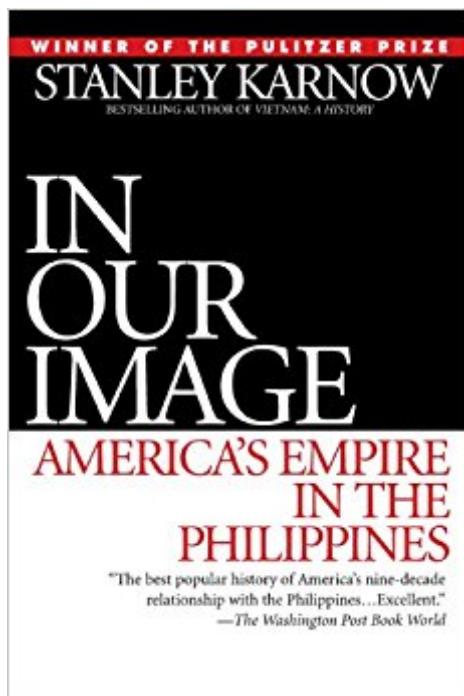


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# In Our Image: America's Empire In The Philippines



## **Synopsis**

/Stanley Karnow Karnow goes back 500 years to paint a fascinating portrait of Philippine history, ultimately focusing on the U.S.'s imperial experience in the islands. Here is the truth about America's attempt to remake the Philippines "in our image"--complete with American political, educational, and cultural institutions. "Authority and great insight."--Time. 16 pages of photographs.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Though Karnow claims that U.S. imperialism in its former colony, the Philippines, has been "uniquely benign" compared to European colonialism, the evidence set forth in this colorful, briskly readable history undercuts that prognosis. He shows that a succession of U.S. presidents and administrators coddled the archipelago's 60 or so ruling families, perpetuating the feudal oligarchy that continues to this day, and widening the gap between rich and poor. Karnow, whose *Vietnam: A History* is a standard account of the American venture in Southeast Asia, draws intriguing parallels: the U.S.-Philippine war of 1898, much like the Vietnam experience, dehumanized U.S. troops, who looted and annihilated villages; ex-President Marcos, like South Vietnamese ruler Diem, presented Washington with the problem of how to deal with a client state that squandered its credibility. In Karnow's assessment, the "new prosperity" under Corazon Aquino has not touched the Filipino countryside or slums. Photos. Author tour. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Philippine history is often described as 300 years in a (Spanish) convent and 50 years in Hollywood.

Karnow, who worked for 30 years as a journalist in Asia, narrates the careers of several individuals who influenced the Philippines. His treatment of the indecisiveness of President McKinley over the issue of empire and of the egotistical General MacArthur make the work a definite purchase for libraries. Weaker in treatment is the post-independence period, where Karnow concentrates upon Marcos and Aquino, both of whom he knows. Particularly revealing is his account of the White House coming to terms with the Aquino election victory. Those who love swashbuckling history will enjoy this work.- Donald Clay Johnson, Univ. of Minnesota Libs., MinneapolisCopyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is an excellent history of the Philippines. Because it's a relatively small country, and starting with the Spanish colonial period, the author had sufficient space to give enough details to paint a very complete picture of the island nation. Karnow mentioned that compared to leaders of other countries the SE Asian region, the Filipino leadership was far more accessible and open to the press. He took advantage of the willingness of the key figures to talk and has given readers a far more interesting story of the Philippines than might have been expected. He describes the strengths of the key players and I don't think he hid very many of their weaknesses. It was an eye opener to read Karnow's recounting of the differences between how the Spanish and Americans treated the Filipinos. I recommend the book highly.

Even though it was written in the 90's , this is as fine a summary of the US relationship with the Philippines as could be written. Having been to the Philippines on business on a few occasions , Karnow captured the nation and its people perfectly, including the clannishness, the culture, the corruption, and the heartbreak that is uniquely Filipino. It is not a proud chapter in our relationship. I particularly enjoyed the description of the overrated and vain Douglas MacArthur as well as Cory Aquino, the Marcos' and Aquinaldo and other illustrious names in this compelling story.

The Philippines arguably constituted the United States' sole exercise in large scale colonialism, yet from the start it was beset with two painful contradictions: firstly, between America's maintenance of overseas territories and her traditions of limited government and isolation from foreign entanglements; secondly, between her stated desire, genuine at least in some quarters, to shepherd the Philippines towards authentic independence as rapidly as possible, and an emergent strain of crony corporatism within the US that saw the Philippines as a virgin market ripe for exploitation through restrictive trade arrangements that would engender economic dependency,

entrench the old feudalist order and shackle growth. Sobering and not particularly optimistic in its conclusions, it is a fascinating book to digest now, almost 30 years after its publication.

It's a bit of a slog (took me months to finish) but well worth it. I'm married to a Filipino and have been to the wonderfully complex country maybe 15 times and always look forward to going back. This book really gave me an in depth background going back centuries of the modern Philippines. For a briefer history, go to the end of the book for a nice summarized timeline (or go to the Ayala Museum in Manila, which has a wonderful set of around 60 dioramas that display this country's rich and complicated history). I have long said the Philippines is the United States of Asia, not because of the U.S.'s political history, but because more than any country in Asia that I've been to, you see a true mixing of cultures-Malay, Chinese, Spanish, American, Indonesian, Arab, etc. This book obviously focuses of the U.S./Filipino history but it is a fascinating read even without the U.S. angles.

A somewhat loosely organized history of the Philippines, from the Spanish "discovery" in the mid 1500's through the American acquisition in the Spanish-American War , Philippine independence, the fractious Marcos years, and ending with the Presidency of Aquino. The recurrent theme implicit throughout the book is that the undercurrents of feudalism, crony capitalism and corruption that have hampered the country's development have been there for centuries.

I purchased the Kindle Edition of this book with some doubts in my mind as to how interesting a book on the Philippines could be. Once I started the book all doubts ceased. This book is written in a very engaging and interesting style that keeps you coming back to it for more. It opens with a brief treatment of then current Philippine/American relations and then delves deeply into the early Spanish colonial period. Along the way the author provides all the important details of The Age of Discovery for Spain in a very frank and adult way, detailing the realities of early Spanish colonialism in the islands. The author clearly has a deep knowledge of the people and history of the Philippines and he shows an impressive grasp of the country's culture and collective world view. This book is excellent on the history and weaves together all the facts in a very entertaining and compelling way.

I enjoyed the book and would recommend it for anyone with ties or a general curiosity about the Philippines. I've been married to a Filipina for six years and thought it would be good to know more about her culture and homeland. The book served this purpose well. My only complaint is that the author allowed his opinions too much representation. The book is of course his interpretation of

US/Filipino history and so one would expect it to have his personal slant but I would have been appreciative if it had been inserted less forcefully so as to not distract me from the narrative. Besides that shortcoming and that the book is a bit dated now, I thought it very worthy of four stars.

This is the most detailed history I have ever read about America's involvement in the Philippines. Despite the wealth of detail, which could get boring, I could not put the book down. I was reading it while riding in a minivan on holidays in the Pacific instead of enjoying the scenery 100%. Mr Karnow does not just cover Philippine History, we also get Spanish, American and European insights. Mr Karnow also mercilessly exposes the fatal result of muddled thinking and policy both by politicians and the military, tragically to be repeated half a century later in Vietnam and again in Iraq. Sadly, America never seems to learn from its past mistakes. I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in how America became so intimately involved in Asian affairs.

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