

*Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars.* By KRISTIN L. HOGANSON. Yale Historical Publications. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Photograph. Illustrations. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. xii, 305 pp.

Significant historical events happen because of countless factors, which stem from the most powerful and decisive to the minutiae of everyday life. Historians have attempted to study the latter in recent decades, especially if they relate to specific cultural factors such as class, gender, race, and even sexuality. In her meticulously researched work, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, Kristin L. Hoganson delves into the gender dynamics surrounding the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars. By analyzing the interplay between masculinity, military intervention, and imperial ambitions, Hoganson sheds light on the complex factors that fueled these historic conflicts.

Hoganson's monogram challenges conventional narratives, highlighting solely geopolitical or economic factors as the driving forces behind these wars. Instead, she argues that notions of masculinity, particularly the need to assert a dominant American manhood, played a substantial role in shaping the trajectory of American foreign policy. At the beginning of the monogram, numerous men born or influenced by the Civil War came into political power (15). Arbitration, a polar contrast from jingoism, is seen as making the United States weak and unmanly, causing backlash from those post-Civil War men in power (21). In the 1890s, women became more involved in politics, especially during the 1896 election (30–31). Throughout the monogram, the author paints America's view of Cuba as female, delicate, and needing a robust and manly figure to arrive and rescue the situation. The irony is that men supported mixed-race Cubans over African Americans, but only because they idolized the fighters as "chivalrous" and

saw Cuba as a “damsel in distress” (44–45). When Cuba rebelled against Spain in 1895, jingoists portrayed the Cubans as chivalrous defenders battling against a degenerate Spain; as the author remarks, “by appealing to American men to take a stance in favor of chivalric principles, jingoes couched the Cuban issue as one for men to resolve” (61). Pro-war politicians believed that war would mold American society to honor men again and respect them as powerful and “virile” (74–75). Men at the time saw war as a way to prove their manhood, even more than economics—e.g., a political cartoon displaying business interests as a man in drag (79).

While Hoganson’s book successfully highlights the importance of gender in shaping the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars, it occasionally overlooks alternative perspectives. The narrative primarily focuses on American men, leaving less room to explore the role of women or non-American actors. Nonetheless, when a declaration of war by the United States announces, Hoganson points out that men *and* women supported the war, especially regarding the Massachusetts Women’s Relief Corps (107). After McKinley’s assassination, attention went to Roosevelt and his role in the war; he brought up his military experience, which worked to further his political aspirations; thus, the supposed political effectiveness of the government rested on its manly character, in turn hurting women in politics, even though women substantially helped during the war, which suffragists tried to point out, with limited success (126–130). Hoganson makes periodic assessments over race, which is segued well since the lens of the monogram centers on gender but arbitrarily mentions how African-American men suffered recognition, too (131–132). Hoganson hooks back on the stereotype of “feminized Filipino” to show Filipino men as effeminate, childlike and weak, while offering an interpretation of imperialism centered on humanitarian obligations in the Philippines and how manly men with character help “savages” build character, too (137–138). Hoganson bounces between gender and

race, and while the connections are relatively strong, the author proceeds on a tangent every time she mentions race. The tangent reiterates the previous observation about how men saw war as a way to prove manhood (141–143).

By the end of the monogram, Hoganson discusses the anti-imperialist side of the United States, infuriated that the U.S. wants to build an empire. Anti-imperialists increasingly co-opted the language of manhood to argue that, far from bolstering masculinity, it was contributing to the degeneracy of American men. They reoriented the definition of manhood back towards an older one that emphasized virtue, morality, and self-government, centered in the Declaration of Independence. Hoganson outright states, “in response to the accusations that their Philippine policies violated the nation’s deepest convictions, imperialists brandished a national manhood metaphor [...] the youthful republic had become an adult, they declared, and should assume the responsibilities of a mature man” (157). Following these two wars, the United States receded from its imperialist aspirations because its male population had effectively proven its manhood, and so imperialism no longer had a cultural impetus on the general population.

In *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, Hoganson provides a groundbreaking analysis of the interplay between gender, militarism, and imperialism in late 19th and early 20th-century America. By examining the multifaceted ways in which ideas of masculinity influenced foreign policy and domestic society, she offers a fresh perspective on these historical events. Hoganson’s work contributes significantly to the field of gender studies and provides readers with a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in constructing American identity.