

A Study in Uncertainty

Interviewer

“The interviews we’re recording now.

Brian Linn

I don’t get a make-up person? [Laughter]

Interviewer

Well, for a make-up person”

Interviewer

We can throw a bit on there. Â

Brian Linn

No, that’s alright.

Interviewer

He’s joking, I think. Â So just for the sake of the transcriber, if you could spell your name and the title by which you’d like to be identified. Â So”

Brian Linn

Okay. Â The name is Brian McAllister Linn. Â It’s B-R-I-A-N, McAllister”M-C-A-L-L-I-S-T-E-R; small œ, large œ; and Linn”L-I-N-N. Â And I’m a professor of history at Texas A&M University.

Interviewer

So let’s go right to the work at the conference and then we’ll backtrack from there to some of your early academic history and some of the things that you’ve produced. Â Tell me what the focus was”the subject that you tackled in the essay for the TRADOC conference on war termination. Â

Brian Linn

I dealt specifically with what happened after the end of what’s now called the Philippine-American War and used to be the Philippine Insurrection. Â And I call it the Philippine War. Â So period”I sort of studied the last campaigns that occurred in 1901-1902, and then carried it out to sort of see what the problems they had with ending the war after it had been officially declared over; some of the impact that it had had on the Army; and then the long term strategic results of occupying an overseas empire. Â

Interviewer

And I guess what you just described as a war that has three completely different names says something about war termination in itself, doesn’t it?Â

Brian Linn

Right. Â Yeah, exactly. Â We were never sure what the war was. Â And in fact, there was a

legal problem because we officially didn't take possession of the Philippines the treaty wasn't signed with Spain until about two months after the war had begun. So this two months that they're not really sure, as a result the Army dates casualties and engagements on two different dates. One is on February 4th, the other one is in April 16th or 17th, I think.

Interviewer

Go on for a moment before we get specific about the Philippine War to some of the themes that Roger Spiller outlined in what I guess was in some respects the kind of broad, introductory essay about war termination and its historical importance, if you could.

Brian Linn

Well, I should point out there was enormous discussion at the meeting we had in January about how to define war termination and what this project would actually be. And everyone that deals with it has to deal with a variety of things. Do you want you obviously have to talk a little bit about how the war began. Then you have to sort of talk about how obviously how it ended. Now do you want to spend a lot of time focusing on how the war ended, or do you want to breeze through that and talk about the short term consequences and the long term consequences?

Brian Linn

And I think and to the credit of the people that organized it, we didn't get a checklist. We weren't sort of given a master outline that we had to follow. And I think Roger's problem, then, was to try and impose coherence on a group of essays in which people were focusing on very different things. I've read five of them and there are similar themes in them but the organization and so forth so my take I would guess that Roger's great contribution is to put the sort of coherence on there that the individual essays might not necessarily have. And I think he's probably the one you should interview on his on how he fit that together.

Interviewer

Well I guess [Inaudible] though, allowing that freedom was necessary because each war dictated its own special understanding of the way that a war ends. And it also is dictated from in part from the perspective from which you're viewing it. I mean, if you go out 20 years later you might see that the significance of an earlier battle was more important than whatever was the last campaign.

Brian Linn

Right.

Interviewer

And in your case in the Philippine War, really it's very hard to mark what the end was because the insurgency overlaps and entangles itself with the war itself, and then beginnings and ends are really hard to tease out. Is that right?

Brian Linn

Well, sort of two points. One of them is the first book that we were following, America's Final Campaigns, had added a study in unpreparedness. There was a unifying theme; but that was in part driven by TRADOC's desire to show the

consequences of unpreparedness. A

Brian Linn

Right now, weâ€™re in a situation in the current operating environment where those lessons arenâ€™t nearly as clear and itâ€™s not nearly as vital for people to know the consequences of not fighting and winningâ€”or not winning the first battle.

Interviewer

Isnâ€™t itâ€”given what General Dempsey just outlined and what Professor Spiller mentioned, you could say itâ€™s a study in uncertainty.

Brian Linn

Right. Â But itâ€™s a lot easier to prepare for unpreparedness than it is to prepare for uncertainty, almost by definition.

Interviewer

Prepare for uncertainty, yeah.

Brian Linn

In my particular case, the war essentially ended because Teddy Roosevelt declared it was over and he picked July 4th. Â But the initial commander in military operations, who was General Elwell Otis, wrote I think in March of 1900, â€œThe war is over and all thatâ€™s left is a big job of policing.â€ Â Soâ€”and this has been said, by the way, about Afghanistanâ€”that we have essentially won that war twice, we just havenâ€™t recognized that weâ€™ve won it and pulled out; Â that we won it allegedly when the Taliban were driven out, and we could have declared victory and come home; and we won it in 2004 when the first election occurred, and we could have declared victory and come home. Â

Brian Linn

And neither choice, neither decision was made to do that. Â And now weâ€™re in a situation where it looks like itâ€™s far moreâ€”I wonâ€™t say far more, but it may well be completely unraveling and we will simply have to sort of pack our bags and leave because Karzai and no one wants us anymore. Â And itâ€™s simply, we canâ€™t afford economically or in terms of our world position to continue to fight it. Â So war is difficult; you have to know when to say itâ€™s over. [Laughter]

Interviewer

Wellâ€”right. Â Now, I think, Iâ€™d like to come to the parallels between the Philippine situation and Iraq and Afghanistan, both. Â But just before we get to thatâ€”

Brian Linn

Okay. Â Â

Interviewer

â€”and I do want you to describe the story of the Philippine War but historically, thereâ€™s also an argument that the First World Warâ€™s end doesnâ€™t happen until the Cold War

ends, right? A

Brian Linn

Yeah. Â Yeah.

Interviewer

So I mean, thereâ€™s anyâ€”these are in some respects historical conceits, arenâ€™t they?Â

Brian Linn

So in a way, Rooseveltâ€™s taking a year after the end of the war to declare what everyone knows. Â And that sort of leads to, some would argue, well, those wars arenâ€™t really over until the Moro Wars end in 1913, or the Japanese invasion or now look, youâ€™ve got violence in almost every area that the Americans did problems with after. Â Youâ€™ve got problems in Southeast Luzon; youâ€™ve got Samar, Mindanao. Â Where were there problems after the end of the Philippine War? Â Itâ€™s the same areas. Â Â

Interviewer

So in a way, Rooseveltâ€™s taking a year after the end of the war to declare what everyone knows. Â And that sort of leads to, some would argue, well, those wars arenâ€™t really over until the Moro Wars end in 1913, or the Japanese invasion or now look, youâ€™ve got violence in almost every area that the Americans did problems with after. Â Youâ€™ve got problems in Southeast Luzon; youâ€™ve got Samar, Mindanao. Â Where were there problems after the end of the Philippine War? Â Itâ€™s the same areas. Â Â

Interviewer

Or you could argue, I guess, that the war could have been â€œoverâ€ with independence in 1934, and thatâ€™s justâ€”

Interviewer

Again, it depends on where you want to define it and how you want to define it but where you want to choose to stop.

Interviewer

Again, it depends on where you want to define it and how you want to define it but where you want to choose to stop.

Brian Linn

Right.Â If you want to talk about the war being over when thereâ€™s no more sort of endemic resistanceâ€”armed resistance against the government of the Philippines, that war is still very much going on. Â And we now supposedly have Special Forces troops operating in areas that Pershing was operating in; helping the Philippines Army.

The Philippine-American War: The Paragraph Version

Interviewer

Tell me the story of the Philippine War. Â Iâ€™m going to ask you thisâ€”it reminded me so that when Ryan Disko that comes only in this one directionâ€”[Inaudible]

Brian Linn

Okay. Â Well, itâ€™s sort ofâ€™

Interviewer

Just tell me theâ€™youâ€™re speaking to an undergraduate, letâ€™s say. Â Youâ€™re just telling them what the war was from the period of McKinley, Rooseveltâ€™the whole story.

Brian Linn

Yeah. Â Well itâ€™s one of those problems that you could probably do it in once sentence, and you could do it in a paragraph, and you can do it in a 400 page book. Â But anything in between is very difficult.

Interviewer

Letâ€™s try the paragraphâ€™

Brian Linn

Okay. Â The war is a completely unplanned war in the sense that you haveâ€™weâ€™re at war with Spain to liberate Cubaâ€™a very limited war. Â I mean, this is a limited war objective. Â Weâ€™re not talking about invading Spain. Â And in fact, the initial plan was simply to enable blockade, which would have achieved most of these objectives. Â But the first military action of that war is a strike by the Navyâ€™s Asiatic squadron on the Spanish squadron in Manila Bay, which isâ€™Â

Interviewer

Why are we interested in this in the beginning? Â

Brian Linn

Now, this is very complicated and I think itâ€™s got some relevance for today. Â It was a militarily sound action without people really thinking, â€œOkay, once we do this what are we supposed to do with it?â€ Â Well, the fact that we can do it doesnâ€™t necessarily mean you should do it. Â And so Dewey sails out and he wins this tremendous and completely unexpected victory. Â And you have to remember, except for the wars on the western frontier, which werenâ€™t wars, this is the first war since the Civil War. Â And peopleâ€™

Interviewer

What year are we now? Â

Brian Linn

â€™1898. Â This is â€™Deweyâ€™s victory isâ€™

Interviewer

Describe Dewey for a second.

Brian Linn

Well, Dewey is a Civil War veteran; a Vermonter whoâ€™s out in the Far East. Â Heâ€™s

actually in Hong Kong with the Asiatic squadron which is largely to protect U.S. trade in the Far East; mainly China trade. He's got a very small squadron out there, but relative to the Spanish, it's quite powerful. And he does a very brave thing; he steams through the defenses, which for all he knew he was going into what they called torpedoes, we would call mines, that they had coast artillery. In fact, Spanish hadn't put those out because they had all decayed. And so he steams through. Once he does that, the Battle of Manila Bay is essentially pretty much a massacre. Well, news of Dewey's victory comes back. And it has two

Interviewer

But backing up, why did Dewey engage there? What was the "what were the terms of engagement, to put it that way, for Dewey? And what political motivation inspired it?

Brian Linn

Well, I'm not sure he's certain. The idea is that you're at war with this country; this is a target of opportunity. There's no smoking gun in the sense of there's no document from McKinley saying "If we destroy the Spanish fleet in the Philippines, we can trade the Philippines for Cuba," or "We need foreign trade," or "We need to capture the Philippines so we'll have a base in the Far East." These are all ideas that are brooded about, and the New Left has made much of this. But McKinley himself as a strategic leader kept everything to himself. And he had the wonderful ability of talking to people and looking at them very sincerely and speaking in platitudes. And at the end, they were absolutely sure he agreed with them, but they couldn't really remember much of what he said. And he didn't like to write anything down. And he liked to "he talked to people and he listened. But he kept his own counsel.

Brian Linn

And so despite enormous amounts of effort by scholars, we really don't know what's in his mind. He rarely committed himself. And if you read his speeches, he would try out different ideas, depending on the audience. And sometimes he would say one thing and sometimes he would say something else, and he would sort of get the temper of the American public from that.

McKinley as Clausewitzian Strategist

Interviewer

What is the great biography of McKinley? Where is that?

Brian Linn

I don't think there is "I mean he's too complicated. People have tried but I've never

Interviewer

He's sort of opaque, in other words.

Brian Linn

He's very opaque, and he's very frustrating "cause he doesn't give "I mean, I used to teach McKinley to military officers as a case study in the Powell Doctrine, because he violates every one of the Powell Doctrine. And yet, I would argue, he is the

most successful wartime commander in chief weâ€™ve ever had. Â

Interviewer

Right. Â Walk me through both those points real quickly.

Brian Linn

Okay. Â He does not provide clear guidance; he doesnâ€™t have an end state. Â He doesnâ€™t go in with overwhelming force. Â If you go through, he doesnâ€™tâ€”I guess he secures popular consent but not really because he doesnâ€™t really allow the Congress much knowledge on the Philippines until heâ€™s already done it. Â He keepsâ€”I mean, he doesnâ€™t do anything. Â He doesnâ€™t provide the American public with what weâ€™re supposed to be doing there. Â He keeps everything quiet. Â He never commits himself. Â

Brian Linn

The best McKinley story I can tell you is Wesley Merritt, who McKinley has appointed to be the commander of the next mission to the Philippinesâ€”comes down and spends several hours with McKinley talking about what McKinley wantsâ€”goes back, and thereâ€™s a telegram in the War Department reports from Merritt, sort of saying, â€œI donâ€™t know if you want me to occupy Manila or the entire Philippine archipelago.â€” Â Now think, a man who can sit down with his commander for three or four hours and talk to him, have this discussion and at the end of it, he still doesnâ€™t know. Â

Interviewer

He does not knowâ€”

Brian Linn

And McKinley doesnâ€™t tell him. Â

Interviewer

Yeah. Â

Brian Linn

Thereâ€™s no court letter back saying, â€œOh, just Manila.â€” Â And these military officers get very angry at McKinley. Â And they say, â€œWhy is he doing this? Â Why is he, you knowâ€”heâ€™s being a politician. Â Heâ€™s being wishy-washy.â€” Â I say no. Â Heâ€™s being a strategist. Â Heâ€™s one of the mostâ€”Iâ€™m sorry, brilliant strategists in the world, or in American history because what does he have to gain by committing himself? Â Thatâ€™s a question you need a strategic analysis. Â What does he have to gain by committing himself? Â

Brian Linn

The Powell Doctrine assumes you will always gain by committing yourself. Â But the one case study where Powell claims it worked, in fact we lost enormous amount by committing ourselves. Â We should not have said weâ€™re not going to Baghdad; in retrospect. Â that was a very silly decision. Â It was a very silly decision on a strategic level on numerous occasions, his ability as a strategist was shown to be mediocre at best. Â

Brian Linn

McKinley doesn't commit. And at any time, as a result, up until he sort of tells the delegation in Paris that we want the Philippines, which is quite late after the war is over he could pull out. If the situation doesn't work, if he gets a defeat, he has not risked his personal prestige. He has not risked the nation's prestige. He can withdraw. And so he sends people out and sees what's going on. He's a Clausewitzian war has its own dynamic. Things will turn up. The Powell Doctrine assumes that no good opportunities will arise, that you know this all when you go in. And that's why you have an end state. McKinley always assumed that war could go one way or the other. And it might throw up disasters but it might also throw up opportunities.

Brian Linn

Yes. And

Interviewer

Yes. And

Interviewer

You always will he do the worst thing possible? Will he do the best thing possible?

Interviewer

You don't know. And that uncertainty, when presented by a strong executive figure, can be a powerful deterrent to a war itself.

Interviewer

You don't know. And that uncertainty, when presented by a strong executive figure, can be a powerful deterrent to a war itself.

Interviewer

Yes. And he was a very capable and very strong executive. And you think about it, you know, the war really starts in late April; it's over by August 13th. And

Interviewer

Late April to

Interviewer

1. And

Interviewer

1. And

Interviewer

It's over in August of May, June, July, it's barely a four month war. And in that, he captures he gets the Philippines, he frees Cuba, he gets Hawaii, Guam he creates this empire. And at minimal cost to the nation. You know, it's really hard to beat that. I mean, compared to that the Gulf War is not nearly as successful an operation. And so you have to throw this back at military officers when they're dealing with McKinley, then explain why he's successful. If he's completely inept, why is he so successful? And the fact is, he's a strategist in my mind in

the sense of recognizing war is chaotic and letâ€™s seize opportunities. A And for him, thatâ€™s a very good way to be.

The Fragility of Interpretation
Interviewer

So go back to the story of the war.

Brian Linn

Okay. Â So you have a commander in chief whoâ€™s like that to begin with. Â And as a result, the warâ€™s and especially the Philippine dimension, which is completely unexpectedâ€™because McKinley is into opportunity, he does provide very specific guidance, but itâ€™s not the guidance his commander in chiefs wantâ€™his commanders in field want. Â He provides guidance about civil government, about how to treat the Filipinos, about what your mission is. Â And from the beginning, McKinley sees this as an opportunityâ€™or he sees the Armyâ€™s missionâ€™not just an opportunityâ€™he sees the Armyâ€™s mission as one essentially of governance. Â Whether thatâ€™s going to be permanent governance or not, he doesnâ€™t commit anything.

Interviewer

Is this borne of the white manâ€™s burden notion, then?

Brian Linn

Well, again, with McKinley itâ€™s very tough to find out because he rarely commits himself. Â Now itâ€™s pretty clearâ€™

Interviewer

Thatâ€™s in the discussion at theâ€™Â

Brian Linn

Yeah.

Interviewer

I mean, thatâ€™s popular to the conversation at the moment.

Brian Linn

Actually, the poem â€œWhite Manâ€™s Burdenâ€ is written by Rudyard Kipling at this time. Â I mean itâ€™s [Inaudible] to the United States upon the occupation of the Philippines. Â I mean, that poem is directly written by a British imperialist to the Americans on what they need to do. Â So the term wasnâ€™t used before then because it didnâ€™t exist. Â But it becomes very popular. Â And in fact, people write parodies of it.

Brian Linn

Now currently, thereâ€™s an enormous amount of focus in America on race. Â And the question is is race a factor or is it the driving factor? Â And I just havenâ€™t seen enough in the documentary evidence to see it as a driving factor. Â And again, I can tell you what Henry Cabot Lodge thought about it, and Alfred Therman thought about it. Â And perhaps what Teddy Roosevelt thought about it. Â But the fact that these people are

thereâ€™ and even if you can prove theyâ€™re talking to McKinleyâ€™ doesnâ€™t prove that thatâ€™s U.S. policy. Â And this is a problem that the New Left and the race-oriented explanation or the gender-oriented explanationâ€™ that this is a test of American manhoodâ€™ always has. Â At a certain level, you have to show cause and effect. Â And thereâ€™s no cause and effect. Â

Interviewer

And those are the two popularly 20th century understandingâ€™ takes on this particular war? Â

Brian Linn

Well, this is one of the most hotly debated andâ€™ thereâ€™s a good article in the American Historical Review a long time ago that said the worst chapter in any American history textbook, and itâ€™s about this period. Â Because peopleâ€™ two reasons. Â Itâ€™s inherently true in the Philippine War. Â People from the beginning cast the war in ideological terms. I mean, from the beginning it was cast as either imperialism, Americaâ€™s destiny, or anti-imperialism, this is the breakingâ€™ the final breaking of the republic. Â The ideal of Jeffersonâ€™ and this is what Mark Twain and George Risby Hore and the anti-imperialists are talking about. Â

Brian Linn

And that ideological debate actually supplanted any narrative history of the war. Â No one really cared about the events except as they fit into this ideological interpretation. Â The imperialists spent a great deal of time proving the Filipinos were unfit for government and were committing atrocities, and this proved their unfitness for government. Â The first task of the newly formed Intelligence Bureau is to gather Philippine documents to show that the Filipinos caused the warâ€™ Aguinaldo caused the warâ€™ and that they couldnâ€™t be trusted. Â

Brian Linn

So thatâ€™s going on on the government side. Â And on the anti-imperialist side, the same thing is going on. Â They take sections from soldiersâ€™ letters, some of which were later shown to be bogus, to prove the Americans are conducting operations in a genocidal manner. Â And I hate to say this but many of my colleagues in academicsâ€™ 260â€™160 years laterâ€™ are still at that level. Â They havenâ€™t advanced the dialogue very much at all. Â Theyâ€™re perhaps doing more research but their interpretations were formed by Mark Twain 106 years ago and they havenâ€™t really moved beyond that. Â Â

Interviewer

What is your interpretation? Â

Brian Linn

Well, I really wasnâ€™t interested in either one of those. Â I mean, I really wasnâ€™t. Â And I think that was my saving grace. Â What I was interested inâ€™ what I kept, when I started looking at it, is that no one had ever written a book about how this war was actually fought on either side. Â There was just a lot of mythology, but no one had sort of gone down and tried to retrace how the war was actually fought.

Brian Linn

Well, for a military historian thatâ€™s rare. A I mean, you can go to this library here and you can find 30 books on how Shiloh alone was fought, or the second day of Gettysburg was fought. Â To come across an American war where thereâ€™s actually no narrative of how the war was fought was amazing for me. Â And it happened to be that I was interested not in big unit operations, I was interested in counterinsurgency. Â And this is an ideal war. Â So youâ€™ve got a war that no one knows how it was fought and a counterinsurgency struggle. Â

Brian Linn

And so for me the real interest was not the big picture, which I donâ€™t think Iâ€™m qualified to understand, and I donâ€™t think anyone else is, either, to be quite blunt. Â I mean, I donâ€™t buy the big picture interpretations of this war for a number of reasons. Â But the main one is, people havenâ€™t done the research. Â

Brian Linn

Now, so when I started getting interested in that, I went in saying well, all I had read by people like Stuart Miller and Howard Zinn was this was a race war; Americans went in and murdered indiscriminately and shot down Filipinos in drovesâ€”what your textbook tells you. Â And it was because of race. Â And so I said, â€œWell where did this happen?â€” Â I sort of started with these big picture ideas: was it because American society was racist? Â Well, for a military historian, thatâ€™s hard to prove if youâ€™re a sort of an archive rep. Â So I thought, well maybe it was because, as Stuart Miller claimed, they recruited all these people from the West who already had this Indian War background and they just went out there and fought them like Indians.

Brian Linn

And, well that really quickly proved to be completely fabricated. Â I mean, he confused two different organizations; it was completely silly. Â He had the guys that fought the conventional war who tended to be predominantly Western. Â But that wasnâ€™t who fought the counterinsurgency campaign; those guys were from all over the country. Â So he just didnâ€™t understand that there had been a state volunteer and a U.S. volunteer and theyâ€™re two different organizations. Â Soâ€”

Insurgency Looms
Interviewer

Give me a side note here just with theâ€”the conventional war begins and ends in that time period nowâ€”

Brian Linn

Yeah. I mean thereâ€™s aâ€”

Interviewer

The counterinsurgencyâ€”the insurgency continues for how long? Â

Brian Linn

Well thereâ€™s two phases. Â Fighting breaks out in Manila. Â I mean, the first Battle of Manila is August 13th, 1898. Â The Americans come in and sort of strike a deal, which some of the Army guys donâ€™t know, and capture Manila. Â Emilio Aguinaldoâ€”who claims that he represents an independent Philippine republic has already claimed

independenceâ€”is on the outside and doesnâ€™t get in there, and tries to get in and the Americans hold him back. Â

Brian Linn

So from August to February, you have this escalating tension. Â Aguinaldo is hoping that, first the Americans wonâ€™t take the Philippines. Â And then when itâ€™s clear that McKinley has demanded that, that the senate wonâ€™t vote for that, that they will reject the treaty. Â And thereâ€™s a lot of indicationâ€”heâ€™s gotâ€”itâ€™s a close vote. Â It was won by about two or three votes at the end. It was won by about two or three votes at the end.

Interviewer

On anti-imperialist argument almost prevailing is what youâ€™re saying?

Brian Linn

Yeah, and why do we need an overseas [Inaudible]. Â The Army has got very few peopleâ€”11,000 or 13,000, Iâ€™m not sureâ€”in Manila and many of those are physically broken down from disease. Â So itâ€™s in the process and it canâ€™t get anyone from Cuba because those people are really hammered by yellow fever. Â So itâ€™s justâ€”itâ€™s been devastated by 1898. Â And it needs to build troops up. Â And in fact, theyâ€™re waiting for about 6,000 or 7,000 new troops to come in. Â And so they can send these people who are mostly National Guardsmen who signed up to fight the Spanishâ€”well, that war is over; and theyâ€™re being Stop-Lossed. Â Theyâ€™re being heldâ€”I mean, this is one of the first cases of Stop Loss. Â

Brian Linn

These guys were allâ€”had signed up for the duration of the war. Â Once that treaty is signed, the war is over and they want to go home. Â Well, as these two sides both donâ€™t want war, and McKinley keeps saying, â€œLook, time is on our side. Â Time is on our side.â€ Â Commanders say, â€œWhen can we fight?â€ Â â€œDonâ€™t.â€ Â He keeps telling them, â€œDonâ€™t fight; time is on our side.â€ Â Aguinaldoâ€™s government will fracture,â€”which McKinley was in goodâ€”he didnâ€™t have intelligence, but his gut was very good on this.Â

Brian Linn

Aguinaldoâ€™s government isâ€”the Malolos Republic is entirely drawn from the landholding elite. Â Many, many islands arenâ€™t even represented. Â The delegate from Cebu was a Tagalog from Manila. Â Aguinaldoâ€™s attempts to impose control, even on the island of Luzon, arenâ€™t working. Â In many cases, like on the island of Panay where he sends an armed group toâ€”they immediately start not fighting, but disputing with the local insurgents who want a federal republic in Panay or Omnegros. Â These people arenâ€™t fighting for a Philippines like Aguinaldo wants, a strong centralized government run by the Tagalogs. Â These people are Cebuano or Ilocano or Luzani. Â They want something like Brazilâ€”a series of federated states. Â

Brian Linn

And so thereâ€™s this very contested period, which I think McKinley is sort of aware of. Â And unfortunately, in Manila, tensions are rising. Â Thereâ€™s been a number of alarms. Â And on the night of February 4th, a patrol from the Nebraska regiment stumbles into a

Filipino scouting, fire is exchanged. A

Brian Linn

Well, fire has been exchanged for months. Â I mean, this is pretty common. Â But in this particular instance, things escalate beyond the ability of both sides to stop them. Â Aguinaldo is out of town; firing escalates. Â The next day, the Americans go on the offensive. Â And thereâ€™s this very, very bitter battle for about two weeksâ€™the Battle of Manila in which the Americans drive back Aguinaldoâ€™s forces, capture much of the equipment that he had captured from the Spanish.Â

Brian Linn

And thatâ€™s crucial, â€™cause Imauzu rifles, for example, you canâ€™t manufacture that ammunition. Â And so they captured that much of the artilleryâ€™they destroy many of the Spanish trained units. Â And if youâ€™ve ever seen Manila, Manila itself runs like this. Â Thereâ€™s the ocean from Manila Bay. Â But on this side, thereâ€™s something called Laguna de Bayâ€™this big lagoon. Â And Manila is actually on this sort of narrowâ€™well the Americans drive through, and so between the ocean and the bay, the Americans establish this cordon. Â And that splits Aguinaldoâ€™s army into two. Â His base of strength is in the south, the Tagalog provinces of Cavite and Batangas and Tiabas and Laguna. Â But he and his army are in the north, in central Luzon. Â And the Americans then sort of build a defensive ring in the south and then go on the offensive in the north. Â And the campaign from February to November is very similar, isâ€™

A Dual-Front War

Interviewer

In terms of [Inaudible] wouldnâ€™t thatâ€™I mean is it encountered in normal war theory that creating a two-front war for yourself is dangerous, which is what they had effectively done? Â

Brian Linn

Yeah, I mean he had circled Manila, which is good. Â But the problem with encircling it, if your back is to water, is once they break out, youâ€™re forced. Â

Interviewer

Right. Yeah.

Brian Linn

Now, then the Americans haveâ€™Adjomine would say â€™œinterior lines.â€™ Â They can build a defense and shift troops back and forth. Â What they do in practice is they knockâ€™periodically theyâ€™II go and knock back theâ€™

Interviewer

The southern tip? Â

Brian Linn

The southern tip. Â But then they focus on going after Aguinaldo and trying to destroy it. Â Now the Philippines is an agrarian society. Â And most of the crop is essentially rice. Â To the south itâ€™s hemp, which leads to a real problem of supplying our armies. Â You

just can't there's a reason why the Europeans developed modern war right about the time they started producing an agricultural surplus. You can't wage war in a society like the Philippines with basically subsistence.

Brian Linn

And so the only way that you can subsist an army is along this railroad line that runs into central Luzon. So both Aguinaldo and the Americans are sort of tethered to this line. And so what happens is Aguinaldo's army will be first at Malolos and then a series of positions along the railroad line where he's trying to supply himself, retrain his army. And the Americans will drive up the railroad.

Brian Linn

One unit will sort of attack him and hold him. Another unit will march through the countryside and try and come in the rear and cut the railroad line. And the problem is there's no maps, so they go off on the Spanish shows a road, and it's a trail. You're tied to caribou, which can move about four miles a day. So with the first day, you march past your logistic line. Second day, your troops start drinking the local water. Third and fourth day, you start having dysentery, malaria, fever. And the units just collapse. And then you have to sort of rebuild them and then a month later you can go on another.

Brian Linn

It's not that and Aguinaldo can always sort of slip away. Just a day too short or a couple of hours too short, they get to the railroad line and he's evacuated. So you have a series of very interesting encircling campaigns. But by summer, the army that went to the Philippines is broken.

Interviewer

Where is commanding control for the U.S. under this circumstance?

Brian Linn

Well, you have General Elwell Otis, who's the commanding general in the Philippines, and later the military governor. And he always wears two hats. And he always focuses on that. When I talk about the Philippines, and then I'd get these guys, "Well, these guys were just a bunch of old Indian [Inaudible]" they weren't professionals like we are. I said, "Elwell Otis had a law degree from Harvard. And by the way, while he was fighting a war, he wrote the civil code for the Philippines. Now, you find me a four-star general in the U.S. Army that can do that. And they can't. I said, or three-star or two-star. Or probably even a one-star. You've got more generals than any organization, I think, except maybe the People's Liberation Army."

Interviewer

It's probably still the civil code.

Brian Linn

Yeah. And yet, here's this old guy who can do more than you could, and he's fighting a war at the same time. And he's doing a good job of fighting that war. So, and because of that, there's a moral legitimacy for him to tell his officers, "You will also do this." So as they're fighting their way up there, they're also beginning

to establish civil governments behind them. A Because McKinley's mission to the Army is that the Army's job is what he calls benevolent assimilation—to show the Filipinos this is the Army's mission—by your actions that you—that the United States will provide good government. And that's why the civil—

Interviewer

And then depart this notion, right? And

Brian Linn

It's not even there. Sometimes there will be a colonial government coming in, but that's again, not declared. And there's a sort of tension that goes on with these commanding generals asking for instructions on when we can fight, and McKinley saying, "Your job isn't to fight; your job is to govern." And they're sort of talking back. And

Brian Linn

But Otis takes this very seriously. So as the Americans are moving up, they're beginning to establish civil government. But by summer, his army is just collapsing. And so he needs time to get those volunteers back to the United States and bring in a new army that's only been created in the last, well I guess, I think about April. Now some of these are regular units who have been rebuilt since Cuba, and they're raw recruits. I mean, 80%, 90% had just joined up.

Brian Linn

So the old army is already dead by 1899. And then 35,000 of them are the special U.S. volunteers who are raised entirely for service in the Philippines and have a limited term enlistment. And they start appearing around August. Now when that new army comes—gets back, and even as it's—Otis launches the final offensive. Only this time, he drives up the railroad, that's Arthur MacArthur. And

Brian Linn

Henry Lawton launches a sweeping attack and Lawton bogs down almost immediately in the mud. So he takes his Cavalry corps and sends this guy called Brigadier General Samuel Young who's the first Army Chief of Staff. And Young does this incredibly heroic march. And at the same time, another expedition—an amphibious expedition—lands at the top of Lingayen Gulf. And

Interviewer

But all encircling Augier, right?

Brian Linn

Right. And cutting the railroad. They immediately go. And around November 13th or so, I'm not sure the exact date, Aguinaldo's army is just collapsing. I mean, people are just taking their guns and walking home. And Aguinaldo says—essentially declares, "We will now continue resistance through guerilla war." And he tries to set up regional commands. And he himself flees and goes off into the mountains in Northern Luzon where he remains largely a figurehead until Frederick Funston captures him, in I think April 1901. Now—

Interviewer

He is eventually—he dies in captivity or—

Brian Linn

No, no, no. — Once he's captured in this sort of great special operations mission that—he comes back; he's treated very well. — He meets with General MacArthur, who has replaced Otis. — And within about a week, issues a proclamation urging his comrades to lay down their weapons. — And he actually lives all the way through to the Japanese occupation. — I think he dies in the 1950s.

Interviewer

Wow.

Brian Linn

So—and in the process, writes several autobiographies which sometimes have different facts in them. — So no, he's—and—

Interviewer

Well he's commanding the insurgency after this? — —

Brian Linn

Well, but you know, the thing is command, — cause he never really commanded. — He was—the same way Karzai commands the Afghan government. — He's a coalition leader who rules only because he can conciliate very powerful military chiefs. — And by November, he can no longer control. — I mean, he's had to execute or murder his commanding general, a guy called Antonio Luna, — cause he fears he's having a coup. —

Brian Linn

His army is pretty well collapsed. — But his leaders have already collapsed, and they've sort of taken—they've gone back to their local provinces. — Now, if you look on this war as a war between the American government and its army and the Philippine Republic and its army, then—and that's how General Otis looked on it, then by December, that war is over. — Because Aguinaldo's army has been destroyed; he sweeps down to southern Luzon and destroys General Trias's army down there and then sends out an expedition and just captures ports all the way down to Mindanao and actually into the whole lower Archipelago.

Brian Linn

And that's why Otis says, — "The war is over. — There is no organized armed resistance facing us anymore." — And he then—"Otis"—dissolves the tactical organizations. — You're no longer 2nd Brigade, 1st Division—and instead creates regional commands. — He breaks up the Philippines into departments: there's the Department of Northern Luzon, Department of Southern Luzon, Department of the Sias, Department of Mindanao and Holo.

Civil Government Imposed

Brian Linn

But these areâ€”in Otisâ€™s reference, and the U.S. Armyâ€™s reference, these are back to the old western departments where you had like, the Department of New Mexico. And then in there, there are not tactical commands but district commands. So heâ€™ll group four provinces into the first district of the Department of Northern Luzon, the second district. And to Otis, the shift now is between becoming a commanding general to becoming a military governor. And thatâ€™s the transition heâ€™s made in his mind, and what heâ€™s doing is setting the groundwork now for that civil government. Heâ€™s already written a sort of basic document for civil government..

Brian Linn

Thatâ€™s another funny thing is you say, â€œWell, where is your document for civil government?â€ And they give you this pile, and they can give ones to the Marines, and itâ€™s a page and a half. This is how you set up a government. Thatâ€™s all it is: police. And any lieutenant can do it. And so heâ€™s working on that, but he also starts telling McKinley, â€œI want to come home now. Iâ€™ve done my job; Iâ€™m tired, and Iâ€™m overworked and itâ€™s time for me to come home.â€

Interviewer

And he saw that the quote unquote â€œend of this warâ€ was that he had set up the Philippines for civil government.

Brian Linn

Right, and in fact, a civil government starts arriving under William Howard Taft. And the Philippine commission is gettingâ€”en route and Arthur MacArthur takes overâ€”the father of Douglas MacArthur. Well, Arthur MacArthur had been out in the field and he didnâ€™tâ€”

Interviewer

Back to Taftâ€™s role here is what? Â

Brian Linn

Well, Taft is going to becomeâ€”the Philippine Commission is there to sort of create the conditions and what ultimately happens, it transitions to become the civil government of the Philippines. Â The Philippine Commission shifts from being a sort of â€œassess the situation, suggest the right form of government to that actual government.â€ Â Â

Interviewer

Because Taft is a lawyer, heâ€™s coming in, heâ€™s going to establishâ€”

Brian Linn

Right. Â And heâ€™s got a guy called Luke Wright whoâ€™s another southern judge, and so heâ€™s got a group of civilians. Â And theyâ€™re coming out to sort of first assess and then ultimately take over, which I think was a lot smarter than what President Bush did, was send Bremer out immediately to sort of take civil power. I mean whoeverâ€”and it was really irritating was hearing, â€œWell, we did

Brian Linn

this in the Philippines,â€ like you told us to do in the Philippines.

Brian Linn

Â And you say, “No, you did it exactly opposite from what McKinley did.”

Brian Linn

Â But again, McKinley is a very capable and shrewd person.

Interviewer

Because there was a lot of interest in the McKinley and Bush W.”

Brian Linn

Yeah.

Interviewer

W. Bush’s administration, wasn’t there? Â

Brian Linn

Right.

Interviewer

And Cheney had a big interest in”

Brian Linn

I know Karl Rove really had an interest. Â Rove was just”but without really”it’s sort of like that great line in A Fish Called Wanda where the Kevin”I can’t think of his name.Â

Interviewer

Kevin Kline? Â

Brian Linn

Kevin Kline, Otto, and Jamie Lee Curtis have this wonderful exchange where she says, “Otto, you big ape.” Â And he says, “Apes don’t read Nietzsche.” Â And she says, “Yes, they do, Otto. Â They just don’t understand him.” Â And I have to say”

Interviewer

So Rove was reading McKinley without understanding.

Brian Linn

Right.Â

Interviewer

Was probably reading into it what he wants to see.

Brian Linn

Exactly. Â And without understanding that to run that system, you need to have Mark Hanna and you need to have William McKinley. Â And neither ofâ€”neither Rove nor George Bush were in that league, frankly. Â I mean, you have one of the best wartime presidents and probably one of the worst. Â And itâ€™s a real big difference. Â So a system thatâ€™s personal has to have the personalities.

Brian Linn

But to get back to the war, well, what has happened in factâ€”and Otis was aware of this but he viewed this as banditry. Â But it really takes a long time for Manila to pick up what look like isolated flashes and recognize thereâ€™s a pattern. Â Many of the troops from Aguinaldoâ€™s forces, but more importantly, these regional places like in Panay and Samarâ€”as the Americans push out, these people are never defeated. Â The Americans land and they might seize a port. Â But these people donâ€™t recognize they were defeated. Â And they werenâ€™t fighting for Aguinaldo; they were fighting for local control. Â And they had it. Â And theyâ€™ve had two years to do it.

Brian Linn

The Spanish had left in 1898. Â Now in 1900, the Americans are showing up, landing, seizing a hemp port and saying, â€œYouâ€™re now under the U.S. flag.â€ Â And these little flashes of a guerilla attack and you know, a shooting a sentry and a raid on a supplyâ€”but more importantly, the difficulties the Americans are having in setting up local government and exerting control, it takes a long time to recognize that what was initially a conventional war has shifted to not a unified insurgency.

Brian Linn

But if you want to talk a dozen of little insurgencies over who is going to control villages and provinces. Â And that is a war that the Filipinos are far better equipped to deal with than they were as a conventional war. Â Itâ€™s hard to create an army out of nothing. Â But if you have a tradition of resistance at the local level, theyâ€™re really well set up for that. Â Andâ€”

Interviewer

This is where the comparison to Afghanistan seems so acute.

Brian Linn

Right.

Interviewer

And not Iraq in the same way, right? Â

Brian Linn

Yeah, Iraq had tribes. Â But yes, notâ€”itâ€™s a much better in many ways. Â And itâ€™s only reallyâ€”I mean, we didnâ€™t really run into this in Afghanistan until we went into the countryside and started trying to impose order. Â And at that point, that war suddenly shifts very dramatically â€”cause people might not care whoâ€™s in Kabul. Â But when you come into their territory, thenâ€”and that resistance is â€”remember when they were anti-government elements for a while? Â Anti-Iraq element? Well, I mean, if these people

donâ€™t recognize a construct known as Iraq or Afghanistan, how can there be anti-Afghanistan elements? Â I mean, itâ€™s a great example of just not understanding the nature of the threatâ€™

Interviewer

Well, itâ€™s sort of pre-nationalism essentially, isnâ€™t it?

Brian Linn

Yeah and some people would argue that thatâ€™s still very much the case in the Philippines. Â I mean, most of what we get from the Philippines is still dominated by people in Manila and still very strongly Tagalog. Â And Iâ€™ve heardâ€™this is a story but itâ€™s a true story.

Localized Resistance

Brian Linn

When I was there in 1996 at this conference, I met Eugene Otazu, whoâ€™s the greatâ€™heâ€™s a grandson of the person that lead the Balangiga Massacre. And he was very excited to meet me. And he told me that one of the things he really liked about me was I had restored Samarâ€™s resistance to the Samarinos, that all the treatments in both the United States in the Philippines treated it as Vicente Lukban, whoâ€™s â€œone of Aguinaldoâ€™s officersâ€™had come and lead this resistance. And he said, â€œThatâ€™s not true. This is our resistance. Lukban was important, but he was important as a leader. But it was us. We fought this war.â€™

Brian Linn

And so what I get from Filipinos is very interesting. Because in some cases, like people in the Tempf and the Manila area are very hostile to this because Iâ€™m essentially saying itâ€™s a local resistance; Iâ€™m challenging the idea of a unified Philippine nation, which a lot of people in Manila have bought into. And itâ€™s very important that they prove that was the case in 1898. But out in Cebu or Iloilo or places like that, they have a much more positive view of this view of the war because it restores them.

Interviewer

Yeah, sure and it also goes to the heart of something in General Kingston just said. I mean, notâ€™General Dempsey saidâ€™

Brian Linn

Yeah.

Interviewer

Which is that thereâ€™s one layer of understanding, and then you go deeper.

Brian Linn

Right.

Interviewer

And then another layer of understanding. Â And if you donâ€™t go deeper, you missâ€™or

you risk not knowing really what happened and whetherâ€”whether youâ€™ve achieved your objectives or not.

Brian Linn

Right. Â And this is where it gets also very interesting in terms ofâ€”the anti-imperialists tend to quote MacArthur saying, â€œWeâ€™re facing a united Philippine nation.â€ Â But the time heâ€™s making that statement, MacArthur is in no position to know that. Â Heâ€™s been in Manila, and he hasnâ€™t been in the field for six months.

Interviewer

This is Arthur MacArthur?

Brian Linn

Arthur MacArthur. Â He makes that statement quite late in the war. Â And he makes it, I think, for political reasons. Â He makes it because heâ€™s fighting with Taft and Taftâ€™s challenging him. Â Itâ€™s not a statement that people in the field would have agreed with. Â And Arthur MacArthur doesnâ€™t have a whole lot of support out in the field. Â So again, when youâ€™re in Manila and youâ€™re looking at all of this, you create â€”so one layer of understanding, which is, this is a national resistance; the Filipinos are united against us. Â But on the local level, and Iâ€™ve read thousands of reports, itâ€™s much more the resistance is local. Â Thereâ€™s certain people that are opposing this. Â The majority of people just want to be left alone. Â Or in some areas, the majority of people are hostile. Â But theyâ€™re not hostile to us because itâ€™s a Filipino nation. Â Theyâ€™re hostile to us for local reasons. Â

Brian Linn

And so the locals understandâ€”every lieutenant understands the situation in his village probably pretty clearly. Â MacArthur sees this great pattern which he can then claim credit for solving. Â And thatâ€™s another thing isâ€”

Brian Linn

And thatâ€”now at that time, everyone thought the insurgency was over. Â Okay, Aguinaldo had been captured and surrendered. Â All the major leaders, there was only three areas that were recognized as still having violent resistance; the last embers. Â And everyone thought these were going away. Â And soâ€”and you know, so this attackâ€”and again, the worst real attack that had happened in the whole warâ€”panics temporarily the high command in Manila who areâ€”were sitting on a cauldron thatâ€™s about to blow up. Â All of the Philippines, theyâ€™re going to go back again. Â And so they come down very hard, especially in Samar. Â

Interviewer

What happens? Â So McKinley is assassinated in 1901, right?

Brian Linn

Right. Â And thatâ€™s really not that important. Â The war is over by that time. Â

Interviewer

What is Teddy Rooseveltâ€™s relationship to this story? Â

Brian Linn

Not really very much. Â I mean, Rooseveltâ€”I mean, he benefits in many ways from McKinleyâ€™s assassination. Â Thereâ€™s a sort of protecting theâ€”McKinleyâ€™s legacy and so forth. Â But McKinley is assassinated really within about a couple days later, the Balangiga Massacre occursâ€”whatâ€™s called the Balangiga Massacre. Â Itâ€™s a very successful, locally run attack on an American garrison in Balangiga, Samar. Â

Brian Linn

Taft, who had I think a better understanding of whatâ€™s going on says, â€œNo, that is not that case. Â And this is an attempt for the military to take control back from us, because theyâ€™re talking about imposing martial law.â€” Â Roosevelt, to his credit, probablyâ€”and this is mainly his main decision to make at this point, is to sign with Taft and to not put the military back in charge. Â Now, out of that campaignâ€”particularly Samar into another one, the last one, the one in Batangas Province, come allegations of atrocities. Â And so the second follow-through on this is a lot of accusations of Americans killing, burning, indiscriminate shooting, putting people in concentration camps which was very emotional because we had accused the Spanish of doing that in Cuba. Â And so we kind of worked to free people from concentration camps and now weâ€™re doing it ourselves. Â

Brian Linn

And so thatâ€™s the second legacy. Â And thereâ€™s ultimately a Senate investigation, or Senate hearings on the conduct of American troopsâ€”

My Laiâ€™s Legacy: A Retro-Projection
Interviewer

Whatâ€™s the result of that?

Brian Linn

Well for one thing, it makes it very easy for anti-imperialists to go and cull testimony from that, right? Henry Graff did a book, American Kills the Philippines, essentially all he did in that book was cull pretty selected testimony on American atrocities as they say, â€œHereâ€™s what they were doing.â€” And it taints the entire reputation of the U.S. Army.

Brian Linn

I mean, the fact is that while there was torture and there were indiscriminate shootings and all these sort of things that occurred before, they had not been policy. They had been sort of individual acts which have to be understood in the context of those individual acts. I mean, you know, you have to understand why these people did this. And instead, thisâ€”these two campaignsâ€”particularly Samar, made it look like this was policy.

Brian Linn

Itâ€™s the end of the war. They must have been doing this all the time. And it then became the task of historians like myself to prove it hadnâ€™t happened rather than the case of anti-imperialists to prove it had. Very similar to My Laiâ€”My Lai was an isolated instance. The people that did itâ€”everyone knew it was wrong, and that it was unusual. But because of My Lai, itâ€™s almost become a necessity for American soldiers to prove that they didnâ€™t do My Lais rather than having to prove they did.

Brian Linn

And so a whole number of scholars, and they're still writing books like it. I mean there's one that just came out about a year ago"start with the assumption this was a racial, genocidal war. How do I know? Because of what happened at Samar. And I go on that assumption, and it's up to someone else to prove it didn't. And beyond that, it really, it ceased to be a matter of proof because people like Glenn May and Al McCoy and myself have actually gone in and traced this war at the village level all over the Philippines.

Brian Linn

And that was the major contribution in my book was to say, "Okay. Here's how the war was fought. And if you want to study a counterinsurgency that's essentially a local insurgency, you study it at the local level. You get out of Manila and you get out of the headquarters and you go into the field and you know, box after box of eight by five cards is essentially saying, "In this town, this was the nature of the resistance." We know this because we've captured their letters and here's what the Americans did to solve it. This was a local insurgency that the Americans solved primarily through local counterinsurgency methods. And that's my thesis.

Interviewer

And is that"so that comes to what are the lessons for counterinsurgency doctrine out of this are what? "

Brian Linn

Right. " Well there's"again different levels to it. " One of them is, there's a lot of techniques that I think would be pretty useful that took a long time for people to start adapting in Iraq and Afghanistan that I think if someone had bothered to show up and say, "Okay, here's enough money for three weeks to think about what the major things." "

Brian Linn

For example, they're operating in jungle. " It became standard operating procedure"in fact, an order"that every patrol had to go out and map the area, okay. " You"and that's just a sort of basic technique. " They began to do surveys. " They began to do identification cards and photos and dossiers and began to collect intelligence, both not just at the central level but at the local level. " I mean, these are really simple things but they took, from what I heard, a long time to develop. " And they developed, interestingly enough, at the captain level before they were being implemented at Baghdad, which is exactly the Philippine"

Brian Linn

Experience.

Brian Linn

Experience as well. " But you might have saved a lot of trouble by just having a sort of handbook of about five pages saying here's standard practices that we use. " They learn a lot about how to patrol, how to use native spies, how to use guides, how to"and so a lot of it is just very practical things. So on one level, the Army develops a lot of really

good, useful techniques for operating in jungles, for amphibious attacks, for operating in grass, for how to—I mean this is the amazing thing—how to supply troops in an environment that is so hostile that people die a couple of days. I mean, that’s what they win a lot of their campaigns against the guerillas simply because they can survive in the jungle and the guerillas can’t. And the guerillas starve to death and ultimately come in and surrender.

Brian Linn

But simply how to do deal—logistics are crucial in this, which people forget because they’re so used to opening up their MREs. That’s one level. And the second level would probably be that at the higher levels. How to develop an intelligence network for a counterinsurgency that allows for rapid dissemination of information at the local level, but also allows the central people to develop an idea. Because I mean, that’s MacArthur’s major problem. He’s has terrible intelligence service; he doesn’t know what’s going on most of the time. He really doesn’t, if you read his telegraphs. He doesn’t have a clue what’s going on. He’s panicking, he’s

Interviewer

But he knows he doesn’t have a clue, is that right? A

Brian Linn

No he doesn’t. Not Arthur MacArthur, are you kidding? Everything—as far as Arthur’s concerned, he’s right all the time and everyone else is wrong and they’re conspiring against him. But I mean, he’s panicking when he ought to be calm and he’s calm when he ought to be panicking. And part of that because he doesn’t have an intelligence system. So that level of how do you have an intelligence system, which I think is crucial, basic processes for setting up a civil government. I mean, American officers on their own are writing to their hometowns to get book donations to bring back to the Philippines so they can set up schools. But there’s a lot of just really useful stuff the Americans could have done on that level. A

Brian Linn

The third level that you can get it from is the sort of how to put this into your education in terms of leadership development, just generally. One thing that surprised me, for example, reading about the Moro Wars, is how many people had read the Qur’an before they even went—or while they were in Mindanao. John J. Pershing was made an honorary chief. And the amazing thing about the Moro Wars is that they’re fought among the Americans and individual tribes, or in a couple cases cults. But there’s never a religious war. Spanish had had a religious war there for 100 years; Americans don’t. And when the Americans leave, the Moros ask—many Moro chiefs ask them to stay because they know when they—when the Americans go, the Filipino Christians will come in and exploit them.

Brian Linn

And that’s exactly what the Filipino Christians did. And most of that has been since the Americans left. Mindanao is quite peaceful when you consider it’s an incredibly violent culture because these people have a lot of cultural sensitivity. And they’re not trying to convert or proselytize; they’re very clear about that. And the term crusader isn’t thrown around at all. And so you’re

Interviewer

So Petraeus Doctrine as described this morningâ€”

Brian Linn

Right.

Interviewer

Is built somewhat on this kind of understanding.

Brian Linn

Right. And it requires an educated officer corps. And these people did have a lot of time to think and read and study the Qur'an and contemplate what they were going to do.

Interviewer

Which would also go against the argument that this was a racial war.

Brian Linn

Yeah.

Interviewer

Because there wasâ€”or that this was the white man's burden to take care of the primitive and the ignorant

Brian Linn

Right.

Interviewer

Because there was a respect, it sounds like, for the cultural achievementsâ€”different though they may be.

Brian Linn

Yeah. I mean they are racist in that they're very aware that the Filipinos are a different race, and the troops talked about that all the time. Andâ€”but theâ€”my problem is that I've never been satisfactorily convinced that when people are pulling a trigger or setting fire to a village or even administering a water cure to somebodyâ€”that that's geared by racial antagonism. Ninety percent of the timeâ€”any case I've ever found, there's very clear practical reasons why you were shooting at this person or setting fire to their village or torturing them. And it has nothing to do with the fact they're Filipinos; it has to do with you have information I want. Andâ€”or you can give me the names of someone I want. Andâ€”or I'm punishing you.

Interviewer

But were the Americans different than the Spanish in this respect? In this case?

Brian Linn

Well, letâ€™s see. Â The Americans were having a much more ambitious agenda than the Spanish. Â The Spanish had really only controlled Manila and then sent their priests out. Â It really hasnâ€™tâ€”and then worked deals with the localâ€”

Interviewer

But theyâ€™re looking to Christianize theâ€”

Brian Linn

Well, yeah, in Mindanao they are. Â The rest of the Philippines is Catholic/Christian of a form. Â But there was actually a schism in the church and a separate Anglopian church emerges, too, which the Americans also to deal with. Â But yes, in Mindanao thatâ€™I mean, the term Moro was a Spanish term for the moors. Â And when the Spanish arrived there from the beginning under Legazpi it was like, â€œOh, well, we know these enemies. Â Theyâ€™re the ones we fought against in the Reconquista.â€ Â And theyâ€™d bring that attitude immediately. Â And the Moros bring their own attitude which is, â€œAh, yes. Â We know these people.â€ Â And so the Spanish helped make it a religious war. Â And I think the Philippine government, until recently, didnâ€™t help at all.

Modern Salience

Interviewer

Letâ€™s bring itâ€”because weâ€™re running out of time, itâ€™s actually been an hour and a half. But with respect to this particular conference today, the lessons that the Philippine experience provide to us in terms of looking forward.

Brian Linn

Well, I think the ones I draw areâ€”weâ€™re talking about these levels of basic counterinsurgency tactics, higher ideas on how to run a counterinsurgency campaign, the sort of Petraeus Doctrineâ€”if youâ€™re going to be people-centric, you have to have officers sensitive to that. The lessons after that, and some of the ones Iâ€™m going to talk about laterâ€”these are incredibly debilitating wars. I mean, the Philippine War only lasted about three years. But it devastates the officer corps and the NCO corps, and the enlisted corps. And that army has to be rebuilt, which people are very aware of now. But mainly itâ€™s disease. And so the army you go into these conflicts with isnâ€™t the army you come out with.

Brian Linn

And this leads to a second issue which is both then and now, that war ends at the end of the 19th centuryâ€”or begins at the end of the 19th century and ends at the beginning of the 20th century. And the Army is very aware of the new century. And itâ€™s in the process of reforming itself. The root reforms occur as a direct result of the conflict in the Philippines and the revelations of how incompetent they were in Cuba.

Brian Linn

So as General Dempsey was talking about, this transformation issueâ€”where are we going to go in the 21st century? Thatâ€™s a problem that people in the Philippines, and certainly when they come back, are addressing. And the result is the Army that comes out of the Philippines is not only in personnel different, organizationally and administratively itâ€™s very different. And thatâ€™s another thing. How to rebuild and reform theâ€”excuse

meâ€™lâ€™m going to get some water.

Interviewer

Sure.

Brian Linn

I finally talked myself out.

Interviewer

Well lâ€™m wonderingâ€™and I think this is where youâ€™re goingâ€™whether these kinds of wars that involveâ€™these kinds of ends of wars that involve a persistent insurgent element that can debilitate an army, particularly when weâ€™re fighting it in two fronts.

Brian Linn

Right. Â And they lead to sort of an issue of theyâ€™re physically debilitating. Â They tend to lead to sort of reforms. Â But the third issue they would raise, and that General Dempsey raised today as well, do you concentrate on the war youâ€™re fighting and think that the wars that youâ€™re going to fight are going to be like this? Â If weâ€™re going to face counterinsurgency warfare, then we need to structure the Army in a certain way. Â

Brian Linn

And if weâ€™re going to be occupying Afghanistan and Iraq for ten or fifteen years, we need to sort of think about that. Â If on the other hand weâ€™re going to be fighting another peer competitor, we have to structure ourselves differently. Â Now at the end of the Philippine War, the United States Army has that. Â There are people in the United States Army saying we need to be a colonial army. Â We need to have civil servants, we need to train our guys and weâ€™re going to administer the empire. Â People like Leonard Wood and Robert Bully are arguing the Army needs to know as much about waging peace as it needs to know about waging war. Â Others, such as J. Franklin Bell, are saying no, we need to prepare for a big war. Â And when theyâ€™Â

Interviewer

Itâ€™s the same argument going on now.

Brian Linn

Exactly. Â And thatâ€™s an argument that is won very clearly within about ten years by the big war people. Â And of course, they always argue, â€œWell, we were right. Â See, look at World War I.â€ Â But everyone sort of forgets that months before Wilson declares World War I, Pershing is down in Mexico in the punitive expedition in 1914 orders Bellâ€™s directives. Â And all the stuff from the Philippines is sent down to the guys in Mexico. Â Soâ€™

Interviewer

So is the lesson that we allâ€™an army for all things, for all possibilities and all points of view. Â And we will be fighting big war, conventional war, and weâ€™ll be fighting insurgencies.

Brian Linn

Right. Â Right. Â Iâ€™d say the argument you have to have is it is probably betterâ€”and the United States Army prior to Iraq and Afghanistan was fixated on being 99% brilliant at conventional operations. Â How do we get to be 99.1%, you know? Â And it would have spent a lot more time sayingâ€”better off, it turns out, if weâ€™d have said, â€œLetâ€™s be 80% good at conventional war and build up our capabilities in these others.â€ And thatâ€™s the decision the United States really didnâ€™t make. Â It kept two armies for a long time. Â And I think it was a lot better off. Â Guys like Pershing, in 1913, heâ€™s fighting Moros. Â Four years later, heâ€™s in cross. Â

Interviewer

Well itâ€™s the hangover from Vietnam in partâ€”Â

Brian Linn

Yeah.

Interviewer

Makes us not want to fight those wars again, right? Â I mean thatâ€™s what it isâ€”Â

Brian Linn

Well, I think the Army never liked to fight those wars, but officers accepted it as part of their duty.Â What I think was made certainly by peopleâ€”General Powellâ€”is sort of a devilâ€™s bargain.Â We will guarantee you victory if you only fight the type of wars we want you to fight.Â

Interviewer

Thank you so much. Â This was terrific. Â [End of Audio]