

Michael Patrick Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism: 1898-1909*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 272pp.

Alex Bryne*

University of Nottingham

The Anti-Imperialist movement within the United States has been traditionally viewed as a failure due to its inability to prevent the imperialist expansion of the United States after the Spanish-American War of 1898. Michael Cullinane's *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism*, however, attempts to shed new light upon the movement and reshape the historical consensus that surrounds its activities during the turn of the twentieth century. Cullinane argues that the movement has been examined within a restrictive manner, as the overarching failures of the movement from 1898-1900 and the focus on the movement's abstract political principles in existing scholarship have prevented a wider understanding of the movement from being established, thus detracting from its 'long duration and diversity of activism.' (2-3) In order to correct this, Cullinane offers a study of the Anti-Imperialist movement that categorises the activism of the movement into three distinct approaches: legal, transnational and social. By conducting an analysis of the movement in this manner, Cullinane aims to establish a 'reevaluation of the anti-imperialist movement, its operations, its members, and its impact during the most active decade of its opposition to American foreign policy' and thus 'determine with a greater degree of accuracy whether the anti-

* Alex is a first-year PhD Candidate in American and Canadian Studies at the University of Nottingham and book reviews editor at *49th Parallel*. His field of interest includes U.S. foreign policy, democratization and modern intellectual history. He can be reached at ahxab5@nottingham.ac.uk.

imperialists were truly a failure'. (4) Central to his analysis of the movement, however, is the concept of liberty. Throughout his study Cullinane argues that liberty was the unifying factor in the often disparate and incohesive movement. Whilst the movement may have consisted of a 'hodgepodge of odd bedfellows' with differing aims and opinions and undertook a variety of approaches that changed over time, the movement held one core belief: that 'empire was anti-thetical to American liberty'. The concept of liberty, Cullinane argues, was therefore 'the enduring ideological bond of the movement'. (6) He makes clear in every chapter how important liberty was to the ideals of the movement throughout the period by citing from a range of activists' personal papers.

Cullinane begins by explaining the historical background of the anti-imperialist movement and argues that there was a long standing tradition of anti-imperialism within the United States well before the events of 1898. Important for Cullinane, of course, was the presence of liberty within this earlier anti-imperialist discourse. (11) He then presents a chronological examination of the movement's activities, with each major event coinciding with one of the three particular approaches of the movement previously outlined. Examples of the movement's legal approach to anti-imperialism include: the opposition to the Treaty of Paris after the Spanish-American War, in which the movement opposed the possibility of the acquisition of the Philippines on legal grounds; the movement's activities during the 1900 presidential election, in which the anti-imperialists made the case against extending the rights of citizenship to inhabitants of the United States' new territorial acquisitions; and the so-called Insular Cases of 1900-1901. By the conclusion of the Insular Cases, however, Culliane argues that the movement realised that the legal approach to their activities was failing and that a new approach needed to be adopted. (113-114) The anti-imperialist cause had to be spread to wider audiences and become part of a public debate in order for it to survive. Cullinane makes plain that whilst the approach changed, the driving concept of liberty

remained central to the movement. This shift from legal to social activism occurred during the atrocities scandal in the Philippines and the movement began to base its anti-imperialism on moral grounds rather than legal. Cullinane sees this as an important period for the anti-imperialists as they achieved tenable successes. A clear shift in United States foreign policy can be identified as a direct result of this anti-imperialist action, dispelling the myth that the movement was a total failure. (118)

The final approach the movement took was a transnational approach and this aspect of the movement is indeed the most interesting that Cullinane outlines. He argues that many activists within the movement saw worldwide anti-imperialist struggles as similar to their own cause and presents two examples of this within his study: the sympathy displayed towards the Boers during the Boer War and the movement's opposition towards Belgian atrocities within the Congo. Because anti-imperialists 'identified liberty as the practice of exercising sympathy to all humanity', they had as much sympathy for the Boers as they did Filipinos, and the movement's social activism between 1904 and 1908 against Belgian atrocities demonstrated the longevity of the movement well beyond 1900. (86) Cullinane additionally highlights the movement's transnational activities as a fruitful area for further study.

What *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism* contributes to the history of the United States, therefore, is a much needed re-evaluation of the United States Anti-Imperialist movement. Cullinane does not rewrite the history of the movement and does not deny its failures nor pretend that it was a unified force, but he demonstrates that it was a more successful movement than the historical consensus has given it credit for. He convincingly shows that the movement took a number of different approaches to its activism, adapting to setbacks and failure in order to bring about a certain degree of success, as well as demonstrating the centrality of liberty to the movement as a whole.