"The March of the Flag" speech, 1898

While running for the Senate in 1898, Indiana’s Albert Beveridge gave a campaign speech in which he explained why the United States should keep the Philippines. As you read this excerpt, consider his arguments in favor of U.S. imperialism.

It is a noble land that God has given us; a land that can feed and clothe the world; a land whose coastlines would enclose half the countries of Europe; a land set like a sentinel between the two imperial oceans of the globe, a greater England with a nobler destiny. It is a mighty people that He has planted on this soil; a people sprung from the most masterful blood of history; . . . a people imperial by virtue of their power, by right of their institutions, by authority of their heaven-directed purposes—the propagandists and not the misers of liberty.

It is a glorious history our God has bestowed upon His chosen people; a history whose keynote was struck by the Liberty Bell; a history heroic with faith in our mission and our future; a history of statesmen who flung the boundaries of the republic out into unexplored lands and savage wildernesses; a history of soldiers who carried the flag across the blazing deserts and through the ranks of hostile mountains, even to the gates of sunset; a history of a multiplying people who overran a continent in half a century...

Therefore, in this campaign, the question is larger than a party question. It is an American question. It is a world question. Shall the American people continue in their restless march toward the commercial supremacy of the world? Shall free institutions broaden their blessed reign as the children of liberty wax in strength, until the empire of our principles is established over the hearts of all mankind?...

God bless the soldiers of 1898, children of the heroes of 1861, descendants of the heroes of 1776! In the halls of history they will stand side by side with those elder sons of glory, and the opposition to the government at Washington shall not deny them. No! They shall not be robbed of the honor due them, nor shall the republic be robbed of what they won for their country. . . .

Hawaii is ours; Puerto Rico is to be ours; at the prayer of the people, Cuba will finally be ours; . . . at the very least the flag of a liberal government is to float over the Philippines, and I pray God it may be the banner that Taylor unfurled in Texas and Frémont carried to the coast—the stars and stripes of glory.

The march of the flag! . . .

Think of the thousands of Americans who will pour into Hawaii and Puerto Rico when the republic’s laws cover those islands with justice and safety! Think of the tens of thousands of Americans who will invade mine and field and forest in the Philippines when a liberal government . . . shall establish order and equity there! Think of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who will build a soap-and-water, common-school civilization of energy and industry in Cuba when a government of law replaced the double reign of anarchy and tyranny. Think of the prosperous millions that empress of islands will support when, obedient to the law of political gravitation, her people ask for the highest honor liberty can bestow, the sacred Order of the Stars and Stripes, the citizenship of the Great Republic!
The American Anti-Imperialist League was founded in 1899, after the United States occupied Cuba and Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands. Cuba became nominally independent, although the United States retained until 1934 the legal right to intervene in Cuban domestic and foreign affairs. Both Puerto Rico and the Philippines became American colonies. The Filipinos revolted against American rule in February, 1899, and were suppressed in 1902 after a bloody, ruthless guerrilla war. Most Americans supported overseas expansion, but many of the nation's most illustrious citizens - including Andrew Carnegie and William James, were appalled by American imperialism. In 1899 they founded the American Anti-Imperialist League in order to campaign, unsuccessfully as it turned out, against the annexation of the Philippines.

We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism, an evil from which it has been our glory to be free. We regret that it has become necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. We insist that the subjugation of any people is "criminal aggression" and open disloyalty to the distinctive principles of our Government.

We earnestly condemn the policy of the present National Administration in the Philippines. It seeks to extinguish the spirit of 1776 in those islands. We deplore the sacrifice of our soldiers and sailors, whose bravery deserves admiration even in an unjust war. We denounce the slaughter of the Filipinos as a needless horror. We protest against the extension of American sovereignty by Spanish methods.

We demand the immediate cessation of the war against liberty, begun by Spain and continued by us. We urge that Congress be promptly convened to announce to the Filipinos our purpose to concede to them the independence for which they have so long fought and which of right is theirs.

The United States have always protested against the doctrine of international law which permits the subjugation of the weak by the strong. A self-governing state cannot accept sovereignty over an unwilling people. The United States cannot act upon the ancient heresy that might makes right.

We deny that the obligation of all citizens to support their Government in times of grave National peril applies to the present situation. If an Administration may with impunity ignore the issues upon which it was chosen, deliberately create a condition of war anywhere on the face of the globe, debauch the civil service for spoils to promote the adventure, organize a truth suppressing censorship and demand of all citizens a suspension of judgment and their unanimous support while it chooses to continue the fighting, representative government itself is imperiled.

We propose to contribute to the defeat of any person or party that stands for the forcible subjugation of any people. We shall oppose for reelection all who in the White House or in Congress betray American liberty in pursuit of un-American ends. We still hope that both of our great political parties will support and defend the Declaration of Independence in the closing campaign of the century.

We hold, with Abraham Lincoln, that "no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. When the white man governs himself, that is self-government, but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government—that is despotism." “Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men in all lands. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it.”

We cordially invite the cooperation of all men and women who remain loyal to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.
At the turn of the Twentieth century, most Americans held strong views regarding U.S. policies toward the former colonies of Spain. Imperialism, or the policy in which stronger nations extend their economic, political, or military control over weaker territories, had divided the nation. After reading two arguments related to United States imperialism, analyze each argument as instructed below. Finally, weigh the strength of each argument and determine which position you more closely identify with.

“March of the Flag” speech

Thesis Statement: What position is the author taking of the issue of American Imperialism?

Premise #1: What basic point does the author make that the rest of the argument seems based upon?

Premise #2: What point or assumption does the author make that seems most closely connected to the first premise? (“If premise #1 is true, then premise #2”)

Premise #3: What point or assumption does the author make that seems to rely all his other points? (“If premise #1 and premise #2 are true, then premise #3”)

Conclusions: Based on the reasoning provided, what conclusions has the author made regarding the issue of American Imperialism? (Since these premises are true, logically we should…)

“Platform of the Anti-Imperialist League”

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Which side do you believe makes the stronger argument on this issue?
Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man's Burden” (1899)

Born in British India in 1865, Rudyard Kipling was educated in England before returning to India in 1882, where his father was a museum director and authority on Indian arts and crafts. Thus Kipling was thoroughly immersed in Indian culture: by 1890 he had published in English about 80 stories and ballads previously unknown outside India. As a result of financial misfortune, from 1892-96 he and his wife, the daughter of an American publisher, lived in Vermont, where he wrote the two Jungle Books. After returning to England, he published “The White Man's Burden” in 1899, an appeal to the United States to assume the task of developing the Philippines, recently won in the Spanish-American War.

Take up the White Man's burden, send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile to serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness, on fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden--In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror and check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple, an hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit, and work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden, the savage wars of peace--
Fill full the mouth of Famine and bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest the end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly bring all your hopes to naught.

Take up the White Man's burden, no tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper--the tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter, the roads ye shall not tread,
Go mark them with your living and mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden and reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better, the hate of those ye guard--
The cry of hosts ye humour Ah, slowly!) toward the light:--
"Why brought he us from bondage, our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden, ye dare not stoop to less--
Nor call too loud on Freedom to cloak your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper, by all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden; have done with childish days--
The lightly preferred laurel, the easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood through all the thankless years
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom, the judgment of your peers!