ Richard M. Pfeffer, ed., *No More Vietnams? The War and the Future of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1968), p. 38.