

**An Imperial Vision: William Howard Taft and the Philippines, 1900-1921**

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### **Note on Sources**

The following abbreviations are used throughout the footnotes to refer to specific manuscript collections:

ERP – Elihu Root Papers, Library of Congress

GFHP – George Frisbie Hoar Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society

HCLP – Henry Cabot Lodge Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society [Microfilm]

TRP – Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress [Microfilm]

WCFP – William Cameron Forbes Papers, Harvard Houghton Library

WHTP – William Howard Taft Papers, Library of Congress [Microfilm]

### **Declaration of Authorship**

I confirm that this work is my own and that I have clearly referenced/listed all sources as appropriate. Full references for the footnotes can be found in the bibliography.

## **Introduction**

This thesis seeks to establish William H. Taft's influence over the U.S. experiment with empire in the Philippines. It shows how a politician who is often characterised as a loyal servant of Theodore Roosevelt, at least before 1909, was in fact a key driver of policy decisions. Taft's views of empire may have been built on the ideas of others, but his own synthesis of these ideas and the career path he followed during this period single him out as one of the most influential figures in U.S.-Philippine relations. Taft saw the Philippine relationship as a long-term prospect and foresaw a future where the islands would eventually become a dominion of a United States, like the relationship between Great Britain and Canada. This, it is argued here, was Taft's distinct "imperial vision."<sup>1</sup>

This thesis reassesses the role of Taft in the American imperial experiment in the Philippines between the years 1900 and 1921. During this period Taft was the highest-profile figure arguing consistently for a permanent imperial relationship with the Philippine Islands. Various historians have covered Philippine affairs during this period, but none has made such a detailed analysis of Taft as a leader in guiding Philippine policy toward retention. Taft held a number of high-level roles during the period 1900-1913 – when the Republican Party continuously controlled Philippine policy – which allowed him to maintain a permanent influence over the nature of U.S.-Philippine relations. After this period Taft had less direct influence, but utilised his experience, reputation and contacts to speak out against the Democratic Party's policy for the islands and became the figurehead of a campaign to retain the Philippines.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "Great Britain," "British" and "Britain" are used in this introduction to refer to the United Kingdom. This is done for greater continuity between commentary and source materials: almost all references to the United Kingdom in the correspondence between Taft and his contemporaries referred to the United Kingdom in these terms, or, in other cases, more inaccurately as "England."

The two decades following Taft's inauguration as the first Civil Governor of the Philippines, on July 4, 1901, mark the first half of the U.S.-Philippine colonial experience and represent the first phase in the evolution of U.S.-Philippine policy regarding the question of the imperial relationship's future. Historian Peter Stanley describes 1921 as the year when 'a stalemate had been reached in Philippine-American relations,' with the fate of retention in the balance.<sup>2</sup> In relation to Taft's involvement in the debate, historian David H. Burton states that Taft's appointment as chief justice in 1921 'brought a virtual end to his life in diplomacy and the politics that had been part of it.'<sup>3</sup> During this two-decade period Taft had taken on the mantle of chief retentionist, but his appointment as Chief Justice of the United States – his life's ambition – and the return of the retentionist Republicans to government in 1921, signalled a changing of the guard and the end of Taft's time as the leader of the retentionists.

### *Historiographical context*

William H. Taft was an integral figure in the history of the American-Philippine relationship, and historians have acknowledged this fact. However, the focus of this thesis contributes a portrait that is currently missing from the existing historiography. There are two published works of note that concentrate on Taft's personal role in the Philippines. These two works focus on short periods within the timeframe discussed here and draw different conclusions about Taft and his role in the U.S. imperial venture from those made in this thesis. The first of these is Ralph E. Minger's 1975 study of Taft's career from 1900 to 1908, in which the author devotes

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley, *Nation in the Making*, 262.

<sup>3</sup> Burton, *Confident Peacemaker*, 115.

two chapters to Taft's time in the Philippines.<sup>4</sup> Minger's work is a largely narrative and sympathetic account of Taft's role in the Philippines during this time, which draws heavily from traditional biographical accounts such as Henry Pringle's comprehensive 1939 work.<sup>5</sup> Although Minger presents a cohesive summary of Taft's involvement in the Philippines during this period, he breaks no new ground beyond drawing together the many facets of Taft's role as Civil Governor of the Philippines and then as Secretary of War. His comments are also almost entirely uncritical of Taft, aiming to show that Taft was largely successful in his various foreign assignments that his experiences helped to prepare him for the presidency with an almost unprecedented knowledge of U.S. foreign relations.

More recently Rene Escalante's 2007 monograph examines Taft's role as a Commissioner and Civil Governor in the Philippines from 1900 to 1903. Escalante's objectives and conclusions differ markedly from what this thesis argues. Although Escalante recognises that most historians date the so-called "Taft Era" as a period of concerted influence from 1900 to 1913, he chooses to analyse the much shorter period when Taft was part of the Philippine administration, arguing that after 1903 Taft was preoccupied with affairs elsewhere and delegated the matter of the Philippines to the Philippine Commission. Escalante also states that he does not seek to 'dwell on the effects of the policies that he [Taft] implemented to American foreign policy and to his political career.'<sup>6</sup> In these respects, among others, Escalante's work bears distinct dissimilarities in purpose and, in some cases, assumptions, to this thesis.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Minger, *The Apprenticeship Years*.

<sup>5</sup> Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*.

<sup>6</sup> Escalante, *The Bearer of Pax Americana*, 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Escalante's belief that Taft's concern with the Philippine issue reduced significantly after 1903 is simply not persuasive, as this thesis shows in detail. In support of his assertion, Escalante cites Taft's numerous other duties as Secretary of War and points to the fact that Taft visited the Philippines only twice between 1904 and 1908. However, Taft's predecessor as Secretary of War, Elihu Root, was certainly interested in the Philippines, yet Root never visited the islands during his tenure at the War Department, despite Taft's entreaties for him to do so.

Aside from these specific examples, there are further works that concentrate on Taft's role in U.S. Far Eastern policy. The most comprehensive is Walter Scholes and Marie Scholes' 1970 study of the Taft administration's foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> The Scholes book deals with the period of Taft's presidency, but the Philippines are not addressed directly within the scope of the Scholes book, leaving this aspect of Far Eastern policy unexplored. David Burton's book, *Confident Peacemaker*, provides a useful discussion of Taft's internationalism but has little to say on his Philippine policy that is not dealt with more thoroughly in non-Taft focused studies of the period.<sup>9</sup> Also worthy of note are the numerous biographical studies of Taft, all of which give some attention to Taft's time in the Philippines, but all of which also focus almost exclusively on the period when Taft was physically present in the islands.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is the Philippine and Far Eastern policy of Theodore Roosevelt, not Taft, that is preponderant in the historiography dealing with the

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<sup>8</sup> Scholes and Scholes, *The Foreign Policies of the Taft Administration*.

<sup>9</sup> Burton, *Confident Peacemaker*.

<sup>10</sup> Some are generous studies published during the run up to Taft's 1908 presidential campaign: Oscar King Davis, *William Howard Taft: The Man of the Hour*, and Robert Lee Dunn, *William Howard Taft, American*. Following Taft's death in 1930, a number of largely narrative studies appeared: Herbert S. Duffy, *William Howard Taft*; Francis McHale, *President and Chief Justice: The Life and Public Service of William Howard Taft*, and Edward H. Cotton, *William Howard Taft: A Character Study*. The most complete study is still Henry Pringle's two-volume 1939 work, *Life and Times*. Pringle was the first to make use of the Taft Papers at the Library of Congress and was aided further by corresponding with and interviewing Taft's friends, family and associates. There are two 1973 volumes focusing on Taft's presidency: Donald Anderson, *William Howard Taft: A Conservative's Conception of the Presidency*, and Paolo Coletta, *The Presidency of William Howard Taft*. Later books that focus on periods beyond and including his presidency are: Judith I. Anderson's *William Howard Taft: An Intimate History* and David H. Burton's numerous works: *Taft, Wilson and World Order*; *William Howard Taft: In the Public Service*; *The Learned Presidency: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson*, and *Taft, Roosevelt, and the Limits of Friendship*. Most recently published in 2009, as an updated version of the Taft volume in the Kansas series on U.S. presidents, is Lewis Gould's *The William Howard Taft Presidency*. In terms of studies of Taft after the presidency there are fewer works, among these the most comprehensive is Alpheus Thomas Mason, *William Howard Taft: Chief Justice*; the earlier, Frederick C. Hicks, *William Howard Taft: Yale Professor of Law & New Haven Citizen*; and more recently David Burton, *Taft, Holmes and the 1920s Court: An Appraisal*. Also, two bibliographical collections exist on William H. Taft and offer a fairly exhaustive list of publications specifically relating to Taft, the first of these is the more recent and most comprehensive: Paolo Coletta, *William Howard Taft: A Bibliography*, and Gilbert J. Black, *William Howard Taft 1857-1930: Chronology, Documents, Bibliographical Aids*.



influence of specific political figures.<sup>11</sup> This thesis seeks to add a missing piece to the narrative of Taft as a figure in American and Philippine history.

Beyond works that seek, like this thesis, to centre primarily upon Taft, there are a great number of important and influential works looking more widely at U.S.-Philippine policy during this period which make important analyses of U.S. Philippine policy, Taft and the Taft Era in the islands that are engaged with in this thesis. There are a multitude of works that take different approaches to the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars, which are useful in interpreting the causes of, ideals behind, and voices against the U.S. imperial adventure that followed the war.<sup>12</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, there was a dearth of material published on U.S. policy towards the islands following the Spanish-American War. However, in recent decades this deficit has been amply rectified by a surge of interest among historians

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<sup>11</sup> There are a number of works on U.S. policy in the Philippines and the Far East that focus on Theodore Roosevelt, illustrating the continued fascination among historians with Roosevelt in foreign affairs, ahead of Taft. Among them are: Oscar M. Alfonso, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Philippines 1897-1909*; Thomas A. Bailey, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese-American Crises: An Account of the International Complications Arising from the Race Problem on the Pacific Coast*; Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*; G. Wallace Chessman, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power*; Tyler Dennett, *Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War*; Raymond A. Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*; James R. Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and World Order: Police Power in International Relations*; Frederick W. Marks III, *Velvet on Iron the Diplomacy of Theodore Roosevelt*; George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America, 1900-1912*; Charles E. Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906-1909*; Serge Ricard, *Theodore Roosevelt: et la Justification de l'Impérialisme*; William N. Tilchin, *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire: A Study in Presidential Statecraft*, and William N. Tilchin, and Charles E. Neu, eds., *Artists of Power: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Their Enduring Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy*. There are numerous other volumes dealing with TR's foreign endeavours, aside from the glut of biographical studies, helping to evidence the relative dearth of materials relating specifically to Taft, despite his influential involvement during this period.

<sup>12</sup> Relatively recent works dealing with the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars and the role of the U.S. military in the Philippines include: Philip Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902. Vol. 2 1898-1902*; John Morgan Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags: The United States Army and the Philippines, 1898-1902*; Willard B. Gatewood, Jr. *Black Americans and the White Man's Burden, 1898-1903*; Richard E. Welch, Jr. *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902*; Lewis L. Gould, *The Spanish-American War and President McKinley*; Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*; Samuel K. Tan, *The Filipino-American War, 1899-1913*; Thomas Schoonover, *Uncle Sam's War of 1898 and the Origins of Globalization*; Paul T. McCartney, *Power and Progress: American National Identity, the War of 1898, and the Rise of American Imperialism*.

working from varying interpretative standpoints.<sup>13</sup> This thesis seeks to engage with this ever-growing field of scholarship and yet marks out a still under-explored aspect of the U.S. imperial-era in the Philippines. The role of Taft in forming, guiding, enacting and opposing U.S. Philippine policy throughout the period 1900-1921, reveals a new perspective of a figure discussed usefully by many of these recent works.

### *Sources*

Beginning with Henry Pringle's use of them for his 1939 biography, the William Howard Taft Papers at the Library of Congress have remained the best single source of information about Taft and his imperial vision. The collection has been utilised by virtually all historians of Taft and the American-Philippine relationship, and they are still the most useful and extensive source of evidence for the development of Taft's ideas and imperial theories during this period. In relation to the Philippines, as has been mentioned, the focus of most historians has been on the periods when Taft was physically present in the islands, between 1900 and 1903, and

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<sup>13</sup> There are a number of excellent works on the nature of U.S. policy in the Philippines during, and in the years following, the Spanish-American War. The earliest studies that are still widely cited include Grunder and Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States* and Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*. Some excellent collections of essays can be found in: Norman G. Owen, ed., *Compadre Colonialism: Philippine-American Relations: 1898-1946*; Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, ed., *Cultures of United States Imperialism*; Hazel M. McFerson, ed., *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics and Society in the Philippines*, and Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, ed., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives*. Recent monographs on the U.S.-Philippine imperial experience of particular note are: Stuart Creighton Miller, "Benevolent Assimilation": *The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903*; Lewis E. Gleeck, Jr. *The American Half-Century and The American Governors-General and High Commissioners in the Philippines: Proconsuls, Nation-Builders and Politicians*; Bonifacio S. Salamanca, *The Filipino Reaction to American Rule 1901-1913; Toward a Diplomatic History of the Philippines*; H. W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines*; Frank H. Golay, *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946*; Peter Stanley, *A Nation in the Making: The Philippines and the United States, 1899-1921*; G. A. May, *Social Engineering in the Philippines: The Aims, Execution, and Impact of American Colonial Policy, 1900-1913*; Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*; Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines*, and Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning*.

during his two trips to the islands in 1905 and 1907. However, this thesis explores Taft's correspondence regarding the islands well beyond this period, as well as re-evaluating letters already discussed in the historiography and how they relate to the different analytical aims of this thesis.

In addition to the Taft Papers, the papers of other leading figures in the U.S. and the Philippines – notably Elihu Root, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Cameron Forbes – proved invaluable in researching this thesis. Moreover, the many governmental reports, speeches and articles written by Taft and his contemporaries add another set of resources through which to evaluate Taft's ideas about empire and how he conveyed these to his various audiences. Contemporaneous newspapers and journals have also proved a rich source of opinions regarding the imperial experiment, as well as recording some of Taft's lesser-known public utterances.

As this thesis looks primarily at Taft's views and his understanding of empire and the nature of his imperial vision, there is, as a result, not as much attention given to Filipino perspectives of the impact of these ideas and realities as has been the case in other recent works on the U.S.-Philippine relationship. In recent years the historiography on U.S.-Philippine affairs, as discussed above, has offered an array of works analysing Filipino reactions to and interpretations of American rule, especially in works by historians such as Bonifacio Salamanca, Paul Kramer, Julian Go and Frank Golay. This thesis is seeking to build upon these important works, by reassessing the role of Taft and his ideas as a matter of importance that has been somewhat sidelined in recent years. It also aims to help provide new insight into the possibilities and alternative outcomes for the U.S. colonial experiment, with its re-evaluation of Taft's imperial vision as its focal point.

### *Determining an Imperial Vision*

Throughout this thesis numerous terms arise that are somewhat contentious and used rather differently by various commentators, including: empire, imperialism, expansionism and, specifically in this thesis, “imperial vision.” This section contextualises and defines how these terms are understood and used in the chapters that follow.

The historiography of U.S. imperialism has developed a great deal during the last century. Until the 1970s, economic interpretations of imperialism dominated in academic treatment of the subject and provided some of the most influential studies of U.S. imperialism. The 1960s saw the heyday of this school of interpretative thought with the so-called “Open Door” school, made up of key historians such as William Appleman Williams and Walter LaFeber.<sup>14</sup> As historian Wolfgang Mommsen notes, the Open Door school argued that the U.S. followed a continuous process of ‘informal or free-trade imperialism,’ with the exception of a ‘brief interlude of overt imperialism between 1898 and 1900,’ which they regarded as a ‘temporary deviation from the main path of development.’<sup>15</sup> Though the impact of this group is still keenly felt in discussion of U.S. imperialism, since the 1970s the topic has been subjected to far wider interpretation – as indeed has the idea of the imperial moment of the late 1890s. Writing in 1978, historian James A. Field rejects the importance of the need for export markets and the beginnings of foreign investment as causes for taking political control of overseas territories, instead claiming that technological

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<sup>14</sup> See William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* and Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire, 1865-1898*. The works of these two authors in particular were hugely influential in guiding theory about U.S. informal imperialism in the latter decades of the twentieth century. An excellent introduction to the most important works in this field can be found in: Frank Ninkovich, “The United States and Imperialism,” pp. 79-102, in: Robert D. Schulzinger, ed., *A Companion to American Foreign Relations*.

<sup>15</sup> Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism*, 93-94.

developments and historical “accidents” paved the way for the U.S. annexations following the Spanish-American War.<sup>16</sup> Field’s essay contains a call for further interpretation and analysis of “American imperialism” that has been somewhat satiated in subsequent decades. The term, often eschewed by U.S. historians in the earlier twentieth century, has now become relatively commonplace, and instead of referring simply to the events of 1898 and the former Spanish colonies or to U.S. economic influence, has been utilised to meet a multitude of different interpretative purposes.

The last four decades of literature on imperialism is vast, and footnotes can merely scratch the surface.<sup>17</sup> In 2002 historian Frank Schumacher noted that fourteen years after Lloyd Gardner criticised historians’ ambivalence in coming to terms with the U.S. as an empire, the field had developed substantially. Schumacher attributes some of these developments to an increasingly interdisciplinary approach by historians to the subject of empire, integrating disciplines such as literary scholarship, anthropology and sociology to broaden scholarly discourse.<sup>18</sup> In 2004, Mona Domosh suggested that, until recently, the term “American imperialism” had ‘been understood in terms of its territorial and political claims – commencing with the Spanish-American War, and continuing with increasing vigour through to the late twentieth century as the United States became the dominant global power.’ Domosh claims that, in the last decade, scholarship has added a ‘complementary but different story...that is as much about “civilization” and consumption as it is about conquest and production,’

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<sup>16</sup> James A. Field, “American Imperialism,” 644-645 and 667-668.

<sup>17</sup> Some key volumes not already mentioned in previous footnotes, relating to U.S. imperialism, include: Whitney T. Perkins, *Denial of Empire: The United States and Its Dependencies*; Ernest May, *American Imperialism: A Speculative Essay*; V. G. Kiernan, *America: The New Imperialism--From White Settlement to World Hegemony*; Frank Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism*; Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, and Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*.

<sup>18</sup> Schumacher, “The American Way of Empire,” 35-36.

though one might argue that such a movement in interpretation began somewhat earlier than the last decade alone.<sup>19</sup>

In his book on French and British imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, historian Winfried Baumgart called “imperialism” ‘a vague and imprecise catchword.’<sup>20</sup> “American imperialism” is an equally vague term, and it means something very different in today’s historiographical discourse from what it meant to most Americans in 1898. William H. Taft was raised in a world where empire, if anything, meant something slightly more concrete. Britain and France, for example, had vast empires, which were named as such, and involved control over various far-flung nations at a number of different levels. Economist J. A. Hobson, writing in 1902, noted that Britain had divided its empire up into various types of control from heavily controlled “crown colonies” to relatively lightly controlled, mainly white, states that had achieved responsible government.<sup>21</sup> Canada, the United States’ near neighbour, and summer destination of choice for Taft and his wife, was a British possession that was largely self-governing, but had a number of its key executive, legislative and judicial powers still resting with Britain.<sup>22</sup> As historian J. D. B. Miller notes, despite these reserved powers, it was mainly in the area of foreign relations that nations such as Canada had little independence from Britain.<sup>23</sup> It was Canada, as it related to Great Britain in this period, that Taft spoke of often when discussing what is referred to here as his “imperial vision.”

The Philippines, an Asian archipelago with a primarily non-white population, represented more of a typical British crown colony, where self-government was but a

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<sup>19</sup> Domosh, “Selling Civilization,” 453.

<sup>20</sup> Baumgart, *Imperialism*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Hobson, *Imperialism*, 23. Hobson’s seminal text argues that special interest groups motivated nations toward imperialism, though the theory has been subject to great scrutiny over the subsequent century.

<sup>22</sup> Marriott, *The Evolution of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, 212-214.

<sup>23</sup> Miller, *The Commonwealth in the World*, 24.

distant dream. However, for Taft, the Philippines would, given roughly a century of tuition, be able to reach a relationship with the United States like that of Canada to Britain (which will here be called a “dominion” relationship). As Chapter Two discusses, the Philippines would achieve some “native” representation immediately – in terms of political positions at lower levels of government – and within years Filipinos were represented on the islands’ ruling commission, putting them far ahead of “native” participation in a British crown colony.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the most unconventional usage in this thesis is how the term “expansionist” is approached. Taft saw “expansionists” as those who actively advocated territorial aggrandisement of the United States at the turn of the century, and he did not number himself among them. A number of prominent Republican politicians, typified by Theodore Roosevelt and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, actively sought to extend U.S. influence by acquiring strategic possessions. Roosevelt subscribed to a “Large Policy” that would see the United States come to equal terms with European nations. In one recent study, historian James Holmes argues that Roosevelt sought to project U.S. power into a region of interest and exclude its great-power rivals.<sup>25</sup> For Roosevelt there were clear geo-political gains to be made from a Large Policy that saw the U.S expand its possessions and prestige into previously underdeveloped corners of the globe.

Unlike the Large Policy advocates, Taft did not believe that the United States should actively aim to expand its territory. He stated in 1900, when appointed to the Philippine Commission: ‘I am not and never have been an expansionist. I have always

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<sup>24</sup> Although the term dominion was used widely at the turn of the century, the precise definition of a dominion came much later with the 1926 Balfour Declaration which set out that: ‘*They are autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations* [italics in original].’

<sup>25</sup> Holmes, *Roosevelt and World Order*, 143.

hoped that the jurisdiction of our nation would not extend beyond territory between the two oceans. We have not solved all the problems of popular government so perfectly as to justify our voluntarily seeking more difficult ones abroad.<sup>26</sup> However, Taft accepted the position as head of the Philippine Commission and with it the idea that by this point annexation of the islands was a *fait accompli*. In addition, Taft came to accept that, in hindsight, McKinley had had little option in taking the islands given the alternatives on offer. Taft felt that the Philippines were not fit for independence and that chaos would reign if they achieved premature liberty and U.S. rivals would surely take the islands in such an eventuality. Thus, though Taft did not agree “in theory” with expansion, he certainly saw the attraction of its outcomes and perceived the potential benefits that imperialism could bring to the Philippines and the United States. Taft was far more enthusiastic about the practice of governing an empire than he was about seeking one. Roosevelt, more geo-politically and strategically minded than Taft, began to question the benefits of the Philippines to the United States, as is explored in Chapter Four. Taft, however, felt that the wider project of accomplishing his imperial vision was the most important aspect of U.S. policy in the islands. Roosevelt was willing to expand U.S. sovereignty just as he was later willing to withdraw it for similarly strategic purposes. Taft was reluctant to annex additional territories but became equally reluctant to leave the islands without having accomplished the lasting imperial bond that he desired.

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There has been a great deal of historiographical discourse over how different the “imperial moment” at the turn of the century was from U.S. expansionism before 1898. Historian Alfred Weinberg, in his work *Manifest Destiny*, identifies the

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<sup>26</sup> *Washington Weekly Post*, March 6, 1900.



following factors as important in spurring on continental expansion: ‘metaphysical dogmas of a providential mission and quasi-scientific “laws” of national development, conceptions of national right and ideals of social duty, legal rationalizations and appeals to “the higher law,” aims of extending freedom and designs of extending benevolent absolutism.’<sup>27</sup> Many of these themes were taken up by the imperialists of the late 1890s as ideas to inform the government of the Philippines and William H. Taft was certainly among them. A number of historians contend that U.S. imperialism at the turn of the century was merely an extension of the ideas that had fed Manifest Destiny and the conquering of Native Americans and others in the quest to stretch across the continent. Historian Walter L. Williams suggests that instead of seeing 1898 ‘as a new departure, historians might view Philippine annexation as the last episode of a nineteenth-century pattern of territorial acquisition and direct political rule of subject peoples.’<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, despite distinct continuities with previous moments of expansion, especially in rhetoric, there were important differences between previous continental expansion and the annexation of territories following the Spanish-American War. The annexations brought about fierce domestic opposition in the U.S. to an extent that had never been seen in previous moments of expansion. In 1898 and afterwards, those both in favour of and opposed to annexation of the Philippines considered the situation to be different, uniquely controversial and an experiment not subject to precedent in U.S. history. What seems a more satisfactory interpretation is one that accepts certain continuities alongside some distinct departures in 1898. Certainly, for Taft, paternalistic ideas of “civilising” and “duty” were examples of continuity with previous moments of expansion. However, the new form of political

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<sup>27</sup> Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Williams, “United States Indian Policy,” 831.

and constitutional relationship that resulted from the designation of the islands as “unincorporated territories” was a departure that Taft was keen to take advantage of, as it allowed him far more freedom of direction as head of the Philippine Commission.

In terms of this departure from previous methods of expansion, Taft was aided in formulating his imperial vision by the anomalous legal and political status of the islands following the 1898 Treaty of Paris. A legal scholar writing in 1934 described the situation thus: ‘Not the Americans who negotiated the treaty but the subsequent ingenious statesmanship of the Supreme Court invented the mysterious doctrine of “unincorporated territory,” whereby until Congress “incorporates” newly annexed territory the governmental power of Congress over it is subject to some only of the limitations of the Constitution, that is, subject to those and those only which the Supreme Court deems “applicable.”’<sup>29</sup> The Insular Cases, as the series of Supreme Court decisions relating to the U.S. insular possessions (mainly between 1901 and 1905) came to be known, established that the Philippines were not a U.S. territory in the sense of Alaska, Oklahoma or even Hawaii. One of the most important differences in this new form of U.S. territory was that such “unincorporated territory” was not fully governed by any existing precedents regarding its future or the extent to which the U.S. Constitution applied therein. As contemporary legal commentator L. R. Wilfey pointed out, ‘hitherto Congress, in the government of the territories, in the exercise of its powers under the Constitution, has proceeded on the theory of ultimate statehood,’ but in the case of the Philippines the Supreme Court established that they were not a “territory,” and therefore the question of future statehood went

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<sup>29</sup> McGovney, “Our Non-Citizen Nationals, Who Are They?” 598.

unresolved.<sup>30</sup> Given this malleability, Taft came to envisage a long-term period of trusteeship over the Philippines, lasting perhaps a century or more, whereby the islands would be taught democratic American principles until they were capable of responsible self-government. He envisaged that, on achieving this distant goal, the Philippines would then be fully aware of U.S. benevolence and would celebrate their imperial relationship, becoming a dominion of the United States and a beacon of U.S. enlightenment to the rest of Asia.

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The annexation of the Philippines came after a period of substantial shifts in U.S. race relations. Although the Reconstruction era had seen a positive legislative overhaul in African-American rights, the period of Southern “Redemption” and Jim Crowism that followed was characterised by racially motivated disenfranchisement, lynching and segregation that peaked around the turn of the century, particularly in the American South. This period also saw the final stand of Native American peoples in armed resistance to U.S. continental expansion and a substantial influx of Asian immigration to the West Coast. Race was evidently a major concern in U.S. domestic politics during the period in which Taft – born in 1857 – grew up and rose to prominence in public life. Taft was raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, and after his undergraduate years at Yale he returned to his home city to study law and his early legal career was largely confined to that region.<sup>31</sup> The Cincinnati of the mid to late-nineteenth century was fast-growing and, according to historians Nancy Bertaux and Michael Washington, contained a ‘highly diverse population.’ Taft lived in a city of racial diversity and, though his family’s wealth kept him in a state of relative racial homogeneity, the racism and racial separation of the late nineteenth century were not

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<sup>30</sup> Wilfey, “Our Duty to the Philippines,” 311.

<sup>31</sup> With the exception of a brief period as U.S. Solicitor General from 1890-1892, which saw him move to Washington D.C. for the first time.

completely foreign to him. Cincinnati, like most cities in the U.S. at the time saw its substantial African-American population routinely subjected to discrimination in fields such as education and employment.<sup>32</sup>

Aside from the legal implications and repercussions of the Reconstruction legislation, the period also saw a significant shift in intellectual dialogue concerning race. Historian Michael Krenn notes that although Charles Darwin's theories on evolution were widely known and read in the United States, a particular variant of his theory came to dominate American intellectual and political thinking during this time, the concept of Social Darwinism.<sup>33</sup> Social Darwinism was applied to explain the differences between the human "races," and was adapted to justify the notions of white supremacy that were already widespread in the United States at the time. Academic Mark van Ells contends that 'grounded in scientific "fact," the aura of white supremacy seemed unassailable to many, if not most, white Americans at the end of the nineteenth century.'<sup>34</sup>

The late nineteenth century also saw a further narrowing at the "top" of the racial hierarchy in the guise of Anglo-Saxonism. British historian Paul Rich positions the main period of 'Anglo-Saxon solidarity' between Britain and the U.S. as running from 1895 through to 1905, and resting largely on 'a common illusion in both Britain and America of a collective racial superiority over other peoples.'<sup>35</sup> Jane Samson suggests that there was a 'particularly vigorous school of thought' in Britain and the U.S. that saw "Anglo-Saxons" as 'the highest stage of human development.'<sup>36</sup> Historian Paul Kramer sees this Anglo-Saxonism as a 'racial-exceptionalist bridge

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<sup>32</sup> Bertaux and Washington, "The 'Colored Schools' of Cincinnati," 43-44.

<sup>33</sup> Krenn, *The Color of Empire*, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Van Ells, "Assuming the White Man's Burden," 611.

<sup>35</sup> Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, 25.

<sup>36</sup> Samson, *Race and Empire*, 73.

between the United States and the British Empire.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Anglo-Saxonism provided an important link between U.S. racial ideals and imperial ideals, in a period that saw a political and ideological reconciliation between the U.S. and Great Britain. Many upper-middle class American politicians, such as Taft, had Anglophile leanings and were proud of their British ancestry. During this period many began to perceive a closer kinship with Great Britain over other nations and Anglophilia certainly coloured Taft's approach to world affairs. Taft looked to Britain as an example for U.S. imperialism in some respects and, as Chapter Six discusses, was keen to keep them on good terms during the League of Nations debate.<sup>38</sup> In this way race was not only formative in terms of how Americans, such as Taft, viewed Southeast Asians but also in how they understood their role in imperial nation building.

Taft saw the key to success in racial matters as best sought through a *gradual* movement towards increased rights and equalities for non-whites. However, unlike contemporaries such as Theodore Roosevelt, Taft did not appear to regard racial theory as of fundamental importance to his worldview. Roosevelt's personal correspondence often goes into great detail regarding his theories of racial difference, whereas Taft appears to have adopted what was an increasingly accepted view for someone of his class and education. Despite the increasing stratification of the racial hierarchy during the period, there was also a section of society – to which both Taft and Roosevelt belonged – that subscribed to the notion of racial improvement. As historian Frank Ninkovich contends, Lamarckism was the 'reigning scientific view' of the day in the United States at this time.<sup>39</sup> Lamarckism held that races differed in their innate abilities, but it also conceded the possibility of racial improvement through

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<sup>37</sup> Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons," 1326.

<sup>38</sup> Taft's legal background had given him great respect for the English legal tradition. An example of his praise for the English legal and political system can be found in his introductory essay entitled "English Political Genius," in J. N. Larned ed., *English Leadership*.

<sup>39</sup> Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism*, 70.

education. Education became a keystone in Taft's efforts to attract Filipinos to the benefits of U.S. rule, as discussed here, particularly in Chapter One. Ideas about race certainly proved influential during the lifetime of Taft and were evident in his earliest ideas of how a U.S. form of imperialism should operate, as this thesis seeks to illustrate.

### *Outline of Thesis*

The rest of this thesis consists of six chapters arranged in a broadly chronological manner, running from 1900 to 1921. The organisation of the chapters emphasises the earlier period, 1900-1908, covered in four chapters, over the later period, 1909-1921, which is covered in only two. There are several reasons for this uneven chronological divide. The organisation of the first three chapters allows for three thematically focused introductions to Taft's involvement in the debates over empire and imperial ideology of the time. This groundwork is necessary for understanding the origins of Taft's ideas and policies in their full historical and theoretical context, and helps give a coherent basis for the analysis of Taft's Philippine policy in later years.

The years 1900-1908 constitute the period running from Taft's arrival in the islands at the head of the second Philippine Commission, through his tenure as civil governor until 1903, and then as U.S. Secretary of War until 1908. The relevant chapters explore how Taft's ideas regarding empire developed and changed during what was a fundamentally formative period, as it was the period in which Taft had the most direct interaction with and influence over Philippine affairs, and spent the most

time in the islands themselves, guiding day-to-day policy-making. What divides these chapters is partly chronological but primarily their thematic focus.

Chapter One, “The Benevolent Educator: Social Policies, Education and Racial Uplift, 1900-1903,” begins by assessing how Taft came to terms with the idea and ideal of the United States as an empire within the framework of social policies, most notably education policies, during his time as a Philippine Commissioner and then as civil governor. This chapter contextualises Taft within the contemporaneous debates surrounding the imperial issue, but also shows how he created his own synthesis of these ideas to form some distinctive impressions on matters of race and education that would stay with him throughout the following decades. The chapter explores how existing academic, political and even existing U.S. military ideas and concepts of race influenced Taft’s views and how, in various respects, they guided what would become known as Taft’s “policy of attraction,” the keystone in his imperial policy, which sought to win over the Filipino people to the idea of U.S. rule. The chapter also assesses Taft’s placement of education at the centre of the policy of attraction and how such a policy was guided strongly by ideologies surrounding both empire and race. The first chapter concludes by considering Taft’s negotiations to purchase the Vatican-owned friar lands, perhaps the high-point in the policy of attraction and suggesting to the Filipino people that there was something genuine behind Taft’s rhetoric of the “Philippines for the Filipinos.”

Chapter Two, “The Devoted Imperialist: The Question of the Islands’ Future, 1900-1903,” concentrates on one of the most important themes in Taft’s Philippine experience: the role of the U.S. civil government in the Philippines and the idea of Filipino political education. The chapter begins by examining contemporary debates over the status of the islands, including the very different options of U.S. statehood

and independence. The chapter charts Taft's progression towards the conviction that ultimately the Philippines should remain indefinitely in a permanent imperial relationship with the United States after they achieved a sustainable level of self-government. Taft believed that in order for this ultimate goal to be achieved some shorter-term strategies had to be employed to bring the Filipino population around to the benefits of his imperial vision. The policy of attraction also extended through to politics. Taft believed that the Filipinos must undergo a period of U.S. tutelage in government, but also conceded that he must garner the support of enough of the existing Filipino elite to make this practicable. Such support could only be gained by what Taft really considered premature elevation of Filipino elites to low- and medium-level roles in the government, later termed "Filipinization": a short-term concession for the greater good of his long-term aims.

However, despite some concessions, Taft was always firm when it came to talk of independence. The concept elicited cautionary speeches from Taft on the dangers of independence and especially the promise of future independence and its repercussions for the success of the U.S. venture in the archipelago. Taft struggled to balance the ideas of long-term political tutelage, what he considered premature elevation of the Filipino elite, and keeping independence off of the Philippine political agenda. These problems became increasingly clear as the years progressed, as Chapter Four shows, and Taft's attempts to quash the power of pro-independence parties and patronise the pro-U.S. elites failed to make significant progress after he departed from the islands. Ultimately, even the pro-U.S. elite conceded that independence would have to form part of their party platform, despite the suggestion that many of them had grave reservations about the consequences of premature independence. Taft had



to rethink his approach to maintaining the permanent imperial bond in the light of these developments.

Chapter Three analyses another key theme in Taft's policies for a continuing imperial relationship, looking at the commercial development of the islands and trade relations between the two nations, during a longer period than the preceding chapters. The title of the chapter, "The Enthusiastic Developer: The Tariff and Chinese Immigration, 1900-1908," sums up the two key aspects of Taft's policy that it addresses. Taft believed that the abolition of tariffs between the United States and the islands would do much to gain the goodwill of the Filipinos. Firstly, it would prove there was a special relationship between the two places, feeding into the wider policy of attraction. Secondly, it would stimulate trade and help bring about the cultural exchanges that this entailed. Taft also had a strong belief that in order for the Philippines to see the true benefits of their imperial relationship, the United States should invest heavily in improving infrastructure in the islands. This latter policy, Taft believed, would once again show U.S. goodwill and commitment to the islands, but more importantly, draw the United States and the Philippines into a long-lasting economic relationship.

The second part of the chapter connects with the issue of economic relations by focusing on the hitherto neglected issue of Chinese immigration to the Philippines. This issue provides an interesting case study of the extent to which Taft wished for a strong economic union between the two nations that would provide a firm foundation for a continued imperial relationship. General Arthur MacArthur, the islands' last military governor, had restricted Chinese immigration in line with the exclusionary policy of the mainland United States. However, Taft wavered over the question of Chinese immigration rather than simply accepting and maintaining the *status quo*.

The continued lobbying of U.S. and European businessmen in the islands, who desired a relaxation of the immigration restrictions following the end of military rule, struck home with Taft's idea of attraction and long-term investment.

Despite its positive potential, Taft was also certain that most Filipinos, just like Californians, did not want Chinese immigration and that to allow such immigration would undermine his rhetoric of the "Philippines for the Filipinos." Where many Filipino opponents were wary of cheap competition for jobs, U.S.-based opponents feared that allowing Chinese immigration to the Philippines would provide a stepping-stone for a "yellow flood" across the Pacific. As a result, Taft vacillated over the issue, his preferences ranging from total exclusion to Commission-specified restrictions on Chinese immigration.

Taft's aims for a revision of the existing tariff and immigration policies in regard to the islands appear to have lacked a clear comprehension of the wider concerns of many within the American public about such changes, and help to explain the shortcomings of his policies in these areas. Though the islands' anomalous status allowed Taft some useful flexibility in how he could implement his imperial vision in the Philippines, it also made some in the U.S. fearful that changes to policies such as the tariff might have wider ramifications when it came to whether or not all of the U.S. Constitution might "follow the flag."

Chapter Four, "The Great Postponer: The Japanese Threat and Self-Government, 1904-1908," examines two different themes regarding the Philippine question: the matter of military-strategic considerations in the U.S.-Japanese relationship, and the matter of growing calls for independence from within the islands

during Taft's tenure in the War Department.<sup>40</sup> As Secretary of War from 1904 to 1908, Taft was able to keep a close eye on Philippine policy as the islands were administered through the Bureau of Insular Affairs, a division of his War Department. The new role obviously gave Taft wider diplomatic responsibilities that in turn touched very importantly upon the Philippines.

President Theodore Roosevelt made Secretary of War Taft a sort of diplomat to China and Japan during a period of upheaval in U.S. relations with these nations, particularly in regard to immigration. However, Japan was Roosevelt's primary concern as he saw the Japanese as the main military threat in Asia and a potential danger to U.S. interests in the Far East. Japan's victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars had established it as the primary military power in East Asia. As a result Japan was keen to be recognised as an equal on the international stage, something Japanese leaders regarded as undermined by exclusionary U.S. immigration policies. During this period much was made of the potential for a war between Japan and the United States. In any such potential conflict the Philippines, as Roosevelt noted, would provide a military Achilles' heel. For Taft, and his determination for a continued imperial relationship with the Philippines, there was added reason to repair the diplomatic goodwill between the U.S. and Japan: if the fear of war continued, U.S. strategic interests in the Philippines might well call for expedited independence.

Whilst on diplomatic duty, Taft was sent to the Far East twice in four years, allowing him not only to keep relations with Japan friendly but also to visit the

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<sup>40</sup> The leading historians on U.S.-Japanese relations in the past few decades are: Charles E. Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906-1909* and *The Troubled Encounter: The United States and Japan*; Raymond Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* and *Double Eagle and Rising Sun: The Russians and Japanese at Portsmouth in 1905*; and Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations*, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911*, *From Nationalism to Internationalism: U.S. Foreign Policy to 1914*, and *Japan and the Wider World: From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present*.

Philippines and inspect the day-to-day running of the colonial administration there. Historian Bonifacio Salamanca argues that both Roosevelt and Taft ‘favored ultimate independence as the culmination of American policy,’ even though they never explicitly stated this viewpoint.<sup>41</sup> However, this thesis argues that Taft was determined that independence should never become the logical conclusion; to him this was certainly not the case. In terms of an imperial relationship, what is clear is that Taft was indeed keen to postpone any change in the relationship, but for him, unlike others, this was a long-term aim. His visits to the Philippines as Secretary of War made these views all the more clear, and demonstrated that he was willing to depart from his usual loyalty to Roosevelt in order to postpone the issue of independence for the islands. For Taft’s imperial vision to remain intact, he had to use these visits not only to conciliate Japan, but also to help convince the headstrong president that the Philippines were not an Achilles’ heel and instead remained a potential asset to the United States in the region. This chapter also explores the idea that Taft was more narrowly focused in his priorities and lacked the wider geo-political thinking of the more pragmatic Roosevelt.

Chapter Five, “The Reluctant President: Maintaining the *Status Quo* and the End of the Taft Era, 1908-1913,” begins by exploring Taft’s final months as Secretary of War in 1908 and his Philippine policy after the opening of the new Philippine Assembly. However, 1908 was also the year in which Taft ran for the presidency and won against anti-imperialist William Jennings Bryan. This chapter explores how the Philippine issue was approached and developed in the 1908 election debates, even if it did not prove the decisive factor in Taft’s victory. The next part of the chapter explores how, on assuming the presidency, Taft was able to maintain his favoured

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<sup>41</sup> Salamanca, *Toward a Diplomatic History of the Philippines*, 55.

status quo policy in the Philippines without the fear of a sudden change in executive policy. It also looks at how, when he became president, Taft attempted to develop his Philippine imperial vision, particularly through tariff reform. However, as the latter half of the chapter explores, the Philippine issue only really came to the fore after Taft's defeat in the 1912 presidential election, when the Democrats' return to power posed a real threat to the future of Taft's imperial vision.

This final section of this chapter analyses Taft's stance against the Democrats and their policy of promising and expediting Philippine independence. This key period was Taft's last chance to define Philippine policy and represented the consolidation of his position as a full-blooded retentionist that would characterise his post-presidential activities. Overall, throughout this period and despite changing conditions in both the United States and the Philippines, Taft maintained his stance on Philippine retention consistently, whether as Republican presidential candidate, sitting president, or lame duck. This chapter shows that in the period when Taft had the greatest ability to guide U.S. foreign policy in the Far East of his entire career, his attitude against Philippine independence remained resolute, and that to the best of his ability he maintained a firm retentionist policy until his departure from federal office.

The final chapter, "The Chief Retentionist: The Wilderness Years, 1913-1921," explores Taft's continued involvement in the Philippine debate after his presidency and up until Republican President Warren G. Harding appointed him as Chief Justice of the United States in 1921. In his final State of the Union Address in December 1912, Taft warned that Democratic plans for Philippine independence constituted a 'policy of scuttle' that would make the Philippines the 'football of oriental politics.'<sup>42</sup> With only three further months in the White House, Taft was fully

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<sup>42</sup> Taft, "Fourth Annual Message," December 3, 1912.

aware that his ability to influence Philippine policy was coming to what he considered a dangerously premature end. During the “wilderness years” that followed, Taft involved himself politically in a continued fight against the Democratic-sponsored Jones Bill, which promised Philippine independence. He also became a figurehead for movements and organisations aimed at retaining the Philippines.

During the same period Taft played a high profile role in the League of Nations debate, where he offered his support to Wilson’s plans for the maintenance of international peace. Taft’s open public support, as the former president, provided evidence that far from being an embittered partisan who followed the party line, Taft was a figure with his own beliefs. However, the League of Nations debate touched upon the key issues of self-determination and decolonisation, which had clear implications for his imperial vision. Taft was torn between his support for the League of Nations, Wilson’s promise of post-war self-determination and his commitment to Philippine retention, and ultimately he felt obliged to put Philippine retention before the consistency of his support for all aspects of Wilson’s vision. The chapter helps illustrate the long-term significance of Taft’s imperial vision, and how it offered a decisively different theme to what became the dominant thrust of U.S. foreign relations in the twentieth century. The general pattern of the rest of the century saw the United States intervene, attempt to install a new American-friendly government and then leave. For Taft, this sort of policy of scuttle spelt disaster. Taft was not a natural expansionist and believed that the United States had much to do perfecting its own systems before it should feel able to change those of other nations. Nevertheless, for Taft, if the United States became involved in installing a government in another nation, it should be a long-term, grass-roots project and not something that could be achieved overnight.

## **Chapter One**

### **The Benevolent Educator: Social Policies, Education and Racial Uplift, 1900-1903**

#### ***Introduction***

William Howard Taft, like most Americans of his time, had little idea about the Philippines until the U.S. became involved in the islands during the Spanish-American War of 1898. What Taft thought about U.S. expansion, imperialism and the role of the United States in the Philippines prior to 1900 is difficult to gauge with any certainty. Even after the end of the war, and the subsequent annexation of the islands, Taft had little reason to think about the distant archipelago until he was asked to head the Second Philippine Commission in January 1900, when he undertook to learn as much as he could about the situation in the islands. Among the first matters Taft made public about his thoughts on the islands was that he did not agree with any expansion in U.S. territory overseas. Instead, he felt that the United States was not a perfected model in itself and that adding to its concerns at this stage was ill-advised. It is worth noting at this early stage that although the terms expansionism and imperialism were and still are often conflated, it is argued here that Taft saw the two concepts as distinct. Taft's dislike for the concept of expanding U.S. territory did not equate to a natural opposition to imperialism in general, as will be explored in this chapter and throughout this thesis.

When Taft arrived in the Philippines in June 1900 the fighting was far from over, even though the Spanish-American War was long finished. Since the capitulation of the ruling Spanish, the United States had continued fighting in the Philippines against nationalist Filipinos, under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo,

who desired independence from the United States.<sup>43</sup> Taft did not arrive in a peaceful place, ready to accept the reality of U.S. civil government, but in a place still unstable and unsure of the benefits of American rule. Historian Brian Linn notes that as the fighting continued, it began to resemble what Kipling envisaged as a ‘savage war of peace,’ where the frustrations of the troops were often transformed into ‘brutality and torture.’<sup>44</sup> Although Taft was critical of the military excesses, especially when trying to expedite the transition to civil rule in the islands, he accepted that many such instances resulted from ‘outrage of feelings’ in response to the actions of insurgent Filipinos.<sup>45</sup> For Taft, the war was prolonged by a small band of irreconcilable rebels and most outrages by U.S. soldiers were provoked, if not excused. Nevertheless, as this chapter goes on to argue, Taft utilised the Filipino dislike of the U.S. military to his advantage in pursuing a policy of attracting Filipinos to the idea of U.S. rule. When Taft became civil governor, he sought to distance himself from the unpopular military government that had preceded him and as he only controlled the “peaceful” parts of the Philippines, this distinction was not hard to perceive.

This chapter begins by assessing how Taft came to terms with the idea and ideal of the United States as an empire, firstly by looking at what evidence there is of his ideas prior to reaching the Philippines and then how these ideas developed once he had arrived. It focuses specifically on the role of social policies, and most notably education policies, during Taft’s tenure as a Philippine Commissioner and then as civil governor. This chapter shows how through his own synthesis of existing ideas and his experiences in the islands, Taft formed some distinct impressions on matters

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<sup>43</sup> Although fighting continued in the islands for many years, to varied extents, the dates usually given for the Philippine-American War are 1899-1902. Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, details the military operations in the Philippines, and dates the conflict as running from February 4, 1899, until July 4, 1902.

<sup>44</sup> Linn, *Philippine War*, 322-328.

<sup>45</sup> “Affairs in the Philippines,” Senate Doc. No. 331, Pt. 1, 76.



of race and imperialism that would stay with him throughout the following decades. The chapter also explores the formation of what became known as Taft's "policy of attraction," the keystone in his imperial policy, which sought to win over the Filipino people to the idea of American rule. Taft placed primary education at the centre of the social dimension of his policy of attraction, and his education policies were guided strongly by ideologies surrounding both empire and race. The chapter concludes by assessing the overall aims and execution of Taft's policy of attraction and its rhetoric of "the Philippines for the Filipinos," and how his social policies during his time in the islands adhered to his longer-term imperial vision.<sup>46</sup>

### *A New Commission*

On January 20, 1899, President William McKinley appointed the first Philippine Commission headed by Dr. Jacob Schurman, president of Cornell University.<sup>47</sup> Schurman resisted appointment to the Commission, initially citing his opposition to McKinley's Philippine policy, but eventually became the head of the commission; a pattern Taft would later repeat.<sup>48</sup> The Commission was initially envisaged to head off a war with Spain, but arrived in the Philippines too late to accomplish this task. It went on to form close links with Filipino leaders who rejected

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<sup>46</sup> The phrase "the Philippines for the Filipinos" became associated with Taft's Philippine policy during his time in the islands, see: Oscar King Davis, *Man of the Hour*, 121-122.

<sup>47</sup> President McKinley's views on imperialism and the decision to annex the former Spanish territories have been a subject of some fascination to historians, who frequently disagree about the president's motivations. As historian Ephraim K. Smith suggests, much of this is down to the 'paucity of information on McKinley's personal opinions,' but the burden of proof, he argues, rests with those who 'have portrayed McKinley as a clever or confident imperialist,' a view with which this thesis concurs. See: E. K. Smith, "William McKinley's Enduring Legacy: The Historiographical Debate on the Taking of the Philippine Islands," in: *Crucible of Empire*, 205. For a relatively recent discussion of the debates over annexation see also: Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: The Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century*; Angel Smith and Emma Davila-Cox, eds., *The Crisis of 1898: Colonial Redistribution and Nationalist Mobilization*; Eric Love, *Race over Empire: Race & U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900*, Chapter 5.

<sup>48</sup> Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, 255. See also: Kenneth E. Hendrickson Jr., "Reluctant Expansionist: Jacob Gould Schurman and the Philippine Question."

the nationalist government set up by Emilio Aguinaldo and instead threw their lot in with the Americans. As historian Julian Go notes, Schurman recognised that the Filipino people would best be won around to U.S. rule by gaining their trust and addressing their needs: views taken up and acted upon in the following years by Taft.<sup>49</sup> In January 1900, the Schurman Commission reported back to the president recommending a shift from military to civilian U.S. rule in the islands.<sup>50</sup> With the Schurman Commission's recommendations in mind, President McKinley appointed a Second Philippine Commission with the task of preparing the way from military to civilian rule as the report had suggested. William H. Taft headed this second commission. Until January 1900, Taft had been serving on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and was apparently taken aback when summoned to the White House and asked to travel to the Philippine Islands with the new commission. He summed up his surprise at McKinley's offer by saying that the president may as well have asked him to 'take a flying machine,' and there is nothing to suggest that Taft had any inkling that such an offer was in McKinley's mind.<sup>51</sup>

Taft was, in the words of historian David Burton, 'born to be a judge,' and his nature was to 'dispense justice through the administration of the law.' Burton also observes that Taft was also largely disinterested in and innocent of the implications of the annexations that followed the Spanish-American War in regard to America's 'world position.'<sup>52</sup> As his biographer Henry Pringle notes, Taft simply had a non-political mind.<sup>53</sup> These useful insights suggest a crucial aspect of Taft's personality when it came to his views on the Philippines. Unlike his friend, the Large Policy champion, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft was not that concerned about the geo-political

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<sup>49</sup> Go, *American Empire*, 34-35.

<sup>50</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 51-54.

<sup>51</sup> Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol. 1, 160.

<sup>52</sup> Burton, *Confident Peacemaker*, 4-6 and 23.

<sup>53</sup> Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol. 1, 154.

and strategic implications of Philippine annexation. Taft was concerned with the law and, when he came to be involved with the Philippines, recreating an American system in the islands. His view could be characterised as concerned chiefly with U.S. legal and political values, but also as narrowly-focused and lacking ample concern with the wider implications, both in mainland U.S. and internationally, of America's Philippine policy.

However surprised Taft might have been at the idea of being sent to the Philippines in 1900, his views on U.S. involvement in the Philippines prior to 1900 are difficult to determine with any great accuracy. Taft's most comprehensive biographer, Henry Pringle, relates the widely accepted view that Taft was generally 'unsympathetic' to, but largely disinterested in, the Spanish-American War, and in terms of the outcome of the war 'In so far as he expressed any opinion, it was opposed to annexation.'<sup>54</sup> Pringle's citations for these two opinions come from third parties, the former a letter to Pringle from Taft's brother Horace in 1933 and the latter from the autobiography of Taft's wife, published in 1914.<sup>55</sup> A more recent biography by historian Paolo Coletta, suggests that Taft revealed 'no interest' in the fruits of the Spanish-American War prior to its intersection with his career.<sup>56</sup> Helen "Nellie" Taft's recent biographer, Carl S. Anthony, echoes this idea and also cites Taft's wife as claiming there had never been 'any unusual interest' in the Taft family regarding the Spanish-American War, the only exception being the fate of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt in Cuba.<sup>57</sup> Historian Stuart Creighton Miller puts it more accurately when he describes Taft as 'a Republican suspected of harboring anti-imperialist

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 154 and 157.

<sup>56</sup> Coletta, *Presidency of William Howard Taft*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Anthony, *Nellie Taft*, 124.

sympathies.’<sup>58</sup> The fact that there are so few references to Taft’s opinions on U.S. imperialism, and the Philippines in particular, prior to 1900, does suggest that Pringle is correct in contending that Taft was largely disinterested with the entire affair before he was thrust directly into it.

Some of the potential influences on Taft’s opinion can be found among his incoming correspondence from family members during the years prior to 1900. Taft’s brother Horace wrote in June 1897, during a national debate over the idea of annexing Hawaii, that ‘The greatest misfortune and the greatest folly that has been perpetrated in the last few years has been, in my opinion, the admission of half a dozen of the new states, which with those we had before, give us about twenty senators from sparsely settled and uncivilized sections of the country. If we could have any assurance that Hawaii was fit for any place in our government system, I should be willing to risk any foreign complications.’<sup>59</sup> Here is evidence that Taft’s brother Horace was anti-expansionist, and his sentiments here were very similar to those Taft expressed after 1900, which will be explored later in this chapter.

In October 1898, following the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, Taft’s mother wrote to her son of a conversation she had with a naval captain from Ohio: ‘He [the captain] naturally thinks it could have been avoided if the navy could have managed it. The order from Washington was “Destroy the Spanish fleet, and take Manila”. The last sentence should have been left off. They could have destroyed the fleet, but there was no use in taking Manila. He thinks the Philippines will be a burden, but if we keep any, we must take the whole.’<sup>60</sup> This letter offers a glimpse of the fact that Taft and his family were not completely devoid of interest in the Philippine question prior to 1900 and it also addresses the idea of retaining the

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<sup>58</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 136.

<sup>59</sup> Horace Taft to WHT June 18, 1897, WHTP 1:18. Partially cited in Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*, 2.

<sup>60</sup> Louise Taft to WHT, October 11, 1898, WHTP 1:18.

Philippines. Another letter from his mother provides further evidence of some interest among Taft and his family, where his mother speaks of a need to ‘acquire some intelligence about the country,’ but confesses, ‘so little interest in it. I suppose it is old age which makes me feel pessimistic as to expansion. I see no advantage in gaining sovereignty over those savages. We have more aliens than we can manage.’<sup>61</sup>

Although this early correspondence does not allow a clear vision of Taft’s own views, it does provide some insight to the opinions he was confronted with from trusted family members. The sentiments in these letters were roundly anti-expansionist and such views, even if there is no clear evidence of their direct influence on Taft’s thinking, were reflected in his public sentiments after 1900.

Given Taft’s lack of clear interest in the Philippines, and the suggestions of anti-expansionist sentiments among him and his family, one might then question why he would decide to take a position in the islands. Taft had been appointed to the United States Circuit Court in 1892 and it was a guaranteed life-long position if he wished it to be so. Most commentators accept, and Taft’s personal correspondence concurs, that Taft’s life goal was to become Chief Justice of the United States. The Circuit Court put Taft in a very opportune position for elevation to the highest court in the land and his existing job provided him financial security as well as federal judicial experience. With this in mind, aside from the ideological aspects discussed below, Taft certainly had some very practical concerns to consider when McKinley asked him to give up his career security, and apparent career goals, to travel to the Philippines and take on an executive and political role, rather than one of a primarily legal or judicial nature.

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<sup>61</sup> Louise Taft to WHT, January 8, 1899, WHTP 1:18. Partially cited in Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*, 2.

On February 6, 1900, Taft was appointed as the head of the Second Philippine Commission. Some biographers suggest that figures such as President McKinley, Secretary of War Elihu Root, Secretary of the Navy John D. Long and pro-imperialist Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R, MA) helped to urge Taft to accept the position.<sup>62</sup> However, biographer Judith Anderson mentions that McKinley was first alerted to Taft's suitability for the role by Judge William Rufus Day.<sup>63</sup> Historian Rene Escalante suggests that Day arranged the meeting between Taft and the president.<sup>64</sup> Several newspapers of the time went further than this and speculated that Judge Day was in fact the pre-eminent figure responsible for encouraging Taft to the position.<sup>65</sup> Shortly after Taft was appointed to the commission, the *Hopkinsville Kentuckian* suggested that Taft's decision to give up his position on the federal bench came at the urging of his fellow circuit court judge from Ohio.<sup>66</sup>

Day had served as McKinley's Secretary of State during the Spanish-American War and helped negotiate the Treaty of Paris, and so had a clear interest in Philippine affairs. The then Secretary of State did not agree with the idea of keeping the Philippines, but felt that the Spanish colonies, excluding Cuba, should have been returned to Spanish rule.<sup>67</sup> This last factor offers room to speculate as to why Day chose to urge Taft to take the post on the commission. The *Kentuckian* suggested that Day was 'the most trusted friend and adviser of the president' and had himself been McKinley's first choice to head the Second Philippine Commission, but that his health was 'too precarious' to allow him to make the voyage. Therefore, the

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<sup>62</sup> Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol. 1, 159-160; Burton, *In the Public Service*, 29.

<sup>63</sup> J. I. Anderson, *An Intimate History*, 66.

<sup>64</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 62.

<sup>65</sup> William R. Day, an Ohio lawyer, was Secretary of State during the Spanish-American War and helped negotiate the Treaty of Paris. After his work in Paris was over Day was appointed a U.S. Circuit Court Judge and in 1903 was elevated to become an Associate Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, (Taft had turned down the same Supreme Court appointment).

<sup>66</sup> *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, February 27, 1900.

<sup>67</sup> Julius Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898*, 326-327.

newspaper reported, it was ‘Judge Day who suggested Judge Taft and secured his acceptance.’<sup>68</sup> The *New York Tribune* and *San Francisco Call* added that Judge Day accompanied Taft to the White House upon his appointment.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps Day believed that, as he could not head the commission himself, Taft was the best man for the job because he held views close to his own. Day’s belief that the U.S. should not have annexed the Philippines was certainly anti-expansionist but his suggestion that the islands should simply have been returned to the Spanish empire would seem to indicate that he was *not* anti-imperialist. To this extent, Day and Taft seemed to share similar beliefs in expansionism and the role of empire – that it could be beneficial, but perhaps not a policy that should be actively pursued. This could help explain Day’s suggestion of Taft to McKinley and his urging of Taft to take up the job once it was offered.

Despite the dearth of evidence as to Taft’s views on empire before his appointment to the commission, as soon as he became involved in the Philippine issue he became increasingly vocal in his opinions. Biographer Judith Anderson recounts, in line with other biographers, that Taft initially suggested to the president that he had never approved of keeping the islands.<sup>70</sup> Some historians, as well as commentators of the time, take this as meaning that Taft was therefore opposed to empire: but such an assumption does not necessarily follow, as suggested already. Taft’s insistence that he, like Judge Day, was an anti-expansionist did not simply lie in private letters and discussions. However, McKinley and his pro-imperialist backers, such as Henry Cabot Lodge, cannot have been blind to the benefits of having an anti-expansionist on the new commission. If the U.S. imperial venture was to appear benevolent, what

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<sup>68</sup> *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, February 27, 1900.

<sup>69</sup> *New York Tribune* and *San Francisco Call*, February 7, 1900.

<sup>70</sup> J. I. Anderson, *An Intimate History*, 66.

better than to send a commission, like that of Schurman before it, headed by a sceptic on the issue of expansionism.

At a dinner in the Queen City Club, Cincinnati in March 1900, Taft spoke after former Attorney General Judson Harmon had reportedly shocked the audience with his proclamation that the U.S. should ‘leave the Filipinos to manage their own affairs, and serve notice on the world that they are now under our protection.’ Taft followed this controversial utterance – pointing out that he was not speaking for the commission, but for himself – by stating that like Judge Harmon ‘I am not and never have been an expansionist. I have always hoped that the jurisdiction of our nation would not extend beyond territory between the two oceans. We have not solved all the problems of popular government so perfectly as to justify our voluntarily seeking more difficult ones abroad.’<sup>71</sup> The following month, in San Francisco, Taft once again ‘announced that he was an anti-expansionist, and would have much preferred if the problems with which the nation was confronted had not been presented’; the *San Francisco Call* suggests that the audience cheered loudly at this statement.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, despite having a secure job that he enjoyed and the fact he harboured anti-expansionist sentiments (similar to those of his mother and his brother Horace), Taft did take the job McKinley offered to him.

Biographer Henry Pringle suggests that there were two reasons which supposedly helped Taft decide to go to the Philippines: firstly, duty, and secondly, the temporary nature of the appointment.<sup>73</sup> In addition to these points, most historians also cite the promise made by McKinley that, were a high judicial position to become

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<sup>71</sup> *Washington Weekly Post*, March 6, 1900. Harmon was an Ohio Democrat who had served as Attorney General to President Grover Cleveland.

<sup>72</sup> *San Francisco Call*, April 13, 1900.

<sup>73</sup> Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol. 1, 160; these same two reasons are given in the most recent study of Taft in the Philippines: Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 64



available, Taft would be a high-priority candidate.<sup>74</sup> Other commentators point to the influence of Taft's wife, and other members of his family, who purportedly helped steer Taft in whatever direction best served his career.<sup>75</sup> However, it is the idea of "duty" which best fits the argument of this thesis and is best illustrated by Taft's words and actions.

To illustrate the influence of duty as a motivating factor, it is useful to first address the alternative motivations mooted by historians. The potential influence of the short-term nature of the appointment makes little sense as a motivating factor. Firstly, Taft could not simply expect to return to his previous position, nor could he be guaranteed a Supreme Court position. Therefore, the short-term aspect offered only uncertainty and insecurity and Taft was not regarded as a reckless opportunist.<sup>76</sup> Secondly, whilst in the islands, Taft opted time and again to stay there, first when appointed as civil governor in 1901 and then twice rejecting President Roosevelt's offer of a Supreme Court Associate Justiceship. This suggests that Taft did not feel the Philippine position would damage his career plans after a year, or even after almost four years.

In terms of the influence of Taft's family, they seemed simply to look out for his interests, as one might expect. His brother Henry did not seem particularly keen that he stay on the bench 'permanently,' but did suggest that if Taft was 'to be simply one member of the Commission so that your opportunity will be limited in shaping the policy, the proposition does not strike me as tempting.' Taft would, Henry

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<sup>74</sup> For example: Golay, *Face of Empire*, 63; J. I. Anderson, *An Intimate History*, 66.

<sup>75</sup> Anthony, *Nellie Taft*, 124, presents Nellie Taft as a woman with the aim of pushing Taft towards any political promotion that could achieve her ultimate aim of becoming First Lady of the United States. Scholes and Scholes, *Foreign Policies*, 1, also notes the influence of Taft's family in urging him to accept the position for the promise of greater honours that might follow.

<sup>76</sup> Even a promise from McKinley himself would have been far from secure, as the president was up for re-election that very year.

reasoned, be best served to accept only if he were the president of the commission.<sup>77</sup> Taft's younger brother Horace wrote that he 'must accept. I take it for granted that the position is for President of the Commission... You can do more good in that position in a year than you could do on the bench in a dozen.' However, it is difficult to say for sure that family opinions were integral to Taft's acceptance of the position. In fact, Horace went on to give an indication of Taft's own feelings on the subject in the same letter: 'I am glad you feel as you do about the Philippines... I hated to have us take the Philippines, but I don't see in the world how we can give them up. It makes me tired to hear the Declaration of Independence quoted on the subject.'<sup>78</sup> These last words suggest that Taft himself had indicated to his brother that the key factor in his decision to go to the Philippines was the idea of duty to his nation, now that expansion was a *fait accompli*.

Soon after the meeting with McKinley, Taft wrote to Secretary of War Elihu Root suggesting that he was 'inclined to accept' the president's offer and added that the 'work to be done is so full of perplexing problems that the responsibility and risk in attempting it will be very great. I doubt my capacity to meet them but an earnest desire to succeed and hard work may overcome many obstacles. If I am to undertake the work, however, I should like to be in a position in which I shall be really responsible for success or failure.'<sup>79</sup> In this statement Taft expresses some polite modesty regarding his ability, but illustrates his true feelings when he suggests that he would actually like to be responsible for the work of the commission, in line with the supportive advice of his brothers. Taft may have been anti-expansionist, but he felt that the duties that came with annexation could not be reneged upon.

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<sup>77</sup> Henry W. Taft to WHT, January 30, 1900, WHTP 1:18.

<sup>78</sup> Horace Taft to WHT, January 31, 1900, WHTP 1:18.

<sup>79</sup> WHT to Root, February 2, 1900, ERP Box 164.

### *The White Man's Burden*

The idea of duty to the Philippines would, and already did, have racial overtones when Taft adopted it as his *raison d'être* for taking on the job there. Taft might have had in mind the words of Rudyard Kipling's famous poem of 1899, published in *McClure's Magazine*: 'Take up the White Man's burden- / Send forth the best ye breed.'<sup>80</sup> A renowned author and poet, who had followed the Spanish-American War with much interest, Kipling wrote to Theodore Roosevelt in September 1898 that 'America has gone and stuck a pickaxe into the foundations of a rotten house and she is morally bound to build the house over again from the foundations or have it fall about her ears.'<sup>81</sup> In Kipling's mind, the "white man's burden" that had so long been Britain's was now also well and truly a burden for the United States. Historian Albert Weinberg goes so far as to refer to the "white man's burden" as the 'Kipling-McKinley doctrine,' bringing the implications of such thinking more directly to the Taft Commission.<sup>82</sup> In this sense, the Philippines were the burden of the United States, unwanted but nevertheless in need of the United States – much in line with Taft's anti-expansionist feelings, but still allowing for a belief in the benefits of empire.

Secretary of War Root and President McKinley's instructions to the Taft Commission, transmitted on April 7, 1900, abounded with the idea of duty brought about by the new addition to American terrain:

As high and sacred an obligation rests upon the Government of the United States to give protection for property and life, civil and religious freedom, and wise, firm, and unselfish guidance in the paths of peace and prosperity to all the people of the Philippines Islands. I charge this Commission to labor for the full performance of this

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<sup>80</sup> Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," 1899, in: *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, 320-321.

<sup>81</sup> Kipling to TR, September 13, 1898, in: *Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, vol. 2, 350. Roosevelt was then the Republican candidate for Governor of New York running on the back of his heroic endeavours in Cuba during the Spanish-American War.

<sup>82</sup> Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, 319.

obligation, which concerns the honor and conscience of their country, in the firm hope that through their labors all the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands may come to look back with gratitude to the day when God gave victory to American arms at Manila, and set their land under the sovereignty and protection of the people of the United States.<sup>83</sup>

Commentator Phillip Darby, considering both U.S. and British imperialism, argues that ‘the commitment to high moral principles’ was a persistent trademark of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, historian Fabian Hilfrich suggests that, among other factors, ‘American expansion was rationalized as something inherently unselfish because it contributed to the betterment of the world.’<sup>85</sup> Reflecting just such sentiments, President McKinley had pledged to ‘deal unselfishly’ with Filipinos with fitting regard for ‘their interests and their advancement.’<sup>86</sup> Certainly, few historians and critics would deny that, at least in theory, U.S. expansionism had always been rationalised around the theme of benevolence and the United States was not the only country to utilise this sort of vocabulary to explain the thrust of expansion and imperialism.

As president of the Second Philippine Commission, Taft would be at the forefront of establishing this ideological motif in the Far East. Although the rhetoric of duty and civilisation had been established prior to Taft’s involvement in affairs, it was within the sphere of Taft’s authority as the head of the commission to go about realising and establishing the methods for turning rhetoric into action. Very much in line with the idea of “duty,” “benevolent imperialism” was an idea that required not only the goodwill and patience of the imperial ruler, but recognised the failings and needs of the governed. Such theories were indelibly bound up with ideas of cultural

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<sup>83</sup> President William McKinley’s Letter of Instructions to the Taft Commission, April 7, 1900, reproduced in full in: Salamanca, *Filipino Reaction to American Rule*, 245.

<sup>84</sup> Darby, *Three Faces of Imperialism*, 169.

<sup>85</sup> Hilfrich, “Visions of the Asian Periphery,” in: *America, the Vietnam War, and the World*, 44.

<sup>86</sup> *New York Times*, December 4, 1900.

superiority at the time and were to be formative in how Taft set about his job first as a head of the commission and later as the first U.S. civil governor of the archipelago.

The Philippine Islands are, and were, the home to a vast array of different cultural groups, largely unfamiliar to the American citizenry, and to Commissioner Taft. As an early Taft biographer put it, they represented ‘an archipelago of fifteen hundred islands, inhabited by no one knew how many tribes, speaking languages that were utterly strange to the western world.’<sup>87</sup> Historian Richard Welch suggests that U.S. ignorance regarding the Philippines caused Americans to rely heavily on British sources for information, such as those of travel writers who had ‘laid great stress on the tribal divisions of the Filipinos as well as their childishness.’<sup>88</sup> Such stresses are also apparent in the Schurman Commission’s report of January 1900, a source of invaluable information and guidance to the Taft Commission prior to their arrival in the islands, which delineated the Filipinos into three distinct races: Negrito, Indonesian, and Malayan.<sup>89</sup> Race and racial difference were certainly among the key considerations from an American viewpoint when thinking about the Philippine Islands and their people. Historian Paul Kramer takes as part of his central thesis the idea that race ‘as a mode of power and knowledge was a core element in the making of formal colonialism in the Philippines.’<sup>90</sup> However, as a racial group (or groups) without a real presence in the American population, Filipinos had yet to be fully categorised within the existing U.S. racial hierarchy, allowing for a modicum of flexibility in how to view their potential as a subject people. This was particularly important when it came to thinking about ideas of racial improvement and uplift.

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<sup>87</sup> Dunn, *William Howard Taft, American*, 12.

<sup>88</sup> Welch, *Response to Imperialism*, 102.

<sup>89</sup> Report of the [Schurman] Philippine Commission, 11.

<sup>90</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 4.

The nature of the relatively unknown Filipino people was a recurring motif in Taft's early observations of the islands, especially in his correspondence with Secretary of War Root. In July 1900, Taft wrote to Root that the 'population of the Islands is made up of a vast mass of ignorant, superstitious people, well intentioned, light hearted, temperate, somewhat cruel, domestic and fond of their families, and deeply wedded to the Catholic church.'<sup>91</sup> These remarks, although generalised, are more critical of Filipino beliefs and cultural traits, as Taft saw them, rather than their racial types and appearance, although Taft was not exempt from making such observations. In August 1900 Taft updated Root on his earlier general impressions of the Filipinos, adding that they comprised:

...a mass of quiet, lazy, polite, ordinarily inoffensive, rather light hearted people, of an artistic temperament in an imitative sense; easily subject to immoral influences; quite superstitious, and if aroused at all exceedingly cruel to animals and each other. They have, if needed to protect themselves, the greatest duplicity, but they have not ordinarily the Macchiavelian [sic] natures which are attributed to them.<sup>92</sup>

Taft's observations suggested that Filipinos were not on a level with Anglo-Saxons in terms of their cultural development, but also that many of their undesirable traits were relatively harmless.

Though Taft considered the majority of the Filipino population harmless, he had harsher words for the educated Filipino elite, suggesting perhaps that he was more concerned with class, in some regards, than race.<sup>93</sup> However, Stanley Karnow is among the historians that contend that Taft relied heavily on the opinions of Filipino elites (*ilustrados*) who, he claims, held their 'own people in low esteem,' serving to

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<sup>91</sup> WHT to Root, July 14, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>92</sup> WHT to Root, August 18, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>93</sup> Frank Golay suggests that Taft held, more generally, a 'hierarchical view of society,' see: Golay, *Face of Empire*, 63.

validate Taft's opinion of the Filipinos as 'abysmally backward.'<sup>94</sup> Taft may have been influenced by the elites of Filipino society in his thinking on the general population, but he was far from uncritical of the elites themselves. Taft regarded the existing elite as a group of 'educated meztizos' who influenced too easily the 'ignorant' masses with their 'superficial knowledge' and 'appearance of profound analytical knowledge of the science of government.'<sup>95</sup> The elites of the islands, Taft asserted, 'deal in high sounding phrases concerning liberty and free government they have very little conception of what that means.' In this set of observations a clear picture arises of the role Taft sought to take. Taft saw the existing elite as corrupt hangovers from the Spanish era who could not 'resist the temptations to venality, and every office is likely to be used for the personal aggrandizement of the holder thereof in disregard of public interest. These conclusions are not theories.'<sup>96</sup> Taft's conclusions led him to believe that such figures should not take any substantial role in political life, where avoidable, and the Americans could and should take their places wherever this would be practicable. More promising for Taft's wider plans was the conclusion that the general population was so easily swayed and suggestible by those in political power, as already mentioned. With the Americans in positions of power, in place of the supposedly corrupt Filipino elite, the Filipino population would surely be won over to the American imperial venture. However, there was a major drawback in this simple plan, and that was that the existing elite were not so easily discarded. This matter will be discussed in the second chapter that deals directly with Taft's political manoeuvrings in the Philippines.

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<sup>94</sup> Karnow *In Our Image*, 173. Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning*, is a more recent study that covers U.S. relations with elite groups in the Philippines and Puerto Rico in depth.

<sup>95</sup> WHT to Root, July 14, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>96</sup> WHT to Root, August 18, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

### *The Policy of Attraction*

Taft's most important policy, and one which affected all of his other policy decisions during his time in the Philippine Islands, is often called the "policy of attraction."<sup>97</sup> The overarching aim of the policy was as simple as it sounds: to attract the Filipinos to both Taft and American rule more generally. Historian Ralph Minger, who is broadly sympathetic to Taft, regards the policy of attraction as one where there 'was to be no concealment or deception.'<sup>98</sup> The policy was designed, after all, to engender the trust of the Filipino people. Historian Peter Stanley characterises the policy of attraction as, at its 'loftiest' soaring 'beyond efficiency and stability- out of the realm of currency, tariffs, and infrastructure- to a concern with democracy, due process, and the dignity of the individual.'<sup>99</sup> The concept of the policy of attraction was benevolent and distinctly in Filipino interests above all others, presenting the head of the commission as the bringer of selfless and high-minded idealism.

Although the policy of attraction would take some lessons from military rule, a key facet of Taft's concern over his policy was that its aims would have to appear very separate from those of the military. The U.S. military were responsible for much harsh treatment of the so-called "insurgents" in the islands during the Filipino-American War. Equally, the U.S. military in the islands had, at best, a mixed record of race relations, which is perhaps unsurprising for a group who had been fighting the Filipinos for several years. Taft was noted for referring to the Filipino people as the "little brown brother" of the United States, but an oft-quoted U.S. military song about

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<sup>97</sup> The term was widely used in literature of the time, for example, Oscar King Davis, *Man of the Hour*. First published in 1908, Davis' ninth chapter is entitled "The Policy of Attraction," and describes Taft's policy as such.

<sup>98</sup> Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*, 63.

<sup>99</sup> Stanley, *Nation in the Making*, 269.



the Philippines from the time helps to illustrate the apparent nature of the transition from U.S. military policy to Taft's policy of attraction:

I'm only a common soldier in the blasted  
Philippines.  
They say I've got brown brothers here, but  
I dunno what it means.  
I like the word fraternity, but I still  
draw the line.  
He may be a brother of Big Bill Taft,  
But he ain't no brother of mine.<sup>100</sup>

Taft felt that in relation to Filipinos, 'where the [U.S.] officer resorts to cruel methods and treats them as inferiors and as "Niggers", the insurgents are able to find recruits.'<sup>101</sup> In Taft's opinion, the overt instances of racial disrespect often evident in the behaviour of the U.S. military were an important factor in helping the Filipino nationalists to find support among the Filipino people in general.<sup>102</sup> Taft later noted that 'The contrast between the desire of the Commission to consult the natives as to what shall be done and the brusque, abrupt way of the military commander of course makes the Commission more popular.'<sup>103</sup> As ex-Filipino politician Rafael Palma wrote in 1923: 'between the saber and the gown, public opinion was decidedly for the latter.' Perhaps this would be unsurprising even without the policy of attraction; as the face of U.S. aggression in the quashing of Filipino resistance to American rule the military were very unlikely to be regarded as the favourable option when contrasted with the Taft Commission. However, Taft was keen not to rely simply on the fact that

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<sup>100</sup> Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, 313.

<sup>101</sup> WHT to Root, July 14, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>102</sup> The African American members of the U.S. military in the islands, unlike many of their white counterparts, formed far friendlier relationships with the Filipino population. The work of Willard Gatewood Jr., in particular, discusses the role of African Americans in the imperial venture. Gatewood suggests that it was Taft who was instrumental in calling for the African American soldiers to be removed from the Philippines, see: Gatewood, "*Smoked Yankees*," 243. Taft's correspondence suggests that his personal objections stemmed from the African American soldiers' relations with Filipino women, which he saw as a demoralising influence: WHT to Root, April 27, 1901, ERP Box 167.

<sup>103</sup> WHT to Root, March 17, 1901, WHTP 8:464.

the commission were the only U.S. alternative to military rule, but to also have his commission appear as trustworthy and as pro-Filipino as possible. Palma also recognised the role of Taft's persona in the policy of attraction: 'Mr. Taft had a very attractive and winning personality and he was able to impart to the civil government an atmosphere that was agreeably different from the military...No one could have inaugurated civil government better than he.'<sup>104</sup> Taft was able to use his role as a replacement for military rule, along with his message of benevolence, to create himself as the figurehead of the policy of attraction.

Despite Taft's general antipathy towards his military predecessor as governor of the islands, General Arthur MacArthur, Taft also had some lessons to learn from the general that would play an important role in the policy of attraction.<sup>105</sup> Firstly, Taft believed MacArthur's public parties and open displays of goodwill had been well received by Filipinos. As early as July 1900, Taft commented on the positive effects of a fiesta put on by MacArthur: 'If there's one thing more than another that a Filipino likes, it is a fiesta.'<sup>106</sup> However, it was the matter of Filipino inclusion in such festivities that particularly struck Taft. Taft praised the New Year's festivities held by MacArthur, commenting that 'the democratic feature of the reception in inviting the public generally to come struck the Filipinos with very great force and has been commented on in the press generally.'<sup>107</sup> In another letter Taft refers to the festivities once again: '[Guests] were cordially received and the crowds of white and brown faces were completely mingled and there was no separation according to color... This

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<sup>104</sup> Palma, *Our Campaign for Independence*, 18.

<sup>105</sup> The transition from military rule to civilian rule, along with the Taft-MacArthur relationship, will be discussed in Chapter Two. Most commentators suggest that Taft was particularly put out by the cool reception he received from the military upon his initial arrival, described in: Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol. 1, 168-169.

<sup>106</sup> WHT to Root, July 26, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>107</sup> WHT to Root, January 9, 1901, WHTP 8:463.

I know from what I have heard was peculiarly gratifying to the Filipinos.’<sup>108</sup> Taft was impressed by MacArthur’s policy of demonstrating goodwill by including Filipinos in such social events, and he felt that these policies had made a definite impact on the Filipino people. It was observations and conclusions such as these that would prove informative to Taft when he enacted his policy of attraction, both on a personal level and on an official basis. As Mrs. Taft noted in her autobiography, the Tafts ‘made it a rule from the beginning that neither politics nor race should influence our hospitality in any way.’<sup>109</sup> The idea of hospitality, public displays of goodwill and the perception that the Filipinos should be seen to be welcomed by Taft and his commission and involved in social affairs were all integral to Taft’s early designs in the islands.

Indications of the Filipino “social inclusion” aspect of the policy of attraction were soon evident in Taft’s behaviour as commissioner. In March of 1901, during a visit to the outlying provinces, Taft reported to Root that he and his fellow travellers had held an informal reception where the ladies ‘shook hands with the natives.’<sup>110</sup> Although this might appear to echo the metropolitan fiestas held by MacArthur, Taft went on to note that the military authorities in the provinces ‘were disposed to be shocked at the idea of having natives... shake hands with the ladies,’ but, ‘the ladies did not mind and the natives much appreciated the evidence of a desire to avoid a color line.’ Taft might not have come up with the idea of inclusive social events, but when writing to Root he was certainly suggesting that he was taking the policy further, and that the military were less keen on it than him. Taft felt that Filipinos viewed such racial mixing at social events as a sign of ‘our confidence in them and... the wiping out of the color line.’<sup>111</sup> In her autobiography, Mrs. Taft recounted the

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<sup>108</sup> WHT to Root, February 24, 1901, WHTP 8:464.

<sup>109</sup> Nellie Taft, *Recollections of Full Years*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> WHT to Root, March 17, 1901, WHTP 8:464.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

effects of such an instance of social mixing: ‘much to the disgust of the military authorities present, we all shook hands with everybody and assumed the friendliest kind of attitude.’<sup>112</sup> Such social mixing of races was hardly a widespread convention in the United States at the time, and in the American South it would have been viewed widely with dismay among whites, suggesting that the white U.S. military in the islands were not alone in their feelings of distaste for social miscegenation. Rather, what this all suggests is that Taft was not bowing to certain U.S. conventions on the social mixing of races, but instead recognising the importance of appearing to consider race secondary, in order for his policy of attraction to succeed.

Although an appearance, at least, of some form of social equality was key to Taft’s policy of attraction, it was not the only form the policy of attraction took.<sup>113</sup> There are numerous examples in Taft’s correspondence of the time, illustrating his own varied schemes of how to attract the Filipino people to U.S. rule. In one of his frequent letters to Elihu Root, Taft wrote about a project that would establish a musical conservatory that he thought ‘may be productive of great good.’ This policy had a clear metropolitan bias, but followed in the same vein as the idea of fiestas and festivities. The theory behind such a project was that: ‘Filipino people as a whole are wonderfully fond and wonderfully apt in the art of music,’ and that such a project would therefore, ‘greatly touch the hearts of the people.’ Taft concluded that the Filipinos were ‘emotional and sentimental, and such an act of generosity would touch them more and affect them more than administrative reforms of a much more important kind.’<sup>114</sup> Perhaps this letter sums up most concisely the much broader purposes and motivations behind the policy of attraction. On some level, the policy of attraction would be based around grand gestures of goodwill, which in line with

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<sup>112</sup> Nellie Taft, *Recollections of Full Years*, 114.

<sup>113</sup> The political aspects of the policy of attraction are discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>114</sup> WHT to Root, August 31, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

Taft's views of the Filipino people, would be most productive in winning what one might now call "hearts and minds." Taft did not shy away from suggesting that such populist gesture politics would be far more effective in winning over Filipinos than more complex and controversial political and administrative reforms.

One example of a Taft attraction scheme that failed to come to anything, but was indicative of his thinking, was the idea of bringing President McKinley to the Philippines. In numerous letters Taft urged such a visit, telling Root, among others, that it would have a very 'healthful effect.' Taft once again followed up his idea by asserting that what Filipinos liked was 'ocular demonstration, even to the point of the spectacular, of the interest that America feels in these Islands, and the desire to create a good government here.'<sup>115</sup> There is little doubt that a McKinley visit would have qualified as a spectacle, especially as at this point in history no sitting U.S. president had left mainland American soil.

Overall, the aims and nature of Taft's initial thoughts on the policy of attraction were that it needed to be clear to the Filipino people that the United States was there for the benefit of the Filipino people, "the Philippines for the Filipinos," as Taft put it.<sup>116</sup> The policy was guided by some seemingly racial assumptions, such as the suggestibility of the Filipino masses and the extent to which they were impressed by grand gestures, but it could also be argued that American politicians thought similarly of uneducated white voters in the United States. The policy of attraction did not end with the idea of grand social gestures by any means, but it is useful to consider this technique first of all, as it is the simplest example of how important the idea of attraction was to Taft in selling U.S. rule to the Filipinos.

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<sup>115</sup> WHT to Root, September 21, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>116</sup> Davis, *Man of the Hour*, 121-122.

### *Education and Uplift*

In June of 1900 Taft described the Filipinos, as ‘in many respects nothing but grown up children,’ a common trope at the time when referring to non-white races.<sup>117</sup> Examples of such an assumption can be found easily elsewhere among white American elites of the time. In 1899 Alfred Thayer Mahan, the famous naval strategist, recommended that the U.S. should follow the recent British model and deal justly with its Filipino wards who were ‘still in race-childhood.’<sup>118</sup> Historian Vicente Rafael suggests that President McKinley regarded the Filipinos as ‘errant children’ who needed to be treated ‘with firmness if need be, but without severity so far as may be possible.’<sup>119</sup> Taft was, therefore, not alone in his belief that the Filipinos were, like children, in the infancy of their cultural and democratic development. However, as historian Frank Ninkovich contends, Taft was ‘more serious about this civilizing mission than most.’<sup>120</sup>

Central to Taft’s thinking on how to go about civilising these somewhat child-like Filipino people, as he saw it, was the idea of racial and cultural uplift through education. Education fit well within the wider policy of attraction: Taft saw it as yet another gift the United States could give to the Filipino people and prove their goodwill and generosity. Historian Renato Constantino goes so far as to describe the Philippine educational system as ‘the handmaiden of colonial policy.’<sup>121</sup> Education was to be at the forefront of policy in two distinct areas, firstly, through primary education and schooling, and secondly, through political education and a radical

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<sup>117</sup> WHT to Associate Justice John M. Harlan, June 30, 1900, cited in: Oscar M. Alfonso, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Philippines*, 44.

<sup>118</sup> Alfred Mahan, *War with Spain*, 249.

<sup>119</sup> Rafael, “White Love,” in: *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, 186.

<sup>120</sup> Ninkovich, *United States and Imperialism*, 55.

<sup>121</sup> Constantino, *A History of the Philippines*, 311.

overhaul of the political system. The former aspect will be analysed within this chapter with its focus on social policies with the latter covered in Chapter Two with its focus on political policies.

Taft's predecessors on the Schurman Commission had reported to President McKinley with a great deal of interest in the idea of the level of Philippine civilisation and the potential benefits of education to its progress. 'Some writers,' the report stated, 'credit [the Filipinos] with a high degree of civilization, and compare them to the Pilgrim Fathers or the patriots of '76, while others regard even the more highly civilized tribes as little better than barbarians.'<sup>122</sup> The report suggested that 'the fitness of any people' to form a government relies closely on the 'prevalence of knowledge and enlightenment among the masses.' As a result of this reasoning Schurman and his commission recommended rapid expansion of primary education in the archipelago through a system of secular and free public schools. This development in educational institutions would be best achieved through primary instruction in the English language, and secondary education should also be encouraged, though with an emphasis on 'good agricultural and manual-training schools' as these would best fit the present needs of islanders.<sup>123</sup> The Schurman report certainly played an important role in putting forward many of the ideas that would go on to be developed by the Taft Commission. However, even at this early stage, the suggestion was that the islanders needed to be educated in basic skills and that secondary academic education would take a back seat. Taft's own commission reported the following year along similar lines, that 'Primary instruction must ultimately be compulsory for all

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<sup>122</sup> Report of the [Schurman] Philippine Commission, 11.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 31 and 41.

children between the ages of 6 and 12 years,' and 'emphasis must be placed upon the elementary education of the masses.'<sup>124</sup>

Despite the recommendations of the Schurman and Taft commissions, the idea of education and schooling as fundamental to U.S. policy in the islands can be traced back further to the actions of the U.S. military government in the islands. Dean Worcester, a member of both commissions, wrote in later years that the military's pro-education policies had a great 'moral effect' upon Filipinos.<sup>125</sup> Historian John Morgan Gates covers the military's use of school construction as a mode of pacification in his work *Schoolbooks and Krags* (1973), which deals with the military's education policy in some detail. Gates suggests that 'in many cases a school was the first thing established by the army in a town, even preceding the rudiments of municipal government,' but that they realised by early 1900 that this work 'was of little intrinsic value except as a way to show the goodwill of the American government in the municipalities.'<sup>126</sup> However, as historian Rene Escalante notes, although there had been around 2,167 primary schools in the islands prior to the war, by the time Taft became governor, 'many of them were either destroyed or used as barracks, prisons, or hospitals of the army.'<sup>127</sup> The idea of schools as a tool in pacification was important to the military, but the idea of schools as a gesture of goodwill was much more clearly in line with Taft's policy of attraction. Taft saw that as schools were a good method of expressing American goodwill and benevolent intentions in the Philippines, this message would require greater stress under his oversight. This is illustrated in a July 1900 letter from Taft to Root, where Taft criticises the military's schoolhouses: Taft opined that there were but five or six well-

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<sup>124</sup> Reports of the Taft Commission, January 25, 1901, 110-113.

<sup>125</sup> Worcester, *The Philippines*, 399.

<sup>126</sup> Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags*, 87 and 137.

<sup>127</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 144.



built schoolhouses, and he disagreed with MacArthur's advocacy of continuing with schooling in thatched houses for the time being. Taft argued that 'the Filipino people are a people upon whom outward show makes a great effect' and, to this end, the appearance of new schoolhouses had to make the right impression of U.S. intentions towards the Filipino people.<sup>128</sup>

However, education was more than simply another facet of public display like the musical conservatory or a potential visit from President McKinley: education could be presented as a genuine grassroots change in the Philippines for Filipino benefit. Historians of progressivism Arthur Link and Richard McCormick suggest that for every social problem of the early twentieth century 'somebody offered a solution which focused on the schools,' citing the huge increase in kindergartens and high schools within the United States at the time.<sup>129</sup> Historian H. W. Brands suggests that Taft's notion of education 'embraced the progressive ideal of readying persons broadly for life in a democratic society.'<sup>130</sup> Taft supported this idea of education and uplift as being firmly at the forefront of U.S. policy. Although it was an idea that was used as a pacification tool by the military and recommended by his predecessors on the Schurman Commission, education was, for Taft, the best message to headline his wider policy of attraction. In his inaugural address as Civil Governor of the Philippines on July 4, 1901, Taft summed up his vision for education policy:

The school system is hardly begun as an organized machine. One thousand American teachers will arrive in the next three months. They must not only teach English in the schools, but they must teach the Filipino teachers... Our most satisfactory ground for hope of success in our whole work is in the eagerness with which the Philippine people, even the humblest, seek for education.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> WHT to Root, July 26, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>129</sup> Link and McCormick, *Progressivism*, 90.

<sup>130</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 68.

<sup>131</sup> Taft, "Inaugural Address as Civil Governor," reproduced in: Burton, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, 78-79.

Taft believed that everybody could be won over by a policy that centred on education, not only the Filipinos, but the American people as well, all of whom Taft thought had a belief in the benefits of education. Taft was good to the promise of his inauguration speech and oversaw the arrival of over 1,074 teachers from the United States.<sup>132</sup> These U.S. teachers were labelled the “Thomasites,” after the ship in which they crossed the Pacific between January 1901 and September 1902, and were used both to increase the basic number of teachers in the islands and to train new and existing Filipino teachers in the American method and English language. Historian Paul Kramer sees the term “Thomasites” itself as problematic, arguing that this connected their journey to the Philippines ‘to much older trajectories of Protestant evangelism in Asia, while moralizing and exceptionalizing U. S. colonialism.’<sup>133</sup> Although the presence of Catholic teachers among later teaching recruits would undercut some of the idea of a Protestant mission, it is true to say that this importation of missionary-like teachers had some clear imperialist overtones. However, what is perhaps more noteworthy, in terms of Taft’s policy of attraction, is that such a focus was to be made on importing teachers and focusing upon instruction in the English language.

The Taft Commission’s report of 1901 declared that ‘English is desired by the natives, and undoubtedly it should be the language basis of public-school work, but it should be introduced gradually.’<sup>134</sup> Four years after the report was made, Taft explained the importance of using the English language to readers of *National Geographic Magazine*: ‘To the Filipino the possession of English is the gateway into that busy and fervid life of commerce, of modern science, of diplomacy and politics, in which he aspires to shine.’ Along with this assertion, Taft also pointed to one of the

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<sup>132</sup> Calata, “The Role of Education in Americanizing Filipinos,” in: *Mixed Blessing*, 91.

<sup>133</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 169.

<sup>134</sup> Reports of the Taft Commission, 109.

most often cited reasons for the uniform use of English: that the Philippines had no one language with which to conduct their affairs.<sup>135</sup> After hundreds of years of Spanish rule the Filipino elite and the Spanish friars were the only groups of society who spoke the Spanish language fluently. Alongside Spanish there were countless other languages spoken in the islands, including the majority native language of Tagalog.<sup>136</sup> However, as Taft suggested, English was not just practical as a method of unifying the Filipinos; the language would cast off the memories of Spanish rule, and would open up the world of international trade and ideas of Anglo-Saxon democracy. In addition, and almost certainly among Taft's highest considerations on the issue, was the fact the language would help tie the islands more firmly to the United States. This assumption became further evident in future years, when Taft grew clearer about his aim, which began to develop during his time as a commissioner and then solidify as civil governor, to draw the U.S. and the Philippines into a permanent imperial relationship.

Beyond the use of American teachers and English as the language of primary instruction, another feature of Taft's thinking on education policy was his decision to focus secondary instruction towards industrial and manual skills, as both commissions had recommended in their reports. Taft's chosen head of education, Frederick Atkinson, took his model from Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute.<sup>137</sup>

Atkinson and other advisors, in line with the Schurman Commission's

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<sup>135</sup> Taft, "Educating the Filipinos," *National Geographic*, 16:1 (Jan. 1905), 46-49.

<sup>136</sup> Historian Leon Wolff suggests that as many as 87 dialects were spoken in the islands, mostly of languages that were of Malay origin, and that 'Most natives had a smattering of Spanish, and every educated Filipino spoke and wrote the language of his conqueror more or less fluently.' See: Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, 20.

<sup>137</sup> Atkinson, a principal from Springfield, MA, was recommended to Taft by Charles W. Eliot, the President of Harvard University, and was regarded by Taft as being thoroughly prepared in 'modern educational methods.' G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 80, 91-92. See also: Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 69, and Karnow, *In Our Image*, 205. Details of U.S. education policy throughout the period of U.S. rule in the Philippines can be found in a recent doctoral thesis: Kimberly Alidio, "Between Civilizing Mission and Ethnic Assimilation."

recommendations before them, combined to convince Taft that Filipinos would be best suited to the type of secondary vocational education that Washington espoused as best for African Americans. Historian Mark van Ells cites Atkinson as suggesting that the U.S. in the Philippines had to be aware of the ‘possibility of overdoing the matter of higher education,’ and that they should ‘heed the lesson taught us in our reconstruction period when we started to educate the negro,’ pointing towards agricultural and industrial training.<sup>138</sup> However, as Frank Ninkovich points out, industrial education did not work out as well as the idealists had hoped, as ‘there was...not much industry in the Philippines.’<sup>139</sup> Aside from ascertaining the success of a vocational education policy, this factor lends itself to recognising how the policy of education, even with its progressive and high-minded rhetoric, was still guided by racial assumptions. Taft’s choice of Atkinson and his acceptance of his recommendations in this matter suggest that Taft too saw the Filipinos as a people who, at least currently, were unsuited to higher academic education on the basis of their cultural backwardness.

In 1898 fewer than 7,000 Filipino students were in primary, secondary and collegiate schools. Under American rule this number would increase markedly.<sup>140</sup> Historian Glenn May argues that although many commentators regard the education system as one of ‘great value to Filipinos,’ it was, in many respects, poorly conceived and poorly executed.<sup>141</sup> In relation to this latter point of poor execution, historian Stanley Karnow cites the use of inappropriate U.S. educational materials in the Philippines, which, among other things, featured pictures of objects that would be

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<sup>138</sup> Van Ells, “Assuming the White Man’s Burden,” 612.

<sup>139</sup> Ninkovich, *United States and Imperialism*, 70.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>141</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 77.

unrecognisable to Filipino children.<sup>142</sup> Another key criticism of U.S. education policy is that it was largely elitist. Frank Golay points to the fact that under American rule primary education never extended to more than thirty five percent of the population, and that this represented mostly Manila and other large urban areas.<sup>143</sup>

However, education policy under Taft was far from wholly ill-conceived. Golay also argues that, despite their shortcomings, U.S. educational policies did benefit the Filipinos and that there were undoubtedly ‘substantial financial resources allocated by the commission to education.’<sup>144</sup> Despite the geographical and social disparities that have already been mentioned, the numbers of children in primary and other levels of education rose substantially under the first few years of American rule, which had to be an improvement for all concerned. For critics of Taft, the focus toward vocational education, in combination with the elitism of the system, could be seen as evidence of a fairly unequal, superficial and racially motivated education policy. However, to his credit, Taft oversaw substantial expansion of and investment in new schools, increased enrolment and increased literacy. As Mrs. Taft put it in her autobiography: ‘whatever may be said about the American Constitution there can be no dispute about the fact that education follows the flag.’<sup>145</sup> Even if Taft’s education policy was far from perfect, it did achieve its primary aim of providing the visible signs of American goodwill and commitment to the Philippines that Taft was so keen to establish.

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<sup>142</sup> Karnow, *In Our Image*, 200.

<sup>143</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 122. As Chapter Two will explore in more detail, Taft’s commission were often accused of favouring the existing elites in most areas of policy, particularly in politics.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Nellie Taft, *Recollections*, 159.

### *The Separation of Church and State*

Under Spanish rule, education and the institutions where instruction took place had been largely under the control of the Catholic Church. From the outset, Taft made it clear that he wished to separate the church from state education in line with the American model.<sup>146</sup> In the words of his commission's report: 'according to the American standard, the ideal school is a non sectarian, graded school, with a prescribed course of study and definite standards for each year, under charge of trained teachers and housed in suitable buildings.'<sup>147</sup> In similar terms, after he had arrived in the Philippines, Taft wrote privately that 'we could not support religious teaching out of the public funds, and that there must be complete separation of Church and State.'<sup>148</sup> Of course, the fact that the church in this case was the Catholic Church did limit adverse U.S.-based reaction to such a policy to a minority. Religious instruction was soon relegated to voluntary status in state-run schools and even this took place outside of school hours.<sup>149</sup>

Despite this formal separation of religion from state-run schools, Taft was keen not to cause a rift with the Catholic Church that, as the majority religious group in the islands, would have gone against the general concept of the policy of attraction. In August 1900, Taft wrote to Root that:

We shall try to secure 5 primary school teachers from the public schools of San Francisco who are Catholics. The effect of bringing catholic teachers here can not be but good, and as they have had experience in public schools they will fully understand the possibility of maintaining a public school according to our system.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> For further information on Taft's efforts in the sphere of religion in the Philippines see: Frank T. Reuter, "William Howard Taft and the Separation of Church and State in the Philippines," 105-117.

<sup>147</sup> Reports of the Taft Commission, 108.

<sup>148</sup> WHT to Root, October 13, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>149</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 70.

<sup>150</sup> WHT to Root, August 11, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

In a further letter, concerned with the proportion of Catholic teachers to be appointed, Taft explained to Archbishop Placide Chapelle that ‘the policy of the Commission was to give the Catholics a fair share, and I thought about twenty or twenty-five per cent would be right.’ Keen to show his commitment to attraction of the Catholic Church, and more so to the faithful themselves, Taft attended the reopening of the Catholic University of Santo Tomas ‘to testify to the faculty that the Commission was here to encourage every effort in education,’ even if such efforts were run by the church.<sup>151</sup> The policy of attraction was a key consideration in the formation of education policy with the religious aspect of education in the Philippines being yet another example of Taft’s determination to strengthen feelings of goodwill between the U.S. administration and the Filipino people. Historian Rene Escalante argues that Taft’s attempts at accommodating the opposing forces in the religion within schools debate, namely, the Catholic Church and those who objected to any religion in schools (such as Fred Atkinson and commissioners Moses and Ide), made him ‘more enemies than friends.’<sup>152</sup> However, whether Taft satisfied the extremes is somewhat beyond his aims in such an accommodation: Taft’s policy of attraction aimed to appeal to the masses and be seen to offer a fair hand to all, not to pander to special interest groups, even if he privately agreed with them.

Perhaps the best example of Taft’s stance towards the Catholic Church in the realm of education was to be seen in the departure in 1902 of two Taft appointees in the education policy-making arena. As early as May 1901 Taft had private concerns over his choice of secretary of public education Fred Atkinson, writing to Root that, ‘I feel that [Atkinson] is not at all in sympathy with our views of the necessity of soothing the Catholic sensitiveness in every way possible and we have to watch

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<sup>151</sup> WHT to Root, May 24, 1901, ERP Box 167.

<sup>152</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 102.

him.<sup>153</sup> In October 1902, Atkinson and Commissioner Bernard Moses resigned; they had been the primary recipients of criticism from the Catholic press. Atkinson had also disappointed Taft with his unwillingness to assure Catholics that ‘nothing was being done to discriminate against them.’<sup>154</sup> The choice of replacement for Atkinson, Elmer B. Bryan, was likely to be more reliably sympathetic to the church as he was a Catholic himself. As Taft noted in a letter to Root in November of 1902: ‘with a Catholic as Secretary of Public Instruction and a Catholic as Superintendent of City Schools in Manila [O’Reilly], I should think that even the wildest catholic editor ought to curb his fury against you and me.’<sup>155</sup> Bryan’s appointment was indicative of Taft’s attempts to achieve separation of church and state, but firmly within the context of the wider policy of attraction.

The influence of religion in the development of Taft’s policy of attraction did not end with the educational sphere; the high profile and far-reaching influence of the Catholic Church in the islands was a matter Taft was only too aware of. Although Taft was Unitarian, he was not a dogmatic adherent to religious sectarianism of any sort. As such, Taft did not feel his mission was that of a U.S. protestant missionary or, as he put it: the U.S. was not in the Philippines ‘to proselyte for Protestant churches,’ but in fact, ‘the way to improve these Islands was to make people better catholics.’<sup>156</sup> Even if Taft was willing to work with the Catholic Church rather than against it, he did not approve universally of the Catholic leaders or institutions in the islands. Taft had a particularly low view of Archbishop Chapelle and the unpopular Catholic friars who were all Vatican appointees in the islands.<sup>157</sup> In various personal letters, Taft

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<sup>153</sup> WHT to Root, May 24, 1901, ERP Box 167.

<sup>154</sup> Reuter, “Separation of Church and State,” 114.

<sup>155</sup> WHT to Root, November 22, 1902, ERP Box 164.

<sup>156</sup> WHT to Root, October 13, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>157</sup> Archbishop Chapelle was a French-American, formerly the Archbishop of New Orleans, who was appointed by the Vatican to oversee the new U.S. colonies after the Spanish-American War. Following



made no attempt to disguise his frustration at Chapelle whose pro-*status quo* attitude, he claimed, ‘earned him the hostility of the people and has made them despair of ever getting rid of the hated monastic orders.’<sup>158</sup> In the words of Maria Longworth Storer, a Catholic correspondent of Taft’s, ‘Archbishop C. has too re-actionary a tendency and does not speak English well enough or comprehend this [friar business] in an Anglo Saxon way.’<sup>159</sup>

The friar lands were estates that were owned by the Vatican and administered by Catholic friars in the Philippines. Within the Filipino population there was palpable discontent with the friars, or as historian Joseph Rowe Jr. puts it, a hatred that was ‘extensive and significant.’<sup>160</sup> Taft was certainly well aware of the unpopularity of the friars. In the wider scope of the policy of attraction, as well as reflecting U.S. ownership of the islands, it became clear that the friars and their estates would prove a bone of contention. Taft put it simply in a letter to Secretary Root: ‘If the Americans could rid these Islands of the friars, the gratitude of the people for our action would be so deep that the slightest fear of further disorder or insurrection would be entirely removed.’<sup>161</sup> In line with his idea of the effect of grand gestures upon the Filipino people, removal of the friars and repatriation of their Vatican-owned lands fulfilled Taft’s criteria for a major coup in the ongoing policy of attraction.

President Roosevelt charged Taft personally with the job of negotiating the friar issue with the Vatican authorities. Taft wrote to the Catholic Archbishop of St.

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his arrival in the Philippines in early 1900, he took steps to returning friars to their parishes, which they had fled following the outbreak of hostilities in 1898, see: Golay, *Face of Empire*, 69. Historian Joseph M. Rowe Jr. suggests that Archbishop Chapelle invariably sided with the friars when disputes arose, see: Rowe, “William Howard Taft: Diplomatic Troublesooter,” 27.

<sup>158</sup> WHT to Root, January 29, 1901, WHTP 8:464.

<sup>159</sup> Maria Longworth Storer to WHT, September 6, 1900, ERP Box 167.

<sup>160</sup> Rowe, “Diplomatic Troublesooter,” 24.

<sup>161</sup> WHT to Root, September 26, 1901, ERP Box 164. The threat of disorder will be explored further in Chapter Two.

Paul, Minnesota, John Ireland, that the friar lands matter was ‘a question local and temporary dealing exclusively with the Philippines- a business matter, purely and simply, to be treated in a business-like way.’<sup>162</sup> The main reason for such a comment was that the U.S. did not formally recognise diplomatic relations with the Vatican and, as such, the task was not, strictly speaking, a diplomatic mission. President Roosevelt instructed Taft that settling the friar lands issue was of ‘prime importance’ in bringing about complete separation of church and state, but he also stressed that nothing relating to ‘diplomatic relations’ were to be sought and that the matter was ‘a purely business transaction.’<sup>163</sup> Historian Rene Escalante argues that Taft took charge of the entire friar lands affair as ‘part of his master plan to bring peace in the islands,’ but this, it is argued in this thesis, was really just part of the wider policy of attraction with its ultimate goal of winning over the Filipinos to a permanent imperial union with the United States.<sup>164</sup>

However, from the Vatican’s viewpoint the friar lands were not just a business matter, as the Vatican also had to consider the status of the friars themselves, who constituted two-thirds of all the priests in the islands.<sup>165</sup> During the drawn out period of negotiations Taft gave the following address to the Vatican’s representative in the matter, explaining the high-minded imperial idealism that supposedly lay behind U.S. negotiations for the land:

I know that we both desire the betterment and uplifting of the Filipino people, and that while it is natural that there should be differences of opinion as to the method of bringing about such a great result, this common desire on the part of the two negotiators gives great hope that a conclusion may be reached by them satisfactory to both and achieving the common purpose.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid. (a copy of the letter from Taft to Archbishop Ireland was attached to Taft’s letter to Root).

<sup>163</sup> TR [unsigned,] “Memorandum for Governor Taft,” April 24, 1902, ERP Box 164.

<sup>164</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 220-221.

<sup>165</sup> Rowe, “Diplomatic Troubleshooter,” 63.

<sup>166</sup> WHT, “Address to Apostolic Delegate Guidi,” [December 1902], ERP Box 164.

The negotiations with the Vatican were prolonged, and at times appeared to have failed, but Taft's diplomacy eventually paid off. The friar lands, consisting of 410,000 acres, were bought by the United States from the Vatican for \$7,239,000 (despite being valued at \$1.5 million in 1893) and sold to the Filipinos on instalment plans to be paid for over several years.<sup>167</sup> The lands were not vast and would not benefit every Filipino but for Taft, as a piece of propaganda to add credibility to the policy of attraction, the transaction was priceless. Historian Paolo Coletta argues that Taft dealt with the friar lands issue 'very well,' and it is clear that despite the seemingly precarious nature of the deal at times, the ultimate success of the venture cannot be denied.<sup>168</sup> This particular case also displayed, for the first time, Taft's ability to deal with a high-profile set of "diplomatic" negotiations in order to further the aims of his policy of attraction.

### *Conclusions*

Taft's policy of attraction was critical to the development of his personal aims for the U.S.-Philippine relationship, as well as for the nature of the day-to-day running of the Philippines. During Taft's time in the islands from 1900-1903, the policy of attraction and the ideology that guided it influenced Taft's decisions on every issue he was faced with. However, the policy of attraction in these early years, during Taft's direct oversight of social, educational and religious policies, formed the bedrock of his thinking on the nature of U.S.-Philippine relations as a whole. Taft might have arrived in the islands as a suspected anti-expansionist with little

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<sup>167</sup> Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, 314.

<sup>168</sup> Coletta, *Presidency of William Howard Taft*, 5.

knowledge of the Philippine situation outside of official reports, but he left with a fierce interest in the islands' destiny.

The policy of attraction might not appear particularly novel or innovative, or in fact entirely of Taft's own invention, but he adhered to it strongly in the social and political policies initiated during his tenure in the Philippines. The nature and purpose of attraction for the military might have been pacification, and for businessmen it might have represented profit, but for Taft it manifested as a larger and longer-term vision. The policy of attraction, as the next chapter will continue to show, might have been in its early stages a policy for pacification, but for Taft it would help form the basis for a continued imperial union between the United States and the Philippines.<sup>169</sup> For Taft it was vital that the Filipino population was won around to thinking fondly of the United States, the policy's primary aim. What might have been regarded on the face of it as a populist solution to short-term discontent became, for Taft, a blueprint for a new U.S. empire, and one that might last forever. In this respect Taft's aims for attraction began to have quite a different long-term outlook from those of many of his contemporaries.

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<sup>169</sup> The influence of the policy of attraction on Taft's political policies are analysed in next chapter.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Devoted Imperialist: The Question of the Islands' Future, 1900-1903**

#### ***Introduction***

Where the previous chapter introduced Taft's policy of attraction in the Philippines as it related to social policies and the areas of education and religion during the period 1900-1903, this chapter continues the analysis of Taft's policy as it pertained to the political status, apparatus and future of the islands. During his time running day-to-day affairs in the islands, Taft developed what was a distinctive concept of the future relationship between the U.S and the Philippines and what the ultimate aim of his policy of attraction should be. What might have appeared to many as a tool for pacification, the first step on the path towards self-government and ultimate independence, became something different for Taft. Although Taft saw the need for pacification, and limited self-government, with an eye to future self-government in roughly a century, he began to believe that full independence was not the natural outcome of the U.S. presence in the islands.

In its political guise, the policy of attraction had many similarities to those explored in the previous chapter. Taft adhered consistently to a similar theory that education should also lie at the heart of his political policy, in the form of "political education," where the islanders would be tutored in the Anglo-Saxon democracy under American supervision until they were prepared for self-government. However, Taft's policy of appearing uniformly benevolent and outwardly projecting the message of the "Philippines for the Filipinos" had more visible limits in the realm of politics. Though Taft had a relatively low regard for what he saw as a generally corrupt class of political elites, he also felt that to succeed in defeating nationalist

sentiment he must work with at least some Filipino politicians. To this end the policy of attraction had to aim higher up the social ladder than pandering to the masses with showy gestures and investment in schooling. The Filipino elites were not so easily won over and Taft, who would in his ideal world have wished to overhaul the political classes completely, realised he needed to work with some of them in order to have a realistic chance of establishing an effective civil government. The price for this would be continued elite participation in the Philippine political system.

This chapter explores the ways in which Taft developed an idea of the political future of the islands as lying within a continued, long-term imperial union with the United States. It will explore the measures, both attractive and coercive, that Taft utilised towards these ends: such as the appointment of Filipino commissioners and the passage of a Sedition Act to prohibit the advocacy of independence. These policies aimed to steer a difficult path between the policy of attraction and Taft's increasingly clear concept of a lasting imperial union. This attempted *via media* brought about inevitable concessions and compromises that would return to frustrate Taft's vision in subsequent years. Taft's success in establishing a civil government was tempered by its reliance on the existing elite and the appointment of so many Filipinos to office – steps he would later bemoan as over-reaching and premature. Taft would later fear he had moved too far, too fast, in the gradual process of handing political control over to Filipinos, later termed "Filipinization." Taft began to realise that for an imperialist, too much democracy was perhaps not the easiest policy to maintain, and that his policy of attraction had a political price.

### *From Military to Civil Government*

The issue of independence was the most problematic that Taft faced during his time in the islands, and it would also be the issue that shaped his efforts at guiding policy in the islands for decades to follow. The basic problem was fairly simple: prior to the Spanish-American War, during the war itself, and then throughout the Philippine-American War that followed, most Filipinos believed that independence was the aim of their endeavours. Nationalist Filipinos under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo were led to believe that when they and their American “liberators” had defeated the Spanish, the end result would be independence for the Philippines. In January 1899 Aguinaldo declared his presidency of the first Philippine Republic and led the fight to wrest control of the archipelago from the Americans who had replaced – rather than removed – the Spanish Empire.

Aguinaldo and his followers believed that President William McKinley and Admiral George Dewey had succumbed to the imperialist lobby, and had reneged on promises to allow the Philippines their independence, causing Aguinaldo to note in 1899 that some began to ‘curse the hour and the day on which we had verbally negotiated with the Americans.’<sup>170</sup> Historian Bonifacio Salamanca argues that most revolutionary Philippine leaders were ‘wittingly or unwittingly’ made to believe that the United States had promised to recognise Philippine independence at the end of hostilities with the Spanish.<sup>171</sup> An example of this can be found in the words of Filipino politician Felipe Buencamino, who stated in December 1900 that Filipinos had ‘believed the United States would aid them in their desire for independence,

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<sup>170</sup> Aguinaldo, *Authentic Review of the Philippine Revolution*, 34, in: GFHP Box 179. Dewey was the U.S. naval leader during the Spanish-American War and was made Admiral of the Navy in 1899.

<sup>171</sup> Salamanca, *Filipino Reaction*, 22.

trusting in the American Declaration of Independence.’<sup>172</sup> Salamanca also contends that, although pro-independence sentiment was not widespread among Filipinos prior to the Philippine Revolution against Spain in 1896, it became ‘a generalized sentiment’ by 1898-1899.<sup>173</sup> Taft had his doubts about the existence of widespread pro-independence sentiment, arguing instead that although the majority of Filipinos might think they wanted independence, they simply did not understand what it really meant for them.<sup>174</sup> However, the 1900 U.S. Republican Party platform did not meet the expectations of those who believed the U.S. meant to make good on the contested “promise” of independence. Instead, the platform promised the islands nothing further than the ‘largest measure of self-government consistent with their welfare and our [U.S.] duties.’<sup>175</sup> When Taft arrived in the islands, during the midst of the Philippine-American War, he faced an uphill struggle to at once seek to attract the Filipino population and simultaneously seek to stifle their hopes of independence.

However, it was not Filipino nationalists alone that Taft was up against in his quest to attract and win over the Filipinos to American rule. The Democratic Party in the United States condemned Republican policy in their party platform, describing it as guided by ‘greedy commercialism’ that had involved the United States in an ‘unnecessary war’ in which the nation took a ‘false and un-American position of crushing with military force the efforts of our former allies to achieve liberty and self-government.’<sup>176</sup> The following passage from the platform, announced on July 4, 1900, summarises the Democratic policy for the future of the islands:

The Filipinos cannot be citizens without endangering our civilization;  
they cannot be subjects without imperiling our form of government;  
and as we are not willing to surrender our civilization nor to convert

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<sup>172</sup> Buencamino, “Memorandum Concerning the Philippine Problem,” August 11, 1900, ERP Box 167.

<sup>173</sup> Salamanca, *Filipino Reaction*, 163.

<sup>174</sup> WHT to Root, August 11, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>175</sup> “Republican Party Platform,” June 19, 1900.

<sup>176</sup> “Democratic Party Platform,” July 4, 1900.



the Republic into an empire, we favor an immediate declaration of the nation's purpose to give the Filipinos, first, a stable form of government; second, independence; and third, protection from outside interference, such as has been given for nearly a century to the republics of Central and South America.<sup>177</sup>

Democratic policy was clear: if their candidate William Jennings Bryan were elected to the presidency, Filipinos would secure the promise of independence that they felt the Republicans had reneged upon. During the early months of 1900, Taft seemed determined that the key to achieve a crushing blow to the Aguinaldo's nationalists did not have to be military, but could be achieved through destroying their morale. Central to this concept was that the incumbent president William McKinley had to defeat the anti-imperialist challenge of Democrat William Jennings Bryan in the 1900 presidential election.

In August of 1900, Taft wrote to Secretary Root that the 'only thing that keeps these insurrectos [Filipino nationalists] who are still in the mountains and in retired parts of the Islands is the hope that by Mr. Bryan's election they may secure that independence of which they say so much and know so little.'<sup>178</sup> In a letter written in October 1900, Taft expressed his belief that the Filipino nationalists had 'succeeded in convincing their followers and a good many other people who are disposed to select the right side before expressing themselves at all that there is every probability of Bryan's election, and that on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, or as soon thereafter as the result can be announced, independence is to be given to these islands.'<sup>179</sup> In these letters Taft was making three important assumptions. Firstly, that the advocates of independence were of a limited number, secondly, that there was a mass of people who were unwilling to commit themselves to the U.S. until they could see the way the

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> WHT to Root, August 11, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>179</sup> WHT to Root, October 1, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

political wind was blowing, and finally, that most Filipinos would see a Bryan victory as a signal of almost immediate independence.<sup>180</sup> If McKinley was victorious, Taft told pro-imperialist Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, ‘the insurrection as a political movement will fade out in the course of sixty to ninety days.’<sup>181</sup> The hopeful suggestion in all of these passages was that if McKinley won then it would be a fatal blow to the nationalists and that the masses who were ‘not opposed to U.S. rule,’ but were simply ‘on the fence,’ would then accept the sovereignty of the United States.<sup>182</sup> Taft told his wife that the fear that ‘the Americans do not intend to stay,’ was keeping Filipinos from committing themselves to U.S. rule.<sup>183</sup> His suggestions were definitely optimistic, but they were assumptions he continued to reiterate in the following decades. Taft felt, with a curious conviction, that if the idea of independence seemed distant and unattainable, the majority of Filipino people would cease to think about it.

Ultimately, the election of 1900 did not signal a definitive end to nationalist fighting and it certainly did not bring to an end the belief among many Filipinos that the islands would, sooner or later, become independent. Nevertheless, McKinley’s re-election on November 6, 1900, did generally fulfil Taft’s hope that a confirmation of four more years of Republican control over the Philippines would help some of the undecided and wavering Filipino elite to accept the idea of American rule for the time being. Two days prior to McKinley’s victory, Felipe Buencamino, a member of Aguinaldo’s nationalist cabinet in 1899, suggested that most influential and intelligent Filipinos believed it was ‘necessary for us to live and learn sometime under the

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<sup>180</sup> On this latter point see also: WHT to Root, October 31, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>181</sup> WHT to Lodge, September 21, 1900, HCLP, Reel 15.

<sup>182</sup> WHT to Root, November 6, 1900, WHTP 8:463; WHT to Charles P. Taft, November 6, 1900, WHTP 1:129.

<sup>183</sup> WHT to Nellie Taft, July 18, 1900, WHTP 2:24.

sovereignty of the United States of America.’<sup>184</sup> This sort of suggestion was exactly what Taft hoped for: an end to the idea of immediate independence and openness to the idea of the benefits of American rule. The election also signalled an affirmation in the United States that America’s imperial duty was one that it took seriously and intended to see through, which was critical to Taft’s policy of attraction. McKinley’s re-election was also a turning point for Taft’s relationship with the Philippines, as it meant that Taft was assured of his role in the islands, and that the administration in Washington would not suddenly change their Philippine policy dramatically to disrupt his efforts there. For Taft, Filipinos would hopefully see McKinley’s re-election as a sign that the United States had accepted the burden of imperialism and had now reasserted their devotion to their duty there.

Once the general concept of the United States remaining in the islands had been assured, Taft was keen to move to the Commission’s primary function of hastening the replacement of military rule in the islands. The Taft Commission’s report of January 1901 stated that the positive effect upon the Filipino people of changing the military government to one ‘purely civil’ could not be too strongly emphasised.<sup>185</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Taft felt that the transfer from civil to military rule was an integral part of the policy of attraction. The U.S. military, which had long been engaged in hostilities in the Philippines, were the face of aggression and, to many, betrayal. The Commission offered a more benevolent and far more attractive face.

From the time Taft arrived in the islands, his relationship with the military was frosty and relations with the military Governor General Arthur MacArthur were particularly strained. Historian Brian Linn suggests that MacArthur could not accept

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<sup>184</sup> Buencamino, “Memorandum concerning the Philippine problem,” November 4, 1900, ERP Box 167.

<sup>185</sup> Reports of the Taft Commission, 35.

his 'subordination to civilian authority,' and notes how Taft began a 'letter writing campaign' detailing the many 'foibles' of the general.<sup>186</sup> Linn goes on to assert that the primary difference between the two men was their judgement of the Filipino people's sentiments towards the Americans. Taft saw those Filipinos resistant to U.S. rule as a minority whereas MacArthur believed the opposite.<sup>187</sup> In late 1900 and the early months of 1901, Taft became increasingly insistent, particularly in his correspondence with Secretary of War Root, that the transfer of power from military to civil government was urgent. Following McKinley's re-election Taft wrote to Root that with the decrease in nationalist activities the time for civil government was approaching rapidly.<sup>188</sup> Similar messages continued to reach Root in the new year, with Taft speaking of a 'hunger for civil government,' and crowds of people greeting him on a tour in the islands who were 'anxious to secure civil government.'<sup>189</sup> As time wore on Taft also grew increasingly critical of MacArthur. Taft told Root that it was 'exceedingly disagreeable to fuss and fuss with a man who resents your presence and who is on the keen watch to detect some usurpation of jurisdiction.'<sup>190</sup> Taft hoped that such continued reports to the Secretary of War about a popular clamour for civil government, combined with encouraging messages about the increased peacefulness of the islands, would hasten the transfer of power from the military to the his commission.

In another letter to Root, Taft outlined his provisional proposals for a future civil government in the islands. Taft suggested that it would comprise 'a civil Governor and a legislature to consist of the members of the Commission and possibly

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<sup>186</sup> Linn, *The Philippine War*, 216.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-217.

<sup>188</sup> WHT to Root, December 4, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>189</sup> WHT to Root, January 9, WHTP 8:463; WHT to Root, February 15, 1900, WHTP 8:464.

<sup>190</sup> WHT to Root, December 27, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

one or two Filipinos.<sup>191</sup> The Taft Commission was made up entirely of U.S. citizens, who would therefore form the majority of this future government. This outlook was in line with Taft's general belief in the preferable nature of an American-run government, which would serve in a supervisory role, while the Filipino population underwent political education. Taft also noted that he would countenance the inclusion of one or two Filipinos in the governing commission. This was slightly contrary to his characterisations of the Filipinos as unfit for self-government and the Filipino elite particularly as corrupt and unfit for government, points explored in the previous chapter. However, including only one or two Filipinos in the governing commission would make certain their minority and ensure American oversight and a virtual veto. The appointment of Filipino commissioners would also serve, as with many other aspects of the policy of attraction, as an impressive gesture towards Filipino inclusion and American good intentions to both the general population and the Filipino elite.

The American-run Commission that would govern the Philippine Islands comprised the original members of the Taft Commission that had arrived in 1900: Luke E. Wright, a Democratic lawyer from Tennessee; Henry Clay Ide, a Vermont lawyer; Dean C. Worcester, a zoologist with a detailed knowledge of the Philippines; and Bernard Moses, a historian and political scientist at the University of California.<sup>192</sup> On June 25, 1901, Taft wrote to Root of the disagreement between members of his commission about the idea of including Filipinos in the proposed ruling commission:

With reference to the appointment of Filipinos on the Commission, there is some hesitation on the part of my colleagues. Judge Ide and

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<sup>191</sup> WHT to Root, January 23, 1901, WHTP 8:464.

<sup>192</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 10. As the next section of the chapter explains, Filipino participation in the commission was delayed until September 1901, when three Filipino members joined the commission.

General Wright think that the appointment at present [June 1901] would impede the action of the Commission in the passing of the civil and criminal codes... and other important legislation which we may need to pass... General Wright has never been very strongly in favor of having Filipinos in the Legislative body. Judge Ide has favored it and Mr. Worcester and I have always been strongly in favor of it, but Professor Moses has not been inclined to it so much. My impression is that probably the best solution is not to appoint the Filipinos until the first of August or the first of September [after which several important pieces of legislation would have been passed].<sup>193</sup>

This letter does seem to illustrate that Taft had taken the lead in calling for the inclusion of Filipinos in the Commission, though it does not necessarily suggest he thought very differently about the place of Filipinos at the high end of politics. What seems far more likely is that Taft saw the inclusion of Filipinos in the Commission primarily as a part of the policy of attraction. Also, the fact that he was open to the idea of appointing them only after much ‘important legislation’ was already in place suggests what he saw as the nature of their role on the Philippine Commission. The inclusion of the Filipinos on the Commission was not only a display of goodwill, but also an example of political realism. Taft recognised that to secure any Philippine support for his plans, he had to work with at least a portion of the existing Filipino elite. Taft appeared to judge that allegiance to the American cause could be bought through political patronage, a very Guided Era outlook, but in allowing Filipinos to participate at all this could be sold to the American and Filipino people as a far more exceptionalist American style of imperialism.

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<sup>193</sup> WHT to Root, June 25, 1901, WHTP 8:464.

### *Issue of Independence*

On July 4, 1901, William Howard Taft was inaugurated as the first U.S. Civil Governor of the Philippine Islands, an event timed to coincide with the date of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>194</sup> Nationalist Filipinos and U.S. anti-imperialists might well have questioned the appropriateness of the date, with the curious contrast of the occasion's aim to formalise American imperial rule whilst, in the United States, American citizens celebrated the day they had cast off the yoke of the British Empire.<sup>195</sup> As civil governor, Taft became an unelected head of state having been in the islands for just over a year and would lead day-to-day policy for the Philippine people. In his inaugural address Taft claimed that this changeover in government was the first step in a 'clearly formulated plan for making the territory of these Islands ripe for permanent civil government on a more or less popular basis.'<sup>196</sup> Taft then went on to stress that the U.S. citizens in the Philippines were representatives of 'the great Republic' and that as such they should set an example to prove to anti-imperialists that, above anything else, 'we are here to secure good government for the Philippines.'<sup>197</sup> The message of good, permanent civil government was notably not a message suggesting independence in anything like the near future. Taft's developing idea was that time was critical to his policy of attraction, and that if only the U.S. were given the opportunity to illustrate the benefits of civil government then the Filipino people could be won over to their new imperial rulers. For Taft it was

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<sup>194</sup> At this point Taft's authority was established over the pacified areas of the Philippines. General Adna R. Chaffee took over as the military commander in the islands. Chaffee's approach was, in the words of historian Brian Linn, to crush the remaining rebels in a campaign of 'vindictive ruthlessness.' See: Linn, *U.S. and Counterinsurgency*, 26-27.

<sup>195</sup> Forty-five years later the same date signalled the eventual independence of the Philippines.

<sup>196</sup> Taft, "Inaugural Address as Civil Governor of the Philippines," July 4, 1901, in: Burton, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, 75.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

independence, and the discussion thereof, that was the main opponent to his efforts to attract the Filipinos: for attraction to be given its best chance, the issue of independence would have to be shelved.

When Taft had arrived in the islands, the idea that the Philippines were presently unfit for independence was the *status quo* policy of the administration. In January 1900 the Schurman Commission, headed by the anti-expansionist Jacob Schurman, had declared that the ‘Filipinos are wholly unprepared for independence, and if independence were given them they could not maintain it.’<sup>198</sup> Taft’s commission was envisaged with this understanding in mind and was sent to the islands not to prepare for independence but instead for U.S. civil government and eventual Filipino self-government. Taft’s strong feelings about independence are illustrated in his letters to Secretary Root where he described the Philippines as currently ‘utterly unfit for self-government,’ and how ‘an independent government of Filipinos would produce a condition worse than in hades.’<sup>199</sup> Historian Whitney Perkins argues that Taft and Schurman’s ideas about independence were similar but that Taft was slower to recognise ‘the strong hold of independence sentiment on the minds of the Filipinos.’<sup>200</sup> This latter statement is something of an understatement. Taft appeared confident that the policy of attraction had a realistic chance of changing the pro-independence attitude completely over time, since the Filipino stance was, in his mind, based on ignorance.

One of the most notable acts that Taft passed in the early days of his administration was the Sedition Act of November 4, 1901.<sup>201</sup> This act dealt a severe blow to independence advocates, proclaiming it a crime to ‘encourage, publicize, join,

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<sup>198</sup> Report of the [Schurman] Philippine Commission, 121.

<sup>199</sup> WHT to Root, August 18 and 31, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>200</sup> Perkins, *Denial of Empire*, 204.

<sup>201</sup> The Sedition Act was essentially in place until the official end of the Filipino-American War on July 4, 1902.



speaking for, or act with the independence movement.<sup>202</sup> Taft described the libel and sedition laws rather more diplomatically as helping to ‘clear the atmosphere some and show that a civil government is not any more helpless against attacks on its own life than is a military government.’<sup>203</sup> However, the Sedition Act had an aim even Taft would have done well to disguise, to bring a forceful end to any talk of independence. Taft, with good reason, saw independence activism as the main obstacle to the success of embedding a permanent U.S. civil government, which of course was the aim of such activists. General MacArthur seemed to agree with Taft to some extent when it came to recognising the danger of independence advocacy, and MacArthur took his own harsh measures such as deporting the leaders of the independence movement to the distant island of Guam.<sup>204</sup> In Taft’s view, independence was an issue for the distant future, certainly not for the present, and any attention given to the issue of independence was wasteful and distracting. However, as an augur of Taft’s future policy towards the Philippines, the Sedition Act shows that even at this early stage Taft’s feelings against independence were so strong, he went so far as to make its very discussion a crime.

With the Sedition Act, Taft showed that although he had every faith in this policy of attraction, with its welcoming and benevolent message, when it came to the issue of independence he did have a harder side to his otherwise outwardly genial character. Nevertheless, historian Leon Wolff suggests that despite the nature of the Sedition Act the Filipino people still ‘genuinely liked’ Taft.<sup>205</sup> Although Taft’s rhetoric of the “Philippines for the Filipinos” and his support for Filipino inclusion in government might have been popular with many Filipinos, it met with objections

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<sup>202</sup> Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, 351.

<sup>203</sup> WHT to Root, November 17, 1901, ERP, Box 164.

<sup>204</sup> Linn, *U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency*, 24.

<sup>205</sup> Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, 351.

from the American civilian population in the islands, many of whom were there to profit from the imperial venture. In October 1901 Taft wrote to Root that it was ‘gratifying’ to hear of domestic (U.S.) support for the Commission because ‘out here [in the Philippines] what between the military and the rag tag Americans and the vicious American press, we feel like that man who said that he was sired by no one and damned by everybody. Still we are in the fight to stay and we believe that patient hard work will bring about the conditions which we seek.’ Taft accepted that despite the positive message the appointment of Filipinos sent to the islands’ native inhabitants, such an action was not heralded gladly by Americans within the archipelago: ‘They bitterly attack the Commission in every way for appointing Filipinos and sneer at every effort we make.’ Despite his belief that the U.S. elements in the islands felt negatively towards the Commission, Taft felt better about Filipino opinion. Taft told military chief General Chaffee, who apparently felt that the Filipinos hated the Americans, that ‘the people felt very differently toward the American civil government.’<sup>206</sup> Given the outcry of many Americans in the Philippines described by Taft, one wonders whether domestic support for the commission was as united behind Taft’s policies as he believed.

Despite his fears that Americans in the islands did not like him, by November 1901 Taft was so confident that he was regarded as the friend of the Filipinos he felt able to write: ‘I think I do not exaggerate and am not misled by flattery when I say that generally the Filipino people regard me as having more sympathy with them than any other member of the Commission and that they would regret anything which would make impossible or improbable my continuance as Civil Governor.’<sup>207</sup> In this sense, it would appear that in Taft’s opinion the policy of attraction was progressing

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<sup>206</sup> WHT to Root, October 14, 1901, ERP Box 164.

<sup>207</sup> WHT to Root, November 17, 1901, ERP Box 164.

well to present U.S. rule, and himself in particular, as working for the interests of the Filipinos. If independence advocates could be silenced, and allow him to work unhindered to demonstrate the benefits and benevolence of American rule, Taft felt that winning the general Filipino population over was not as far-fetched as many would have believed.

### *The Organic Act*

Almost exactly a year after Taft was inaugurated as civil governor the outline for the future of the civil government was set out in the Philippine Organic Act of 1902. The act provided for a bicameral legislature composed of an assembly (lower house), and the commission (upper house). It also provided that a general election would be held every two years for the assembly, but that no election would be held for the commission. Such a step forward in devolution of power was not to be accomplished overnight and the bill provided a fairly comprehensive set of conditions that meant such a government would not assemble for at least a few years. The conditions of the bill required that this government could only be established once the insurrection had ended, a census had been taken, and two years had passed peacefully following the publication of the census.<sup>208</sup> Earlier in 1902 the *Brooklyn Eagle* summarised various important features of future government in the Philippines that Taft had suggested before the Senate Committee on the Philippines:

Governor Taft's plans would first of all, give to the Filipinos a qualified suffrage upon which a popular government would be based, restricted at the outset, but enlarged as the people grew in intelligence and in material prosperity. A local legislature is included in the scheme. It will have an upper and a lower house, the former to be appointive and the latter elective, which is the theory of legislative

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<sup>208</sup> "Organic Act (July 1, 1902) of the Philippine Islands."

construction adopted by Canada and by other smaller colonial dependencies of Great Britain. Taft also proposes that the islanders be allowed to send two or three [non-voting] representatives to Washington.<sup>209</sup>

The outline given in this news report neatly summarises the main points set out in the Organic Act in terms of election and representation. Also worth noting at this point was the fact that, even by the time the first assembly elections took place in 1907, only a tiny proportion of the Filipino population was eligible to vote.<sup>210</sup> The point about the nature of the proposed government being similar to that of a British Dominion, such as Canada, is particularly noteworthy, as it was this style of imperial relationship that Taft began to cite in future years as a model to look towards.

The proposed Philippine Assembly was certainly a move in the direction of Filipino inclusion in the running of their own affairs, which had been a grievance among the Filipino elite for years and was one of the major causes of the Philippine Revolution of 1896. Historian Paul Kramer describes the Philippines as having been the ‘great political exception’ in the Spanish Empire, ruled by a ‘repressive politico-military state and the reactionary friar orders.’<sup>211</sup> This being the case, it was unsurprising that, as a result of Taft’s promise of a representative Philippine Assembly, members of the Filipino elite sent many approving letters to the governor praising his measures.<sup>212</sup> Although in its very early stages, the Philippine Organic Act could be seen as Taft’s effort to bolster the policy of attraction by showing a clear

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<sup>209</sup> *Brooklyn Eagle*, February 18, 1902.

<sup>210</sup> ‘The 1901 municipal code restricted voting rights to men 23 years of age or older who could read and write in either English or Spanish, had held municipal office under the Spanish, and owned real property worth at least US\$ 250 or paid at least US\$ 15 in annual taxes.’ In the 1907 Assembly election only 104,966 Filipinos were qualified to vote, equivalent to 1.15 percent of the total population. See: Jennifer Conroy Franco, *Elections and Democratization in the Philippines*, 45-46.

<sup>211</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 36-37. Spain allowed its colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico representation in the Spanish Cortes, but the Philippines remained unrepresented. The United States also rectified this deficit somewhat, permitting the Philippines to send commissioners to represent the islands in Washington.

<sup>212</sup> Go, *American Empire*, 169.

openness on the part of the U.S. civil government to include Filipinos in the soon to be semi-democratic process of running their own affairs. However, the act did maintain an unelected, potentially U.S.-dominated upper chamber that could block any measures it deemed unwise in the more democratically accountable lower chamber. The policy was for limited Filipino involvement and, for Taft, this devolution of power looked toward a future relationship not unlike that of Great Britain to its dominions.

Although the Organic Act did not give Filipinos immediate self-government or a majority on the commission, it did promise to give the Filipinos a good deal more representation in their own affairs than the Spanish had before them. In addition, as mentioned above, it was also clear that Taft, more so than his fellow commissioners, had been active in bringing this Filipinization about. Taft appeared to have made good on his convictions: although he had been tough on those calling for independence, he had delivered the legislation for an elected Filipino-run lower house, and a strong – if not majority – Filipino presence in the upper house. The conditions set out in the act also proved consistent with Taft's ideals of good governance: the situation was not to be rushed as it was the stability of the Philippines that was key to providing long-term lasting government.

Large Policy advocate Henry Cabot Lodge wrote Taft an interesting letter in July 1902 suggesting one aspect of the commission's policy that would later come back to haunt him. Senator Lodge generally applauded Taft's work in the Philippines but confessed that: 'I still think that it is a dangerous experiment and that we are going too fast, but I hope I am wrong and you know a thousand times more about it than I do.'<sup>213</sup> Lodge believed that for all the limitations imposed upon Filipinization

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<sup>213</sup> Lodge to WHT, July 7, 1902, HCLP Reel 18.

and moves towards self-government, Taft had still gone too far, too fast. In the decade that followed Taft increasingly came around to the opinion that Lodge expressed at this time, but for the duration of his governorship these policies continued at – what Lodge at least considered – too rapid a pace.

Taft, as the previous chapter explored, considered the educated Filipino elites as an important group that held great sway over the general population. However, Taft saw the Filipinos elites as flawed in numerous ways, as he told Root in July 1900:

They are generally lacking in moral character... and are difficult persons out of who to make an honest government. We shall have to do the best we can with them. They are born politicians; are as ambitious as Satan, and as jealous as possible of each other's preferment. I think that we can make a popular assembly out of them for the Islands provided we restrain their action...<sup>214</sup>

As suggested already in this chapter, despite his reservations, Taft's primary motivation in this regard was the policy of attraction on two levels: first, to show the Filipino people America's good intentions and, second, to win around enough of the existing elite to support American rule and aid Taft in his quest to shelve the issue of independence. Historian Julian Go argues that Taft's scheme of patronage, particularly his inclusion of Filipinos in the running of local government, was well-received by the circles of the Filipino elite many of whom regarded Taft as 'the personification of American patronage.'<sup>215</sup> Taft's policy of including Filipinos within the government structures that the commission put into place seemed particularly successful in winning over a number of Filipino elites to the idea of Taft's personal benevolence.

However, Taft did not completely abandon his reservations about a policy of including the existing Filipino elites in the new American imperial set-up. As

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<sup>214</sup> WHT to Root, July 14, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>215</sup> Go, *American Empire*, 116.

historian Michael Cullinane notes, along with the U.S. commitment to implanting an American style of democracy to the islands, Taft faced the problem of continuing to ‘satisfy the political aspirations of the Filipino elite,’ while protecting the Filipino masses from this very same group.<sup>216</sup> Such a balancing act was sure to prove difficult to navigate and as historian Carl Landé suggests, Taft was unable to do both, and in the following years the Filipino elite ‘established and maintained their rule in the manner Taft had feared.’ Landé suggests that this outcome was probably inevitable, given the ‘incompatible’ nature of the aims to establish a level of self-government quickly and to prevent the existing elite from dominating it.<sup>217</sup> Historian Lewis Gleeck Jr. takes a different stance, suggesting that Taft worked actively ‘to keep the Philippines in the hands of its educated and propertied class.’<sup>218</sup> However, Gleeck’s summary seems unfair. Taft was certainly not keen on putting the Filipino elites into power, but his policy of attraction, and any system of government not run entirely by the U.S., could not realistically work without them in the short term. The appointment of Filipino elites to positions in the new government, much like the Sedition Act, was a short-term measure to help ensure the success of the policy of attraction.

Appointing Filipinos in local government, and promising a future Philippine Assembly were popular ideas with both Filipinos and Americans who wished for American imperialism to be more democratic and exceptionalist than that of their Spanish predecessors. However, the potential problem for Taft’s imperial vision was clear: the proposed popularly elected Philippine Assembly would almost certainly become a forum of debate for advocates of independence. The political branch of Taft’s policy of attraction was even more difficult to balance than the social dimension, as there could be no definitive break from the existing elite while

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<sup>216</sup> Cullinane, “Implementing the ‘New Order,’” 10.

<sup>217</sup> Landé, “The Philippines and the United States,” 528.

<sup>218</sup> Gleeck, *American Government*, 31.

maintaining the idea of attraction. Establishing a new elite would be too slow to coincide with the creation of the Philippine Assembly as set out in the Organic Act. Therefore, the assembly would likely prove both the *coup de grace* of the political part of the policy of attraction, and also the biggest problem for Taft's desire to quash the notion of Philippine independence.

### ***The Federalistas***

Taft was not blind to the seeming clash between his suspicion of Filipino elites and their inclusion in the U.S.-run government. Therefore, he did his best to convince himself and others that such a clash was not as problematic as it might appear. As early as August 1900, long before he was installed as civil governor, Taft told Root that there were 'a few notable exceptions' to the general 'unscrupulous' ranks of the Filipino elites.<sup>219</sup> In this letter, Taft illustrates that he was aware of the problems he would face regarding inclusion of the Filipino elite if he were to characterise them uniformly as unsuitable for government, by setting up the notion of an elect few who were suitable. This idea was in line with the Lamarckian idea of racial improvement, suggesting that some rare specimens progressed faster than others of their race on the road to civilisation. On September 1, 1901, making good on this concept, three Filipinos joined the ruling Commission, an idea Taft had championed, and a subject on which he had overruled the desires of some of his fellow commissioners. This move was within the accepted wisdom of the policy of attraction: Filipinos were thus represented at the highest level of Philippine government, sending out just the right message to the population.

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<sup>219</sup> WHT to Root, August 18, 1900, WHTP 8:463.



The first three Filipino commissioners were not elected, but appointed, and were outnumbered by Americans in the Commission. The three exceptional Filipinos were all also relatively pro-American in their sympathies: Benito Legarda, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera and Jose Luzuriaga.<sup>220</sup> Taft told Root, a year before these appointments, that ‘Mr. Legarda is to be classed only with two or three of the best men in the Philippines,’ and was conveniently the ‘most efficient friend of the American cause in these islands.’<sup>221</sup> Taft also praised Pardo de Tavera as ‘cultivated, honorable and entertaining,’ as well as being a fine physician and a man of ‘very decided literary attainments.’<sup>222</sup> Taft did recognise the evident favouritism he showed towards pro-American Filipinos. However, this does not mean he was necessarily being cynical in his appointments, but rather, as he saw it, pro-American Filipinos were the most intelligent and forward thinking.

Given the lengths Taft was willing to go to in his attempts to stifle calls for independence it is not surprising that he used the early period of his administration in the islands to stifle the same people in their attempts to gain political office. Taft’s attempts to quash pro-independence elites took on another form with the establishment of the Filipino Federal Party, which was launched in December 1900. The Federal Party was distinctly pro-American, and its platform accepted U.S. sovereignty and a republican style of government.<sup>223</sup> Taft spoke of the Federal Party as a ‘peace party’ and regarded its inauguration in December as ‘very successful.’<sup>224</sup> It is also unsurprising that all three of Taft’s exceptional Filipinos who were appointed as commissioners belonged to the Federal Party. However, perhaps the

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<sup>220</sup> They were also, as historian Rene Escalante notes, all former members of Emilio Aguinaldo’s revolutionary government at some level, causing disquiet among some insular officials. Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 133.

<sup>221</sup> WHT to Root, August 31, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>222</sup> WHT to Root, April 3, 1901, ERP Box 167.

<sup>223</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 76.

<sup>224</sup> WHT to Root, December 27, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

most remarkable facet of this new force in politics was noted by Filipino politician Pardo de Tavera, who later became a commissioner: ‘it was stated as one of the ambitions of this party that, ultimately, after peace has been established, that the people may aspire to a condition of government where they will enjoy all of the personal liberties and privileges of American citizens, and that they may be able to demonstrate somewhat in the future their fitness for the organization of these Islands into a State of the Union.’<sup>225</sup> For Taft, whose primary aim, it is argued here, was to subdue the independence movement, the Federal Party represented quite the opposite of independence. Nevertheless, the issue of statehood for the Philippines was almost as problematic as the issue of independence.

American statehood for the Philippines was always relatively unlikely given the general antipathy among many, if not all, imperialists and anti-imperialists in the United States, to the idea of admitting 8 million non-white citizens to the union. Secretary of War Root, for example, believed that statehood would simply add ‘another serious race problem’ to the United States.<sup>226</sup> However, although the new status of “unincorporated territory” did not include the notion of eventual statehood, as might have been expected with the formation of previous territories, it also did not preclude such a possibility. Even though achieving statehood for the Philippines faced the substantial problem of objections from many within the United States, it was an idea that Taft toyed with briefly, at least rhetorically, in his early dealings with the Federal Party.

On January 9, 1901, Taft told Secretary Root that the Federal Party’s long term aim was to be ‘made a state within the United States,’ making clear that Taft was

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<sup>225</sup> Report of Interview with Commission with Mess. Buencamino, Pardo de Tavera, Villamor and Dr. Bourns, with reference to the formation of the new Filipino party, December 24, 1900, ERP Box 164.

<sup>226</sup> Frank Ninkovich, *United States and Imperialism*, 55.

not attempting to side-step this issue in his support for the party.<sup>227</sup> Over the following month Taft remained keen to impress upon Root the potential of this new party, writing later in January that ‘the growth of the federal party has been wonderful,’ and that it was ‘gathering into its ranks all the leading men of the archipelago.’<sup>228</sup> However, U.S. support for the Federal Party was not restricted simply to Taft and, as historian Brian Linn remarks, Taft’s rival General MacArthur also aided the party by enabling its members to travel freely throughout the islands and spread their pro-American message.<sup>229</sup> Taft’s choice to support the Federal Party, even with its unlikely initial goal of statehood, reflected his willingness to back influential Filipinos who would come out for anything opposed to independence, and he urged that the Federal Party should be ‘favored and encouraged as much as possible.’<sup>230</sup> Historian Frank Golay contends that, while governor, Taft left no doubt in the minds of Filipinos that he considered the Federal Party to be a ‘bulwark of Republican Philippine policy,’ and this was reflected in his ‘reserving appointments to the colonial administration for party members.’<sup>231</sup> The privileged position of the Federal Party was reaffirmed in the results of the local elections of February 1902, where the party took hold of power ‘almost everywhere.’<sup>232</sup> Taft’s hope was that, with his unreserved support, the pro-American Federal Party could be installed as the most powerful political entity in the islands. This would have long term benefits for both the policy of attraction and the continuation of American rule in the medium to long term.

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<sup>227</sup> WHT to Root, January 9, 1901, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>228</sup> WHT to Root, January 13 and 18, 1901, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>229</sup> Linn, *U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency*, 24.

<sup>230</sup> WHT to Root, January 29, 1901, WHTP 8:464.

<sup>231</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 77.

<sup>232</sup> Gleck, *American Government*, 27.

As one would perhaps expect, the Federal Party was not as universally popular as Taft liked to convey in his letters to Root, and there was certainly determined opposition in the islands to the policies advocated by the Federal Party. Historian Bonifacio Salamanca remarks that following the official end of hostilities in July 1902, ‘several nationalists approached Governor Taft to organize political parties based on a platform of independence.’<sup>233</sup> In response to these pleas Taft did his best to convince these pro-democracy advocates not to proceed for the next two years or so, and it was not until 1906 that this ban on radical (pro-independence) parties was lifted.<sup>234</sup> An example of this underlying pro-independence political movement was the Filipino Democratic Party whose proposed program of September 1902 declared an intention to secure ‘the Independence of the Philippines by lawful means.’<sup>235</sup> The Filipino Democratic Party was not as radical as Aguinaldo and his followers, who fought the United States for freedom and whose nationalist government Taft had characterised as a dictatorship. As a revised Democratic Party program of October 1902 illustrated, the party accepted the fact of American sovereignty and sought to work for independence peacefully from that basis.<sup>236</sup> As much as Taft might have hoped the Federal Party would grow and flourish, the widespread feelings of nationalism and support for eventual independence within the islands made it likely that pro-independence parties would arise sooner rather than later. In acknowledgement of this factor Taft did his best to frustrate and delay the political organisation of the Filipino Democratic Party, and he declared to Secretary Root in November 1902 that he had ‘succeeded in suspending the organization of the

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<sup>233</sup> Salamanca, *Filipino Reaction to American Rule*, 140.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> Program of the [Filipino] Democratic Party, September 19, 1902 [filed November], ERP Box 164.

<sup>236</sup> Program of the [Filipino] Democratic Party, October 19, 1902 [filed November], ERP Box 164.

Democratic Party for a time.<sup>237</sup> What this behaviour illustrates is that, with the Organic Act of 1902 promising an elected assembly within but a few years, Taft was using the influence he currently had to try and establish the Federal Party as the largest and most influential party throughout the islands. Taft's method was clear, he simultaneously patronised his favoured party while disrupting and delaying the organisation of any substantial opposition.

Historian Rene Escalante argues that the Federal Party 'contributed immensely' to Taft's goal of pacifying the islands in their role as interpreters of American policy in the islands.<sup>238</sup> Ultimately, however, the Federal Party's rise to power hinged almost entirely on the patronage of Governor Taft, and its lack of a popular base would prove to be its downfall. Historian Leon Wolff claims that the Federal Party 'attained its peak the day it was organized and from then it went downhill.'<sup>239</sup> Frank Golay goes further when he suggests that Taft was critical to the party's survival and that following his departure from the Philippines in 1903 the party 'fell apart,' due to lack of a rapport with most Filipinos and the gradual disillusionment with the party among American administrators.<sup>240</sup> Therefore, one might count the Federal Party among Taft's failures in Philippine policy during his governorship. Historian Whitney Perkins suggests that Taft's 'optimistic good-will' led him to rely too heavily on the Filipino population's willingness to cooperate with the idea of the Federal Party.<sup>241</sup> Taft was only too aware of the popularity of the call for independence, and he was surely aware also that it was far stronger than any desire for statehood. Taft did show optimism in his support and patronage of the Federal Party, but any canny politician is aware that appearances are vitally

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<sup>237</sup> WHT to Root, November 22 1902, ERP Box 164.

<sup>238</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 136.

<sup>239</sup> Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*, 322.

<sup>240</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 77.

<sup>241</sup> Perkins, *Denial of Empire*, 203.

important, and such a belief was illustrated time and again in the policy of attraction. Taft was bound to exaggerate the possibilities of the Federal Party, both privately and publicly, if it were to have any chance at all of outlasting his patronage. To this end, Taft failed, but the policy was consistent with his growing conviction about a continued imperial presence in the islands.

### *A Promise of Independence*

From his earliest days in the islands, Taft was certain that the American political education programme to prepare Filipinos for self-government would not be a short-term policy but more of a medium to long-term policy. In a letter to U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan, written in June 1900, Taft asserted that Filipinos would require ‘the training of fifty or a hundred years before they shall realize what Anglo-Saxon liberty is.’<sup>242</sup> Taft never set a firm timetable for this period, as noted by historian Glenn May, but rather gave estimates of up to three generations.<sup>243</sup> Although Taft was vague on timing, he was aware that matters had to be treated with care, as he informed his brother Horace in April 1901: ‘You are quite right in saying that being Americans we are likely to go too fast in conferring self-government upon these people, but possibly we can keep some checks which will prevent the disasters naturally flowing from such a course.’<sup>244</sup> Taft, in the policy of attraction, saw the measures he instigated as the short term means to an end. This end was not self-government, but the attraction of popular opinion to the U.S. imperial venture as a whole.

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<sup>242</sup> WHT to John Marshall Harlan, July 14, 1900, cited in: Oscar Alfonso, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Philippines*, 44.

<sup>243</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 15.

<sup>244</sup> WHT to Horace Taft, April 12, 1901, WHTP 1:19.

In the same letter to his brother of April 1901, Taft went on to discuss his fears of a promise of independence, and he expressed grave doubts about the Platt Amendment's promise of Cuban independence made the previous month. Such a promise, Taft argued, 'would destroy the possibility of tranquillity and peace during a period long enough to prepare them for self government.'<sup>245</sup> In June 1902, anti-imperialist Senator George Frisbie Hoar wrote to a correspondent following a meeting with President Roosevelt. Hoar claimed that his understanding of Taft's position was that 'to declare our purpose to give them independence would be misunderstood there and would set everything at sea again, and that all that he has accomplished would be lost.'<sup>246</sup> Hoar was firmly opposed to an American empire, but he nevertheless summed up the message that Taft was keen to convey about independence. Taft's argument was that to promise independence would cause too many problems in the islands, as the Filipino people would undoubtedly misinterpret such a promise. For anti-imperialists such as Senator Hoar, this message might have suggested that Taft was not necessarily opposed to independence in the future, but that instead he was more concerned over making a success of the process of handing over increased amounts of control to the Filipino people without having the distraction of the issue taking hold in the islands. This is what Taft wished to portray as his motivation, but during the same year he revealed a different sort of motivation hovering just below the surface of such reasoning.

In his testimony before the Senate Philippine Committee in 1902, Taft gave a detailed picture of his broader thinking about the future of the American relationship with the islands and revealed his increasing consideration of a long-term imperial

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid. The Platt Amendment did not provide *complete* independence for Cuba by any means, but called for the removal of U.S. troops and for self-government within a very short period when compared to U.S. policy in the Philippines. The United States would maintain oversight in many key areas of Cuban affairs, most notably regarding their foreign relations.

<sup>246</sup> George F. Hoar to W. Schurz, June 5, 1902, GFHP Box 90.

relationship.<sup>247</sup> Taft began by expressing his faith in the idea of tutelage, stating that a government had to be established under ‘American guidance’ while the Filipinos gradually improved their knowledge of ‘what is individual liberty and what is a constitutional government.’ Following this generally accepted picture of the imperial venture, Taft gave an indication of his own developing idea of the imperial relationship by suggesting that when the Filipinos had undergone this tutelage ‘the time will come when the United States and the Filipino people together can agree upon what their relations shall be.’ This statement may initially appear to be simply vague, but the meaning was clearer than it seemed: independence was, in this projected future, not a natural outcome of American tutelage.<sup>248</sup>

Taft did not stop at simply suggesting a future reconsideration of the imperial relationship, but went on to provide a clearer picture of the sort of alternative to independence he had in mind: ‘Whether a colony – I mean a quasi-independent colony as Australia and Canada are to England – an independence state, or a state of the Union, is a question so far in the future, dependent on the success of the operation of the stable government, and that I myself have not reached conclusion on the subject.’ The idea of Philippine statehood, as has been discussed above, was unlikely given the general antipathy towards the idea in the United States, and so Taft’s suggestion of this may simply have been a nod to the official policy of his much-favoured Federal Party. When a Democratic member of the Philippine Committee, Senator Edward Carmack (D, TN) pressed Taft on whether he really believed

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<sup>247</sup> The Philippine Committee’s investigation was, at the instigation of anti-imperialist Senator George F. Hoar (R, MA), meant to investigate allegations of military misconduct. Large Policy advocate Senator Henry Cabot Lodge was the head of the committee, which had a narrow imperialist Republican majority, including imperial advocate Albert J. Beveridge (R, IN). The anti-imperialist minority, led by Hoar who had publicly denounced his party’s imperial policy, was composed of Democratic senators and Eugene Hale (R, ME). Historian Stanley Karnow suggests that, despite the imperialist majority and Lodge’s choices of ‘friendly figures’ to give evidence, a vocal minority on the committee ensured the witnesses were given a grilling. See: Karnow, *In Our Image*, 192.

<sup>248</sup> Testimony of William H. Taft before the Senate Philippine Committee, 1902, reproduced in: Graff, ed., *American Imperialism*, 36.



statehood possible for a state ‘with eight or ten million Asiatics,’ Taft dismissed it as too early to predict what Americans in ‘two or three generations’ would think.<sup>249</sup> However, Taft, after the options of independence and statehood, offered the Senate Committee a third way: a continued imperial relationship, like that of Britain to its self-governing colonies – referred to from hereon as dominions.<sup>250</sup> Later in his testimony, Taft mentioned the term ‘colony’ in a negative tone, and suggested that in the eyes of the Federal Party this term meant imperialism in the exploitative nature of the Spanish empire.<sup>251</sup> Although Taft claimed he had not reached a conclusion on the subject, the idea of the Philippines as a future dominion of the United States was unusual in the general discussion of the Philippines’ future at the time.

Taft’s testimony before the Philippine Committee in 1902 was certainly bereft of definitive statements on the islands’ future. Vagueness on the future of the imperial relationship was consistent with Taft’s attempts to quash advocacy of independence in the islands, as he claimed any definitive statement on an eventual outcome of the imperial experiment would take attention away from the immediate business of building a strong civil government. Taft told the Senate Committee that ‘no matter how long’ American tutelage took, the United States had to persevere in the project until the Filipino people ‘rise to call the name of the United States blessed.’<sup>252</sup> This statement was the crux of Taft’s entire approach to the Philippine relationship and the ultimate aim of the policy of attraction. For Taft the policy of attraction was not simply a stop-gap solution to allow for the establishment of civil government, tutelage and eventual independence, but it was laying the groundwork for a long-term U.S.

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> British Dominions (at least from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards) were markedly different from other British colonies. The British recognised that the dominions had achieved responsible government but were still members of the British Empire.

<sup>251</sup> Testimony of William H. Taft before the Senate Philippine Committee, 1902, in: Graff, ed., *American Imperialism*, 37.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

commitment and a lasting imperial relationship. Taft had already revealed that he believed it would be many decades before a discussion on the islands' future would need to be held. What he hoped was that if that timing of that decision were far enough in the future, the Filipino people might actually opt to remain a dominion of the United States of their own accord.

The views that Taft expressed before the Senate Committee were reiterated in one of Taft's last public addresses in the Philippines, given just days before his departure for the U.S. on December 23, 1903. In this address before the Union Reading College in Manila, Taft defended his slogan of the "Philippines for the Filipinos" as the principle that 'makes up the web and the woof of the policy of the United States with respect to those islands.' He then continued by broaching the independence issue: 'The doctrine does not include, necessarily, the independence of the Filipinos, nor any particular degree of autonomy. It is entirely consistent with the principle to object to an immediate extension of popular government on the ground we are going too fast for the political digestion of the people, and that it is not, therefore, for their good.'<sup>253</sup> Historian Julian Go suggests that the Filipino elite heeded Taft's words, particularly the phrase the "Philippines for the Filipinos," more often than those of other prominent U.S. figures.<sup>254</sup> However, although Taft promised a policy that centred on the "Philippines for the Filipinos," he specifically did not promise independence, and to this end he added the following conclusions: 'Whether an autonomy or independence or quasi-independence shall ultimately follow in these islands ought to depend solely on the question, Is it best for the Filipino people and their welfare? It is my sincere belief that when America shall have discharged her duty toward the Philippines, shall have reduced the tariff, and made the commercial

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<sup>253</sup> Taft, "The Duty of Americans in the Philippines," December 17, 1903.

<sup>254</sup> Julian Go, *American Empire*, 195.

bonds between the two countries close and profit giving to both, the Filipinos will love the association with the mother country, and will be the last to desire a severance of those ties.’<sup>255</sup> In this conclusion Taft noted the many economic bonds that could help bind the islands together. These economic bonds, Taft hoped, would prove the firmest cement between the islands and the U.S. and this factor, and its role in Taft’s imperial vision, is the focus of the next chapter of this thesis. However, much like his testimony before the Senate Committee, Taft was envisioning a somewhat distant future where the Filipinos themselves would choose to remain part of the American empire. It was this vision that guided Taft’s thinking on the Philippine issue for the decades following his departure from the islands in December 1903.

### *Conclusions*

Overall, Taft felt that the Filipino people were not ready for independence and that discussion of the subject would serve only to hinder the progress of the American administration of the islands. To this end Taft attempted to carry out a carrot and stick policy to quash calls for independence. The carrot, or the policy of attraction, was the offer of civil government with Filipino inclusion even at the highest levels. The stick was aimed firmly at those who called for independence, and was illustrated with the passage of the Sedition Act and his patronage of the Federal Party at the expense of its rivals. To some extent all of these actions were seen as short-term political measures, to work in conjunction with the social measures explored in the previous chapter, to attract Filipinos to many supposed benefits of American rule. However, what began to set Taft apart from his peers was his growing belief that quashing the

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<sup>255</sup> Taft, “The Duty of Americans in the Philippines,” December 17, 1903.

independence movement need not only be a short term aim to set the Filipinos on the long road to self-government. For Taft, the successful shelving of the independence question could set the Philippines on the road to a continued imperial union with the United States.

Even in his final year as civil governor, Taft stuck to his familiar warnings about those who called for independence. In a letter to Senator Lodge, Taft described the problem thus: ‘the insurrecto Filipino, the man who is shouting “independencia”, has no more idea of individual liberty and no more purpose of giving it to the common people than the Sultan of Jolo.’<sup>256</sup> Taft’s solution for the short term was to remain vague on the ultimate outcome of the Philippine imperial experiment, and instead stress the need to concentrate on the establishment of a solid civil government, on progressing with the policy of tutelage and, more importantly, the policy of attraction. In the eyes of historian Vicente Rafael this view amounted to ‘indefinite submission to a program of discipline and re-formation requiring the constant supervision of the sovereign master,’ in order for the U.S. to father a ‘civilized people.’<sup>257</sup> However, Taft’s plans were not simply a model for providing for civilisation and future self-government, Taft also sought the hearts of the Filipino people and with this their loyalty to the United States.

Taft’s policy of attraction in the realm of politics had mixed success. Whatever the limitations, Taft gave the Filipinos more substantial representation in the government of the islands than most would have imagined sensible for a figure who had a vision of a continued U.S. imperial bond. Winning over the people of the Philippines, the aim of the overall policy of attraction, led Taft to utilise the existing

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<sup>256</sup> WHT to Lodge, March 21, 1903, HCLP, Reel 20. Jolo is an island in the southwest Philippines, with a majority Moro (Muslim) population that was often characterised as the most backward and unassimilated of groups in the Philippine Islands.

<sup>257</sup> Rafael, “White Love,” in: *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, 187.

Filipino elite to accomplish his inclusion policy, which jarred slightly with his reservations about their ability and character. These might have been compromises on the high-minded rhetoric of the U.S.-Philippine policy, but Taft regarded them as necessary short-term measures. However, although Taft's policies were not uniformly successful, as the demise of the Federal Party after Taft's departure illustrated, Taft felt he had done all he could within the malleable boundaries of the policy of attraction to try and keep the idea of independence off the table.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **The Enthusiastic Developer: The Tariff and Chinese Immigration, 1900-1908**

##### *Introduction*

Most opponents of the U.S. role in the Philippines, at the time, cited the economic motivations behind the venture as an example of the exploitative nature of imperialism. An economic motivation, for the anti-imperialists, showed more clearly than anything else that the American version of an overseas empire was hardly exceptional. On the other hand, many advocates of imperialism in the Philippines pointed to the trading and commercial benefits of the relationship as perhaps the only concrete benefits for American businessmen and citizens, not to mention its much-heralded position as the gateway to the China market. Administrators such as Taft attempted to express the economic benefits of the imperial relationship in a more balanced way with the idea that economic and trading benefits would be shared with, and maybe even favour, the Filipino people. Taft also saw these economic ties, trade links and long-term U.S. investment in the islands in particular, as crucial to cementing the social and political bonds around which he sought to create a permanent imperial union.

William Lloyd Garrison, the son of the prominent abolitionist spokesperson (of the same name), wrote a poem entitled “Onward Christian Soldier!” in 1899 critiquing the United States’ imperial ambitions. The final stanza aimed particular criticism at their economic motivations: “Then, onward, Christian soldier! through fields of crimson gore, / Behold the trade advantages beyond the open door! / The

profits on our ledgers outweigh the heathen loss.’<sup>258</sup> The proponents of this critical viewpoint were not just contemporaries. The influential “progressive school” of historians following on from Charles Beard and the later New Left historians, such as William Appleman Williams and Walter LaFeber, regarded economic influence as key to motivating U.S. imperialism in this early period and beyond.<sup>259</sup> With the reality of an overseas empire solidifying during the period 1898-1901, Taft’s attempts to strengthen the islands’ economic ties with the United States reveal the clashes that arose between short-term measures that formed a part of the policy of attraction and his longer-term imperial vision.

This chapter first addresses Taft’s efforts to remove the tariffs between the U.S. and the Philippines during his time in the islands and afterwards. It looks at how Taft broke away from the political mainstream in this attempt, illustrating how critical he regarded this policy to be. The larger part of the chapter is devoted to a more often overlooked element in Taft’s considerations regarding economic methods for bringing the Philippines closer to the United States: the issue of Chinese immigration to the islands. Chinese immigration was already an issue of growing controversy in the United States, as will be explored later, and the addition of the Philippines as a U.S. possession further complicated the matter. As Harvard based commentator Russell McCulloch Story put it in 1909: ‘The problems of immigration with which the United States has had to deal have not been confined, since 1899, to the Western Hemisphere alone.’<sup>260</sup> Story recognised that the issue of Chinese immigration to the Philippines echoed, but did not parallel, the situation in the continental United States. For Taft, the varied circumstances and the potential for a different immigration policy for the

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<sup>258</sup> Garrison, “Onward Christian Soldier!” December 4, 1899, GFHP, Box 89 [May 26, 1902].

<sup>259</sup> Beard, *The Idea of National Interest*; W. A. Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*; LaFeber, *The New Empire*.

<sup>260</sup> Story, “Oriental Immigration into the Philippines,” 168.

Philippines were to be integral to his involvement in the issue throughout the next decade.

This chapter argues that Taft's aim of drawing the U.S. and the Philippines into a permanent imperial relationship complicated what could have been a far simpler policy in regards to Chinese immigration to the islands. To allow for large-scale U.S.-led capital investment in and development of the islands, Taft required long-term investment as evidence that U.S. interests in developing the islands' resources were not merely fleeting and exploitative. Taft wanted to demonstrate that economic involvement would also be beneficial to the Philippines and the Filipinos, in the model of the policy of attraction. To accomplish this, Taft needed U.S. and European merchants and businessmen in the islands, as well as the U.S. government and the Filipino population to support him. Chinese immigration to the Philippines was an area where the interests of the mercantile community in the islands departed fairly strongly from the interests of the other parties that Taft needed to win over. This chapter analyses the difficulties Taft faced over this issue, and what they reveal about the wider problems Taft faced when it came to his long-term vision for U.S. imperial connections with the Philippines.

### *The Tariff and the Economic Bond*

As early as August 1900 Taft had suggested to Secretary of War Root that one of the main drawbacks of granting the Philippines independence was that 'Capital would be driven from the Islands, and after a year [chaos] would reign.'<sup>261</sup> In October 1900 Taft wrote to Senator Lodge that the islands' 'capacity for development under

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<sup>261</sup> WHT to Root, August 18, 1900, WHTP 8:463.



American auspices is not to be exaggerated in a material way... Nothing will civilize them so much as the introduction of American enterprise and capital here.<sup>262</sup> Here Taft focused attention on the potential civilising aspects of economic intervention; after all, the United States was a capitalist and economic powerhouse so economic motivations did not need to be something to be ashamed of. This suggestion on Taft's part can be looked at in a number of ways. In the most benevolent sense, capital investment would see increased productivity and substantial growth in infrastructure that Taft viewed as integral both to his policy of attraction and also as evidence that the U.S. was in the islands for the long haul and not just a quick gain. In the opinion of historian Rubin Weston, Taft wished to tie the Philippines to the U.S. economically leading to a permanent relationship through capital investment in the islands, trade relations and new tariff regulations.<sup>263</sup> This opinion is certainly in line with the more general thesis in this chapter, that Taft saw economic matters as yet another method by which to draw the U.S. and the Philippines into a more lasting and preferential relationship. However, as has already been established, Taft desired more than an informal economic empire such as that which gradually appeared in Latin America. Taft desired a permanent imperial link between with the Philippines and economic bonds were simply one of a number of methods by which Taft sought to bring about his imperial vision.

In line with his beliefs about an economic side to the continuing bond between the two places, Taft felt that much could be gained from reducing or even removing the tariffs between the U.S. and the Philippines. As early as December 27, 1900, Taft criticised the idea of maintaining a high tariff wall between the U.S. and the Philippines: 'The condition in which these Islands would be left were we obliged... to

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<sup>262</sup> WHT to Henry Cabot Lodge, October 17, 1900, HCLP, Reel 15.

<sup>263</sup> Weston, *Racism in U.S. Imperialism*, 114.

enforce the Dingley Tariff Bill would be most anomalous and difficult.<sup>264</sup> The Taft Commission's report of 1901 recommended that Congress grant Philippine exports to the United States a preference of not less than 50 percent of American tariff duties in order to stimulate the islands' economy.<sup>265</sup> However, the question of tariff revision was far from straightforward, as had been demonstrated when the less threatening idea of tariff reduction between the U.S. and Puerto Rico was debated.

In early 1900 the McKinley administration had suggested revising the tariff with Puerto Rico. Historian Göran Rystad suggests that the issue of Puerto Rican tariff revision served as a "rallying-point" for anti-imperialists, who went on to suggest that the full Constitution should follow the flag to the United States' new insular possessions. Prior to the Supreme Court's further definition of the islands' status in the Insular Cases of 1901-1905, there was a fear in the U.S. that tariff revision could set a wider precedent for equal treatment under the constitution.<sup>266</sup> Since Taft was approaching the tariff question in the Philippines at a time when the question of the insular possessions' constitutional status was still not fully defined, he was swimming against the tide of political opinion.

Despite this earlier outpouring of concern about the potentially wider constitutional ramifications of tariff revision, Taft was adamant that it was a good idea for the Philippines. Following the Supreme Court's classification of the archipelago as an "unincorporated territory," the Philippines were not included within the domestic sphere and thus were liable to pay the full (and potentially punitive) Dingley Tariff rates of 1897 in the same manner as a foreign country.<sup>267</sup> Historian Rene Escalante argues that Taft put particular stress on the idea that by reducing

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<sup>264</sup> WHT to Root, December 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>265</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 78.

<sup>266</sup> Rystad, *Ambiguous Imperialism*, 60-85.

<sup>267</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 156. The Dingley Tariff took its name from Representative Nelson Dingley Jr. (R, ME).

tariffs – which he believed would bring about an improvement in the islands' economy – the likelihood of peace in the islands would move a step closer, in line with his policy of attraction.<sup>268</sup> Nevertheless, there were issues besides Taft's policy of attraction at stake from the point of view of U.S.-based politicians, as there had been in the Puerto Rican case. In addition to this, as political scientist Grayson Kirk noted in an essay of 1936: Article IV of the Treaty of Paris specified that the United States would admit Spanish ships and merchandise to Philippine ports on the same terms as the U.S. for ten years.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, if there were any 'attempt to establish a special tariff regime favoring the two powers' this might have brought about clashes with other states regarding their rights to share in any special rates.<sup>270</sup> However, as Escalante goes on to note, the primary opposition to Taft's calls for tariff reduction came in the form of the influential U.S agricultural sector, which saw the existing tariff as in their particular interests.<sup>271</sup> This was perhaps the most obvious stumbling block from an American point of view, as the powerful tobacco and sugar industries in particular would certainly not be in favour of any direct competition from the U.S. overseas possessions.

Finally, in December 1901 and early 1902 the U.S. Congress debated a new tariff bill to determine the trade relations between the United States and the Philippines. Taft told the Philippine Committee in early 1902 that: 'We are looking, so far as we can, after the interests of the Philippine Islands, with a view to developing trade there that shall be a benefit to those islands... the lower you get the duties on goods coming from the Philippine Islands into the United States, the more

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<sup>268</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 172. At the time of this debate the Philippine-American War was still taking place. Escalante also points out that the Tariff Act passed by the Philippine Commission lent heavily in the favour of the United States over other nations.

<sup>269</sup> Kirk, *Philippine Independence*, 57.

<sup>270</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 172.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-177. Escalante suggests that, other than Philippine hemp, Philippine agriculture did not really benefit from the revision of tariffs.

trade will be developed.<sup>272</sup> Following long debates in both houses, the tariff rate was lowered in March of 1902 when Congress voted to set a duty of 75 percent of the Dingley rates on Philippine goods entering the United States.<sup>273</sup> The result was less than Taft had hoped for and he continued to push for a further reduction. However, Taft's efforts to reduce the tariffs routinely failed throughout his governorship and his time at the War Department, and it was not until Taft occupied the White House that further action took place on the tariff issue, and by that point the question of the Constitution following the flag had been answered far more clearly.<sup>274</sup>

Aside from the tariff, the awkward passage of the Spooner Bill, which aimed to bring about civil government in the Philippines, helped to illustrate the difficulties that Taft faced in his advocacy of strong economic bonds between the U.S. and the Philippines. The Spooner Bill aimed to establish that 'all military, civil and judicial powers necessary to govern the said islands [Philippines] shall, until otherwise provided by Congress, be vested in such person and persons and shall be exercised in such a manner as the President of the United States shall direct, for maintaining and protecting the inhabitants of said islands in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property and religion.'<sup>275</sup> The *New York Times* described some of the main reasons for the passage of the bill as: providing a body able to 'legislate and control the incorporation of concerns, regulate mining claims, [and] dispose of public lands.'<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> "Affairs in the Philippines," Senate Doc. No. 331, Pt. 1, 153.

<sup>273</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 156.

<sup>274</sup> For full details see G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 156-157. Two further votes in 1902 to lower the tariff to 50 and 25 percent of the Dingley rate failed largely due to the Senate and the influence of sugar and tobacco interests; renewed efforts in 1905 also failed. See also Chapter Five of this thesis, 217-223.

<sup>275</sup> Walter Wheeler Cook, "How May the United States Govern the Philippine Islands?" 68. The bill was named after Wisconsin Senator John Coit Spooner, who went on to turn down the offer of the post of Secretary of State in Taft's cabinet in 1909. He had also turned down positions in the cabinets of President McKinley. The Spooner Bill was amended before it was passed in March 1901, and provided only for a provisional government, under MacArthur, which could deal with such issues, leaving with McKinley the question of when the civil government (by this point with Taft to be civil governor) would be inaugurated. See also: *New York Times*, March 3, 1901.

<sup>276</sup> *New York Times*, January 26, 1901.

Seen in these terms, the Spooner Bill was regarded by anti-imperialists in the Senate, such as George Frisbie Hoar, as legislation aimed at ‘economic exploitation’ on the part of the Taft Commission.<sup>277</sup> Taft was undoubtedly keen to see that the Spooner Bill was passed, as he strongly favoured civil government as soon as possible. He also regarded the bill as key to allowing for basic economic investment in the islands.

In November 1900 Taft expressed some hope that the Spooner Bill would be passed, writing about a letter from Senator Henry Cabot Lodge ‘in which [Lodge] says he thinks the Spooner bill can be passed if the President requests it in his message,’ Taft went on to add his own thoughts: ‘I hope that it may be passed for it would be like running on one wheel to attempt to develop this country without the power to offer investments to capital.’<sup>278</sup> In Taft’s view, civil government would be fatally undermined without powers to allow economic investment in the islands.

Ultimately, however, Taft was not to gain the powers he sought in the Spooner legislation. As historian Frank Golay suggests, with Senator Hoar’s amendments to the Spooner legislation, the powers proposed for the commission were significantly cut back. Congress subsequently passed the ‘emasculated’ Spooner legislation as an amendment to the Army Appropriations Act.<sup>279</sup> Taft was disappointed with what he regarded as the failure of the Spooner legislation and with it a delay in the power he desired for governing the Philippines and spurring on economic growth and development in the islands.

The tariff issue and the Spooner Bill are just a couple of examples of the wider economic-based method by which Taft hoped to further the policy of attraction; the aim was to show both the benefits that U.S rule was able to bring to the islands and simultaneously draw the Philippines increasingly into the U.S. sphere of influence. In

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<sup>277</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 71-72.

<sup>278</sup> WHT to Root, November 30, 1900, ERP Box 164.

<sup>279</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 73.

hearings before the Senate Philippine Committee in 1902, Taft went so far as to claim that an end to the U.S imperial presence in the islands would ‘drive out capital; prevent capital from coming there; and upon the investment of capital, the building of railroads, the enlargement of vision of the Filipino people much of our hope of progress must depend.’<sup>280</sup> The United States was, after all, an economic power and therefore, if the Philippines were to develop in its image and not be exploited as they were by the Spanish, Taft believed that not only U.S.-style democracy and government had to be duplicated in the islands but so did a modern economic state. Taft was aware of the criticism that unchecked statements on U.S. capital investment might evoke in the United States, especially from the anti-imperialist camp. In a speech before the American Chamber of Commerce in late August 1902, which Taft could expect to be an audience friendly to his pro-economic development message, the Governor made clear that the U.S. was in the Philippines ‘to benefit the Filipinos and not for selfish exploitation.’ Nevertheless, having established this point, Taft went on to point out that ‘The investment of American capital, however, is an important factor, and the commission will support the businessmen.’<sup>281</sup> In this way Taft attempted to bring together the theory of U.S. exceptionalism and U.S. investment in the Philippines: the U.S. was keen to be involved economically, but only so far as involvement was mutually beneficial.

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<sup>280</sup> Graff, ed., *American Imperialism*, 41.

<sup>281</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 1, 1902.

### *The Other Yellow Peril*

Although most historians, referenced earlier in this chapter, discuss the issues surrounding U.S. economic development of the islands, such as tariff reform, very few touch upon the issue of Chinese immigration. Chinese immigration to the Philippines proved a troublesome issue for Taft throughout his years in the islands and beyond. The issue illustrates an important aspect of Taft's attempt to draw the islands into a closer bond with the United States via economic development.

Chinese immigration to the United States had only really become an issue by the mid-nineteenth century and the focus of the objections was centred in the Pacific states, where the large majority of the Chinese immigrants resided. Objections to the Chinese followed a familiar pattern to much of U.S. nativism: as well as racist objections, the Chinese represented economic competition and would accept lower pay. It is also worth noting, as historian Stuart Creighton Miller does, that 'cultural anxiety over the admission of such a dissimilar migrant as the Chinese was not confined to any one section of the country.'<sup>282</sup> By 1882 anti-immigration and anti-Chinese sentiment led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prevented any immigration to the United States of skilled or unskilled Chinese labourers for a period of ten years.<sup>283</sup> Historian Andrew Gyory suggests that traditional interpretations of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which argue that it came about as a result of pressure from workers, politicians and others from California, combined with a generally racist nineteenth-century atmosphere, do not paint the full picture. Instead, Gyory argues that the decisive factor was the role played by national politicians, who

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<sup>282</sup> Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant*, 192.

<sup>283</sup> In 1888 a treaty was negotiated that further restricted the emigration of Chinese and also had a ten-year revision clause. Both the 1882 act and the 1888 treaty were renewed in the 1890s when their initial ten-year periods had lapsed.

were keen to attract the anti-Chinese vote, during a period of closely contested elections, in a state that was evenly divided in its party loyalties.<sup>284</sup> In 1882 anti-Chinese sentiment unified enough animosity among the U.S. population that it became a salient electoral issue, and it was not one that disappeared soon afterwards.

During the debates over the annexation of Hawaii in the 1890s, the idea of the islands as a platform, or stepping-stone, for Chinese immigration to the U.S. mainland was a matter of real resonance to those opposed to annexation. As Eric Love suggests, the incorporation of the existing Chinese (as well as Japanese) communities in the islands, was seen as an impending danger to the United States.<sup>285</sup> In 1898, when the annexation of Hawaii was finally achieved, Chinese exclusion was extended to the islands. The results of the Spanish-American War of the same year would bring the issue of Chinese exclusion to the islands of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines.

In 1902 and 1904 respectively, the Chinese Exclusion Act and immigration treaty were extended indefinitely.<sup>286</sup> Anti-immigration forces won the day when indefinite extension became law with President Roosevelt's signature on April 29, 1902.<sup>287</sup> The 1902 and 1904 measures included the Philippines and Puerto Rico within their terms, bringing Chinese exclusion to America's new possessions. Like the issue of tariff extension to the insular possessions, the fear of unleashing a foreign threat to the mainland played an integral role in ensuring that exclusion was extended to the Philippines. This chapter analyses the debates over this extension of Chinese exclusion to cover the Philippines in the years leading up to and after 1902, and particularly Taft's role in these debates. Taft's involvement in these debates saw him caught between numerous interest groups and between his own ideals regarding

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<sup>284</sup> Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, 1. Gyory's book discusses the Chinese Exclusion Act in impressive depth, as well as considering the various historiographical approaches to the legislation.

<sup>285</sup> Love, *Race over Empire*, 149-151.

<sup>286</sup> See especially: Jeremiah Jenks and W. Jett Lauck, *The Immigration Problem*, 389-396.

<sup>287</sup> Daniels, *Asian America*, 112.



attraction and U.S. investment in the islands. In this way, the Chinese immigration issue highlights the difficulties Taft faced when trying to reconcile the policy of attraction with his longer-term imperial vision.

Those books on U.S.-Filipino relations that do deal with Chinese immigration often do so to form a backdrop to explore other issues: Stuart C. Miller and Stanley Karnow, for example, both discuss the history of Sino-Philippine relations in a broad sense. Miller says that anti-Chinese sentiment had a ‘long history in the Philippines,’ which rose to become ‘violent Sinophobia’ by the late nineteenth century.<sup>288</sup> Karnow adds that of all the races in the Philippines ‘the Chinese were the most potent economically,’ and he provides an outline of Chinese success in business within the islands during the Spanish colonial era.<sup>289</sup> Antonio Tan’s 1972 work *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1898-1935*, looks more closely at the nature and development of Chinese society within the Philippines. Tan makes clear that the Chinese population in the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century was comprised largely of ‘poor, illiterate peasants and coolies who came from Southeast Asia for economic reasons’ and who lived in a ‘hostile and insecure atmosphere.’<sup>290</sup> The Filipino view of the Chinese seems therefore to depart somewhat from reality. The poor and illiterate Chinese in the islands, like many immigrant groups from across the globe, were seen as an economic threat by the “indigenous population” despite what appears to be their general poverty in the period that Tan investigates. The hostile anti-immigrant feeling towards the Chinese in the Philippines had more than a hint of the Californian situation to it, and this hostility from the general population was a big obstacle for Taft to overcome.

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<sup>288</sup> Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 32.

<sup>289</sup> Karnow, *In Our Image*, 62.

<sup>290</sup> Tan, *The Chinese in the Philippines*, 73 and 87.

However, it is Tomas Fonacier's 1949 article on the Chinese exclusion policy in the Philippines that is perhaps most pertinent to the issues addressed in this chapter. Fonacier details the attraction of the Philippines as a destination for Chinese labourers following the defeat of the Spanish in 1898, and with it the arrival of the Americans in the islands. Fonacier also relates the U.S. military's decision to extend the policy of Chinese exclusion to the Philippines in September 1898 and the subsequent outcry from the Chinese Minister in Washington, Wu Ting Fang. Such diplomatic discontent drew a response from the U.S. State Department, which explained that the military's present policy in the islands was not necessarily the settled policy of the United States.<sup>291</sup> Although both Tan and Fonacier discuss Taft briefly, a more thorough analysis of the nature of the policy that he followed during this period is certainly required for a better understanding of the nature of Chinese immigration policy during the Taft Era in the Philippines, and also of the plans Taft had in mind for the continuing imperial relationship between the islands and United States.

Although the military had excluded Chinese labour from the islands since 1898, the issue of Chinese immigration to the islands had not been decided upon in Washington and therefore the Schurman and Taft Commissions looked into the issue for themselves. The Schurman Commission provided the following advice on the issue when their report was published in January of 1900:

In the regions inhabited by the civilized natives sentiment toward the Chinese varies considerably in different provinces and islands. Where it is strongly hostile the Commission feels that we are bound to take it into serious consideration. And we further believe that the inhabitants of all parts of the Archipelago should be saved from the necessity of being forced to compete with Chinese labor under conditions such that they can not hope to compete with success, always provided that the legislative economic development of the country is not thereby retarded.

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<sup>291</sup> Fonacier, "The Chinese Exclusion Policy in the Philippines," 5-7.

On the other hand, we feel Chinese labor might be very advantageously used in those portions of the Archipelago where, from the character of the inhabitants and their indisposition to engage in manual toil, or from the absence of inhabitants, and the well-known disinclination of the civilized native to leave his home and settle in a new region, it would not come into competition with the labor of the country.

We therefore recommend to your careful consideration the question as to how, where, and for what purpose the Chinese should be allowed to enter the Archipelago.<sup>292</sup>

This report from the Schurman Commission introduces a number of the pressing issues that would be inherited by the Taft Commission when they arrived in the islands. Firstly, there was a marked degree of hostility towards Chinese immigrants from significant sections of the Filipino population. In this sense there was a similarity in the hostility from white Americans towards Chinese immigrants on the U.S. west coast. Secondly, the Schurman Commission held with the fairly widespread belief that the Filipinos were a race that was not inclined towards hard manual labour – this is perhaps a difference from the arguments made against the Chinese in the United States. The Chinese were widely regarded as suited to hard, low-paid work and had been feared as competitors for jobs in the western United States since the late nineteenth century.<sup>293</sup> However, whereas in the United States the Chinese willingness to work for low pay made them competitive, in the Philippines, figures such as Taft saw this as an advantage given what he saw as the innate disinclination of the native Filipino workforce towards labour. These issues were left unresolved by the Schurman Commission's final questions of how, where and why the Chinese should be allowed into the Philippines. Although Schurman's commission had ascertained an obvious drawback to such a policy – namely the hostility of Filipinos towards Chinese labour – they had left open the question of further Chinese immigration, albeit on a selective

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<sup>292</sup> Report of the [Schurman] Philippine Commission, 159.

<sup>293</sup> Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 70.

and restricted basis. Therefore, in terms of guidance for the Taft Commission in 1900, the Schurman recommendations suggested that the issue of Chinese immigration be given serious consideration, even if such immigration would need to be very carefully implemented.

### *First Contact*

Rather than encounter the issue of Chinese immigration on arrival in the Philippines, the issue actually accompanied Taft on his journey to the islands aboard the *USS Hancock*. Taft wrote to his brother, Charles, of his interest in acquiring Chinese servants for his role in the Philippines as early as May 1900 whilst en route to the islands from Japan. Taft already had preconceived ideas about Chinese as servants, telling his brother that employing Chinese would ‘greatly contribute to our comfort,’ concluding that, ‘A good Chinese cook and a good Chinese boy and a good Chinese laundryman are a thing of joy forever.’<sup>294</sup> As mentioned, the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (initially renewable every ten years) had seen the Chinese fall victim to the first large-scale race-based restriction on immigration to the United States. Taft, therefore, was fully aware that Chinese immigration was an issue that was temporarily settled in regards to the continental United States, and due for re-evaluation in 1902. Nevertheless, Taft’s thoughts in this letter to his brother suggest that whereas Taft was aware of Chinese exclusion, he was also of the impression that members of the Chinese “race” were a great boon to those for whom they worked.

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<sup>294</sup> WHT to Charles P. Taft, May 18 1900, WHTP 1:18.

When Taft moved into the governor's residence in Manila, he employed a number of Chinese servants in his household.<sup>295</sup> Taft's respect for Chinese servants seemed to come from the idea that they were reputed to be industrious, but his assumptions also caused him to attribute negative traits to the Chinese. In one letter Taft detailed a suspected robbery that caused him to carry out a 'shaking up' of his 'Chinese household.'<sup>296</sup> Taft seemed resigned to accept that at least some of his Chinese servants involved in this incident were opium addicts who were determined to take financial advantage of, or in his word 'squeeze,' him.<sup>297</sup> Despite such instances, Taft was determined to keep his Chinese serving staff, writing to Root on the matter in 1902 when the issue of extending Chinese exclusion to the Philippines was a matter of much discussion in the U.S.: 'You will remember that in our interviews with you before the Commission came to the Islands at all, we asked you to give us permission to bring in Chinese servants and that permission was given. The time is now coming when the Chinese must be registered and it must appear that those who are registered are lawfully in the country.'<sup>298</sup> In the same letter Taft went on to explain that he was unable to find a copy of this permit and asked if Root could certify this arrangement with the Collector of Customs making clear that Root had 'given authority for the Commission to bring into the Islands domestic servants for their own use: this will put upon a proper status the servants whom we now have and whom we had prior to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act.'<sup>299</sup>

Aside from such negatives, the positive attributes Taft recognised in his Chinese servants saw him and his family employ Chinese servants throughout their

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<sup>295</sup> Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol. 1, 203.

<sup>296</sup> WHT to Charles P. Taft, September 6, 1900, WHTP 1:18.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> WHT to Root, November 22, 1902, ERP Box 164.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.* Further details of the debate on the 1902 Chinese Exclusion Act and the effects of the bill are analysed at length later in this chapter.

time in the Philippines. In 1903, as the time approached for Taft's departure from the islands, he wrote to Root in relation to a particular Chinese in his employ. The servant that Taft discussed in his letter was the brother of one of Admiral Dewey's servants who had apparently been allowed to return with Dewey to the U.S. thanks to 'special legislation.'<sup>300</sup> Taft wrote to Root unhappily that his own Chinese servant had 'been with me now since I have been in the Philippines and I would give a good deal if I could get him in too [to the U.S.], but I suppose I shall have to go back to the same old life and tie up my own shoes and arrange my own toilet, because eight thousand dollars does not permit any other course.'<sup>301</sup> In this instance, Taft's primary concerns seems to be the low cost of Chinese servants more than their efficiency, but the Taft family's fondness for their Chinese servants is suggested elsewhere by the fact that Mrs. Taft saw to it that one of the Chinese servants who had worked for her and wanted to enlist in the U.S. army was given a position as a steward on a gunboat when their family left the islands.<sup>302</sup> The factor of Taft's Chinese servants illustrates that his ideas about Chinese and Chinese immigration were not simply U.S.-based stereotypes, but were influenced by personal contact with Chinese as servants, even if they remained prejudicial.

The history of Chinese immigration to the Philippines before the involvement of the United States had been somewhat different. As Russell McCulloch Story stated in 1909, although the Chinese were 'frequently expelled from the islands... the Chinese had been enjoying comparative freedom during the last fifty years of Spanish rule. The restrictions which were imposed did not constitute any real exclusion.' In fact, as Story goes on to note, the number of Chinese in the Philippines had actually

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<sup>300</sup> WHT to Root, May 13, 1903, WHTP 8:464.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Anthony, *Nellie Taft*, 174.

‘increased at a wonderful rate’ during this time.<sup>303</sup> However, as mentioned above, the U.S. military had chosen to extend exclusion to the Philippines during their time in charge of the islands and the Schurman Commission had recognised the hostility among Filipinos towards Chinese immigrants. As the former military governor, General MacArthur, told a Senate Committee in 1902, the Filipino ‘dislike’ for the Chinese was more a feeling ‘of shuddering, of dread,’ at their ‘indescribable... high qualities.’<sup>304</sup> Whatever the reason, and this testimony will be explored in detail later in the chapter, one can safely assume that Taft was aware of this hostility towards Chinese immigration among Filipinos before he arrived in the islands. In October 1900 Taft illustrated this awareness in a letter to Root, where he noted that: ‘The vicious natives of this city [Manila],- of whom there are many ,- seem to delight in murdering Chinamen and the crimes are difficult of detection.’<sup>305</sup> For Taft a clear problem was evident from an early stage: if he desired Chinese immigration, he would face substantial opposition from a sizable section of the Filipino population.

In May 1901, Taft wrote a letter to Root that dealt with the issue of Chinese immigration in detail. Taft began by pointing out that:

Nearly all the carpenter and stone work that is done here is done by Chinamen, and the exclusion of them from the Islands has raised the price of their labor to about double what it once was... The pressure of the mercantile community on us to allow the introduction of Chinamen is going to be greater and greater I can foresee. Every large enterprise that comes out there will enter upon work with great misgivings as to labor and will harass us for leave to bring in Chinamen and then to export them after the work is done.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Story, “The Problem of the Chinese in the Philippines,” 31. Story was a political scientist who taught at Clerk College in the period 1909-1910, going on to Monmouth College and University of Illinois as his career progressed. The full article discusses the many pros and cons of Chinese immigration to the islands from Story’s point of view, but concludes that Chinese immigration would be unwise in the immediate future as it might result in allowing a ‘disturbing social, political and economic factor into the life of the islands.’ This was especially the case, Story argues, while the United States was unwilling to open their doors to Chinese immigration and risk a similar clash of cultures (48). A shorter piece can be found as: Story, “Oriental Immigration in the Philippines.”

<sup>304</sup> “Affairs in the Philippine Islands,” Senate Doc. No. 331, pt. 2, 906.

<sup>305</sup> WHT to Root, October 21, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>306</sup> WHT to Root, May 24, 1901, ERP Box 167.

In this short introduction to the issue Taft immediately focused on the economic results of excluding cheap Chinese artisans and labourers. As a result, the cost of labour had increased and U.S. and other commercial interests desired a re-introduction of Chinese labour in order to lower costs. Taft followed up this neat cause and effect illustration by adding the idea that business interests would increase pressure to allow Chinese labour, and, importantly, such labour could potentially be short term in nature. Indeed, in line with many of Taft's most seemingly contentious policies in the Philippines – such as the sedition laws and his unswerving patronage of elites – Taft was keen to stress that if Chinese workers were allowed into the Philippines, such a policy would be a short-term measure for the longer-term economic benefit of Filipinos.

In the same letter Taft went on to further analyse what he deemed to be the main cause of ill-feeling towards Chinese among Filipinos:

The objection to the Chinese by the Filipinos is not to him as a laborer I think, but it is to him as a shopkeeper, peddler and merchant... he can drive everybody else out of the trading business. When he comes in as a laborer he saves money enough to enable him to open a small shop. He has a great deal more enterprise than the Filipino and has more variety in his goods... Whether a system might be adopted by which the Chinamen [sic] could be admitted as a laborer or skilled laborer under a license which should forbid his engaging in trade in such a way as to be a practical restraint, and still furnish labor, I do not know. I think that General MacArthur had some decided views on the subject, which rather reflected General Smith's views as a Collector, holding that the importation of Chinese was a menace to the situation here. I doubt the correctness of the extreme view, but it is a subject to be handled with the greatest care and a question which we can postpone certainly until conditions are more settled.<sup>307</sup>

Despite his careful words, Taft did not appear convinced that continuation of the exclusionary policies that were already in place would be the best way forward for the issue of Chinese immigration in the islands. In Taft's opinion one of the main

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid.



factors counting against Chinese immigration to the islands could be overcome by careful definition of the nature of such immigration. As Taft saw it, if the Chinese were to be allowed entry to the islands it must be on a short-term labouring-only basis. As a result, such a policy would satisfy the calls from the U.S. and European mercantile communities for cheap and efficient labour without importing a long-term racial antagonism or encouraging permanent settlement of Chinese in the islands. Nevertheless, Taft conceded in his letter, although he did not think Chinese immigration was a ‘menace’ to the Philippines, he did understand that perhaps the situation might have to wait until the Filipino-American guerrilla conflict had settled down.<sup>308</sup>

In a letter written in August of 1901, Taft’s tone had not changed much from the above letter, but his message seemed to have hardened somewhat on whether importation of labour from China would have to be the ultimate recourse at all, even if it were heavily restricted as he had earlier suggested. Taft claimed that tobacco companies, in particular, were ‘exceedingly anxious to have Chinese labor admitted, because they say that the natives will not labor though offered a peso a day, which is considered very high wages here.’<sup>309</sup> In this case, Taft and business leaders alleged that the labour problem was of the Filipinos’ own making. The Filipinos apparently resented the Chinese because they were willing to work for low wages, the very same factors that caused U.S. and European businessmen to favour their importation.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Taft declared Filipino-American hostilities at an end on July 4, 1902, though fighting continued in the more remote islands for more than a decade.

<sup>309</sup> WHT to Root, August 25, 1901, ERP Box 167. The currency in the Philippines had been called the peso since Spanish times. In February 1903 the United States passed the Philippine Currency Bill that established the Philippine peso at the level of 2 Philippine pesos to the U.S. dollar. The measure also restricted the coinage of silver, and in the opinion of the *New York Times*, even hoped to help push Mexico and China towards the gold standard. See: *New York Times*, February 26, 1903.

<sup>310</sup> The Chinese were renowned for their business acumen in the countries in which they settled. A minority rights pamphlet published in the 1970s [sic] stressed that the history of Chinese success in economic fields within the Philippines, as well as Malaysia and Indonesia, was ‘quite disproportionate to their numbers... [and] aroused the envy and antagonism of many Malays, Indonesians and Filipinos

Taft explained the Filipinos' unwillingness to work as not only a matter of costs, but partly due their inherent indolence as a race: 'The lands are so rich and produce so much for so little work that the native, naturally lazy, finds he is able to support himself with very little labor; his wants are few, his love of idleness is great.' Therefore, Taft concluded, the only solution to the supposed labour shortage that retarded the realisation of the islands' great potential was for the Filipinos to overcome their propensity to idleness and fill the gap themselves, or find somebody else to fill it: 'In the great works which are to be performed here it may be that it will be necessary to allow companies to bring in Chinamen under a bond to take them out when the work is accomplished, but until it is demonstrated that great works cannot be done without this we shall probably not recommend such a course.' Taft finished his remarks on the subject by adding that he hoped for an influx of Americans who would teach the imitative Filipinos that things they 'now regard as mere luxuries are equally necessities.'<sup>311</sup> In this last sentiment Taft once again characterised the Filipinos as racially and environmentally conditioned to laziness, but rather than focus on this, he looked more hopefully to the imitative "traits" of the Filipino. Taft hoped that an injection of U.S. consumerism and capitalist culture would awaken the Filipinos to the *need* to work to acquire more, thus helping to solve the labour problem. Taft believed that the U.S. could not only teach the Filipinos to govern in an American style but even to become more consumerist and consequently more industrious; in this sense it would appear that Taft was willing to put a lot of faith in

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who felt themselves to be economically deprived in their own countries.' This view was certainly something that figures such as Taft subscribed to, though it could well be said that such sentiments are commonly attributed to many immigrant groups throughout the world. See: Charles Coppel, "The Position of the Chinese in the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia," pp. 16-29 in: Coppel, Mabbett and Coppel, *The Chinese in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia*, 19.

<sup>311</sup> WHT to Root, August 25, 1901, ERP Box 167.

the imitative qualities he attributed to the Filipinos to make the U.S.-Philippines imperial venture a successful one.

### *The 1902 Congressional Committees*

As has previously been mentioned, during early 1902 Taft went before the Lodge Philippine Committee, which was primarily investigating allegations of U.S. military wrongdoing in the Philippines. Although not the primary focus of the hearings, Taft was questioned on the issue of Chinese immigration to the Philippines during his time before the committee, as was his predecessor as governor, General Arthur MacArthur. The reason for the hearings touching on the issue of Chinese exclusion was related to the year 1902 being the second occasion on which the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was due for its ten-year re-evaluation, and therefore added an extra urgency to establishing a clear picture on how Philippine policy should relate to that of the mainland United States.

It is useful to look first at the testimony of General MacArthur on the issue of Chinese immigration to the islands, as it provides a comparison when moving on to look at the testimony of Taft himself. Senator Edward Carmack (D, TN) began his questioning of MacArthur on the issue of Chinese immigration by citing a report the general had written in 1901, which had concluded: ‘unmistakable indications are apparent of organized and systematized efforts to break down all barriers with a view to unrestricted Chinese immigration, for the purpose of quick and effective exploitation of the islands; a policy which would not only be ruinous to the Filipino people, but would in the end surely defeat the expansion of American trade to its

natural dimensions in what is obviously one of the most important channels.<sup>312</sup> When Carmack asked for clarifications on MacArthur's statement, the general stated that Europeans and American mercantile communities based in Manila had demanded Chinese labour, regarding Filipinos as incapable. However, MacArthur suggested that the reason for native apathy to labour was partially *due* to Chinese immigration. In MacArthur's view the Chinese were such 'indefatigable laborers' and would work so cheaply that the Filipino zeal for work was oppressed – a somewhat different view to that of Taft's, as explored above. Despite MacArthur's praise for the Chinese as 'most admirable people,' he had no qualms in making his position clear: he believed that Chinese exclusion should be continued and that any change in this policy would be a negative move for the Filipinos and only serve to continue the methods of the previous centuries where the native labourers were ignored.<sup>313</sup> It appeared that MacArthur, although quick to praise the Chinese, saw any encouragement of Chinese immigration to the Philippines as a policy that was not in the interests of the United States, as it would allow what the general saw as pre-U.S. era labour problems in the islands to persist.

During Taft's extensive testimony before the Philippines Committee he was questioned on the matter of Chinese immigration on several occasions. Senator Eugene Hale (R, ME), an anti-imperialist Republican, started by asking Taft whether, in the course of increased expenditure on public works, such as his recommendations to expand the school infrastructure substantially, he felt that the admission of Chinese to the Philippines would become a 'necessity.'<sup>314</sup> Taft's reply was suitably non-committal – 'that is what the contractors say' – and he followed this by suggesting that the committee had most likely received a petition to this end from the Manila

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<sup>312</sup> "Affairs in the Philippine Islands," Senate Doc. No. 331, Pt. 2, 906.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> "Affairs in the Philippine Islands," Senate Doc. No. 331, Pt. 1, 96.

Chamber of Commerce.<sup>315</sup> From the outset, Taft, as he had in his letters to Root, aimed to make clear that Chinese immigration was not *his* policy, but rather the discussion of such a scheme was very much the preserve of the economic sector within the Philippines. However, it is also clear that Taft believed that there was something in the suggestions of the mercantile community in Manila. Such thoughts were strengthened by Taft's belief that increasing investment and trade, and developing infrastructure, were important measures in his policy of attraction.

Senator Carmack asked Taft whether he personally believed it was necessary to 'throw open the doors to Chinese immigration in order to secure a supply of efficient and helpful labor for the development of the country?'<sup>316</sup> Taft's initial response was that he hoped that this would not need to be the course of action in the Philippines. However, Taft added: 'Pressure has been brought to bear upon the Commission to recommend such a policy. In certain parts of the archipelago the admission of Chinese labor without permission to trade, keeping him a laborer, and requiring those who bring him in to take him out again, may possibly aid... in the development of the islands like Mindanao, where the population is scarce.'<sup>317</sup> In this answer there are two key areas of note. Firstly, Taft wanted to make clear that he felt pressured to consider the issue of Chinese immigration, one would assume at the hands of business interests. This appears to be an example of Taft's indirect advocacy of the policy. By continually distancing himself from direct advocacy of Chinese immigration, but also raising the issue on numerous occasions, it certainly appears that Taft wished to covertly back Chinese immigration and shield himself from the Filipino backlash to such a policy. Secondly, Taft stressed the limited nature that such immigration might take and added that such immigration might be focused in areas of

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Graff, ed., *American Imperialism*, 151.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

low population, an idea echoing that of the Schurman Commission's report. Indeed, Filipino politician Felipe Buencamino had also suggested the population factor as the primary supportive consideration when assessing the matter of Chinese immigration. In an interview with a U.S. congressman in October of 1901, Buencamino had suggested that Chinese should be admitted: 'The reason for that is because we have only twenty-two inhabitants to each square kilometer... There is no race in the world that fulfills the precept of God as to multiplying and growing like the Chinese. The Philippines need at least two hundred inhabitants to the square kilometer.'<sup>318</sup> This idea, that Chinese immigration might be strategically targeted to islands with low populations, was evidently something which proponents of Chinese immigration were keen to stress. By the logic of this theory, not only would targeting Chinese immigration to scarcely inhabited islands help develop untouched areas of the archipelago, but it would also keep the Chinese away from the Filipinos themselves.

The next key theme to Taft's testimony revolved around his advocating the notion that, given time, Filipino labour would reach a level of self-sufficiency. Taft then proceeded to give some rather speculative reasons for hope in turning around the supposed indolence of Filipino labour. Taft's first line of reckoning claimed that years of war had caused suspension of industry and that this in turn led to the Filipino labourer losing the 'habit' of industry, which one assumes could be regained now peace was being restored. Taft also thought that when contractors 'understand the Filipino character better and arrange the hours and methods of labor to suit the views of the laborer when it will not interfere with their efficiency, they may be able to secure better results.'<sup>319</sup> This latter theory was, Taft suggested, based on the evidence of differing results achieved by various U.S. military officers and civilian employers.

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<sup>318</sup> Interview between Congressman Gaines and Señor Don. Felipe Buencamino [Interpreted by Walter H. Fergusson] October (13), 1901, EPR Box 164.

<sup>319</sup> Graff, ed., *American Imperialism*, 152.

Following this understanding of labour relations, Taft believed that good management was the key to unlocking the true potential of Filipino labour, and that once this was achieved the Filipino would be able to provide the necessary labour to fill the requirements of the mercantile community in Manila. At another point in the hearing, Taft stressed the efforts being made by the commission to begin training Filipinos so that they would be able to provide the skilled labour that was lacking by adopting ‘appropriations for the establishment of [industrial] training schools.’<sup>320</sup> As was suggested to some extent in his letters to Root, Taft’s testimony again reaffirmed the idea that Taft viewed Chinese immigration as a possible occurrence that should only be a stop-gap solution until a sustainable labour system in the Philippines had been established. In this case too, Taft’s belief in education came to the fore. Where Taft believed in primary and political education to raise the Filipino to the standard required for increased self-government, he also held that Filipino labour could be educated to become more self-sustaining.

Senator Carmack did not leave the issue of Chinese immigration at how it might come about, but instead touched on one crucial aspect of the imperial debate that related to such immigration. The senator asked Taft: ‘Is it not true that one of the great obstacles to the pacification of the islands has been, and is, the fear of bringing Chinese labor to the country, and the fear of sudden and excessive exploitation, and the belief that the United States want the islands purely for purposes of such exploitation?’<sup>321</sup> What was clear from this question, and what Taft himself had to admit, was that many of the resistance fighters in the Philippines – along with many in the U.S. (both supporters and critics) – did believe in an association of U.S. imperialism with economic exploitation. If Taft was to press, albeit apparently

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<sup>320</sup> “Affairs in the Philippine Islands,” Senate Doc. No. 331, Pt. 1, 97.

<sup>321</sup> “Affairs in the Philippine Islands,” Senate Doc. No. 331, Pt. 2, 267.

grudgingly, for limited Chinese immigration to the Philippines against the will of the Filipinos, not only would he be undermining the policy of attraction's theme of the "Philippines for the Filipinos" but he would also be making an unpopular decision clearly associated with U.S. economic interests. To allow Chinese immigration, therefore, would prove much more difficult for Taft to sell to the Filipinos as primarily for their benefit, when most of the figures pressing for such immigration were foreign trade and business interests in Manila and not the Filipinos themselves.

Senator Carmack went on to point out that General MacArthur himself had suggested that 'one of the greatest difficulties attending military efforts to tranquilize the people of the archipelago arises from their dread of sudden and excessive exploitation which they fear would defraud them of their natural patrimony and at the same time relegate them to a status of social and political inferiority.' Taft avoided conceding this point outright, responding instead that this was the danger of exploitation if it occurred 'too soon.'<sup>322</sup> Nevertheless, the Senate hearing had made it clear that if there were to be Chinese immigration to the Philippines, the perception of the motivations for such a policy would have to change rather dramatically. If Taft wished to encourage U.S. investment on a longer-term basis, tying the U.S. to the Philippines economically, it would need to be done in a manner that appeared to benefit the Filipinos; otherwise Taft's policy of attraction might be fatally undermined by accusations of economic exploitation.

While Taft was still in Washington D.C. for his hearing before the Philippine Committee, he also gave testimony on the issue of Chinese immigration to the Committee on Immigration on March 5, 1902.<sup>323</sup> In a similar vein to his testimony

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 267-268.

<sup>323</sup> The committee included Senators Boies Penrose (Chair: R, PA), Charles Warren Fairbanks (R, IN), Henry Cabot Lodge (R, MA), William Paul Dillingham (R, VT), John Fairfield Dryden (R, NJ), Thomas MacDonald Patterson (D, CO), and Representative Hitt (R, IL).



before the Philippine Committee, Taft reiterated his key problem. The Philippine Commission had, Taft explained, in ‘casual discussion’ expressed the opinion that Chinese immigration ought ‘not to be allowed,’ and this reflected Filipino feelings that were ‘very much opposed to the general admission of Chinese.’ Taft’s initial conclusion was that this situation had ‘a political bearing which, if general Chinese immigration be made possible, would give us a great deal of trouble.’<sup>324</sup> If anything, Taft’s remarks here only made clearer that the issue was a political dilemma that the Philippine Commission would have preferred not to have to deal with. However, despite the fact that both the commission and the Filipino population appeared not to favour Chinese immigration, Taft went on to lay out a policy towards immigration that seemed somewhat beyond the *status quo*.

When looking at the manner of Taft’s testimony before this committee, one important factor that he considered was the capacity of the U.S. to police any form of immigration policy in the Philippines. Taft felt that even if exclusion were to be the chosen policy for the Philippines it would prove difficult to enforce. Senator Lodge asked Taft what he thought of the probability of Chinese exclusion being a workable policy. Taft’s response, in line with the fact that Chinese immigration had not ceased entirely during the prior period of U.S. military and civil rule, despite exclusion being in place, suggested that he felt that exclusion was unlikely to be entirely enforceable. Taft told Lodge: ‘Of course the Chinaman is the greatest smuggler in the world, and his capacity for counterfeiting identity, with our lack of power to distinguish one from the other... Gives him an advantage in that respect.’<sup>325</sup> Despite the racial overtones of Taft’s reasoning on the difficulty of enforcing immigration restriction, it would not be difficult to assume that in a nation made up of over seven thousand islands located a

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<sup>324</sup> Hearing before the Committee on Immigration, U.S. Senate, March 5, 1902, GFHP, Carton 178 [Expulsion of the Chinese 1892], 490.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

great distance from the United States, policing immigration was a task that would certainly prove challenging. Overall, Taft seemed to concede that exclusion would be somewhat ineffective and unworkable in reality, even if the flow of Chinese to the islands would be slower with exclusion in place than without.

As with his testimony before the Philippine Committee, the main discussion on immigration focused around whether Chinese immigration policy in the Philippines should be the same as it was for the U.S. mainland. What remained to be seen was whether the misgivings of the civil commission and the Filipino population would give way to the interests of business when Taft came to recommending action on Chinese immigration before the committee. Taft told the Committee on Immigration:

Now, it seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that the best way for Congress to meet this problem is to establish its policy with respect to the United States, and then to treat the Philippine Islands, so far as concerns the introduction of Chinese into the United States, as if it were a foreign country, and that then the Commission or the legislative body of the islands be given some power and authority in its discretion to admit skilled labor, with provision for its return within such time as the Commission may determine.<sup>326</sup>

Taft's statement in this instance appears to give a much clearer indication of the way he was starting to think about at least the short-term policy of allowing Chinese immigration to the Philippines. Admittedly, in his previous statements before the Philippine Committee and in letters to Root, the idea of highly conditional immigration, with some sort of guarantee of the immigration being purpose limited and time limited, had been touted. However, what differed in this instance was that Taft set out a method for how Chinese immigration policy in the Philippines might differ from that of the continental United States. Taft suggested that the Philippines

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 495-6.

might not be included in the mainland provisions of the Chinese Exclusion Act, but rather control of Chinese immigration to the Philippines could be transferred to himself and the commission. Ultimately, what Taft was suggesting was that the immigration policy of the Philippines be left flexible under his oversight, despite his earlier suggestions that Chinese immigration was a thorny issue and something the Filipino population appeared to feel strongly against. In this sense, Taft's mind appeared to be anything but set against Chinese immigration, differing from what he had suggested in most of his previous comments on the subject. The need for public works projects that were integral to the policy of attraction, such as school and road building, as well as the calls of the foreign mercantile community in Manila, meant that Chinese immigration was something that Taft was not going to resist outright.

### *The 1902 Congressional Debate on Chinese Exclusion*

Although Taft gave the Committee on Immigration a good deal of information regarding his thoughts on Chinese immigration in the Philippines, the question of whether he was to establish control of immigration policy in the islands was out of his hands. The Congressional Record from 1902 is replete with discussion of Chinese immigration, and the issue of this matter in relation to the Philippines was not overlooked. On April 4, 1902 the new Chinese Exclusion Bill was discussed before a Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union. Representative James B. Perkins (R, NY) set out the main provisions of this bill, which were pertinent to the Philippine situation. Perkins suggested that the annexation of the Philippines posed the United States two problems in relation to Chinese immigration. Perkins argued that the first of these problems concerned the 'at least 250,000' Chinese who were already

resident in the Philippines. Perkins then went on to remind those present that Governor Taft had suggested before the committee that ‘the great majority of the Chinese in the Philippine Islands would gladly come to the United States if they could have the opportunity.’ The problem, therefore, was not so much that there were already Chinese in the islands, but that they might travel to the United States, and thus the bill set out that: ‘the exclusion of the Chinese against those living in China should be extended to the Chinese who live in the colonial possessions of the United States, and the act provides that Chinese laborers, Chinese coolies, can not come from the colonial possessions to the mainland any more than they can come from China to the United States.’ This provision, Perkins confidently believed, was unlikely to meet with much opposition; in this instance the Philippines Islands were to be treated as if they were a foreign country. However, this first issue was much less controversial than the second of Perkins’ problems: ‘Should the exclusion of the Chinese be extended to the colonial possessions?’<sup>327</sup>

In relation to the immigration of Chinese to the Philippines, Perkins prefaced his remarks by noting that the conditions in the Philippines were different from those in the United States. Perkins related the following outline of the findings of the Committee on Foreign Affairs:

There is in the Philippine Islands, for instance, no body of educated, industrious, intelligent laborers, and the question was, What is the best thing for the interests of the Philippine Islands?... The committee was convinced that the desire of the Filipinos themselves was that they should not be subjected to the further competition of Chinese labor; that they were not ready to compete with them, and certainly they are not, and for that reason the committee has reported, by the bill before this Committee of the Whole, that Chinese laborers be excluded from the colonial possessions of the United States upon the same terms and

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<sup>327</sup> Congressional Record, 57:1, April 4, 1902, 3698-3700. The bill H. R. 13031 was introduced by Representative Perkins from the Committee on Foreign Affairs on March 26, 1902, to replace the existing bill H. R. 9330 that was due to expire on May 5, 1902.

in the same manner that they are excluded from the mainland of the United States.<sup>328</sup>

These findings seem quite unambiguous; in the eyes of this particular committee Chinese immigration would not be permitted to the Philippines, and further, the Philippines should be treated – in this respect – just like the United States. What is also noteworthy is the use of the phrase ‘colonial possessions’ by the committee, giving credence to the idea of the Philippines as a distinctly imperial possession. Given Taft’s suggestion of control over Chinese immigration to the islands being given to the Philippine Committee, and for the Philippines not to be treated like the United States in this respect, Perkins’ subsequent remarks can be viewed with some surprise: ‘Governor Taft, the head of that [the Philippine] Commission, appeared before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and gave his evidence. He is in thorough sympathy with the exclusion of the Chinese. What he said before the committee had, I think, more effect than what was said by anyone else in leading the committee to the conclusion that the exclusion of the Chinese from the Philippine Islands was judicious.’<sup>329</sup> In this situation, what seems evident is that Perkins was seeking to impose his own views upon those of Taft’s and add the aura of Taft’s position and experience in the Philippines to his viewpoint. There is no sense that Taft ever gave such a clear-cut view on Chinese exclusion, as has been discussed at length already.

When considering Taft’s testimony before the Philippine Committee and the Committee on Immigration, in addition to the testimony Perkins cites from the Foreign Affairs Committee, it would appear that Taft’s view on what was the best policy in regard to Chinese immigration to the Philippines was not as clear as Perkins wanted it to seem. If Taft had convinced Perkins and the Foreign Affairs Committee that total

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 3699.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

exclusion was best for the Philippines, and that it was his testimony that was most influential in leading Perkins to be assured of the judiciousness of exclusion, then perhaps his testimonies had been so non-committal as to baffle everybody involved as to his opinion on what was the best next step. If Taft believed so certainly in the total exclusion policy, then one might wonder just why he had proposed to the Committee on Immigration that a potentially flexible policy might be implemented under the control of the Philippine Commission. Just as with the controversial issue of Philippine independence, Taft had suggested one policy relatively firmly, but left his opinions vague enough to allow for a change in direction. However, in the case of Chinese immigration, Taft's seeming ambiguity when it came to a clear-cut statement on future policy had failed to be vague enough and in this case Congress looked prepared to take charge of making a clear-cut decision based, apparently, on Taft's very own advice.

The issue of Chinese exclusion from the Philippines was not as unanimously approved of as Chinese exclusion from the mainland, regardless of Perkins' affirmations of the popularity of such a policy. As the congressional debate continued over the following days and weeks, various Congressmen highlighted the wider complications of extending the Chinese exclusion policy to the islands. Representative Ebenezer Hill (R, NY) suggested that Chinese exclusion from the Philippines would not only bring 'embarrassments from a commercial point of view,' but added that 'the people in the Philippines are, as I have said, absolutely dependent upon the Chinese mainland for even the food they eat.'<sup>330</sup> The same day a fellow New York Congressman, William Harris Douglas (R, NY) stressed the difference between the case of the U.S. mainland and the islands, by noting that the Philippines were

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., April 7, 1902, 3793.

‘nearly 10,000 miles from our shores’ and much closer to China, meaning that Chinese exclusion was not a simple solution to the immigration issue in the Philippines. Douglas went on to suggest the following action, which had marked similarities to Taft’s suggestions to the Committee on Immigration:

The Chinese have been there [in the Philippines] in force for hundreds of years, and it does seem almost unnecessary, so far as the Philippine Islands are concerned, to enforce this law as we propose to make it. It seems to me unnecessary to make it absolutely mandatory on the Philippine Commission to do so in order to protect the United States. I believe that we could with wisdom allow these men to have some say as to the provisions of this act and as to the extent to which it shall be enforced here... I believe and hope that the gentlemen who are pushing this measure will be sufficiently liberal at least to allow the Philippine Commission to use discretion, and not do an absolute injustice to the Chinese to the extent of excluding them from places where they have been since before this country was practically ever heard of, when Western civilization was unknown and Eastern civilization was at its height.<sup>331</sup>

This last point was a direct criticism of the idea of the U.S. exclusion policy being haphazardly enforced upon a foreign land with such distinct and separate historical and cultural links to China. Douglas was not alone in accepting that the Philippines had every reason to be treated differently in this area of policy; the islands were geographically, economically and historically closer to China than they were to the United States. Essentially, Douglas’s point was that the United States would be wrong to impose Chinese exclusion on a region where Chinese immigration had taken place for years before the United States had ever been interested or involved in such a process. Hill had also echoed the sentiments Taft had expressed before the Committee on Immigration: that the Philippines might be best served by allowing the Philippine Commission direct ‘discretion’ on Chinese immigration in relation to the Philippine Islands. Representative Julius Kahn (R, CA) rejected such ideas, making clear that he hoped that such amendments to the bill before them would be rejected, and that the

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 3801.

best course was for the ‘existing conditions’ (exclusion) in the Philippines to be continued.<sup>332</sup>

One final part of the Congressional debate on the bill relating to the issue of Chinese immigration to the Philippines came in the Senate on April 28, 1902.<sup>333</sup> Senator Alexander Clay (D, GA) allayed the fears of Senator Henry Moore Teller (D, CO) that the Philippine Commission would not be given leave to ‘open the door to the admission of Chinese laborers,’ making clear that instead the Commission would only have power ‘to regulate the mode of ascertaining the number of Chinamen in the Philippine Islands.’<sup>334</sup> As Senator Patterson added, the Commission would also have the ‘duty of enforcing the exclusion provisions’ in the Philippines, but have no say in controlling the provisions.<sup>335</sup> President Roosevelt signed the final bill, with these above provisions included, on April 29, 1902.<sup>336</sup>

The Congressional debate had raised a number of issues that suggested why the policy of Chinese exclusion in the Philippines should be treated differently from the policy in relation to the United States mainland. The only influence the Philippine

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<sup>332</sup> Kahn argued that the only change necessary was the transfer of the ‘enforcement of the law from the War Department, where it is now, to the Philippine Commission,’ and not that the power of discretion in the implementation of that law be given to the commission. Although all three of the Congressmen cited above were Republicans there is one notable difference that helps to understand their division on this subject that appears most clearly: geography. Hill and Douglas were from New York State, whereas Kahn was from California, and this more than anything else would suggest why Kahn felt so differently on the subject. The issue of Chinese immigration was a pressing one in California, and it would be surprising if any member from that state had anything but strong reservations about any flexibility or locally run restriction on Chinese immigration.

<sup>333</sup> The Senate debate was concerned primarily with the first of Perkins’ problems with Chinese immigration to the Philippines: the existing immigrant population in the islands. The Senate’s compromise on this issue required that all Chinese resident in the US insular territories (excluding Hawaii) would require a ‘certificate of residence’ or face deportation.

<sup>334</sup> Congressional Record, 57:1, April 28, 1902, 4762.

<sup>335</sup> This issue had also been debated, primarily in relation to the impracticality of sending a sizable delegation of officials from the United States to the Philippines for the express purpose of keeping tabs of Chinese exclusion rather than having existing officials in the islands undertake this task. This concession was part of the ‘compromise’ made by the Senate who had originally supported the idea of sending Washington appointees to overseas Chinese exclusion policy in the Philippines.

<sup>336</sup> As a result of the 1902 Chinese Exclusion Act and again with the 1904 Chinese immigration treaty all exclusionary legislation was extended to U.S. insular possessions. Chinese immigration from the insular possessions to the U.S. mainland, or from one U.S. possession to another (e.g. Philippines to Hawaii) was prohibited, although moving from one island to another within the same group was permitted (e.g. Luzon to Mindanao). See: Jenks and Lauck, *The Immigration Problem*, 395-396.



Commission were to gain was responsibility for the implementation of full exclusion of further Chinese immigration, and responsibility for deporting any already resident Chinese who were unable to acquire appropriate evidence that they should be allowed to remain in the islands. One might assume that these were rather onerous duties that nobody was keen to take on. Taft's apparent ambiguity on the question of the role that the Philippine Commission should play in Chinese exclusion had ultimately landed him additional responsibility and administrative duties, but no actual power to regulate, or even consider short-term provisions for, Chinese immigration to the islands.

### *The Immigration Debate Continues*

On April 29, 1902, Chinese exclusion in the Philippines was officially synthesised with the legislation that was relevant to the mainland United States and its other possessions. However, for Governor Taft, this was apparently not the end of the debate. Despite the fact that Representative Perkins had cited Taft's testimony before committee as evidence of the judiciousness of extending Chinese exclusion to the Philippines, Taft himself decided to keep the debate alive even after the renewal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1902, which included the Philippines specifically *within* its jurisdiction.

On May 6, 1902, just over a week after the exclusion law had been extended to the Philippines, Commissioner Luke E. Wright cabled Secretary of War Root with advice supporting reconsideration of such an extension. Wright informed him of the conclusions of an economics-focused investigation undertaken by Professor Jeremiah

W. Jenks in northern India, Burma, the Federated Malay States, the Straits Settlement, Sumatra and Java.<sup>337</sup> Wright's cable concluded that Jenks' various findings 'all indicate clearly that foreign labor preferably Chinese possibly East Indian should be admitted to the Philippine Islands under careful restriction(s). Exclusion from the United States wise but investigation makes clear that if Chinese admitted to Philippine Islands under restriction(s) it would benefit immeasurably both Americans and Filipinos.'<sup>338</sup> This advice gives a different complexion to the debate in favour of Chinese admission. In Taft's testimony before the various committees he had consistently stressed that he thought Chinese admission was generally not the favoured option and that it was Philippines-based business interests who were pressing for such a policy. Professor Jenks offered further, and less self-serving, support for the admission of Chinese labour. Jenks's experiences in other imperial possessions in South East Asia, notably the British and Dutch colonies there, suggested that conditional Chinese immigration was undoubtedly beneficial for all concerned, and that other colonies offered evidence that such a policy could be successful. The idea that a model for such a scheme had already been tested elsewhere was something that might be expected to play well with those who doubted the "theoretical" benefits of Chinese immigration touted by business interests in the Philippines.

By September 2, 1902, during a speech to the board of trade in Manila, many of whom were, of course, in sympathy with repealing Chinese exclusion legislation, the *Washington Post* reported that Taft had suggested 'that the act extending the Chinese exclusion law to the Philippines be amended.' The article went on to state that Taft seemed to be reiterating the same message of "flexibility" that he had

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<sup>337</sup> Professor Jenks was a renowned American economist who would later be a member of the influential Dillingham Immigration Commission in 1907.

<sup>338</sup> Luke Wright to Root, May 6, 1902, ERP Box 165

expressed before the Committee on Immigration: 'It is contemplated to remove the iron-clad restriction which now exists and clothe the Philippine Commission with the power to regulate the entrance of Chinese labor.' These plans entailed what the *Post* described as 'a wisely regulated system of admissions' of Chinese as laborers under 'sufficient bonds... under proper systems of identification, and a condition that they leave the Philippines after a certain specified period in time.' Finally, the *Post* included a note that such recommendations from Taft were in answer to 'pressing demands' from American business interests in the islands to aid the 'development' of the Philippines.<sup>339</sup> Here, just over four months since Congress and the president had agreed to extend Chinese exclusion to the Philippines, Taft appeared to be urging – somewhat more publicly and persistently than before – that some form of limited immigration should in fact be allowed.

Despite such suggestions that Taft was moving towards promoting an amendment to the Chinese exclusion policy in the Philippines specifically, Taft's correspondence at the time still suggested he had reservations about the necessity and wisdom of Chinese immigration. In October of 1902 Taft wrote to Root regarding a group of merchants in the Philippines who were planning to send a representative to Washington to urge modification of the Chinese Exclusion Act 'so as to admit coolies under some restriction.' Taft warned Root that he did not think that the merchants were motivated simply by the desire for 'cheap labor.'<sup>340</sup> Taft reiterated earlier suggestions that there might be a case to be made for conditional admission of bonded skilled labourers, but felt unskilled labour was not in desperate shortage. Taft appeared to be at loggerheads with business interests and, in this instance, openly questioned their motivation for advocating Chinese immigration. However, rather

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<sup>339</sup> *Washington Post*, September 2, 1902.

<sup>340</sup> WHT to Root, October 4, 1902, ERP, Box 164.

than state that he was firmly against the policy of allowing Chinese immigration and embrace the existing exclusion legislation, Taft appeared determined to leave the window open for negotiation on the issue.

On December 4, 1902 the *Los Angeles Times* reported on a speech that favoured Chinese immigration given by Brewster Cameron, an American representative of the Chamber of Commerce in Manila, which had been made on Taft's return to the islands (following his trip to the Vatican).<sup>341</sup> According to Cameron: 'If the commission had one year ago been given the power to admit skilled Chinese labor, there would 'now' be in course of construction here a practical manual training school for 4000 Filipinos, who were to receive wages while serving as apprentices to 6000 Chinese artisans...The 6000 Chinese artisans were to leave these islands at the end of five years, by which time the apprenticed Filipinos could have taken their places.' Cameron had gone on to suggest the Philippine Commission should not only be given leave to permit immigration of Chinese *skilled* workers, but they should also be given the power to admit Chinese coolies for the 'building of railroads or other enterprises of great magnitude, that must be completed in less time than Filipino labor can be found to do the work.'<sup>342</sup> In this speech, at the specific request of business interests in the Philippines, Cameron not only echoed the request that Taft had begun to accept in relation to conditional immigration of artisans, but in addition, Cameron included the somewhat more contentious issue of the immigration of Chinese coolies. What this speech, unsurprisingly, reveals is that business interests in the Philippines were evidently keen to keep the debate on Chinese immigration alive, and that, in line with Taft's remarks in favour of some limited and conditional immigration, politicians and those in positions of influence might be open to re-

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<sup>341</sup> This could well be the very representative that was spoken of in the letter cited above.

<sup>342</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 1902.

evaluating the situation. By the time Taft left the islands at the end of 1903, the issue had been legally resolved and lay outside of the commission's and Taft's hands. Despite this, Taft continued to become involved in debates on the issue of Chinese immigration to the archipelago. Taft's desire to develop the islands' infrastructure and stimulate long-term U.S. investment in such projects, as part of the wider policy of attraction and his desire to create a lasting imperial union, made the immigration issue far more problematic for him personally than might have otherwise been the case.

### *The Chinese Reaction*

Although the scope of this chapter mainly deals with Chinese immigration to the Philippines, there is inevitably some overlap in relation to wider immigration issues involving Taft during his tenure as Secretary of War (1904-1908). Chapter Four of this thesis looks at Taft's diplomatic role in the immigration debates with Japan with regard to the United States mainland, rather than the Philippines. Therefore, in the remainder of this chapter the subject of Taft's role in relation to immigration will be restricted to the Philippines as far as possible, thus avoiding repetition – but also to allow for direct and relevant comparisons with his policy on Chinese immigration to the Philippines during his tenure as civil governor.

Although the issue of Chinese immigration rose to the fore in U.S. foreign relations again during Taft's time as Secretary of War, the issue of Chinese immigration to the Philippines was subsumed into the greater issue from an American point of view. President Roosevelt's second term saw a number of exclusion related problems for Sino-American relations including: the Chinese exclusionary movement; the Chinese boycott of 1905-1906; an attack on the American mission in Lienchou;

and Chinese criticisms of the American China Development Company.<sup>343</sup> However, coupling the Chinese exclusion policy in the Philippines with exclusion policy of the mainland United States was another bone of contention in Sino-American relations, as it was an issue which Chinese diplomats and officials during the period did not view at all favourably. On June 28, 1905 the *New York Times* reported that the ‘question of Chinese exclusion from the United States continues chiefly to occupy the attention of the Chinese. The extent and depth of feeling manifested astonish foreigners, and are regarded as an evidence of the growth of a national sentiment and public spirit which five years ago would have been inconceivable.’ This short extract the *Times* reflected how many commentators regarded the situation at the time. By 1905 the issue of Chinese immigration seemed, outside of California at least, to be an issue that largely consumed the Chinese rather than the American government. In the view of the *Times* the ‘chief obstacle’ in the settlement of the Chinese immigration debate from the Chinese viewpoint was ‘the question of exclusion of coolies from Hawaii and the Philippines,’ especially as Chinese immigration had ‘long been established in the Philippines.’<sup>344</sup> Despite the passage of the 1902 exclusion legislation that had incorporated the Philippines within a general Chinese exclusion policy for the United States and its territories (incorporated or otherwise), the debate from a Chinese point of view was far from settled, the Philippines being one area in particular where the Chinese considered there was still some room for manoeuvre.

In August 1905 the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Wu Ting Fang, vice-president of the Chinese board of foreign affairs and former Chinese minister to the United States, had called for the admission of Chinese labourers to Hawaii and the Philippines ‘without restrictions.’ The *Tribune* also reported Wu’s disappointment at

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<sup>343</sup> See: Michael R. Riccards, *The Presidency and the Middle Kingdom*, 55.

<sup>344</sup> *New York Times*, June 28, 1905.

the 1902 extension of Chinese exclusion to include the Philippine islands: ‘The Philippines, he said, had long been a natural field for Chinese industry, but the application of the exclusion act to the islands had changed this. Regarding the desirability of Chinese labor in the far east Wu instanced the prosperity of Singapore, in the Straits Settlements, and the adjacent country.’<sup>345</sup> Once again the stress that the newspaper made was upon what Wu had said regarding the Philippines: that the Philippines was different from the mainland United States and should not be treated similarly. Both the *Times* and *Tribune* articles cited the argument that the Philippines had a “history” of Chinese immigration, and one must assume that this was supposed to far exceed in importance the “history” of Chinese immigration to the United States, which was far from a sudden modern occurrence. In addition to this Wu had suggested, much like Jenks in 1902, the positive potential of Chinese immigration and provided examples of various other South East Asian colonies as evidence of this. By October 8, 1905 a letter written by Wu was paraphrased in the *Washington Post* suggesting that Wu desired ‘new treaties [which] should provide that the Philippines and Hawaii should be excepted from the operation of the Chinese exclusion laws... The Philippines are at the door of China, and the “discriminating and humiliating exclusion laws” were extended to those islands “without the consent and under the strong protest of the Chinese government.”’<sup>346</sup> This letter was a more strongly worded indication of Chinese unhappiness with the *status quo* of Chinese exclusion in the Philippines. In this case Wu added to historical immigration the issue of geographical proximity, but more notably Wu strongly decried U.S. policy on the issue calling the exclusion of Chinese from the Philippines ‘humiliating’ and he stressed the fact that China’s protests had gone ignored by U.S. policymakers.

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<sup>345</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, August 10, 1905.

<sup>346</sup> *Washington Post*, October 8, 1905. The *Post* cited a letter from Mr. Wu to a Mr. D. A. Tompkins, of Charlotte, NC, in response to an enquiry about the Chinese trade boycott.

Seemingly the Chinese authorities, although generally unhappy about the U.S. policy of Chinese exclusion, felt that unlike mainland immigration, insular immigration was an area where diplomatic pressure might have some reasonable likelihood of success. The issue of Chinese immigration to the Philippines was to remain at the very centre of the debates over Chinese exclusion in general, but the reasons for reconsideration were issues that Taft and others had raised before and during the debate on exclusion in 1902. Although no new evidence had surfaced, the issue of Chinese immigration was kept alive by business interests in the Philippines, as Taft had often remarked, and also by Chinese diplomatic figures regarding the interests of Chinese emigrants.

### *Conclusions*

In terms of tariff revision, Taft was keen to establish free trade so as to encourage investment and forge closer economic bonds between the U.S. and the Philippines. However, in this instance, though there was some reduction in the tariff, Taft was going against the flow of much political uncertainty over such a policy in the United States. Taft appeared to be somewhat overlooking the divisions that had plagued the tariff debate over Puerto Rico in 1900, when some anti-imperialists had seized on the issue to argue for full constitutional rights for the inhabitants of the U.S. insular possessions. With many of the Insular Cases still to be passed during the years 1901-1905, the status of an “unincorporated territory” was still in flux, and perhaps the timing was not right for such a bold move in tariff revision.

Similarly, in the case of Chinese immigration, Taft’s ambiguity was not effective enough to allow for the situation to remain unresolved, given the difficult



domestic and diplomatic climate, and consequently the Chinese were excluded from the islands in 1902. Taft's policy towards Chinese immigration in the islands was ultimately a failure, but it serves as a useful example of his aim to tie the Philippines closely to the United States in order to forge a permanent relationship between them. This aim led Taft to become involved in an issue that was never going to bring him any personal political advantage or satisfy every group that he wished to placate, especially the Filipinos themselves. However, here Taft again seemed to overlook the wider picture, especially in regard to domestic U.S. opposition to such a policy. Both the tariff and the Chinese immigration issues reveal Taft's aims to bind the two nations together economically, in line with his imperial vision, but also illustrate the somewhat parochial nature of his vision when it came to wider political concerns.

## Chapter Four

### The Great Postponer: The Japanese Threat and Self-Government, 1904-1908

#### *Introduction*

On September 5, 1907, William Jennings Bryan, known widely as “The Great Commoner,” coined a new nickname for Secretary of War Taft. In a speech before an audience of fellow Democrats in Oklahoma City, Bryan was discussing Taft’s suggestion that Oklahoma reject their proposed constitution and ‘postpone Statehood.’ The Commoner suggested that this was symptomatic of Taft’s policies in general: ‘Taft is inclined to postpone everything. He promises to acquire the title of the Great Postponer.’ Although the name did not catch on, Bryan did make an interesting point. Despite Bryan’s focus upon Oklahoma’s constitutional status, he did not fail to extend this theme of “postponement” to the equally debated status of the Philippine Islands, a subject on which he had always been a notable anti-imperialist. As Bryan was making his speech in Oklahoma City, Taft was on his way back to Manila to preside over the opening of the new Philippine Assembly, a keystone event in his continued policy of attraction. Bryan, ever the orator, described the analogy thus: ‘[Taft] is on his way to the Philippines to tell the Filipinos that, while he thinks they ought to have self-government after a while, he wants it postponed for the present. It is not strange, therefore, that he should yield to his ruling spirit in the matter of statehood and tell you to put it off.’<sup>347</sup>

Having left the Philippines at President Roosevelt’s request to take up the position of Secretary of War in December of 1903, Taft had been widely lauded for

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<sup>347</sup> *New York Times*, September 6, 1907.

his work in establishing a stable civil government in the islands. One of Taft's given reasons for accepting this cabinet position, ahead of the offers of the Supreme Court associate justiceships offered him, was that as Secretary of War he would be able to keep close tabs on the situation in the Philippines.<sup>348</sup> Historian Rene Escalante, who argues that Taft's role in the U.S.-Philippine experiment was restricted to his tenure as civil governor, concedes that Taft himself saw the move as allowing him to remain 'in charge of Philippines affairs.'<sup>349</sup> Escalante also notes that other motivating factors for Taft's move include concerns over his health – that had caused him to return temporarily to the United States in 1902 – and the fact that such a move would have been regarded as a promotion, despite the actual reduction in Taft's wages.<sup>350</sup> The Bureau of Insular Affairs, described by historian Romeo V. Cruz as 'America's colonial desk,' administered the United States' insular possessions and, as a division of the War Department, was under the direct charge of the Secretary of War.<sup>351</sup> Therefore, Taft, in his new role, had even more power over Philippine policy than he had had as civil governor, although his influence would be diluted somewhat as he was responsible for numerous other matters in the ever-growing field of U.S. foreign affairs.

This chapter will explore how Taft's policy towards the Philippines, though overshadowed by the many diplomatic missions Roosevelt assigned him during his tenure at the War Department, continued to develop during his time as Secretary of War. Ralph Eldin Minger's book *William Howard Taft and United States Foreign*

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<sup>348</sup> Despite Taft's oft-stated goal of a seat on the Supreme Court, when two seats became vacant in 1903, whilst he was serving as Civil Governor of the Philippines, Taft rejected Roosevelt's offers of becoming an Associate Justice citing his duty to the Filipinos. (Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. and William Rufus Day were appointed to the US Supreme Court in 1903 instead). Taft replaced Elihu Root as Secretary of War in early 1904. Root retired to his private law practice before returning to the cabinet in 1905 as Secretary of State following the death of John Hay.

<sup>349</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 5 and 246-247.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-247.

<sup>351</sup> Cruz, *America's Colonial Desk and the Philippines, 1898-1934*.

*Policy: The Apprenticeship Years* (1975) and Joseph M. Rowe's PhD thesis (1977), both analyse Taft's role as Secretary of War on a case-by-case basis following all of Taft's diplomatic postings during this era.<sup>352</sup> Where these works attempt to explore the numerous diplomatic missions that Taft undertook during his time as Secretary of War, this chapter focuses instead on the continuing importance of the Philippine issue to Taft. Following on from the previous chapter, which highlighted the influence of Taft's plans for a continued imperial bond with the Philippines and how he approached relations with China and Chinese immigrants, this chapter looks at how the Philippine question influenced Taft's conduct in diplomatic affairs with Japan during this period. From being concerned solely with Philippine policy from 1900 to 1903, Taft was thrust into the world of international diplomacy and sent on troubleshooting missions to Panama, Cuba, Russia, China and Japan, as well as visiting the Philippines twice, which Minger describes as 'broad responsibilities' beyond what were previously expected of a Secretary of War.<sup>353</sup> Taft had no real military experience, despite being appointed to head the War Department, but Roosevelt recognised the benefit of Taft's legal expertise and experience in the Pacific as useful in employing him as more of a diplomatic than military Secretary of War.<sup>354</sup> Despite his new role and its different responsibilities and concerns, Taft maintained his stance on the policy of attraction, whilst growing slightly sceptical about the pace of Filipinization that was integral to the early success of the policy. Above all, Taft remained resolute on the idea that the Philippines should not be independent, nor be offered independence within the foreseeable future. Most commentators conclude that as Secretary of War, Taft was Roosevelt's man, as

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<sup>352</sup> Rowe, "Diplomatic Troubleshooter"; Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*.

<sup>353</sup> Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*, 103.

<sup>354</sup> Escalante, *Pax Americana*, 246.

historian Serge Ricard puts it: ‘the nonchalant, loyal lieutenant.’<sup>355</sup> However, Taft’s stance on the Philippines during this period suggests that Taft was more than simply a loyal puppet of Roosevelt. During the years Taft spent in the War Department the U.S. faced various diplomatic issues that arose in Asia, and gradually public opinion – and even the thoughts of pro-imperialists such as Roosevelt – started to accept that Philippine independence would be the eventual outcome of the U.S experiment. This chapter will show that during a period when imperialists started to question the long-term presence to the U.S in the islands, Taft did his utmost to secure his vision of an imperial future.

Historian Romeo Cruz argues that although independence was never promised in the Taft Era in the Philippines, ‘it was pretty much understood that separation was the logical culmination of the policy,’ but that this was undermined by ‘cultural “brain-washing” of the nation so that by self-interest and gratitude the colonial relationship would be perpetuated.’<sup>356</sup> Similarly, historian Bonifacio Salamanca argues that both Roosevelt and Taft ‘favored ultimate independence as the culmination of American policy,’ despite never explicitly stating this viewpoint.<sup>357</sup> This chapter argues that Taft was intent that independence should never become the logical conclusion. In terms of a perpetuated relationship, what is clear is that Taft was indeed keen to postpone any change in the relationship, but for him, unlike others, this was a long-term aim.

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<sup>355</sup> Ricard, “Foreign Policy Making in the White House,” in: *Artists of Power*, 23.

<sup>356</sup> Cruz, *America’s Colonial Desk*, 129.

<sup>357</sup> Salamanca, *Toward a Diplomatic History of the Philippines*, 55.

*A Blueprint for Philippine Retention (1904)*

In a speech given in Cincinnati on February 22, 1904, Taft spoke on the topic of Philippine independence.<sup>358</sup> When asked by the Bishop of Massachusetts why the U.S. should not just ‘declare’ their aim of ultimate independence, Taft’s reply was that the bishop had a ‘fair question.’ However, Taft proceeded:

...I am as convinced as possible that nothing can do more harm than that declaration. It is not that I object to independence when they are fit for it. It is, first, that I object to our binding ourselves to doing anything which may have to be done 100 or 150 years hence. It is not that I object to our agreeing with them, or letting them agree when they are fit for it, what government they shall have; but it is that the agitators, the gentlemen that are engaged in looking for office under an independent government, have very little concern about independence that is to come after they are dead; and if you permit them independence and make it a definite promise you will have continued agitation as to when they ought to have independence; and as a consequence, you will have the attention of the people fixed on something in the future, and not on the success of the present government; and if the present does not succeed, independence cannot be a success.<sup>359</sup>

In this long quotation, Taft made several points but all to one end. For seemingly pragmatic reasons, Taft advised against any promise of independence. Since independence was an issue for the future, there was no need to distract the Filipinos of the present with something that would never apply to them, or even – perhaps – to their children. Taft’s point about the potential for instability, and for the issue of independence to overwhelm the political agenda of the islands seemed largely reasonable. The author, economics professor Henry Parker Willis, who cited this speech, felt that Taft had drawn completely the wrong conclusions, and stated the very opposite, that ‘the absence of such a declaration [on the matter of

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<sup>358</sup> The date on which the Washington’s Birthday holiday fell.

<sup>359</sup> Speech cited in: Henry Parker Willis, *Our Philippine Problem*, 186. The Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts at the time was William Lawrence, son of abolitionist Amos Adams Lawrence.

independence] is the source of unrest, confusion and agitation.’<sup>360</sup> The idea that the carrot of independence should not even be dangled before the Philippines, yet alone given to them, was to drive Taft’s efforts for many years to come.

On April 21, 1904, Taft delivered an address to the Chamber of Commerce of New York State, entitled “The Philippine Islands.”<sup>361</sup> Taft began by drawing a distinction between the U.S. role in the Philippines and that of other colonial powers. He divided the population of the Philippines into two groups: Christian (7 million), and non-Christian (600,000), the latter group composed of Muslims and people of other beliefs. In his opinion the former group offered, in the Philippines, something different from European colonies in the region: ‘The problem of the government of the Moros [Muslims in the southern islands of the Philippines] is the same as that which England has had in the government of the Straits Settlements or India. The government of 7,000,000 Christian Filipinos is a very different problem, and one which it has fallen to the lot of the United States to solve.’ Taft continued by explaining that annexation by the U.S. had been in the interest of the Filipino people, especially in respect to what he offered as alternatives. The first alternative, a return to Spanish rule, would have been a ‘breach of faith.’ The second, handing over government to Aguinaldo and his followers would have led to ‘military dictatorship.’ In short, Taft concluded there was ‘no escape’ and U.S. sovereignty the only option, ‘until by proper measures and patient governmental training and experience they could be given self-governing capacity.’ In this introductory part of his lecture, Taft was restating the adage of duty and burden: the U.S. had not sought the islands and they could do nothing but annex them and lead them to eventual self-government.

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>361</sup> Taft, “The Philippine Islands,” April 21, 1904.

However, the speech was not simply a repetition of such familiar imperialist motifs.<sup>362</sup>

The main thrust of Taft's speech centred on the theme of "civil liberty." The Filipinos, Taft argued, might not exercise complete political control, but this was 'a very different thing from civil liberty,' his example being that, 'Women and children, and other non-voters in this country [i.e. disenfranchised African Americans in the U.S.], have the civil liberty secured by the Constitution, but do not exercise political control.' So, as Taft saw it, under U.S. civil government the Filipinos were secured their civil rights despite their inability to govern themselves, leaving them in a similar condition to the female citizens of the United States. Taft cited several examples, including African-American disenfranchisement, to suggest that, historically, self-government was a right that first had to be earned. Taft concluded: 'In every instance it will be seen that the principles of the Declaration of Independence are always qualified by the statement that the people who are to be consulted with respect to their own government shall have sufficient capacity to govern themselves and better themselves by such self-government.' It is worth noting that Taft chose examples of territories under U.S. rule that were *not* likely to ever leave the union. The Filipinos, as has been shown in previous chapters, were, in Taft's opinion, some way from having the all-important 'capacity' to govern themselves. To move too quickly to independence and to yield to the 'easy' option of the anti-imperialists would, Taft assured his audience, lead to 'absolutism and tyranny, or a political chaos.'<sup>363</sup> The theme of potential anarchy echoed Taft's words of several years earlier, when he had warned that premature independence would result in a condition 'worse than in hades,' which suggests Taft's views on independence had changed little during the

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 3-5.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 6-8.



intervening years, even if his views on the eventual outcome of the Philippine experiment had grown more complex.<sup>364</sup>

Perhaps inspired by his new responsibilities as Secretary of War, Taft looked outside of the Philippines and the United States to Japan for further comparison in his model for self-government, as his speech continued. Taft explained that although Japan's 'marvelous development' over the preceding half century might lead some to hope that a similar speed of progress might be seen in the Philippines, he argued that the Japanese 'are a more industrious people and a more thrifty people than the Filipinos; and second, that they have always had an independent and natural government, proceeding from the feudal system and the continuance of the traditional governmental influence of the imperial household.' In contrast, in the Philippines, following 400 years of Spanish colonial rule, there was 'nothing but the dead-level of a people whose only hope is education up to popular self-government under the guidance of some power which meantime will secure to the people the inestimable benefits of civil liberty.' This comparison is noteworthy because it dealt with Filipino and Japanese race and culture. The Japanese, although an Asiatic "race" comparable on some level with the Filipinos were, in Taft's view, advanced in their progress with a long record of self-government. The important conclusion of this, as fit with Taft's retentionist aims, was to show that, far from being an argument for early self-government (and independence) for the Filipinos, such a comparison only served to show how far the Filipinos had yet to travel.<sup>365</sup>

The next section of Taft's speech moved on to what was the main theme one would expect in an address to the Chamber of Commerce: money. Taft started by suggesting that when it came to the Philippines money should be no object, the U.S.

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<sup>364</sup> WHT to Root, August 18 and 31, 1900, WHTP 8:463.

<sup>365</sup> Taft, "The Philippine Islands," 8-10.

‘mission’ in the Philippines ‘ought to be maintained and encouraged by the people of the United States without regard to the question of its cost or its profitable results from a commercial or financial standpoint.’ This might have seemed slightly surprising from anybody but Taft. A few minutes later Taft revealed that despite such a proposition, the Philippines were so ripe for development, especially in agriculture, that they would have little problem financing their own development. What the islands needed were new merchants who would not complain about the civil administration and instead would take advantage of this ripe market of seven million (excluding the non-Christians) ‘imitative’ Filipinos who were ‘anxious for new ideas, willing to accept them, willing to follow American styles, American sports, American dress and American customs.’<sup>366</sup>

Nearing the close of his speech Taft turned his attention, once again, to independence, but this time even more directly. Taft began by explaining why he continued to oppose any promise of independence:

It is not that I am opposed to independence in the Islands, should the people of the Philippines desire independence when they are fitted for it, but it is that the great present need in the Islands is the building up of a permanent well-ordered government, the great present need of the Islands is the increase of the saving remnant of conservative Filipinos whose aid in uplifting and maintaining the present government on a partly popular and strictly civil liberty basis, shall be secured.<sup>367</sup>

Although the idea that the people were not yet fit for self-government, was a familiar argument, there was new stress here on so-called conservative Filipinos; Filipinos who supported Taft’s ideas on postponement of a promise of independence. These so-called conservatives comprised mainly the remnants of the Federal Party that Taft had nurtured during his tenure as civil governor. Similarly, by Taft’s definition, a radical was any Filipino that proposed independence; and the sooner they

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<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 10-15.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 21.

demanded it, the more radical they were. If independence were promised, Taft argued, the outcome would be to ‘frighten away’ the conservative Filipinos who were essential to the eventual success of the U.S. imperial venture. Taft believed that such conservatives were already timid for fear of being victimised by a potentially ‘violent and irreconcilable’ band that might come to prominence, on account of their previous support of the American regime. Thus, a promise of independence ‘helps no one.’ Independence was an issue for the future, when the Filipinos were suitably educated in labour, civil liberty, political responsibility and the principles of popular government. Taft believed that after all of this had been accomplished, and only then, ‘we can discuss the question whether independence is what they desire and grant it, or whether they prefer the retention of a closer association with the country which, by its guidance, has unselfishly led them on to better conditions.’ There can be little doubt from the final sentiment, which eventuality Taft preferred as an outcome.<sup>368</sup> Once again Taft ventured to suggest that in a distant future, following decades of U.S. imperialism, the Filipinos themselves might choose to remain in ‘closer’ dominion-style relationship with the United States.

In the same speech to the New York State Chamber of Commerce, Taft concluded with reference to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, more commonly known as the St. Louis World’s Fair, which would open on April 30, 1904. The World’s Fair was partly funded by the federal government, the states and private investors. The Philippine Commission, while still under Taft’s control in 1902, passed Act 514 authorising the islands’ participation in the proposed exposition. Taft appointed plant pathologist and museum head, William Powell Wilson, to chair the Philippine Exposition Board, which was largely peopled with those involved in

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

science, museums and entertainment.<sup>369</sup> As historian Jose Fermin puts it, ‘the whole exhibition was conceived, approved and operated by top-ranking American officials, from the U.S. President down to the Secretary of War to the Bureau of Insular Affairs.’<sup>370</sup> Taft referred specifically to the Filipino village that would be a centrepiece of the fair, which would, in Taft’s view, serve to ‘familiarize the people of the United States with the Philippine Islands and in order to bring the Filipinos closer to the United States.’<sup>371</sup> The Philippine exhibit at the fair was organised with the ‘cooperation of several prominent Filipinos and numerous United States colonial officials.’<sup>372</sup> Although this particular speech was made on the eve of the fair’s opening, the War Department, the Bureau of Insular Affairs and Taft had been involved in the organisation of the Filipino exhibit at the fair for the last couple of years at some level. The Filipino exhibit was an opportunity for pro-colonialists to put across their case, and for Taft this message would be his continued theme of retention. Historians Robert Rydell, and more recently Paul Kramer and Jose Fermin, have given a good deal of attention to the Filipino exhibit at St. Louis.<sup>373</sup> While Rydell explores events such as the expositions of the period more generally, Kramer and Fermin focus on the racial implications of the Philippine village at St. Louis in particular. Although it is important to address briefly these authors’ attention to the racial context of the exhibition, this thesis will also focus upon Taft’s attempts to promote a retentionist policy.

As early as 1902 Taft was involved in promoting the idea of a Philippine exhibit at St. Louis. Paul Kramer argues that the government agenda for the fair (represented by figures such as Roosevelt, Root and Taft) was to combat continued

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<sup>369</sup> Fermin, *The 1904 World’s Fair*, 50.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>371</sup> Taft, “The Philippine Islands,” 22.

<sup>372</sup> Rydell *All the World’s a Fair*, 169.

<sup>373</sup> Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*; Kramer, *Blood of Government*, and Fermin, *The 1904 World’s Fair*.

anti-imperialism and the reluctance of Congress to enact preferential tariffs for the Philippines. Kramer quotes Taft's summary of the government's interest in St. Louis: 'This Exposition comes at a critical point in the history of the Philippines. We are at a point where there prevails misinformation, misunderstanding, and an unconscious misrepresentation regarding us. Nothing, I think, can bring the two peoples together to promote friendly and trade relations between the States and the Archipelago so well as such an exhibit.' Kramer argues that Taft saw the exhibit as a way to put Philippine resources before the eyes of consumers and investors, as well as showing the progress of peace in order to encourage the lowering of tariffs.<sup>374</sup> As was discussed in the previous chapter, Taft saw increased trade and investment as crucial to strengthening bonds between the two nations. In this way Taft believed he could illustrate to Filipinos and anti-imperialists the mutual benefits of the colonial experiment, with the important message to potential investors and businessmen in the United States that this imperial venture would indeed benefit them. In Taft's mind, the exposition was an ideal opportunity to stress the idea that the Philippines and United States were better off together. As Robert Rydell notes, one exposition publication suggested that: 'the time is coming when the purchase and retention of the Philippine Islands will seem as wise to our descendents as does the Louisiana Purchase seem to us who live today.'<sup>375</sup> This sentiment suggests entirely what Taft saw as the ultimate aim of the exposition. Preferential tariffs and investment were of undoubted importance, but the ultimate goal of both of these policies, as with the policy of attraction as a whole, was – at least for Taft – retention.

The Filipino village proved a major hit with fairgoers, who were attracted by the "exotic" Filipinos. However, if the message of the fair was meant to demonstrate

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<sup>374</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 237.

<sup>375</sup> Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 167.

the case for retention of the islands through the progress being made there, press attention suggests that most people were more interested in the spectacle of the savage. As Robert Rydell argues: ‘if the fairgoers perceived the villagers as utterly backward and incapable of progress, the displays would actually buttress the racist arguments used by the anti-imperialists to oppose annexation of the islands.’<sup>376</sup> The problem that this represented was obvious. Taft, and others who wished to encourage the colonial venture through the fair, had to face the reality that although it might well illustrate the Filipinos’ need of the U.S., it might equally show why the U.S. should disengage from a hopeless cause. Paul Kramer sees the fair as the government’s attempt at a propaganda exercise, with supposedly both uncivilised and civilised Filipinos present to represent the ‘bifurcated path of Filipino progress.’<sup>377</sup> For Kramer, the fair ultimately misrepresented Filipinos to an American audience and simultaneously the nature of the display alienated visiting Filipino elites.<sup>378</sup> Rydell and Kramer point to the heart of the problem that the Filipino exhibit posed for retention advocates, and this was evident in various newspapers of the time. The *Atlanta Constitution* claimed that: ‘Of all the savages here, though, the head-hunting, dog-eating, naked Igorrote, in all his filth and barbaric ignorance, attract the most attention.’<sup>379</sup> The *New York Times* attributed the fame of the exhibition similarly, as ‘largely excited by the widespread publicity which Igorote [sic] dog-eaters and head-hunters, the cannibal Moro, and the aboriginal Negrito have obtained.’<sup>380</sup> The *Washington Post* reported that since the arrival of the ‘wild people,’ the ‘dog population of that part of the grounds has decreased considerably.’<sup>381</sup> The attention of

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>377</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 30

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>379</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, July 3, 1904.

<sup>380</sup> *New York Times*, July 17, 1904.

<sup>381</sup> *Washington Post*, May 2, 1904.

fairgoers was to the spectacle and exoticism of the Filipinos, and this was not necessarily what was going to convince sceptics of the need to strengthen bonds with the Philippines.

According to the *World's Fair Bulletin*, Taft believed that 'the proposed exhibit would have a "moral effect" on the people of the islands,' and that it would help with the remaining pacification of the islands.<sup>382</sup> Taft gave a speech on "Philippine Day" (August 13), which commemorated the fall of Manila to the U.S. in 1898, setting out another supposed aim of bringing Filipinos to the United States: 'It is a source of infinite satisfaction for me to look about the forty acres that embrace this Philippine exhibit and to think of the immense good that it has done and will do in making the people of the Philippines acquainted with the United States.'<sup>383</sup> The exhibit, in Taft's mind, even if it presented a slanted view of the Filipinos as "uncivilised" peoples, would help acquaint Filipinos with Americans and show Americans why investment was needed in infrastructure and education. However, Taft also felt that by bringing in a small number of "civilised" Filipinos he could offset any imbalance caused by the exhibit at St. Louis. Taft supported the idea of a 'delegation of forty to fifty [prominent] Filipinos... in order that by going about the country and the different cities they may become acquainted with the institutions and appearances of this country, and at the same time the business and prominent men of the cities of the United States may have acquaintance with the best elements of the Filipinos.'<sup>384</sup> Nevertheless, St. Louis, as Kramer and Rydell suggest, almost certainly backfired by alienating Filipino elites and proving to the American visitors that the Philippines were "uncivilised" and unfit for the United States. However, for Taft, the exhibit – in theory if not in realisation – still proved that the Philippines needed the

<sup>382</sup> Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 168.

<sup>383</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 1904.

<sup>384</sup> Taft, "The Philippine Islands," April 21, 1904.

U.S. and were capable of improving with their help and guidance, as well as proving to American sceptics that Philippine resources were substantive and that retention could be profitable as well as humanitarian.

### *The 1905 Voyage to the East, Part I: Japan*

Japanese-American relations did not originate with the annexation of Hawaii or the Philippines, but these events made the United States a Pacific power at just the time that Japan itself was becoming the pre-eminent non-European power in the Far East. Following on from Japanese victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), European powers and the United States were made to take note of the rise in Japan's military strength and influence in the region during the Meiji period (1868-1912), and also the increasing fragility of China. Historian Akira Iriye positions Japanese participation in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900 as an important demonstration of the nation's emergence as a great power.<sup>385</sup> However, it was the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) that was to bring the United States into contact more intimately with Japan's rise. Japan's defeat of a white European power came as a surprise to many at the time, and President Roosevelt, an admirer of Japan, mediated the resulting Treaty of Portsmouth that concluded the war.<sup>386</sup> However, despite Roosevelt's admiration of the Japanese, the rise of Japan caused concern for the United States on a number of levels, for example, the security of the Philippines or the territorial integrity of China, and thus U.S. trade and investment opportunities

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<sup>385</sup> Iriye, *Japan and the Wider World*, 15.

<sup>386</sup> The Portsmouth Conference took place between August 5, and September 5, 1905. For in-depth analysis of the conference see: Raymond Esthus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*; however, most previous works cite the earlier: Tyler Dennett, *Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War*.



therein.<sup>387</sup> However, it was the issue of Japanese immigration to the United States that was the root cause of the American concerns relating to Japanese threats to China and the Philippines.

Historian William Neuman contends that an anti-Japanese movement had existed in the United States as early as 1887, but that it was not until 1905 when the Asiatic exclusion league was founded in San Francisco, that the movement began to wield political power.<sup>388</sup> During Taft's tenure as Secretary of War, relations between the United States and Asia reached a new level of tension. If Japan were to be a Great Power, the Japanese believed they should be treated as such by the United States, particularly in the area of immigration policy. Between 1891 and 1900, 27,440 Japanese migrated to the United States, but in the period 1901-1907 these numbers increased to 42,457 (with as many as 38,000 more entering via Hawaii).<sup>389</sup> However, the cause of most concern over this new influx of Japanese immigrants was to be found primarily, like the opposition to Chinese immigration before them, in California.

President Roosevelt was a firm admirer of the Japanese as a "race," but he objected to their immigration to the United States. Historian Thomas Dyer argues that Roosevelt's objections to Japanese immigration 'stemmed from the belief that the predominantly white population of the United States would be unable to absorb or assimilate Orientals, and that race difference between Orientals and whites loomed so high as to preclude even basic understanding between the two groups.'<sup>390</sup> However, as

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<sup>387</sup> As has been mentioned before, a primary factor for many imperialist advocates after the Spanish-American War was that the Philippines would bring America closer to the lucrative Chinese market. The United States was concerned that European powers and the Japanese had imperial designs on China itself, and would divide it into their own exclusive spheres of interest. The U.S. Secretary of State John Hay sent the Open Door notes to these various imperial powers in 1899 in an attempt to secure guarantees from those powers that they would assure the territorial integrity of China.

<sup>388</sup> Neumann, *America Encounters Japan*, 124.

<sup>389</sup> Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei*, 51-52.

<sup>390</sup> Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race*, 135.

Dyer goes on to point out, although supporting exclusion of the Japanese, Roosevelt condemned attempts to segregate Japanese and the more outlandish schemes proposed by some on the West Coast.<sup>391</sup> President Roosevelt and Secretary of War Taft were only too aware that the consequences of the West Coast enraging Japanese opinion against the United States could prove much more damaging than the anti-Chinese movement in California had with the boycott of U.S. goods. For Taft in particular the possibility of war with Japan could prove fatal to the U.S. imperial experiment in the Philippines.

President Roosevelt wrote to one correspondent in March of 1905 about the growing rumours that the Japanese posed a threat to the Philippines: 'It may be that the Japanese have designs on the Philippines. I hope not; I am inclined to believe not; for I like the Japanese, and wish them well, they have much in their character to admire.'<sup>392</sup> Although it was the question of Japanese emigration to Hawaii and the United States that was at the heart of diplomatic wrangling, it was the issue of the Philippines and Far Eastern stability that was to be equally prominent among Taft's thoughts on his visit to Japan in 1905.<sup>393</sup>

In the summer of 1905 Secretary of War Taft headed a congressional delegation on a tour of the Far East. Among the delegation were President Roosevelt's daughter, Alice, seven senators and twenty-three House members.<sup>394</sup> Biographer Henry Pringle argues that Taft's decision to take the trip to the Far East was largely because of a feeling that he needed to sort things out in the Philippines, as

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 139. Despite this, Dyer also points to evidence that TR accepted that Japanese men were prone to commit sexual crimes against white women, in much the same way black men were often alleged to do throughout the South at the time.

<sup>392</sup> TR to John Albert Tiffin Hull, March 16, 1905, in: Morison, *Letters* vol. 4.

<sup>393</sup> Taft's correspondence shows that the issue of Japanese immigration to the Philippines was discussed, but this particular avenue does not appear to have any major influence on the Japanese immigration debates, as it did in Chinese immigration debates. See: Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 91.

<sup>394</sup> Rowe, "Diplomatic Troubleshooter," 131.

he had received word during the previous year from concerned members of the Federal Party – that he had patronised so generously during his time there – that they were losing their authority.<sup>395</sup> However, given his new role as a cabinet member and not a Philippine governor, and added to this the broad array of diplomatic duties Roosevelt assigned him, the mission would not be to the Philippines alone. The S.S. *Manchuria* departed San Francisco on July 8, 1905, stopping off in Hawaii en-route to the Far East, then visiting Japan, the Philippines and China before departing again for the U.S. in early September.<sup>396</sup>

Historian J. M. Rowe Jr., in his 1977 thesis, rejects the interpretation that Taft was sent to Tokyo in 1905 on a ‘mission’ to come to an ‘agreement with Japan.’ Instead, Rowe argues that any agreements made were no more than reaffirmations of prior understandings.<sup>397</sup> Historian Ralph Minger, writing at a similar time, also suggests that there is no evidence that Taft was given any specific instructions for his visit.<sup>398</sup> However, although nothing particularly novel was agreed on Taft’s visit, the continuation of peaceful relations with Japan was a critical part of Taft’s imperial vision for the Philippines. If the Philippines were under threat they could potentially come to be seen as a burden by some in the United States, undermining Taft’s aims for a long-term commitment to a U.S. presence there.

Taft wrote to his wife on July 25 detailing the grand reception they had received at Yokohama and Tokyo.<sup>399</sup> However, aside from lavish diplomatic dinners, Taft’s main task whilst in Japan was to bring about more cordial relations with the Japanese, whether he had specific instructions to do so or not. Taft met with Japanese

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<sup>395</sup> Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol.1, 292-293. Pringle refers to messages from Pardo de Tavera and Benito Legarda, members of the Philippine Commission whom Taft had appointed.

<sup>396</sup> The party split into two after reaching Hong Kong.

<sup>397</sup> Rowe, “Diplomatic Troubleshooter,” 116-117.

<sup>398</sup> Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*, 143.

<sup>399</sup> WHT to Nellie Taft, July 25, 1905, WHTP 2:25.

Prime Minister Taro Katsura on the morning of July 27, and Taft forwarded a memorandum of this meeting to Roosevelt and Root.<sup>400</sup> The details of the meeting, as set out in the memorandum, have become commonly known as the Taft-Katsura Agreement. The meeting dealt with various issues, including the Philippine Islands. The memorandum records a discussion about some pro-Russians in America who ‘would have the public believe that the victory of Japan would be a certain prelude to her aggression in the direction of the Philippine Islands.’ In response to this Taft defended Japan, as his diplomatic role and desire for peace necessitated:

Secretary Taft observed that Japan’s only interest in the Philippines would be, in his opinion, to have these Islands governed by a strong and friendly nation like the United States, and not to have them placed either under the misrule of the natives, yet unfit for self-government, or under the hands of some unfriendly European power. Count Katsura confirmed in the strongest terms the correctness of his views on the point and positively stated that Japan does not harbor any aggressive designs whatever on the Philippines; adding that all the insinuations of the yellow peril type are nothing more or less than malicious and clumsy slanders calculated to do mischief to Japan.<sup>401</sup>

The remaining two sections of the memorandum dealt with: first, the joint desire of Japan and the United States to maintain peace in the Far East through an informal alliance; and second, the suzerainty of Japan over the Korean peninsula.<sup>402</sup> Taft’s role was not that of Secretary of State, and as a result he voiced the constraint he felt in making any concessions or agreements regarding Korea in particular, which he felt lay outside the limits of his remit. This perhaps also reflected the reluctance of the U.S. government to make any official agreements on the Korean issue either.

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<sup>400</sup> Although the following citations are from the copy of the communication from Taft to Root in the Taft Papers, the same, and one slightly edited version can be found in the Roosevelt Papers: WHT to Root, July 29, 1905, TRP 1:57.

<sup>401</sup> WHT to Root, July 29, 1905, WHTP 3:52.

<sup>402</sup> However, as historian Raymond Esthus notes, this memorandum did not become public knowledge in the United States until August 1924, despite being leaked in the Japanese newspaper *Kokumin Shimbun* soon after the original memorandum. Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*, 104-105, and “The Taft-Katsura Agreement: Reality or Myth?” 46-51.

Nevertheless, when speaking of the Filipinos' inability to self-govern, there was no indication that Taft felt himself so restrained by his position. Indeed, the above citation summarised Taft's views, and that of Root and Roosevelt at that time, fairly succinctly. As the Republican administration saw it, the Philippines were best off under their rule, and it appeared that Japan accepted. In the most basic sense, the Taft-Katsura agreement was a convenient acceptance of spheres of influence and an acknowledgement of the *status quo*: if Japan was free to exert its influence over Korea, then the United States were free to do likewise in the Philippines, without any interference from the other power.

Two days after this meeting Taft wrote to Nellie of his 'historic' visit to Japan, and summarised his trip up to that point.<sup>403</sup> Taft told his wife of the meeting with Katsura, and bemoaned the expense of having to cable such a long memorandum to Washington. Whether Taft had specific instructions from Washington or not, he had treated his visit to Japan as more than a pleasant stopover *en route* to the Philippines. Taft used the Japanese visit, not to forge a new diplomatic agreement, but to reaffirm existing relations. The fact that this involved the reiteration of Japanese disinterest in the Philippines, as well as Japanese support of American sovereignty there, was something that Taft was glad to confirm before leaving to visit the archipelago itself.

### ***The 1905 Voyage to the East, Part II: The Philippines***

Taft told his wife, with only one day left in Japan, that he was preparing to leave for the Philippines 'full of doubt and uncertainty.'<sup>404</sup> It is unclear whether Taft's concerns were over the meeting with the Japanese or the prospect of his first trip to

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<sup>403</sup> WHT to Nellie, July 31, 1905, WHTP 2:25.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

the Philippines since he had stood down as civil governor. In a letter written the following day, Taft's concerns became clearer, as he wrote to Nellie: 'I don't know how we are coming out in the Philippines with our Democratic Senators and Representatives... I shall keep you advised as well as I can of every thing that happens.'<sup>405</sup> As both the former civil governor and in his present position as Secretary of War Taft was closely associated with the successes and failures of U.S. policy in the islands, and his imperial vision required him to ensure the Philippine experiment was viewed as a positive venture. Therefore, as the head of the bipartisan visiting delegation of congressmen and other figures, Taft appeared to be somewhat nervous of whether he would be able to convince the anti-imperialist sympathisers among his group of the benefits of U.S. rule in the Philippines. Taft was proud of his achievements in the islands and although he had only been absent for just over a year and a half, what appeared evident in his correspondence on his return was a sense that he felt that his previous success might well have deteriorated in his absence.

A week after arriving in the islands, Taft wrote Nellie that 'we have had an interesting and very important week,' and although he felt that the official welcome had been less 'cordial' than anticipated, he imagined this was down to their earlier than scheduled arrival. Taft continued: 'I found a condition strongly in favor of Independence immediately. I found I had to sit on that idea immediately and my Friday night speech was directed against this heresy.' Here Taft revealed that in addition to concerns about a desire to impress his visiting delegation with the U.S. imperial venture in the Philippines, Taft was equally concerned over the fate of his own imperial vision that called for a permanent imperial link and suppression of independence advocacy. The impression Taft gave was that he was confronted with a

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<sup>405</sup> WHT to Nellie Taft, August 1, 1905, WHTP 2:25.

situation that had been allowed to get out of hand, and it would take his knowledge and experience to quell such talk. Taft certainly thought that a clear expression against immediate independence, by himself, had a definite impact: ‘The expressions and manifestations in my favor are quite gratifying. Still my frankness will probably end all this for a year, and ultimately most of them will be reconciled. My problem now is to get Gen. Wright out of office, skip Gov. Ide and select a proper man – This is no small job.’<sup>406</sup> Taft was evidently concerned with the perception that the independence movement had made significant headway since his departure from the islands, and it appeared that he lay most of the blame for this with the administration that succeeded his.

When Taft had originally left the islands under the new Governor General Luke E. Wright, he had nothing but praise for his successor. Less than two years later Taft felt let down by Wright, and one of the key illustrations of his disappointment was the fact that talk in the islands was strongly in favour of immediate independence. Historian Paul Kramer recognises Taft’s departure from the islands and replacement with Wright – whose policies, particularly his support for ‘repressive measures’ by the Philippine Constabulary – triggered a ‘breakdown of the first Philippine-American alliance system.’ Kramer claims that Wright had ‘neither the tact, patience, nor understanding,’ of Taft in his methods of conciliating the Filipino elite, and argues that Wright broke with Taft’s policy of attraction toward Filipinos, both social and political, favouring instead a partnership with an even more conservative community of U.S. businessmen, Spaniards and friars.<sup>407</sup> Historian Frank Golay, as noted in Chapter Two, suggests that Taft was critical to the survival of the pro-American Federal Party and that following his departure from the Philippines in 1903 the party

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<sup>406</sup> WHT to Nellie Taft, August 14, 1905, WHTP 2:25.

<sup>407</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 291.

‘fell apart,’ due to lack of a rapport with most Filipinos and the gradual disillusionment with the party among American administrators, such as Wright.<sup>408</sup>

The policy of attraction was critical to Taft’s success, whatever its shortcomings, and to the potential of Taft’s long-term imperial vision. Taft, seemingly with good reason, returned to the Philippines to see much of his public relations work with pro-American Filipino elites undone, and for him it was this departure from his methods that had led to a rise in prominence of pro-independence advocates.

Daniel R. Williams, a Manila based lawyer, wrote a long letter to Taft which gave one interpretation of the rise in independence advocacy that so disappointed

Taft:

While the professional agitator is undoubtedly responsible for much of this [dissatisfaction] feeling, and has used the unfortunate material conditions of the country as a basis for sowing distrust among the people and for preaching ‘independencia’, it would be a serious mistake to believe that the dissatisfaction is limited to Filipinos of this character. It is shared by Filipinos of almost every class, a great many of whom have no sympathy with a movement looking to immediate independence.<sup>409</sup>

Williams, like Taft, saw independence advocates as ‘agitators,’ but also recognised that sympathy towards the independence movement was widespread throughout the Filipino population. The judge went on to explain that the reasons for such feelings were as many as there were special interest groups to be found. However, above all other factors Williams felt that the primary cause of dissatisfaction among Filipinos lay with the fact that ‘the authorities have failed, at least outwardly, to give due weight to the feelings or prejudices of the people.’ In this sense Williams was preaching to the converted, as anybody familiar with Taft’s time in the Philippines would know that he prided himself upon working with the Filipino

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<sup>408</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 77.

<sup>409</sup> D. R. Williams to WHT, August 31, 1905, WHTP 3:52.



elites and acknowledging their sensibilities, crucial pillars of the policy of attraction. Williams also saw increased agitation for independence as a result of a departure from Taft policies: ‘Your speech at the Filipino Banquet was worth coming to the Philippines to make. It has clarified the atmosphere tremendously and will, I think, limit the ‘independence’ talk to a very small coterie of persons. It has also largely relieved the distrust of the people as to our purposes and intentions toward them.’<sup>410</sup> Taft’s return, rather than a trip aimed at showing congressmen and other guests the nature of U.S. rule in the Philippines, instead saw Taft keen to get back into the forefront of the day-to-day running of affairs in the Philippines.

In Taft’s next letter to Nellie, the topic of independence came to the fore once again. Taft reported that he had heard that pro-independence spokespeople planned to make the delegation hear their ‘cries for independence,’ reporting that something along those lines had happened at Iloilo where he took the occasion to ‘wrap the speaker over his mental knuckles.’ In terms of Taft’s traditional allies, he reported that the Federal Party had approached him in relation to changing their party platform. Taft, reportedly, told the Federal Party representatives not to set out a policy towards independence: ‘an issue which would only arise long after they were dead,’ and added that any immediate change in platform would appear opportunist. He concluded that he was struck more than ever by the ‘shallowness’ of the political concepts of Filipino politicians.<sup>411</sup> After all, Taft had supported and patronised the Federal Party primarily because they were pro-American and had rejected a pro-independence stance, and their adoption of a platform addressing independence – however distant – seemed to undermine much of what Taft had fought to suppress during his governorship. What this letter brings to light is Taft’s determined approach to keep independence off of

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> WHT to Nellie Taft, September 18, 1905, WHTP 2:25.

the political agenda in the Philippines, despite clear shifts in the political climate there. It was becoming clear to Taft that most Filipinos favoured independence, and those who favoured immediate independence were in the political ascendancy, while his erstwhile favoured Federalists were considering a significant alteration to their previously anti-independence platform.

While Taft recognised an evident rise of pro-independence political momentum, he remained equally sure it could be overturned. Taft had made clear his belief in the impressionability of the average Filipino, and his belief that only an “irreconcilable” few really sought independence, and that this latter group lacked the political understanding to truly conceive what they desired. However, despite mocking the weakness of pro-independence campaigners in the Philippines, Taft made it clear that those who were really to blame were the U.S. representatives he had left to maintain the anti-independence climate he had supposedly set in place. Taft felt that Wright was well-intentioned, but that the incumbent governor-general did not believe as strongly as him in the ‘policy of conciliation.’ He told Nellie that he had found ‘a great many expressions of affection from the Filipino people and have confidence that if you and I were to go back to Manila for two or three years, we could restore the old condition of things.’ Despite his disappointment at the commission’s efforts since his departure for Washington, Taft felt that his short visit was already reaping significant benefits. Taft told his wife that the Democrats journeying with them had done little in the way of undermining his speeches in the islands and that his own words were ‘more or less accepted as the speeches of the delegation.’ Once again, those who did speak in favour of independence were on the receiving end of Taft’s belief that such ideas were completely inadvisable: ‘...they had a day for complaints, and the wildest enemies of the irreconcilables could not ask

for a more pitiable presentation of the lack of knowledge of government and of its responsibilities and difficulties than was shown by the people that occupied the committee for a day in discussing the necessity for immediate independence. I have a copy of the evidence and I should like to have you read it over to see how foolish men can be without knowing it.' However, this sentiment seems somewhat hopeful. Taft repeatedly found himself having to stifle and patronise talk of independence and to debate with pro-independence advocates. Regardless of how amateurish Taft found Filipino debating skills, it was not skilful debating in front of small audiences that was going to wipe out the popular calls for independence. Taft concluded disappointedly: 'I left the Philippines despondent somewhat because before me was the necessity of ultimately eliminating from the Government Wright and Ide and possibly Forbes.'<sup>412</sup> Taft's solution to the rising tide of the independence movement was a wholesale change in the administration: he also believed that he was best-suited to return in the medium-term and restore order and tranquillity.<sup>413</sup>

On his return to the United States Taft's correspondence backlog reveals some of his conclusions about the trip to the Far East. In reply to congratulations on his speech at the Metropole Hotel in Manila concerning the Philippines, Taft told Filipino Judge Ignacio Villamor that he particularly valued the support of 'my conservative friends to understand my exact position,' and reasserted his continued intention to 'help the Filipino people.'<sup>414</sup> Taft's diplomatic tour of the Far East in 1905 seemed to have achieved its aims, in terms of showing the representatives the situation in the

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<sup>412</sup> WHT to Nellie Taft, September 24 1905, WHTP 2:25.

<sup>413</sup> Taft's findings during his trip ultimately led to the removal of Wright and Commissioner Pardo de Tavera, who had been an outspoken critic of Wright. Paul Kramer sees these events as ushering in 'a shift in American clientelist strategies away from the Manila-based *Ilustrados*' towards a younger generation of provincial politicians (299). Kramer's work looks in detail at the politics within the Philippines during this period. Paul Kramer, *Blood of Government*, Chapter 5.

<sup>414</sup> WHT to Hon Ignacio Villamor (Judge of Court of First Instance, Manila), October 4, 1905, WHTP 8:466.

Philippines and re-establishing the U.S. sphere of influence over them in the Taft-Katsura agreement. President Roosevelt praised Taft's accomplishments with regard to Japan, telling Taft that the U.S. position 'could not have been stated with greater accuracy. The statement about the Philippines was merely to clear up Japan's attitude, which had been purposely misrepresented by pro-Russian sympathizers and is shown to have been entirely apart from your statements – that is, our statements – in reference to Korea [sic] and reference to our having the same interests with Japan and Great Britain in preserving the peace of the Orient.'<sup>415</sup>

Despite the success of Taft's 1905 trip to Japan, the period following the visit saw significant upheaval in U.S.-Japanese relations. There are a number of works that deal with the Japanese immigration crisis of 1906-7, and as the focus of the chapter is Taft's concern with Philippine independence, only a brief summary of the affair is given here for the sake of contextualisation.<sup>416</sup> Anti-Japanese feeling had been increasing steadily on the American West Coast in the early twentieth century, but by 1906 the situation in California had reached a head. According to historian Masuda Hajimu, following the San Francisco earthquake of April 18, 1906, 'physical attacks and boycotts against Japanese and their stores increased in frequency.'<sup>417</sup> On October 11, 1906 the San Francisco Board of Education passed legislation to segregate Japanese children in primary schools; in response the Japanese issued a serious protest claiming the legislation violated the Japanese-American treaty of 1894, and an unintended escalation in the situation resulted. Initially, Root proposed a treaty of mutual exclusion in January 1907 on behalf of Roosevelt, who thought that such an

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<sup>415</sup> TR to WHT October 7, 1905, WHTP 4A:320.

<sup>416</sup> Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship* is perhaps the definitive work on this period; Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*, provides an excellent in-depth analysis of Roosevelt's policies and attitudes towards Japan during this period, as does the earlier A. Whitney Griswold. *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States*, and Thomas A. Bailey, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese-American Crises*.

<sup>417</sup> Masuda Hajimu, "Rumors of War," 10.

agreement would help him in California, but the Japanese rejected the legislation as humiliating. The Gentlemen's Agreement of February 1907 saw the U.S. end Japanese labour immigration from Hawaii to the mainland, and Japan agreed to restrict labour immigration to the U.S. more stringently.<sup>418</sup> However, in the late spring and early summer of 1907 further anti-Japanese demonstrations in California, and Roosevelt's decision to deploy the Great White Fleet to the Pacific, saw fears of a Japanese-American war reach fever pitch.<sup>419</sup> On this tense occasion, with Japanese-American relations in the balance, Secretary Taft's planned trip to the Philippines to attend the opening of the new assembly in October 1907 saw him include a trip to Japan to attempt to smooth over this ongoing diplomatic crisis. Once again, as in 1905, Taft was very aware that peaceful relations with Japan were critical to any successful outcome to the future of the U.S. imperial relationship, and particularly to the potential success of his distinct imperial vision. If relations with Japan were to deteriorate into war, then the Philippines would surely be at the forefront of America's security problems.

### *The 1907 Voyage to the East*

Respected historians have pointed out that Taft seemed relatively unconcerned about a potential war with Japan when he left on his trip to the Far East in late 1907. Historian Charles Neu sees Taft as someone with first-hand experience with the Japanese, and notes that during this period Taft 'presided phlegmatically over the

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<sup>418</sup> Neu, *The Troubled Encounter*, 48-56.

<sup>419</sup> Frederick W. Marks III, *Velvet on Iron*, 56-57. Marks argues that in sending the U.S. fleet on a round-the-world cruise (via Japan), Roosevelt did not wish to precipitate war with Japan, but rather make a bold statement of U.S. power. Rather than a menacing entity it was referred to "diplomatically" as a goodwill or practice cruise. For a discussion of the speculation of a Japanese-American war during the period 1905-1913 see: Masuda Hajimu, "Rumors of War," 1-37.

bitter inter-service debate on the defense of the Philippines,' whereas Roosevelt was much more vocal on strengthening defences in the archipelago.<sup>420</sup> Similarly, historian Raymond Esthus comments that Taft was 'even more certain than Roosevelt that Japan did not contemplate war, and he did not betray any anxiety whatsoever.'<sup>421</sup> Historian Thomas Bailey suggests that Taft was not alone in thinking that the threat from Japan had been blown out of proportion, considering the substantial economic drawbacks such a conflict would have for Japan. However, in the same work, Bailey also remarks that Taft did submit a detailed report of steps that might be taken to defend U.S. Pacific possessions and the Pacific Coast, in the event of hostilities with Japan.<sup>422</sup> Taft, as secretary of war, could not take the Japanese threat to the Philippines too lightly, but he also felt that an outbreak of hostilities was relatively unlikely to occur.

On August 21, President Roosevelt wrote to Secretary Taft less than a month before Taft was to depart on his second trip to the Far East, this time ostensibly to inaugurate the new Philippine Assembly. Many historians cite Roosevelt's letter as an important document on the nature of the president's policy towards the Philippines.<sup>423</sup> However, as it concerns Taft and the main thrust of this thesis so greatly, it is worth citing it once more. Roosevelt revealed to Taft his seeming conversion to the idea of relatively expedited if not immediate independence:

We have continually to accommodate ourselves to conditions as they actually are and not as we would wish them to be. I wish our people were prepared permanently, in a duty-loving spirit, and looking forwards to a couple of generations of continuous manifestation of this spirit, to assume the control of the Philippines for the good of the

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<sup>420</sup> Neu, *Uncertain Friendship*, 15. Neu also points out that in late 1907, Leonard Wood was so concerned over Taft's lack of concern over the Japanese threat to the Philippines that he wrote to urge William Cameron Forbes to join him in convincing Taft of the threat (140).

<sup>421</sup> Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*, 192.

<sup>422</sup> Thomas Bailey, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese-American Crises*, 231-232.

<sup>423</sup> Most recent historians of Far Eastern relations writing about this period cite this letter, for example: Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*, 195, Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship*, 142-143.

Filipinos. But as a matter of fact I gravely question whether this is the case... Mind you I am not saying what I think our people *ought* to feel, but what I fear they *do* feel... I think we shall have to be prepared for giving the islands independence of a more or less complete type much sooner than I think advisable if this country were prepared to look ahead fifty years and to build the navy and erect fortifications which in my judgement it should. The Philippines form our heel of Achilles. They are all that make the present situation with Japan dangerous. I think that in some way and with some phraseology that you think wise you should state to them that if they handle themselves wisely in their legislative assembly we shall at the earliest possible moment give them nearly complete independence... it may be that you can as you suggest better use the simile of Canada and Australia... I think that to have some pretty clear avowal of our intention not to permanently keep them and to give them independence would remove a temptation from Japan's way and would render our task at home easier. Personally I should be glad to see the islands made independent, with perhaps some kind of international guarantee for the preservation of order, or with some warning on our part that if they did not keep order we would have to interfere again...<sup>424</sup>

In many ways this letter must have been a crushing blow to Taft, although Roosevelt tried his best not to sound too pro-independence, by couching his phrases to Taft's particular ideas of an Australian- or Canadian-type relationship with Britain. Nevertheless, Roosevelt, though doing his best to assure Taft that he agreed with him deep down about retaining the Philippines, gives as many reasons as he can muster to suggest why his hand was becoming inevitably forced to the policy of independence, most notably: domestic apathy and the threat of Japan. In this letter, Roosevelt makes the outright suggestion that Taft promise independence during his trip to the Philippines, and finishes by concluding that 'I should be glad to see the islands made independent.' Although trying his best to placate Taft, the President, in this private letter, was trying to bring Taft around to what, despite his protestations, was his way of thinking. Taft's reply was far from positive about Roosevelt's new direction: 'I appreciate the difficulties you present, but I sincerely hope that you will make no public declaration on the subject until I return from the Philippines... It is not

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<sup>424</sup> TR to WHT, August 21, 1907, in: Morison, ed., *Letters of TR*, Vol.5.

necessary for me to make definitive statements to the Filipinos themselves. Indeed, I think it would be unwise to do so.<sup>425</sup> Taft went on to add that all he intended to convey to the Filipinos were the opportunities offered by self-government, and rather more vaguely, ‘that the American people are not anxious to retain control of the islands except as it may be necessary to do so in order to protect the Filipino people themselves.’<sup>426</sup> Though Taft did not state directly to the president that his primary desire was to see the islands retained, and eventually turned into a U.S. Dominion of sorts, Taft made it known that he had no intention of promising independence. In a letter of September 5, 1907, a somewhat spurned Roosevelt reassured Taft that: ‘As for the Philippines, I shall do nothing until your return, but really I do not intend to do much more than state what you say you will state to the Filipinos themselves.’<sup>427</sup>

In a recent article, historian Stephen Wertheim suggests that Roosevelt would have preferred to stay in the Philippines, but was influenced by both domestic opinion – which Wertheim argues historians have overlooked – as well as strategic considerations when he moved toward accepting eventual independence and gradually abandoned the cause of imperialism.<sup>428</sup> Roosevelt, ever more the politician than Taft, was moving with the flow of popular opinion in the United States regarding the islands, though as elected president, rather than an appointee like Taft, one might expect Roosevelt to take a somewhat wider view of affairs. Historian Charles Neu suggests that by September 1907, newspapers such as the *New York Herald*, as well as many Republicans and Democrats in Congress, favoured withdrawal from the Philippines in some manner.<sup>429</sup> What is also clear is that Roosevelt took far more seriously the idea of a military/strategic threat to the United States if the country was

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<sup>425</sup> WHT to TR, August 31, 1907, originally cited in Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol.1, 302.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

<sup>427</sup> TR to WHT, September 6, 1907, TRP 2:246.

<sup>428</sup> Wertheim, “Reluctant Liberator,” 494-518.

<sup>429</sup> Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship*, 148.



to remain in the Philippines in the long term. These factors indicate key divides between the general approaches of Taft and Roosevelt. Firstly, they reveal Roosevelt, unsurprisingly, to be the canner politician, far more sensitive to shifts in public and political opinion than the judicially minded Taft. Secondly, this instance reveals Roosevelt's far more geo-political and strategic view of world politics, in comparison to Taft's somewhat more parochial instincts. Taft saw the question of Philippine independence as primarily an issue between the United States and the islands, and saw other interests as more incidental to his imperial vision. Roosevelt, one of most vocal advocates of Large Policy expansionism, demonstrated a more pragmatic view of world affairs and was willing to change his stance on Philippine retention in recognition of the importance of future U.S.-Japanese relations and American public opinion.

It was evident that, as Taft left for his second trip to the Far East as secretary of war, this trip would prove critical in helping to stem the tide of popular and political opinion, which, like the President himself, was turning against retention. As for Philippine popular opinion of the independence matter, Taft showed himself willing once again to cast a rather deaf ear to the majority, to concentrate rather on conditions not as they actually were – to paraphrase Roosevelt's letter – but as Taft wished that they would be. In Taft's case this wish was for a future in which the Philippines were not offered even a promise of independence until many decades had passed and there was more likelihood that such a proposition might actually be turned down by Filipinos in favour of a continuing imperial bond.

## *Japan*

On September 13, 1907, Taft set off on his second tour to the Far East, aboard the S.S. *Minnesota* headed once again for Japan. Whereas historians might have differed over whether Taft had a “mission” during his trip to Japan in 1905, it is clear that in 1907 he most certainly did. However, opinion is divided over the purpose of the mission. Biographer Henry Pringle suggests that Taft’s aim in Japan in 1907 was to assure President Roosevelt that Japan would not seek war with the United States, and he further argues that Taft saw this as ‘doubly important’ in order to keep the Filipinos safe.<sup>430</sup> But, historian Charles Neu sees Taft as more of ‘a diplomatic messenger than as a creator of policy.’<sup>431</sup> Neu suggests that Taft had a noticeable ‘absence of ideas about American Far Eastern policy,’ and merely reflected the views of Roosevelt.<sup>432</sup> Both historians are right to a degree. Though Taft, as in 1905, did not have a mandate to create policy, as a diplomat popular in Japan he was able to use his role to guide the way policy was both presented and perceived by the Japanese.

In his conclusions on Taft, Neu neglects to include Taft’s views on the Philippines, which, as argued throughout this thesis, remained resolute and strong. Taft’s vision for the Philippines guided his ideas of U.S.-Japanese relations in a very different manner than Roosevelt’s thoughts regarding Japan. Taft did not fear war with Japan in the foreseeable future and saw the Philippines as a project of more than a century to come. Roosevelt had come to see the Philippines as an Achilles’ heel in recognition of the threat posed by an expansionist imperial Japan. As argued above, it was clear that Taft was keen to establish that the Philippines were not a cause of friction in 1905, but in 1907 there was additional pressure on Taft to present this

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<sup>430</sup> Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol.1, 302.

<sup>431</sup> Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship*, 16.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

picture to Washington following Roosevelt's clear expression of doubts over America's long-term future in the islands. It must be conceded that Taft was pursuing reconciliation with Japan primarily for its own sake and not only due to its impact on Philippines affairs. However, the knock-on effects of reconciliation regarding Taft's imperial vision certainly did not escape his notice. Taft's 1907 Japanese visit gave him the opportunity to bring Japanese-American relations down from a crisis point, but in so doing, indirectly helped secure the Philippine-American relationship from both potential Japanese aggression and the more immediately threatening doubts of Roosevelt.

The press reported widely upon Taft's second visit to Japan as Secretary of War, and in the main agreed that he was on a mission. The *Times* of London was an exception in that it reported Taft as stating that he had 'no mission to Japan except to bear a friendly greeting and to visit old friends on the way to Manila.' As a sign of the speculation over his journey, Taft was also forced to declare that the United States had no intention 'to sell the Philippines.' The *Times* went on to state its belief that Roosevelt's transfer of the U.S. naval fleet to the Pacific was in preparation for a war with Japan, and added that the U.S. press was only serving to encourage such an eventuality.<sup>433</sup> In August 1907 the general board of the navy had contacted President Roosevelt with its concerns over the strategic vulnerability of the islands, which might serve as pawns in U.S.-Japanese affairs.<sup>434</sup> The *Boston Daily Globe* speculated that the purpose of Taft's 'mission' was to set the groundwork for an entente on immigration.<sup>435</sup> The *New York Times* pointed out that it was unsurprising that such

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<sup>433</sup> *The [London] Times*, September 30, 1907.

<sup>434</sup> Minger, "Taft's Two Missions to Japan: A Study in Personal Diplomacy," 293. (Minger cites a 1950s article by William R. Braisted for this information). Information relating to Taft's two trips to Japan given in this essay is similar to that found in: Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*, Chapter 6. In both instances, Minger gives a detailed narrative of the events that took place during Taft's trip to Japan.

<sup>435</sup> *Boston Daily Globe*, September 30, 1907.

attention was being given to the fact Taft had met with his counterpart in Japan, General Masatake Terauchi on two occasions, given that they were both secretaries of war. The *New York Times* continued, however, that the Japanese widely saw Taft as ‘a peace envoy.’<sup>436</sup> Aside from the U.S. and British press, the English language press in Japan also had a good deal to say on the nature of Taft’s visit to their country. A sympathetic article in the *Japan Gazette* saw Taft as the best person to disperse the ‘war clouds,’ an opinion shared by the *Japan Chronicle*, which furthered its praise of Taft’s diplomacy by forecasting that a potential Taft presidency would further strengthen Japanese-American relations.<sup>437</sup> Whatever the western or Japanese press speculated about Taft’s “mission” to Japan in 1907, it was evident that with the exception of the *Times* most commentators agreed, despite diplomatic assurances to the contrary, that Taft was indeed on a mission.

Regardless of press speculation and diplomatic denial, in terms of issues on the political agenda in 1907, immigration was manifestly Japan’s main concern, and for the United States immigration and the Philippines were important factors. When one considers Roosevelt’s letter concerning Philippine independence, and the danger of Japan, it becomes clear that if Taft was to avoid promising independence he would need to weaken the perception that Japan was a threat to the Philippines and the United States. Indeed, in his most widely reported speech of the trip Taft declared to great acclaim that war between the U.S. and Japan would be ‘a crime against modern civilization and as wicked as it would be insane.’<sup>438</sup> For Taft, the Philippines were more of a central issue than to most other parties involved, especially as the once pro-imperial Roosevelt was growing, like many Americans (or so he felt), dubious as to the potential of the U.S. remaining in the islands for the long term. Taft, as has been

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<sup>436</sup> *New York Times*, September 30, 1907.

<sup>437</sup> *Japan Gazette*, October 2, 1907; *Japanese Chronicle*, October 5, 1907, both in: WHTP 3:70.

<sup>438</sup> *New York Times*, October 2, 1907.

shown on numerous occasions, had clear long-term ambitions for the islands and if Roosevelt was wavering, and the threat of war with Japan was an important factor in his doubts, then Taft would certainly do all that was in his power to assuage such concerns. Ultimately, an agreement on Japanese immigration in any guise was important to Taft, primarily because it would improve the possibility of long-term links between the U.S. and the Philippines.

Marquis Kinmochi Saionji, the new Prime Minister, met with Taft on his visit and expressed his full endorsement of all agreements reached during Taft's meeting with his predecessor Taro Katsura, including the fact that Japan harboured no aggressive intentions toward the Philippines. Taft's joking response was to suggest that Japan would not take the Philippines even if 'accompanied with a dowry of a million dollars,' but soon added more seriously that such a sale was nevertheless unthinkable and would have been a gross 'violation' of the United States' obligations to the islands. Clearly, whether the talk over the idea of selling the Philippines to Japan was simply press speculation, Taft wanted to make sure that everybody was sure that there should be no doubt about the falsity of such a proposition.<sup>439</sup>

Historian Ralph Minger cites Taft's earlier speech before the Japanese Chamber of Commerce on September 30, at length in one article, in regard to Taft's views on U.S.-Japanese relations. In relation to speculation on the Philippine situation, Minger relates and accepts Taft's version of events: that Japan did not want the Philippines, and the U.S. could not in good faith sell the islands, calling the idea 'absurd.'<sup>440</sup> 'There is only a little cloud over our friendship of 50 years, and the greatest earthquake of the century could not shake our unity,' Secretary Taft declared

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<sup>439</sup> Chinda to WHT, October 1, 1907, WHTP 3:70. For the sake of consistency this chapter is using the Westernised ordering of Japanese names, as many Americans at the time did. Many historians of Japan prefer to use the Japanese system, where, for example, "Taro Katsura," referred to by (sur)name as simply Katsura, is more correctly given as "Katsura Taro."

<sup>440</sup> Minger, "Taft's Two Missions to Japan," 290.

at a banquet in Tokyo on October 1. Taft suggested that the immigration problem could be solved through diplomatic channels and he also went on to accuse the press as serving as agitators to the situation: *The Times* (London) concluded that the speech ‘created a splendid impression.’<sup>441</sup> The *Washington Post* reported Taft’s visit in detail, adding that whatever the immigration entente the United States might agree with Japan, it should be equally requested by Japan of Great Britain on behalf of Canada.<sup>442</sup> Indeed, Baron Shinichiro Kurino, the Japanese ambassador in Paris, stated that Japanese relations with the U.S. ‘are in every respect excellent’ and that public opinion was ‘calmer than it has ever been,’ citing both the disturbances in Vancouver and the popular welcome of Taft in Tokyo.<sup>443</sup> Taft’s conclusion on the possibility of war, as laid out in his Tokyo speech, was that it was media hype more than reality, and placed blame squarely at the feet of the American press.<sup>444</sup>

In a long cable sent to General Frank McIntyre of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Taft set out a detailed account of his Japanese trip.<sup>445</sup> Taft informed McIntyre that the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs was among the first to ask Taft about rumours of a U.S. willingness to sell the Philippines and how he related his explicit denial of these rumours. Taft also assured the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tadasu Hayashi, that the anti-Japanese immigration sentiments in San Francisco were unrepresentative of Americans as a whole. In further meetings Japanese officials made it clear to Taft that what Japan most ‘resented’ was that Japanese were not

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<sup>441</sup> *The Times* [London], October 2, 1907. Though, as mentioned earlier, the San Francisco earthquake did in fact lead to increased discrimination towards Japanese in California.

<sup>442</sup> *Washington Post*, October 2, 1907. This statement was made in response to reports of a ‘quiet movement’ in British Columbia discussing secession from Canada if they were forced to submit to ‘unrestricted Japanese immigration.’

<sup>443</sup> *The [London] Times*, October 2, 1907.

<sup>444</sup> Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*, 158.

<sup>445</sup> McIntyre worked at the Bureau of Insular Affairs and went on to become head of the Bureau after Gen. Clarence Edwards.

treated equally to Europeans, and that if such equality were achieved the Japanese would be happy to sign a reciprocal agreement restricting immigration of labour.<sup>446</sup>

Taft summed up his ten-page cable by concluding that the Japanese Government and commercial interests in Japan were opposed to any conflict with the United States, the only dissent coming as a response to the idea that the Americans regarded the Japanese as inferior. However, Taft was not dismissive of popular discontent: 'Popular voice is now so strong in Japan that the government could with difficulty resist pressure of war by the people should the immigration question be brought to direct issue by Act of Congress violating treaty.'<sup>447</sup> Taft's solution was to maintain the *status quo* in the United States confirming that emigration would be curbed by Japan in the future.<sup>448</sup> The Japanese newspaper *Yorozu Shoho* was left without reassurance on the immigration question by Taft's visit, though the paper did concede that in view of 'Secretary Taft's great speech we hope that there is no ground for the rumors now coming across the ocean.'<sup>449</sup> If Taft genuinely had no mission and no diplomatic role as he claimed, then he had gone beyond his remit in Japan, assuaging Japanese fears of exclusion, as well as reassuring himself, and sending a message to Roosevelt, that the Japanese had no interest in the Philippines at all. On the latter point, such an assurance was sure to influence Taft's actions in the Philippines as his Asian trip continued. Historian Ralph Minger concludes that Taft's lack of concern over a war with Japan displayed his 'lack of insight' into Japan's rise to power, as well as his 'lack of historical perspective.'<sup>450</sup> Perhaps in this instance, as in the matter of Chinese immigration or the establishment of free trade with the

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<sup>446</sup> WHT to Frank McIntyre, October 4, 1907, WHTP 3:70.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 165. At the same time Great Britain was facing a similar diplomatic issue in relation to Japanese immigration in British Columbia.

<sup>449</sup> *Yorozu Shoho* [translation] October 9, 1907, WHTP 3:70.

<sup>450</sup> Minger, *Apprenticeship Years*, 162.

Philippines, Taft revealed the narrowness of his vision when it came to Philippine affairs. Unlike Roosevelt, who admired and respected the power of the Japanese military machine, Taft downplayed the importance of such wider concerns when they conflicted with his imperial vision.

Following his high-profile visit to Japan, Taft proceeded to China and was received ‘most royally’ by the Chinese, who, in Taft’s opinion, ‘were anxious to wipe out the memory of the boycott of two years ago.’<sup>451</sup> Taft made an important address before the American Association of China during his visit, assuring them that the United States favoured the Open Door Policy and would ‘encourage this great Chinese Empire to take long steps in administrative and governmental reform.’<sup>452</sup> He referred to the Chinese boycott of American goods in 1905 as ‘a closed incident, a past episode.’<sup>453</sup> As Willard Straight, the American consul general in Manchuria, had written to Taft in the previous month, the Chinese ‘rely greatly on the United States’ in regard to Japanese ambitions in Manchuria (a region rich in minerals and coal).<sup>454</sup> In the same address Taft mentioned the Philippines unsurprisingly in as much as the United States would ‘retain them permanently’ or turn them over to the Filipinos only when they were fit to maintain the required level of governance.<sup>455</sup> Taft’s journeys to China, and more pressingly to Japan, were important precursors to his arrival in the Philippines. Taft had attempted as best he could to stabilise relations with two of Asia’s most important powers and, particularly in the case of Japanese-American relations, avert a potential threat to the future of his imperial vision.

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<sup>451</sup> WHT to Charles Taft, October 10, 1907, WHTP 1:21; WHT to TR, October 10, 1907, TRP 1:77.

<sup>452</sup> Address by WHT at the American Association of China, Shanghai, October 6, 1907, WHTP 1:21.

<sup>453</sup> WHT, “Rough draft of Shanghai Speech,” circa. October 7, 1907, WHTP 3:70.

<sup>454</sup> Willard Straight to WHT, September 15, 1907, WHTP 3:70.

<sup>455</sup> WHT, “Rough draft of Shanghai Speech,” circa. October 7, 1907, WHTP 3:70.



### *The Philippines*

The Philippines were on Taft's mind throughout his journey through East Asia, as they had no doubt been ever since he left the islands as civil governor. His trip in 1905 had left him dissatisfied with the civil government in general, Governor General Wright in particular, and the growing strength of the independence movement above all. In 1906 Wright had been replaced temporarily with Henry Clay Ide (an original member of the Taft Commission) and then in September 1906 with James Francis Smith.<sup>456</sup> Historian Stanley Karnow suggests that Taft's decision to replace the tactless and widely disliked Wright with a 'devout Catholic' was an attempt to try and salvage the 'political edifice he had left behind.' However, as Karnow notes, and others at the time also recognised, the rise of Filipino nationalism could not be solved as simply as this.<sup>457</sup> Manila-based judge Newton W. Gilbert wrote to Taft before he departed for the Philippines: 'The Philippine people are awaiting your coming with all their old-time regard, and I may say, love. The present is, in a way, a crisis, and your presence will do much to keep things right. General Smith is wonderfully adapted to his position, but the difficulties have been wonderfully increased by the various actions, or failure of action, of congress. If the progress and efforts of many of us here can avail, you will be the next President, and then we may hope for a definite pronouncement of policy on the part of the United States.'<sup>458</sup> Taft was being welcomed back by supporters, something he seemed keen to emphasise. Gilbert's letter also reveals the increased expectations by late 1907 that Taft would be a candidate for the Republicans in the 1908 presidential election. However, the main

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<sup>456</sup> Smith had served as a soldier in the Spanish-American and Filipino-American Wars and as an associate justice on the Supreme Court of the Philippines before joining the Philippine Commission in January of 1903. He served as Governor-General until November 1909.

<sup>457</sup> Karnow, *In Our Image*, 231.

<sup>458</sup> Newton W. Gilbert to WHT, October 4, 1907, WHTP 3:70.

purpose of Taft's 1907 visit, that differentiated it from the trip of two years previously, was the opening of the Philippine Assembly. The assembly represented the culmination – as far as Taft had foreseen as civil governor – of the political power vested in Filipino hands for the sake of the policies of attraction and political education.

In April of 1907 *Collier's Magazine* speculated on the Philippine question. An article in *Collier's* suggested that many observers believed that Democrat William Jennings Bryan was still 'secretly' for 'immediate independence.' The magazine saw this state-of-affairs as something that had been a substantial 'handicap' to Taft for seven years. 'Consider the position of Canada, yet alone India, if her relations with England were to be changed by a change of administration! Or of Alaska, in our own case,' the magazine stated, suggesting that the idea that Democratic victory in a U.S. election might bring about a U-turn on colonial policy was the main 'stumbling-block' to progress in U.S.-Philippine relations. However, aside from the reporter's own views on the situation, quotations from an interview with Taft provide further illumination to Taft's own feelings about the perceived independence policies, which a Bryan administration might implement. Taft suggested that: 'In one sense it would be a good thing as far as the Philippines are concerned... if Bryan were in. He would probably find that the Republican Senate would not permit withdrawal, even if the force of the situation did not convince him of its impracticability. We might have a repetition of our experiences with Hawaii in Cleveland's Administration. When the Republicans returned to power we fixed a policy of definite occupation by annexation.'<sup>459</sup> Despite the fact that the United States had already annexed the Philippines, Taft's parallel with the Hawaii precedent seems to suggest Taft believed

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<sup>459</sup> *Collier's Magazine*, April 13, 1907, in: WHTP 17:623.

that whether the Republicans retained the White House or not, the likely fate of the Philippines was that they would become closer to the United States: more like the status eventually conferred to Hawaii.

The interviewer for *Collier's* went on to ask Taft whether there was no possibility of the United States escaping their responsibility to the Philippines, 'even if we are of the mind?' Taft answered definitively: 'I see none,' citing once again the inevitable instability and potential for occupation by another great power. Taft argued that the islands needed to be able to 'care for themselves,' and the U.S were obliged to remain in the archipelago until that situation arose, finishing with the statement that, 'It is not conceivable that our country will ever let them go except of our own will.'<sup>460</sup> One can only assume that in this sense Taft felt that Philippine independence was a question that they would only put to the Filipino population when such a proposal could conceivably be rejected, a point some decades away at least, as Taft had suggested on numerous previous occasions.

In his 1907 visit to the islands, Taft, as the figurehead of U.S.-Filipino relations, had returned to oversee the birth of the Filipino lower chamber and make the inaugural speech upon this significant occasion. The speech itself was, Taft told Root, 'not as easy a task as it might be,' suggesting that Taft was unsure of the focus of his message for the occasion. Once again it is useful to return to Roosevelt's "Achilles' Heel" instructions to Taft, suggesting that he might use the occasion of his trip to the Philippines to break his (and the Republican administration's) silence on independence. There is little doubt that this concern weighed heavily on Taft. Roosevelt, for so long an arch-imperialist and a chief ally of Taft, had reneged on his support for Taft's policy of indefinite retention.

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

On October 16, 1907, Taft gave his address inaugurating the Philippine Assembly that, following the elections held in July, comprised a majority of representatives calling for immediate independence.<sup>461</sup> Historian Stanley Karnow described the speech as: ‘a stale and tiresome lecture that showed him to be badly out of date,’ primarily due to its inattention to the fact that many Filipino politicians were ambivalent to independence, and that many used the issue more as a bargaining tool for greater autonomy and aid from the Americans than from any great conviction.<sup>462</sup> This is a useful point, as it was clear that Taft was relatively uninterested in the reasons behind the now widespread calls for independence among politicians who had once shied from the issue, but was overwhelmingly focused on stemming the tide of such advocacy among Filipinos. As Karnow also points out, many Filipino politicians privately feared the consequences of the realities posed by independence.<sup>463</sup> However, Taft’s reasoning for many years had been that even promising independence would prove disastrous, and he reverted to form in his speech: ‘How long the process of political preparation of the Filipino people is likely to be is a question which no one can certainly answer. When I was in the Islands the last time, I ventured the opinion that it would take considerably longer than a generation. I have not changed my view upon this point.’ He went on to suggest that the U.S. experiment was unique, and as such, ‘to fix a certain number of years in which the experiment must become a success and be completely realized would be, in my judgement, unwise.’<sup>464</sup>

The closest Taft came to suggesting a future independence came in typical Taft fashion: ‘As this policy of extending control continues, it must logically reduce and finally end the sovereignty of the United States in the Islands, unless it shall seem

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<sup>461</sup> The outcome of the Assembly elections is discussed in detail at the beginning of Chapter Five.

<sup>462</sup> Karnow, *In Our Image*, 238.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> “The Inauguration of the Philippine Assembly,” Manila, Philippines, October 16, 1907, reprinted in: Burton, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, 83-105.

wise to the American and the Filipino peoples, on account of mutually beneficial trade relations and possible advantages to the Islands in their foreign relations, that the bond shall not be completely severed.’<sup>465</sup> As on previous occasions Taft suggested that the time for independence was a good way in the future, but then at that indeterminate point the Philippines would have a choice on independence, and, importantly, might choose to remain connected to the United States. Also, though put much more diplomatically, this was in line with his comments to *Collier’s* magazine, cited earlier, that the United States would be the judge of when such a decision should be made.

Taft was under no illusions that if a vote were taken within a year, there would be very little possibility of the Philippines remaining in a long-term relationship with the United States; Taft’s ideal needed at least a generation or two for the Filipinos to become accustomed to the association. Finally, Taft concluded on this issue, the decision was not his but a decision for the United States Congress. Taft’s conditional and vague suggestions of a distant decision on the question of independence were in line with what he, rather than President Roosevelt, advocated. Roosevelt had suggested to Taft that a promise of independence should be conceded, and for Taft this would have all but ended the possibility of the future dominion-style relationship that he desired. Historian Charles Neu, despite arguing that Taft was not a policy maker but was instead guided by the stronger opinions of figures such as Roosevelt, does at least concede that in opposing a declaration on the future of the Philippines, Taft served to delay any hasty action by Roosevelt and allowed matters to calm down in the coming months so that Roosevelt’s ‘mood passed.’<sup>466</sup> Indeed, Taft’s decision to not promise independence ultimately secured more than five further years without

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<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

<sup>466</sup> Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship*, 143.

such a promise being made, during which time he continued to control policy in this area securing this *status quo*. Surely, one must concede then that this in itself can be considered a fairly important example of Taft himself shaping Philippine policy in a significant way. Roosevelt's pro-independence letter of August 1907 is cited as a 'milestone' in the history of American imperialism.<sup>467</sup> However, it was Taft's diplomacy and careful language in Japan and the Philippines during this period that helped avert Roosevelt's concession of a promise of independence, and allowed the possibility of long-term imperialism to survive for the time being. This action was critical to Taft's imperial vision and the fact he went against the advice of Roosevelt, whom he respected enormously, evidenced how important the issue was to him.

One might consider that Taft's concern over his speech before the assembly was some form of consternation about the devolution of limited political power to the Filipinos, especially to those who were calling for immediate independence. On the contrary, Taft assured President Roosevelt that the assembly promised 'to be a conservative body, and I think that it will help instead of interfering with the success of government.' This being despite the fact that the assembly elections had delivered a huge majority for parties calling for immediate independence in their platforms, and a disappointing result for Taft's more conservative (pro-American) Filipino politicians. However, as an example of Taft's grudging acknowledgment of the election results, he did go on to add the following caveat: 'The Assembly may ask Congress to define the relations between the United States and the Islands by some promise. I think it would be wiser not to have any definite promise or any definitive statement.'<sup>468</sup> As a final reply to the Philippine elections of July and Roosevelt's August message, Taft had responded in the negative to all parties who favoured a

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<sup>467</sup> Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan*, 195.

<sup>468</sup> WHT to TR, October 18, 1907, WHTP 4A:321.

promise of independence. Roosevelt wanted Taft to reveal the president's changing views on retention and Taft had refused to do so – Taft would not act as an apostle of independence even for his political career-maker. The next chapter in this thesis looks in more detail at the nature and composition of the assembly, and how Taft reacted to the new structure of government and the political ascendancy of pro-independence politicians in the Philippines.

### *Conclusions*

In a banquet held for the Secretary of War in the Hotel Metropole in Manila, on October 21, 1907, some prominent Filipinos made speeches commenting upon Taft's address before the assembly with their own readings of Taft's seemingly ambiguous take on Philippine independence. Antonio Regidor, a former revolutionary leader, concluded his remarks by expressing his hope that the U.S. and the Philippines 'may live forever imperishably united... but free, each with its independent juridic personality.'<sup>469</sup> Filipino politician Vicente Singson Encarnation felt that Taft's wise words about the need for the United States to remain in the islands for the foreseeable future, would see him remembered as 'the good angel of the Philippines at a critical time and that he was the skilled artificer and molder of our future Nationality.'<sup>470</sup> Both of these speakers praised Taft, and both saw in Taft's speech some implicit guarantee of future independence. However, Regidor seemed to embrace Taft's ultimate vision more closely: a permanent union of sorts, but with some form of legal autonomy for the Philippines. In a newspaper report later in the month Regidor told

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<sup>469</sup> Speech by Don Antonio Regidore, October 21, 1907, WHTP 3:70.

<sup>470</sup> Speech by Señor Vicente Singson Encarnation, October 21, 1907, WHTP 3:70. Encarnation was the minority floor leader in the Assembly as a member of the Progressive Party, the successor party of Taft's favoured Federal Party.

readers that: “Mr. [William Jennings] Bryan himself, in answer to a question propounded by me through a mutual friend, advises the Filipinos not to create obstacles for America, and to follow Mr. Taft, who’s the only one who can lead us to the realization of our ideals.”<sup>471</sup> Regidor, clearly a devout Taft supporter, was stating things just the way Taft saw them: he was the only man with a plan that was good for the Philippines and the U.S., and further, he was the only one with the ability to carry it out. Indeed, rather than representative voices of the majority of politicians in the Philippine Assembly, the figures who spoke so gushingly of Taft were the remnants of his favoured conservative pro-American elites. According to Regidor, even the Great Commoner thought that the Great Postponer had the right idea for the Philippines, however unlikely this seems. Nevertheless, what Taft’s speech to the assembly had shown was that Bryan was right, Taft wanted postponement. He desired postponement of increased self-government, postponement of a promise of independence and postponement of independence itself. What Bryan failed to note was that Taft did have a plan beyond mere postponement: some form of permanent colonial connection, for the attainment of which Taft saw postponement as the key.

Taft informed his brother Charles that the Americans in Manila were beginning to see ‘first, the advantage of the policy that I have always pursued, and that it has not been antagonistic to American business interests, and second, they begin to realize that if I am the Republican nominee and elected, nothing could happen in the politics of the United States which would more direct the profitable attention of Congress and the people to the Philippines.’<sup>472</sup> With Taft among the frontrunners for the Republican presidential nomination in 1908, Taft and those who

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<sup>471</sup> Antonio Regidor, “The Nationalists and Taft,” from *Asamblea Filipina a Manila* [translated newspaper article], October 31, 1907, WHTP 3:71.

<sup>472</sup> WHT to Charles Taft, October 23, 1907, WHTP 1:21.



supported him had every reason to believe that his opinions on the future of the Philippines were worth listening to.

## Chapter Five

### The Reluctant President: Maintaining the *Status Quo* and the End of the Taft Era, 1908-1913

#### *Introduction*

In January of 1908, Secretary of War Taft sent a special report to President Roosevelt detailing the findings of his recent visit to the Philippines. In the published version of Taft's report there was an additional introductory letter from the president, which offers a good example of how Roosevelt felt about Taft's decision to delay the promise of independence and continue the policy of retention. Roosevelt argued in his letter that the U.S. had treated the Philippines with 'wisdom and disinterestedness,' and that, had they turned the islands 'loose' or submitted them to absolute U.S. rule, they would have done the Filipinos a great injustice. Roosevelt called attention to the 'admirably clear showing made by Secretary Taft' against going too fast towards giving the Filipinos self-government, and – instead – continuing the ongoing gradual approach to preparing the Filipinos for self-government. Roosevelt felt that although the Filipinos had 'made real advances in a hopeful direction,' they still had 'a long way to travel before they will be fit for complete self-government, and for deciding, as it will be their duty to do, whether this self-government shall be accompanied by complete independence.' In this sense, Roosevelt echoed the thoughts Taft had expressed at the inauguration of the Philippine Assembly, and appeared to be backtracking from the idea of promising the Filipinos independence sooner rather than later.<sup>473</sup> Perhaps this is the best example of Taft having a significant influence on Roosevelt's Philippine policy, which had only the previous year advocated promising

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<sup>473</sup> "Special Report of Wm. H. Taft Secretary of War to the President on the Philippines," January 27, 1908. As the previous chapter established, in 1907 Roosevelt appeared to have come to the opinion that the Philippines were a strategic liability and that perhaps independence should be expedited.

the Philippines independence due to lack of public support for retention and the strategic weakness of the islands in a potential scenario of war with Japan.<sup>474</sup> Taft had held firm in his retentionist stance and this introductory letter suggests that the usually stubborn Roosevelt underwent a change of heart on the Philippine issue. Whether Roosevelt had truly changed his opinion, or simply felt it prudent to endorse his cabinet member's words as set out at the inauguration of the Philippine Assembly, the set of events is clear: Roosevelt suggested a change of policy, Taft rejected this change and Roosevelt endorsed Taft's policy.

Following on directly from the previous chapter and Taft's return from the opening of the Philippine Assembly, this chapter begins by analysing Taft's final months as Secretary of War in 1908 and his Philippine policy after the opening of the new Philippine Assembly. However, 1908 was also the year in which Taft ran for the presidency and won against anti-imperialist William Jennings Bryan. This chapter analyses what the party candidate and presidential election campaign debates revealed about what a Taft presidency would mean for the Philippines. The next part of the chapter explores how, on assuming the presidency, Taft was able to maintain his favoured *status quo* in the Philippines without the fear of a sudden change in executive policy. However, as the latter part of the chapter explores, the Philippine issue only really came to the fore in late 1912 and early 1913 when Taft was a lame duck president on his way out of the White House. This section examines Taft's last days in office and his stand against the Democrats and their proposed policy of

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<sup>474</sup> As historian Charles Neu suggests, Taft did not 'succumb to any of the fear that had agitated Roosevelt during the crisis of 1906-1908' with Japan, and he continued to remain calm and passive toward the Japanese issue during his presidency. Despite Taft's personal feelings, military and naval advisers began a more 'systematic consideration of war with Japan' during Taft's presidency and 'fretted over the vulnerability of the Philippines.' However, strategists were divided over whether Germany or Japan represented the biggest threat and the navy refused to move the fleet to the Pacific. Neu sees the Taft presidency as a time of slowly simmering antagonism between Japan and the United States – where U.S. attempts to interfere in Manchuria caused further friction – that climaxed under Wilson's presidency with yet more immigration-related aggravation. See: Neu, *Troubled Encounter*, 75-77.

promising Philippine independence and expediting the process of Filipinization. This key period was Taft's last chance to try and define Philippine policy, and represented the redefinition of his position as a figurehead for retentionists that would characterise his post-presidential activities. Overall, throughout the entire period examined here Taft maintained his stance on Philippine retention consistently, whether as Republican presidential candidate, sitting president, or lame duck. This chapter illustrates that in the period when Taft had the greatest ability to guide U.S. foreign policy in the islands of his entire career, his attitude against Philippine independence remained resolute, and to the best of his ability Taft tried to maintain a retentionist policy until his departure from federal office and then, perhaps, beyond.

### *The Aftermath of the Assembly Elections*

Following its inauguration in October 1907, the Philippine Assembly became the representative lower house in the administration of the Philippines. The Philippine Commission, headed by the U.S. Governor-General comprised the upper house. Although the upper house was appointive, a "popular" election was held for the assembly with 104,000 (Christian) voters electing 80 Filipino assemblymen.<sup>475</sup> Taft reported the results of the election as follows:

Progresistas	16
Catolico	1
Independientes	20
Nacionalistas	31

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<sup>475</sup> The distinction between Christian (primarily Catholic) and non-Christian (Muslims and those with indigenous beliefs) is the focus of significant attention from historian Paul Kramer. Kramer argues that the U.S. built a 'bifurcated state' that was 'built upon an imperial indigenism, one of whose fundamental features was a racialized construction of religion, specifically an account of the radical, typological differences between Hispanicized Catholics and what were called non-Christians.' Kramer argues that the Catholics were seen as 'partly civilized' by centuries of Spanish rule, the non-Christians were viewed as especially savage and backward. See: Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 208-209.

Inmediatistas	7
Independistas	4
Nacionalista Independiente	1 <sup>476</sup>

Although at first glance there were a number of political parties presented in Taft's report, in reality the largest by far was the *Partido Nacionalista* (Nationalist Party). The Nationalist Party was a combination of pro-independence groups that together won a commanding fifty-nine of the seats in the assembly (though only one third of the popular vote).<sup>477</sup> Taft's favoured party, the *Progresistas* (Progressive Party), captured only sixteen (despite receiving one quarter of the total vote).<sup>478</sup> Although the American-led commission had a majority supporting the Republican administration in relation to the U.S.-Philippine relationship, the assembly now posed a tangible and vocal opposition to retention.

Although is it not of central relevance to this thesis to deal with the election and composition of the assembly in detail, it is useful to establish the main composition and state of Philippine politics after the opening of the assembly. The Progressive Party was essentially the reincarnation of the former Federal Party and comprised, in Taft's words, 'the ablest and most conservative of the Filipinos,' representing 'conservatism on the issue of independence.'<sup>479</sup> Taft continued to put his faith in so-called conservative Filipinos, by which he meant those not in favour of immediate independence and rather more in favour of a continued American presence in the islands. The Federalist Party had, in its earlier days, stood on a platform that supported the idea of statehood for the Philippines. However, as historian H. W.

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<sup>476</sup> "Special Report," 45. As one historian notes, the Assembly represented the first parliament 'ever freely elected in Asia,' but was voted for by only landowners, taxpayers and the literate, accounting for only three percent of the population. Karnow, *In Our Image*, 238.

<sup>477</sup> Historian Paul Kramer notes that despite the seeming 'radical break' in the political makeup of the Philippines, ninety percent of the new assemblymen had already held office at some level under an American administration. Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 300.

<sup>478</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 124. Golay accounts for the disparity between the popular vote and the proportion of seats won in the Philippine Assembly as due to the large number of independent candidates who 'scattered the vote.'

<sup>479</sup> "Special Report," 43.

Brands argues, disillusion about the attractiveness and potential of statehood, coupled with the lifting of the ban on advocating independence in the islands, had changed the party's fortunes and outlook since Taft left the islands.<sup>480</sup> The Sedition Act had stalled the formation of pro-independence parties, which had attempted to give voice to the popular call for independence while Taft had been governor, as explored in Chapter Two. Therefore, partly as a response to the rise of opposition parties rallying around the independence issue, in 1905 the Federal Party removed the statehood plank from their party platform and substituted instead a call for eventual independence, a move reaffirmed in the name change that followed a year and a half later.<sup>481</sup> Despite its seemingly substantial shift in platform, the Progressive Party was still the closest political party in the Philippines to the imperial vision Taft advocated and its membership comprised most of the Filipino elite still openly sympathetic to Taft's policy of gradualism. Taft claimed that the party 'took the position fully and flatly that the people of the Philippines were not fitted for immediate independence.'<sup>482</sup> So keen were Taft and Philippine Governor-General James F. Smith to keep the pro-American elites in influential positions that Benito Legarda (a Progressive) was elected by the American-dominated commission as one of the two new resident commissioners to Washington.<sup>483</sup> The second resident commissioner was Pablo Ocampo, nominated by the assembly and a Nationalist advocate of immediate

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<sup>480</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 86. Brands highlights the visit of members of the Federal Party to the St. Louis World's Fair, where they witnessed the reality of racial segregation and Asian exclusion in the United States, as a turning point. He suggests that this chastening experience helped convince the party that statehood was not necessarily all that desirable and that those in the United States would be unlikely to accept it anyway.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> "Special Report," 44.

<sup>483</sup> When it came to appointing new resident commissioners in 1910, Taft was determined to have Legarda appointed again, despite continued rejections of such an appointment by the Philippine Assembly, to the end that even his own party deserted his candidacy. Legarda's pro-U.S. stance and his belief that the Filipinos were not ready for self-government made his candidacy, in the words of Frank Golay, 'anathema to the Nacionalistas.' Taft's wishes were achieved by the passage of legislation allowing the existing commissioners to remain in place until their successors were elected. See: Golay, *Face of Empire*, 150.

independence, reflecting far more realistically the shift in political power. However, not everybody in the administration was so sure of Taft's continued faith in the Progressives. As historian Stanley Karnow suggests, Commissioner William Cameron Forbes and other U.S. officials in the islands considered the party 'a spent force.'<sup>484</sup> Taft's report was trying to present the fact that his favoured party had clearly lost in the most positive light, but the election results were clear: a promise of independence was favoured by the vast majority of assemblymen and Taft's Filipino allies could no longer dominate affairs in the islands on patronage alone.

In contrast to the Progressives, the Nationalist Party was a 'fusion of several smaller groups' all favouring immediate independence.<sup>485</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, Taft saw calls for immediate independence as a vote winning slogan rather than a truly held conviction for most of the Filipino elite, and felt that the long-term strategy he favoured was a far more difficult option to sell. Taft described the situation thus: 'As a shibboleth – as a party cry – immediate independence has much force, because it excites the natural pride of the people, but few of their number have ever worked out its consequences, and when they have done so they have been willing to postpone that question until some of the immediate needs of the people have been met.'<sup>486</sup> Taft argued that if given a popular vote on whether to become independent, it was not surprising the Filipinos would vote for independence, and that this was, on one level, an encouraging sign:

Another logical deduction from the main proposition is that when the Filipino people as a whole, show themselves reasonably fit to conduct a popular self-government, maintaining law and order and offering equal protection of the laws and civil rights to rich and poor, and desire complete independence of the United States, they shall be given it. The standard set, of course, is not that of perfection or such a governmental capacity as that of an Anglo-Saxon people, but it

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<sup>484</sup> Karnow, *In Our Image*, 237.

<sup>485</sup> Brands, *Face of Empire*, 86.

<sup>486</sup> "Special Report," 46.

certainly ought to be one of such popular political capacity that complete independence in its exercise will result in progress rather than retrogression to chaos or tyranny. It should be noted, too, that the tribunal to decide whether proper political capacity exists to justify independence is Congress and not the Philippine electorate. Aspiration for independence may well be one of the elements in the make-up of a people to show their capacity for it, but there are other qualifications quite as indispensable. The judgement of a people as to their own political capacity is not an unerring guide.<sup>487</sup>

Taft felt that even if the majority of the people did favour immediate independence, then such convictions would not be ‘an intelligent judgement based on a knowledge of what independence means, of what its responsibilities are or of what popular government in its essence is.’ Despite the changing conditions in the politics of the Philippine Islands and the ascendancy those advocating immediate independence, Taft’s message had not changed. Unlike a more canny politician such as Theodore Roosevelt who had sensed the changing winds in U.S. and Filipino opinion on independence leading him to question the idea of retention in 1907, Taft was determined that in the long run he would be proved to have been right in his constancy. In line with his long-standing emphasis on education, Taft felt that political judgement was something the uneducated majority of the Filipino population needed to be taught to understand the nature of democracy and civil rights.<sup>488</sup> In order to achieve this, Taft suggested the U.S. Congress should contribute ‘a permanent appropriation of two or three millions of dollars for ten or fifteen years to the primary and industrial education of the Filipino people,’ with the Filipino government matching the amount.<sup>489</sup> Far from taking a reactionary stance to the rising calls for immediate independence, Taft’s alternative was a plan that he had advocated since the beginning of U.S. civil government in the islands: education centred and gradualist.

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<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 30.



Historian H. W. Brands sums up the political change, especially the transformation of the *Federalistas* into the *Progresistas*, as indicative of an acceptance among Filipino politicians that the political narrative had shifted decisively from *whether* the Philippines should be independent to *when*.<sup>490</sup> By contrast, historian Bonifacio Salamanca points out that the Americans were ‘slow in admitting that a real change in leadership had taken place,’ seeking to claim that the assembly elections were an ‘inconclusive index’ of party political strengths.<sup>491</sup> However, Taft was not in complete denial of the political power of the independence movement and despite not wishing to promise independence, it was unrealistic to expect Taft to sidestep the issue entirely. Taft conceded in his report that the gradual policy of increased self-government for Filipinos ‘necessarily involves in the ultimate conclusion as the steps toward self-government become greater and greater the ultimate independence of the islands.’ However, as he had done time and again in previous speeches and reports, Taft suggested that ‘although of course if both the United States and the islands were to conclude after complete self-government were possible that it would be mutually beneficial to continue a government relation between them like that between England and Australia, there would be nothing inconsistent with the present policy in such a result.’<sup>492</sup> Thus, given his suggestions of a continuing imperial bond, Taft had not really accepted independence, but instead suggested that it was one of two possibilities as the ‘ultimate conclusion’ of U.S. policy, both involving complete self-government. The fact that he used the word “ultimate” twice in one sentence, once again suggested that this perceivable option of independence was a great distance in the future. Taft went on to conclude that: ‘If the

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<sup>490</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 86.

<sup>491</sup> Salamanca, *Filipino Reaction*, 161-162.

<sup>492</sup> “Special Report,” 74. Here again Taft draws a comparison with the relationship between Britain and its dominions in Canada and Australia, discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

American government can only remain in the islands long enough to educate the entire people, to give them a language which enables them to come into contact with modern civilization, and to extend to them from time to time additional political rights so that by the exercise of them they shall learn the use and responsibilities necessary to their proper exercise, independence can be granted with entire safety to the people.’ Taft saw this policy as markedly different from Britain’s dealings with its non-white colonies, and rebuked British criticisms of the U.S. for educating the masses and moving too fast, where the opposite policy had worked for the British.<sup>493</sup> Such a view is supported by historian Glenn May who suggests that despite ‘the restrictions imposed on the franchise and the supervision to which Filipino officials were subjected, the Americans gave their subjects more experience in self-government than Europeans did to theirs.’<sup>494</sup>

One might conclude from Taft’s report that Taft had shifted position on independence. Taft had definitely acknowledged independence as one of the ultimate options in the distant future, but suggested that an imperial relationship of some kind might be a mutually agreeable alternative. Again, this was not really new, but simply a different way of stating the idea Taft had been trying to promote since at least the hearings before the Philippine Committee in 1902. If there was a shift in Taft’s rhetoric, it was provoked by the realities of the assembly elections and the popular mood in the Philippines towards the issue of *immediate* independence. The policy of attraction was based on compromises with the Filipino elite and concessions over devolved government. However, the culmination of this policy always posed a danger, in that the opening of the assembly meant that Taft could no longer dictate who would be elected to office. As a result Taft’s Filipino political allies had accepted

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<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>494</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 181.

independence as an ultimate goal for their own good, albeit in the long term, and Taft had to accept that the nature of his discourse on independence had to follow suit. Taft could not alienate his so-called “conservative” Filipino allies by suggesting independence was not an option – ever – if he was going to be able to pursue what had always been his ultimate goal: a dominion-style relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines. During his time as civil governor, Taft had been able to suppress talk of independence with the excuse of ongoing guerrilla warfare, but now the tide of political discussion had turned against him decidedly. Taft believed that if the Philippines were to remain under U.S. rule for a couple of generations the mood could shift once more and his aim of a permanent link could be achieved in time. The Progressive Party was still Taft’s best hope, and the threat to his designs now lay not so much in mere discussion of independence, but rather in the discussion of immediate independence. If the Philippines were to be won over to U.S. rule under decades of education, investment and trade, time was required. The vague promise of the gradual turnover of power and a far off decision on independence was not so far removed from his original aims – there was still no firm promise or timetable, and as such time would be allowed for a shift in popular opinion.

### *The Philippines, the Nomination and the Election of 1908*

#### *Part I – The Nomination*

Returning from the Philippines to become Roosevelt’s Secretary of War had been an important step for Taft, one that not only allowed him to maintain oversight of Philippine affairs, but also to further his political career as his family had suggested. Theodore Roosevelt’s somewhat rash declaration in 1904 that he would not accept

another nomination in 1908 ruled out the favourite for the position and Taft's was among the names raised as a potential successor along with Secretary of State Elihu Root and Charles Evans Hughes. As early as 1906 Roosevelt, for want of a figure more fitting (and as he saw it, more malleable), had been considering backing Taft for the presidency in 1908.<sup>495</sup> On January 2, 1908 *The Independent* of New York suggested: 'Thruout [sic] the year Mr. Taft has... remained the leading candidate for the Republican nomination.'<sup>496</sup> Therefore, despite his professed reluctance to become president, just as he had been reluctant to go to the Philippines, Taft began the year 1908 as the frontrunner for the nomination. In a letter to Philippine Commissioner William Cameron Forbes in November 1907, Taft had suggested that interest in his candidacy for the presidency was already waning. Taft told Forbes: 'it is not particularly disappointing or surprising to me for I had anticipated it, and it will mean that I can continue at the head of the War Department at any rate until a year from next March, which will still leave something of the Philippine problem in my hands for a solution.'<sup>497</sup> Whether or not Taft truly was so indifferent to his presidential potential, what is more pertinent in his sentiments is his aim to use the remaining time as Secretary of War to deal with the Philippines. The phrase 'in my hands' is particularly telling, as it suggests that even as early as 1907 Taft was afraid that his ability to shape Philippine policy might be coming to an end. Such a fear was to be relived four years later in a far more significant manner.

*New York Times* journalist Oscar King Davis spends a great deal of time stressing the importance of the Philippines as the basis for Taft's qualifications for executive office in his campaign biography *William Howard Taft: The Man of the*

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<sup>495</sup> J. I. Anderson, *An Intimate History*, 90-92. As Anderson suggests, Root was Roosevelt's first choice, but the Secretary of State showed an even greater reluctance than Taft to put himself forward.

<sup>496</sup> *The Independent* (New York), January 2, 1908.

<sup>497</sup> WHT to Forbes, November 30, 1907, WCFP, File No. 291. At this point Forbes was not yet Governor-General.

*Hour*.<sup>498</sup> As a presidential candidate Taft was not an experienced politician, nor had he ever been elected to office, but he had an impressive record in foreign affairs. Similarly, biographer and historian Donald Anderson sees Taft's foreign affairs experience as 'perhaps his biggest asset as a potential presidential candidate.'<sup>499</sup> Historian Akira Iriye goes so far as to state that Taft's experience and expertise in foreign relations meant that he 'was ideally fitted to provide the leadership that was required of the country as it entered the second decade of the post-1898 era in its foreign affairs.'<sup>500</sup> If Taft had any credible claim to being prepared to assume the presidency, then it was to be found in his executive experience as Civil Governor of the Philippines and in his multiple foreign assignments as Secretary of War. Mr. Dooley summed up the candidacy of Taft in the following sketch of Taft the "Jollier" in his own inimitable style:

An' thin ther's me frind Taft. Sthrongly ricomminde be th' captain iv th' Cincinaty Reds, he is said to be good prisidintyal timber....  
 Oh, he's called Sicity iv War, but he don't pay anny attention to that. Not he. If War had a sicity like Taft, it wudden't dictate anything to him but mashed letters. But he hasn't been to his office f'r I don't know how long. His rale position in the cabinet is Official Jollyer. He's the Happy Hand. Whin there's a ruction anywhere Taft starts out an' cleans it up...  
 Wan day he's down in th' Flippeens tellin' our little brothers that in th' coorse iv cinchries, if they'll on'y have patience to wait, they'll get a chance to cheer th' movin' pitchers in front iv th' newspaper offices ivry fourth Novimber.<sup>501</sup>

On March 31, William Jennings Bryan, the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination for presidency attacked Taft's record, suggesting that, unlike himself, Taft failed to offer reform, and that under Taft imperialism would remain.<sup>502</sup> On April 8, in a similar vein, Bryan focused on the cost of imperialism and the fact that Taft had

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<sup>498</sup> Davis, *Man of the Hour*.

<sup>499</sup> D. Anderson, *Conservative's Conception of the Presidency*, 24.

<sup>500</sup> Iriye, *From Nationalism to Internationalism*, 213.

<sup>501</sup> Finley Peter Dunne, "Mr. Dooley on the Presidential Candidates," 1908, WHTP 623:17.

<sup>502</sup> *New York Times*, March 31, 1908.

never made a promise of independence to the Filipinos despite having had the chance to do so.<sup>503</sup> What Bryan suggested was not that Taft's Philippine administration had been a failure, as it was widely regarded as a success, but rather that a continuation of this policy reneged on unwritten agreements concerning independence and came at a considerable cost to the U.S. taxpayer.

It was not only Bryan who tried to characterise a vote for Taft as a vote for imperialism. In a letter to the *New York Times* of June 1908, Erving Winslow, of the Anti-Imperialist League, quoted former president Grover Cleveland in suggesting that once the Philippines were fit for self-government the U.S. should stop their 'interference.' Winslow went on to state: 'Imperialism is an attitude which contradicts this position. Such attitude [sic] is that of William H. Taft, and among all the citizens of the United States he is the one and only person fully committed to it with his belief that it cannot be attained in any case for a "generation" or "generations" – better that it should not come at all; and that the ideal ultimate relation should be such as exists between Canada and Australia and Great Britain.'<sup>504</sup> Although the Anti-Imperialist League was clearly biased against Taft's plans for the Philippines, this summary was remarkably accurate, and recognised that despite the appearances of the 1908 Special Report and its rhetoric of ultimate independence, what Taft really desired was that independence 'should not come at all.'<sup>505</sup> What is also noteworthy is that Winslow regarded Taft as the 'one and only person' who was 'fully committed' to a long-term imperial relationship. This suggests that those who most opposed Taft's plans also most clearly recognised how distinctly committed he was, among leading political figures, to such an imperial vision.

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<sup>503</sup> *Washington Post*, April 8, 1908.

<sup>504</sup> *New York Times*, June 28, 1908.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*

On June 18, 1908, the Republican National Convention selected Taft as their presidential nominee for the election and secured Taft's Philippine policy as that of the Republican campaign.<sup>506</sup> Most contemporaries and historians agree that Taft's nomination was a result of Roosevelt's endorsement and that the only way Taft could have lost the nomination was if Roosevelt had stood against himself.<sup>507</sup> However, although the "Roosevelt factor" was the main reason for Taft's nomination, his candidacy, and opposition to it from anti-imperialists such as Winslow, had focused upon his record in the Philippines and his imperial vision. The Republican National Platform, as adopted at the Chicago convention on this same day, had the following to say upon the issue of the Philippine Islands: 'In the Philippines insurrection has been suppressed, law is established and life and property made secure. Education and practical experience are there advancing the capacity of the people for government, and the policies of McKinley and Roosevelt are leading the inhabitants, step by step, to an ever increasing measure of home rule.'<sup>508</sup> The platform, as one would expect, stressed progress under Republican rule, and used the term 'home rule' to describe the increased self-government in the Philippines, suggesting the sort of imperial relationship that Taft advocated: something along the lines of a British Dominion.<sup>509</sup> The platform also proposed free trade (with certain restrictions) between the U.S. and the Philippines, which Taft had advocated for many years, seeing it as essential in

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<sup>506</sup> The results of the convention nominations were as follows: Taft, 702; Philander Chase Knox, 68; Charles Evans Hughes, 67; Joe Cannon (Speaker), 58; Charles Warren Fairbanks (Roosevelt's Vice-President), 40; Robert LaFollette, 25; Joseph Foraker, 16. Pringle, *Life and Times*, vol. 1, 353.

<sup>507</sup> Summing up Roosevelt's hand in Taft's successful nomination, historian Judith Anderson cites the *Times* of London which called the Republican Convention 'the greatest and most striking of all Roosevelt's many victories.' J. I. Anderson, *An Intimate History*, 102.

<sup>508</sup> "Republican Party Platform," July 16, 1908.

<sup>509</sup> 'Home Rule' is often related in a British context to the debates of the time surrounding the issue of Irish independence. The first Irish Home Rule Bill had been defeated in 1886, a second was defeated in 1894 and a third would be passed and subsequently postponed by World War I in 1914. The parallels between the Irish and Filipino situations are discussed in Chapter Six, where the issue came more directly to the fore in the Wilsonian vision of self-determination of nations in the aftermath of the Great War.

tightening the imperial links. This chapter goes on to discuss the issue of free trade with the Philippines in a later section. These two portions of the platform had far more pertinence for Taft, who had spearheaded both initiatives, than for Roosevelt for whom the Philippine issue was far from a primary concern.

Leading anti-imperialist Erving Winslow, in the same *New York Times* article quoted above, interpreted the Republican platform as a promise of imperialism: ‘Mr. Taft now stands on the Republican platform, which has substituted boldly for the indefinite and misleading word “self-government,” formerly employed in party utterances, “home rule,” as the goal for the Filipinos, not independence at all.’ Winslow even stated what is argued here to be Taft’s goal from his time as civil governor onwards: ‘the candidate knows after the “generation” or “generations” of preparations which he exacts, or even after a very few years of American exploitation which he encourages, relinquishment would be practically impossible.’ He closes with a stern warning that voters must remember that ‘Mr. Taft is to them the candidate of imperialism.’<sup>510</sup> To Winslow, Taft’s well meaning words and suggestions of a distant agreement on relations were transparent and he suggested that it was only too clear that Taft’s ultimate goal was some form of lasting imperial bond. Of course, Winslow was not looking at Taft’s plan from a disinterested viewpoint and was actively trying to advance a negative construction of Taft’s imperial vision. However, for the Democrats, a party that had stood against imperialism with Bryan as their candidate in 1900, and lost, the issue of imperialism was perhaps their weakest hand against Taft, who was regarded as perhaps the kindest and most successful face of benevolent U.S. imperialism. Although the Philippine issue was not the central issue of the election campaign by any means, with Taft and Bryan so closely linked to

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<sup>510</sup> *New York Times*, June 28, 1908.



such differing viewpoints regarding Philippine policy, it was certain to play a role in the debates that followed their respective nominations.

The Democratic platform, as one would imagine, had quite a different outlook for the Philippines than its Republican counterpart. The section dealing with the islands stated:

We condemn the experiment in imperialism as an inexcusable blunder which has involved us in enormous expense, brought us weakness instead of strength, and laid our nation open to the charge of abandoning a fundamental doctrine of self-government. We favor an immediate declaration of the nation's purpose to recognize the independence of the Philippine Islands as soon as a stable government can be established, such independence to be guaranteed by us as we guarantee the independence of Cuba, until the neutralization of the islands can be secured by treaty with other powers. In recognizing the independence of the Philippines our Government should retain such land as may be necessary for coaling stations and naval bases.<sup>511</sup>

In stark contrast to Taft's aim to maintain a colonial connection, through a gradualist approach towards home rule and increased cultural and financial exchange through free trade, the Democrats, likely under the anti-imperialist talisman of Bryan, were offering independence. The Democrats saw the Philippine experiment as an aberration in U.S. doctrine and proposed expedited self-government and independence – far more like Cuba than Puerto Rico.

### ***Part II – The Election***

In July 1908, an editorial appeared in the *New York Times* in support of Taft's stance towards the Philippines: 'Anti-imperialism is not an issue in this country, it is only a whine.' It stated that even if people did compare the platforms of Taft and

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<sup>511</sup> "Democratic Party Platform," July 7, 1908.

Bryan on the Philippines, it would be unlikely they would choose Bryan.<sup>512</sup> The article went on to argue that even if Bryan were elected, 'he would be obliged to treat the Philippines precisely as Mr. TAFT would treat them, except that Mr. TAFT is much wiser and more competent for the task. Independence for the Filipinos is for the present a dream, and no Administration would negotiate or any Senate ratify an international treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of the Philippines as Mr. BRYAN'S platform recommends.' The *Times* then went on to contend that as soon as Bryan 'finds that the people do not like one of his improvised issues, he retires it.' The article suggested that a firm and consistent stance on the issue was the mark of 'great statesmen' whereas shifting opinions were characteristic of a 'demagogue.'<sup>513</sup> The editorial in itself suggested that the Philippine issue would not be overlooked entirely as the election campaign began.

Despite the fact that Taft had consistently deferred any promise of independence, even at the behest of Roosevelt in 1907, and that the Republican Party Platform endorsed home rule, a special report in the *Times* published in August 1908, suggested both Roosevelt and Taft favoured independence. According to the *Times*, Roosevelt met with National Party leader Manuel Quezon at his summer home in Oyster Bay and suggested that he was 'in favor of granting independence to the Filipinos within the next twenty years.' However, the direct quotations from Quezon do not specify a guarantee of independence in twenty years, but rather a suggestion

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<sup>512</sup> *New York Times*, July 20, 1908. In terms of political views, the *New York Times* in the nineteenth century was regarded as a Democratic newspaper, but by the first decade of the twentieth century was, according to Elmer Davis, a former member of the editorial staff, 'somewhat more independent than Democratic.' This same commentator added that the *Times* had a high regard for President Roosevelt's character, energy and patriotism, but feared the potentially far-reaching consequences of his more radical ideals and were chiefly disappointed with his inaction on fiscal policy. See Davis, *History of the New York Times*, 248-249. Press historian Frank Luther Mott concurs with this view, adding that, in politics the *Times* was conservative and 'actually, independent in party politics.' Indeed, both observers point out that the *Times* actually supported the 1900 McKinley campaign and the 1908 Taft campaign. Therefore, in terms of political leanings, the *Times* was relatively politically independent. See: Mott, *American Journalism*, 550-551.

<sup>513</sup> *New York Times*, July 20, 1908.

that if the conditions were good enough the President hoped to see the islands independent in twenty years. The article implicates Taft in its suggestion, by alleging that as he set up the meeting between Quezon and Roosevelt via a ‘direct wire’ between Oyster Bay and Taft’s residence in Hot Springs, it somehow forecasted ‘the attitude of the Taft administration toward the Philippines.’<sup>514</sup> Overall, what the article might suggest is that the assumption that a Taft presidency would simply be a surrogate Roosevelt presidency was already clear in the minds of the press. It was also possible that Roosevelt still believed, as he had in 1907, that the party would ultimately promise independence sooner rather than later. However, both assumptions were to prove wrong. Whether Roosevelt wanted to promise the Philippines independence, or indeed realise it in two decades, Taft did not want to do either of these things and as his presidency would prove, much to Roosevelt’s chagrin, his time in office was not about to be Roosevelt’s third term.

The previous article did, in its summary, also touch upon a different angle of the debate over the Philippines and the election, and that is the question of whom the Filipinos preferred to win in 1908. The *Times* quoted Manuel Quezon, leader of the Nationalist Party in the Philippine Assembly, as favouring the election of Taft, because he knew the needs of the Filipinos and was well acquainted with Filipino politicians.<sup>515</sup> The *Washington Post* had, earlier in the year, reported that the Philippine delegation to the Republican Convention favoured Taft for similar reasons, as he ‘understands the conditions in the Philippines.’<sup>516</sup> However, Bryan claimed that Alberto Barretto, leader of the governing body of the Nationalist Party, assured the Democrats that their victory was preferred in the upcoming U.S. elections. Bryan argued that as the Nationalist Party was the largest single party in the assembly and

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<sup>514</sup> *New York Times*, August 18, 1908.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>516</sup> *Washington Post*, May 18, 1908.

was unanimously behind him and the Democrats, Taft's claims that those who advocated independence also supported the Republicans were unfounded. 'If Taft wants to defend his policy on the ground that it ought to be adopted whether the Filipinos want it or not, he can do so, but he cannot bring to the support of his position any authoritative declaration by any considerable portion of the Filipinos,' Bryan finished.<sup>517</sup>

On September 19, 1908 in an address to the citizens of Norwood, Ohio, which was confined to the subject of the Philippines, Taft stated that his claim in a prior interview, that 'even the Independistas – that is, those in favor of immediate independence for the islands – prefer Republican victory to Mr. Bryan's promises,' was based on a personal conversation with Manuel Quezon. Taft further elucidated the claim: 'Quezon [sic] ... told me that although the Independistas liked Mr. Bryan's platform they preferred my election, as a friend of the Filipino, to Mr. Bryan's promises,' and that Quezon had repeated these comments in a published article evidencing a difference of opinions among the *Independistas*.<sup>518</sup>

Moving on from this Taft, whom Bryan had characterised as someone who was sticking to his imperialist policy, told an audience at the National League of Republican Clubs in Cincinnati that, unlike himself, Bryan had no proven track record. Taft continued: 'Has he [Bryan] ever done anything but formulate propositions in his closet of an utterly impracticable character, largely with a view of attracting votes by their plausibility and very little with a view of their operation.' Taft went on to dissect Bryan's record, first his futile 1896 campaign on free silver, and then his 1900 campaign on anti-imperialism: 'His agitation of this question continued the war in the Philippines against the authority of the United States for

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<sup>517</sup> *New York Times*, September 20, 1908.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*

nearly two years longer, and many a poor fellow who lost his life in the service of his country in those far-distant islands owes it to the inspiration which the opposition of the Democracy under Mr. Bryan made to the policy of Mr. McKinley in the Philippines. He was beaten in these issues, and we continue to celebrate the Fourth of July with fervor.' Here Taft was widening the debate out to a larger discussion of the issues surrounding the imperial experiment and what he regarded as Republican practical progress in the face of cynical Democratic politicking. This was surely because the idea of overall Republican success in pacifying and establishing a civil government in the islands was a stronger rallying point than the specific policy of denying the islands a promise of independence. By 1904, Taft claimed, the Philippines had ceased to be a 'paramount issue' and that Bryan joined Alton B. Parker (the Democratic nominee in that year) to denounce the tyranny of Roosevelt.<sup>519</sup> In essence, Taft attempted to denounce Bryan as pandering to the masses by declaring his support for whichever issue appeared to be in vogue, in contrast to himself, whom Bryan had characterised as a candidate of the *status quo*.

However, although the focus of this chapter, the Philippines were not a decisive issue in the presidential election campaign and what really won the election was the message that Taft was the chosen successor of the popular incumbent. Historian Judith Anderson suggests that during Taft's campaign the press generally expected a Republican victory and presented Taft as a safe pair of hands, with the exception of the *New York Times* which, she notes, felt he should be submitted to at least some measure of further scrutiny. However, she goes on to note that the *Times* and many other newspapers supported Taft primarily because they saw him as

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<sup>519</sup> *New York Times*, September 23, 1908.

Roosevelt's successor and representing Roosevelt's policies.<sup>520</sup> Although Taft staged a limited campaign in 1908, most of the work to win over voters was done on his behalf, and not a little of this was choreographed by Roosevelt who, historian Paolo Coletta argues, gave Taft 'vital support.'<sup>521</sup> Coletta sees Taft's journey to the presidency as less of a campaign than an 'apostolic succession,' and Taft's continued suggestions that he was initially reluctant to run and remained uncertain as to his abilities were testimony to the pivotal role of Roosevelt's support and advocacy in his winning the presidency.<sup>522</sup> However, historian Lewis Gould's more recent presidential biography criticises those who see Taft as merely a 'supporting player' in 1908, arguing instead that Taft actually campaigned quite well, though he still recognises the importance of Roosevelt's activism.<sup>523</sup> In the November election, although failing to retain all of the states won by Roosevelt in 1904, Taft won the electoral vote by a margin of 321 to 162, and the popular vote by 51.6 percent to Bryan's 43 percent.

In an article of January 1909 in *Outlook*, Charles Edgar Wheeler, recently returned from transportation-related business in the Philippines, claimed that he was ready to accept a remark recently accredited to Taft in the press, which claimed the president said, 'I am glad I am elected for what I can do for the Philippines. I can't forget my first love.'<sup>524</sup> Even if Roosevelt's popularity had been the primary reason for Taft's nomination and election, it is certain that the Philippines were, in Taft's opinion, a central difference between the parties. Both parties claimed to want what was best for the Filipinos, and both campaigned on their opposing platforms in regard to Philippine independence. Although there is no evidence to suggest that the issue influenced the voters to any great extent, what the campaign for party nominations

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<sup>520</sup> J. I. Anderson, *An Intimate History*, 113.

<sup>521</sup> Coletta, *Presidency of William Howard Taft*, 9.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 1.

<sup>523</sup> Gould, *The William Howard Taft Presidency*, 17-20.

<sup>524</sup> *Outlook*, January 2, 1909.

and the subsequent election campaigns of Taft and Bryan did elucidate were the stark differences in the future of the Philippines depending on the victor – just as sharp, if not more so, than in the election of 1900. With Taft’s victory in November, not only was a continuance of the *status quo* on the cards but also, with Taft himself in the Oval Office, he no longer had to placate a wavering Roosevelt on the issue of independence.

### *The Presidency and the Payne-Aldrich Tariff*

Although biographies and other works dealing specifically with the Taft presidency do analyse Taft’s policy in the Far East, there is almost no attention given to Philippine policy. The most comprehensive work on Taft’s presidential foreign policy, *The Foreign Policies of the Taft Administration*, does not take the Philippines on as an issue of foreign policy and thus the issue of Philippine dimension of Taft’s foreign policy is left largely unexplored.<sup>525</sup> Biographical and other general works looking specifically at the Taft administration tend to focus more on domestic U.S. policy and his deteriorating relationship with Theodore Roosevelt, largely excluding the Philippines and spending far less time on foreign affairs. Historian Akira Iriye argues that despite Taft’s experience in foreign affairs, he was a strict constitutionalist and when it came to his presidency he was not keen to be nearly so hands on a president in relation to foreign affairs as Roosevelt had been.<sup>526</sup> In the main this was true, and even in the case of the Philippines Taft did not and could not direct as much attention to the islands as president as he had before. Historian Lewis Gould argues that Taft delegated foreign affairs to his Secretary of State Philander Knox such an

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<sup>525</sup> Scholes and Scholes, *Foreign Policies*.

<sup>526</sup> Iriye, *From Nationalism to Internationalism*, 213.

extent that Knox became ‘almost autonomous’ in foreign policy making.<sup>527</sup>

Nevertheless, Taft did keep close tabs on the situation in the islands and when opportunities to further his Philippine vision offered themselves he became closely involved.

The notable exceptions to this tendency to overlook Taft’s Philippine policy during his presidency are works that focus primarily on the U.S.-Philippine relationship rather than specifically on Taft. This latter group gives light to some of the initiatives Taft spearheaded during his presidency to further his aims of increasing the potential for a long-term imperial presence, particularly in the economic arena. The most notable instance of Taft’s advocacy of his imperial vision during his presidency came with proposed new tariff legislation and the potential for bringing about free trade between the U.S. and the islands, a policy which Taft had been advocating for many years.

Historian H. W. Brands links Taft’s advocacy of free trade between the U.S. and the Philippines to his and Secretary of State Philander C. Knox’s so-called “dollar diplomacy.”<sup>528</sup> Indeed, as historians such as Foster Rhea Dulles and Scholes and Scholes reveal in their analysis of Taft’s Asian policy, the Taft administration’s policy in the Far East was directed almost entirely at maintaining the Open Door and making the U.S. a ‘leading financial and commercial power in Asia.’<sup>529</sup> Brands thus positions the Philippines as part of a wider move to create economic spheres of influence outwith American borders. Taft, as was argued in the first chapter of this thesis, was not a natural expansionist and he did see that economic investment and not a large

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<sup>527</sup> Gould, *The William Howard Taft Presidency*, 81.

<sup>528</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 98.

<sup>529</sup> Scholes and Scholes, *Foreign Policies*, 247. This policy was not without its diplomatic drawbacks, and the administration’s aims of establishing commercial neutrality in Manchuria took too little account of the less informal imperial designs of Russia and Japan. See: F. R. Dulles, *Forty Years*, 85, 93-95.



formal empire was the best route for the United States to increase its presence in the world. However, although “dollar diplomacy” was an integral part of Taft’s outlook in foreign affairs, Taft’s idea of increasing U.S. investment in the Philippines – already part of a formal empire – was long-standing and went well beyond just economic dependency.

The tariff situation between the United States and the Philippines had been a thorn in Taft’s side since his arrival in the islands back in 1900, as discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis.<sup>530</sup> Following the Supreme Court’s classification of the archipelago as an “unincorporated territory,” the Philippines were not included within the defined domestic sphere and were thus liable to pay rates in the same manner as a foreign country. This punishing rate was lowered in March of 1902 when Congress voted to set a duty at seventy-five percent of the Dingley rates on Philippine goods entering the United States.<sup>531</sup> One of the main hindrances to further tariff reform came in Article IV of the Treaty of Paris, which specified that the United States would admit Spanish ships and merchandise to Philippine ports on the same terms as the U.S. for ten years.<sup>532</sup> Since the reduction of the tariff in March 1902, all of the subsequent attempts to further reduce the tariff wall with the Philippines had come to nothing.<sup>533</sup> However, as historian Stephen Wertheim points out Taft was not alone in his efforts to eliminate the Philippine tariff in the years after 1902. Wertheim notes that President Roosevelt also wrote to numerous congressmen in favour of further

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<sup>530</sup> See: Chapter Three, 103-108.

<sup>531</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 156. See Chapter Three for more on the tariff controversy.

<sup>532</sup> Kirk, *Philippine Independence*, 57.

<sup>533</sup> For full details see G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 156-157. Two further votes in 1902 to lower the tariff to 50 and 25 percent of the Dingley rate failed largely due to the Senate and the influence of sugar and tobacco interests, renewed efforts in 1905 also failed.

tariff reduction but he, like Taft, was unable to win over Republican protectionists to the endeavour.<sup>534</sup>

Taft had consistently favoured and advocated a reduction in tariffs between the United States and the Philippines from his time as civil governor through to his presidency, as various historians have shown. Paul Kramer points out that during the St. Louis World's Fair, Taft hoped that a representation of the islands as a pacified place and a good area for investment would illustrate the need for lower tariffs.<sup>535</sup> Donald Anderson points out that Taft's efforts to lobby for lower tariffs on tobacco and sugar as Secretary of War had caused an early rift with President Roosevelt.<sup>536</sup> Lewis Gleeck Jr. suggests free trade was the last remaining aim of Taft dating back to his time as civil governor that had yet to be achieved when he assumed the presidency.<sup>537</sup> All of these examples serve to illustrate how Taft had consistently advocated lower tariffs, or free trade with the Philippines, and that such a policy was an extension of his "policy of attraction" aiming to bring the two nations ever closer together. Indeed, in January 1908, the year of the election, Taft had once again called for tariff reform in his Special Report on the Philippines, advising that 'legislation be adopted by Congress admitting the products of the Philippine Islands to the markets of the United States, with such limitations as may remove fear of interference with the tobacco and sugar interests in the United States.'<sup>538</sup>

The fact that Taft came to the presidency in 1909 was fortuitous for the potential success of tariff revision between the U.S. and the Philippines. Although objections from many in the U.S. agricultural sector, who feared the competition of

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<sup>534</sup> Wertheim, "Reluctant Liberator," 513-514.

<sup>535</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 260.

<sup>536</sup> D. Anderson, *Conservative's Conception of the Presidency*, 14.

<sup>537</sup> Gleeck, *American Half-Century*, 125. Gleeck identifies Taft's other, completed, aims as the transition from military to civil rule and the purchase of the friar lands.

<sup>538</sup> "Special Report," 79.

cheap and plentiful Filipino produce, still existed, the passage of time had helped alleviate some other obstacles to tariff revision. Firstly, the Treaty of Paris provision that Spanish ships would be treated equally to U.S. ships in the islands for ten years had now lapsed. Secondly, many of the concerns about wider constitutional implications that had arisen in earlier efforts to revise both the Puerto Rican and Philippine tariffs had been answered by the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions in the 1901-1905 Insular Cases. By 1909, the fear that free trade might mean the Constitution would end up following the flag, had been largely eradicated – the Supreme Court had decided that the Constitution only followed the flag in some cases. Therefore, by the time of Taft's presidency the potential for successful tariff reform with the Philippines had increased markedly.

Before moving on to look at the tariff itself, it is useful first to look briefly beyond Taft's personal opinions on free trade, to how such a policy was perceived in the Philippines. Historian Glenn A. May claims that many in the Philippines prior to 1909 recognised that there would be benefits from reductions in the tariff, especially in serving to stimulate agriculture and helping the islands to recover from recent drought and pest problems.<sup>539</sup> However, historian Bonifacio Salamanca remarks that many Filipino politicians, such as Manuel Quezon, argued initially that free trade would create an economic dependency on the U.S. and delay Filipino independence further.<sup>540</sup> Quezon put it thus: 'We believe that, as a consequence of free trade, more American interests would be created in the Philippines, and that the bonds of union would be far stronger.'<sup>541</sup> Nevertheless, Salamanca goes on to argue that although outwardly many of the Filipino elites opposed free trade, much of this rejection was a face-saving tactic and that many opposed it in the full knowledge that their opposition

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<sup>539</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 156-7.

<sup>540</sup> Salamanca, *Filipino Reaction*, 127-128.

<sup>541</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 96.

would ultimately be futile.<sup>542</sup> Those in favour of free trade, such as Governors-General Smith and Forbes, helped to convince those who opposed it by arguing that tariff reduction would lead to increased prosperity that, theoretically, could in turn bring the Philippines to a state of being fit for independence far sooner than if high tariff walls remained intact.<sup>543</sup> Whether the governors-general believed this is another matter. As historian Peter Stanley notes, Taft mentioned unashamedly, and on numerous occasions, that one of the chief benefits of a tariff reduction would be to create a lasting economic bond between the United States and the islands.<sup>544</sup> Even if Forbes believed that free trade might hasten the potential for independence, which seems unlikely given his outspoken retentionism in subsequent years, Taft certainly hoped that the economic bond created by free trade would make independence both less desirable and less achievable.

As the year 1909 arrived and with an incoming president who favoured free trade with the Philippines, there was every expectation that a reduction in Philippine tariffs would come quickly. The Republican Party Platform of 1908 had called for free trade: ‘Between the United States and the Philippines we believe in a free interchange of products with such limitations as to sugar and tobacco as will afford adequate protection to domestic interests,’ in a similar vein to Taft’s Special Report of the same year.<sup>545</sup> On March 4, 1909 Taft made his inaugural address as President of the United States, taking time to mention the passage of the tariff bill:

The governments of our dependencies in Porto Rico and the Philippines are progressing as favorably as could be desired... The business conditions in the Philippines are not all that we could wish them to be, but with the passage of the new tariff bill permitting free trade between the United States and the archipelago, with such limitations on sugar and tobacco as shall prevent injury to domestic

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<sup>542</sup> Salamanca, *Filipino Reaction*, 128-132.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> Stanley, *Nation in the Making*, 147.

<sup>545</sup> “Republican Party Platform,” 1908.

interests in those products, we can count on an improvement in business conditions in the Philippines and the development of a mutually profitable trade between this country and the islands.<sup>546</sup>

Although Taft's inaugural address suggested that concessions would likely be made on sugar and tobacco, as he had also stated in his 1908 Special Report, the new president was still calling for the most substantial reform in the Philippine tariff for seven years. This might be noted by a critic as partial backtracking by Taft on the issue, but in reality, without concessions to such powerful special interest groups, the 1902 *status quo* would remain, which Taft would have considered far more damaging than such concessions.

The Payne-Aldrich Tariff was passed in July 1909 and made specific provisions for the Philippines.<sup>547</sup> The act provided that: 'all articles, wholly the growth or product of, or manufactured in the Philippine Islands from materials wholly the growth or product of the Philippine Islands and of the United States, upon which no drawback of customs duties has been allowed therein, coming into the United States from the Philippine Islands shall hereafter be admitted free of duty,' with notable exceptions and limitations in rice, sugar and tobacco products.<sup>548</sup> Likewise, an act passed by the Philippine Legislature and Assembly provided that, with the exception of rice, U.S. products might enter the islands duty free, with similar provisions to those in the Payne-Aldrich Tariff.<sup>549</sup> Former member of the Philippine Commission and now resident commissioner in D.C., Benito Legarda congratulated

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<sup>546</sup> Taft, "Inaugural Address," March 4, 1909.

<sup>547</sup> The tariff was named after its two creators: Representative Sereno E. Payne (R, NY) and Senator Nelson W. Aldrich (R, RI). The former was the head of the House Ways and Means Committee and the latter the chair of the Senate Finance Committee.

<sup>548</sup> "Payne-Aldrich Tariff," 233-237. See also Section 5, which further specified the above quotation, this added that products from the Philippines that might be duty-free might not contain more than twenty percent foreign materials.

<sup>549</sup> "Philippine Tariff Act of 1909," 71: 'all articles, except rice, the growth, product, or manufacture of the United States and its possessions to which the customs tariff in force in the United States is applied and upon which no drawback of customs duties has been allowed therein, going to the Philippine Islands shall hereafter be admitted therein free of customs duty....'

Taft on the passage of the tariff and expressed a hope that ‘in the near future we will all see the wisdom of such a measure.’<sup>550</sup> Historian Glenn A. May regards the Philippine provisions of the Payne-Aldrich tariff as a victory for Taft, and one that was wrought from tough personal bargaining, especially on matters relating to members of Congress with strong links to sugar and tobacco interests in their states.<sup>551</sup> Indeed, this was a very important victory for Taft’s imperial vision. Taft was sure that substantial U.S. trade and investment in islands would follow and help secure the long-term growth of American-Philippine economic connections. Although critics might regard the concessions as a retreat from fully fledged free trade, the substantial reductions in the tariff that were obtained were so crucial to Taft’s policy towards the Philippines that they were a realistic price for passage of the bill.

Taft wrote to Governor-General Forbes in June of 1910 expressing his delight that the Payne bill was ‘bringing such benefit to the Philippines’ in response to an earlier letter from Forbes.<sup>552</sup> Forbes responded by praising Taft, telling the president that ‘the Payne Bill... is your contribution to the cause.’<sup>553</sup> Historian Peter Stanley claims that the tariff did fulfil the administration’s hopes, seeing a marked increase in trade between the Philippines and the United States.<sup>554</sup> Despite his success in reforming the Philippine tariff during the first years of his term, the Payne-Aldrich tariff was widely regarded as a disappointment by most parties in regard to the domestic United States. As historian James Chace puts it, ‘By signing the Payne-Aldrich tariff bill, Taft seemed to have broken the promises made in the Republican

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<sup>550</sup> Benito Legarda to WHT, August 31, 1909, WHTP 5:340.

<sup>551</sup> G. A. May, *Social Engineering*, 158-160. Amendments were granted reducing initial quotas on sugar and on tobacco to enable the passage of the tariff bill. As May points out, in the case of negotiations with the sugar beet industry in the United States Taft guaranteed he would prevent a ‘reduction on the general tariff on sugar.’

<sup>552</sup> WHT to Forbes, June 9, 1910, WCFP File No. 297.

<sup>553</sup> Forbes to WHT, July 14, 1910, WHTP 6:363.

<sup>554</sup> Stanley, *Nation in the Making*, 152.

platform of 1908, when the party had pledged tariff revision, which was understood to mean a reduction in the high levels established a decade earlier,' when, in fact, many of the tariffs in the heavily amended bill ultimately increased.<sup>555</sup> As a sign of the growing disillusionment with the Taft administration, the 1910 U.S. Congressional elections saw the House move to a Democratic majority, although the Senate remained in Republican hands.

The idea of commerce and trade being a key element in binding the Philippines to the United States in the long term has been mentioned in previous chapters with Taft's earlier, if less successful, efforts to reduce or abolish entirely the tariffs between the two. In Taft's eyes, with increased U.S. trade and more American capital invested in the islands, it would become all the more likely that more people would come to see the benefits of maintaining and strengthening the union, rather than moving further along the road to separation. As political scientist Grayson Kirk observed in 1936: 'Two decades and a half of free trade have produced in the Philippines an exceedingly valuable market for American exports and they have caused the Islands to develop a commerce that is almost exclusively limited to the United States,' reflecting an 'ever-closer integration with the American economic system.'<sup>556</sup> In one sense Taft would have been very encouraged by such a prospect of "integration," but by 1936 the Philippines had also been set firmly on the road to independence, and it was with the end of Taft's presidency that this abrupt turnaround really began.

Another instance regarding Taft's encouragement of economic investment in the islands during his presidency, which is also commented upon by historians looking at the Taft Era in the Philippines and is worthy of consideration is that of the

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<sup>555</sup> Chace, *1912*, 17.

<sup>556</sup> Kirk, *Philippine Independence*, 71.

sale of the friar lands. In 1908 the Philippine Commission passed a bill, approved by the Philippine Assembly, which allowed for the friar lands to be excluded from the rules restricting the sale of public lands.<sup>557</sup> In addition to this, as noted above, the Payne-Aldrich tariff had allowed for a limited amount of duty-free sugar to enter the U.S. from the Philippines, making the purchase of such lands all the more attractive. In 1909 a scandal arose that reached all the way to the presidency and lasted until 1911, when Commissioner Dean Worcester, the Philippine Secretary of the Interior, negotiated a series of deals with U.S. sugar interests and, more controversially, with public officials to sell-off the remaining friar estates.<sup>558</sup> Historian Frank Golay suggests Taft was tarred by the scandal particularly because of the involvement of those close to him in some of the deals, such as his brother Henry W. Taft and Attorney General George Wickersham whose positions in interested legal firms linked them to the purchases.<sup>559</sup> Nationalist Filipinos denounced large-scale U.S. investment as evidence of exploitation by the United States, and the U.S. House Committee on Insular Affairs investigated the controversial sales keeping the issue public for months.<sup>560</sup> Despite the controversy, the friar lands sales were ultimately upheld, but not until much bad blood had been created and not until spring of 1911.<sup>561</sup>

The tariff reductions and the friar lands scandal illustrated different faces of the same Taft policy that had always suggested that his imperial vision hinged upon: attracting the U.S. to the potential of the Philippines in order to draw the islands into a permanent relationship. However, for Taft neither of these cases was fully successful

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<sup>557</sup> Sullivan, *Exemplar of Imperialism*, 127-128. These are the same friar lands discussed at length in Chapter One of this thesis.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-131. Taft approved the first major sale: that of the substantial San Jose estate to U.S. based sugar interests.

<sup>559</sup> Golay, *Face of Empire*, 136-137.

<sup>560</sup> Sullivan, *Exemplar of Imperialism*, 132-36.

<sup>561</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 100-101.



and in fact left him open to accusations of exploiting the islands rather than improving them, only helping to further the calls for independence among the Nationalist elite.

In July 1910 Governor-General Forbes informed Taft that little had changed in regard to calls for independence, despite the success of the tariff reductions: ‘the Nationalist platform is opposed to the American administration and it is true that the vast majority of Filipinos want independence.’<sup>562</sup> Forbes was, if not more so than Taft, keen on developing the Philippines and increasing U.S. investment in the islands and to this end Taft had put the right governor-general in place. However, whatever Forbes’ strengths and weaknesses at the head of the Philippines, surely any figure supporting Taft’s firm retentionist line would have struggled to maintain consistently good relations with a Philippine Assembly set firmly against it. Forbes informed Taft that the nationalist press in the islands was ‘stirring up a general antipathy among the Filipinos to the Government,’ though he also suggested that the frostiness of the Nationalists in the assembly was inevitable as they would want to prove their independence from the commission.<sup>563</sup> In confirmation of the difficulty in working with an assembly set against the commission’s line, Forbes wrote to Secretary of War Henry Stimson in late 1911: ‘The Assembly are getting a little out of hand... I find some feeling in the Commission that we have conceded too much.’<sup>564</sup> Forbes concerns that working with the assembly was not getting easier and his belief that the demands for independence were not getting any quieter would grow all the more telling as the election year arrived in 1912.

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<sup>562</sup> Forbes to WHT, July 14, 1910, WHTP 6:363.

<sup>563</sup> Forbes to WHT, April 9, 1911, WHTP 6:363.

<sup>564</sup> Forbes, to Stimson, November 29, 1911, WHTP 6:363.

### *The Jones Bill and 1912*

Most books analysing the run up to the 1912 presidential election have little if anything to say about the Philippines.<sup>565</sup> As historians Garel Grunder and William Livezey put it, the Philippines in 1912 were simply not ‘one of the issues of the election.’<sup>566</sup> As discussed earlier, although the Philippine issue had been raised during the 1908 campaign it was hardly a crucial factor in the election results, and it was the backing of Theodore Roosevelt that proved equally important in securing Taft’s victory. Conversely, in the 1912 election, Roosevelt proved just as decisive in securing Taft’s defeat.

During his presidency, Taft, as Roosevelt’s anointed successor, had proved a disappointment to the colonel by allying himself with the conservative Old Guard of the Republican Party and alienating its more progressive elements. After an increasingly bitter campaign of criticism Roosevelt, rejected by the Old Guard as their candidate in 1912, stood as an independent to run against his former friend. In addition to the challenge of Roosevelt and the now formal division of his own party, Taft was running upon an unenviable record as the incumbent and by 1912 there was a widespread acceptance that Taft’s presidential record was one composed largely of failures.<sup>567</sup> As historian Lewis Gould puts it, even if Taft had been running on his own against Roosevelt with a ‘reasonably united Republican Party’ behind him he would still ‘have been an underdog going into the race.’<sup>568</sup> Taft’s record as president was a

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<sup>565</sup> Among the more recent works dealing with the 1912 election are: James Chace, *1912: Wilson, Roosevelt, Taft and Debs*, and Lewis L. Gould, *Four Hats in the Ring*. Both scarcely mention the Philippines as an issue in the 1912 election.

<sup>566</sup> Grunder and Livezey, *Philippines and the United States*, 147.

<sup>567</sup> Coletta, *Presidency of William Howard Taft*, 258. Coletta lists several pieces of legislation regarded as a failure, or that failed to come into effect: the Payne-Aldrich tariff, Canadian reciprocity and his international arbitration treaties.

<sup>568</sup> Gould, *Four Hats in the Ring*, 176.

far riper target for his opponents than the Philippine issue and the future of the islands was accordingly sidelined as an issue in this unusual multi-party battle for the presidency.<sup>569</sup>

The lack of focus on the Philippines as an election issue was evident in the Republican Party Platform of 1912, which gave only one line to the issue: ‘The Philippine policy of the Republican party has been and is inspired by the belief that our duty toward the Filipino people is a national obligation which should remain entirely free from partisan politics.’<sup>570</sup> The Democratic Party Platform seemed to pay more attention to the issue, but really just reiterated the sentiments of 1908, once again condemning the experiment in imperialism and promising ‘an immediate declaration of the nation's purpose to recognize the independence of the Philippine Islands.’<sup>571</sup> With the retentionist and independence stances already taken, the Progressive Party chose not to mention the Philippines at all in their platform.<sup>572</sup>

Taft was resigned to defeat long before the election took place and the result when it came was as bad as he had imagined. On November 5, 1912, Taft returned the worst result for an incumbent seeking re-election in U.S. history, receiving the vote of just over 23 percent of the electorate and carrying only the eight electoral votes of Vermont and Utah. Roosevelt, whose Progressive campaign had split the Republicans, garnered more than 24 percent of the popular vote and 88 electoral votes. However, with just under 42 percent of the popular vote, and a sweeping 435 electoral votes, former Princeton professor Woodrow Wilson returned a Democrat to the White House for the first time since Grover Cleveland. Despite being low on the

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<sup>569</sup> Most commentators now suggest that the 1912 election was a four-candidate affair between TR, Taft, Wilson and Socialist candidate Eugene Debs. Debs polled almost a million votes in the election.

<sup>570</sup> “Republican Party Platform,” June 18, 1912.

<sup>571</sup> “Democratic Party Platform,” June 25, 1912.

<sup>572</sup> “Progressive Party Platform,” November 5, 1912.

priority list of the main parties' campaigns in 1912, the Philippine debate had gained a little attention in Congress as the 1912 election approached. However, with a Democratic clean sweep of Congress and the presidency in November, the time had arrived for the Philippine debate to gain some very rapid momentum.

During the run-up to the 1912 election, a bill that would later become the focus of the Philippine debate between Democrats and Republicans was making its debut before Congress. The main sponsor of this new Philippine bill was Representative William Atkinson Jones, the Democratic chair of the House Committee on Insular Affairs since 1911. Although he had made minority reports on the subject of Philippine independence since 1902, Jones's name was about to become far more prominently associated with the debate over the islands' future.<sup>573</sup>

In March 1912, Jones introduced the first of two 'Jones bills,' drafted by Filipino Nationalist Manuel Quezon, setting out a timetable for independence after eight years, and a U.S. military presence for twenty.<sup>574</sup> However, as historian Paul Kramer notes, at this early stage, with the Republicans still controlling the Senate, the bill was very unlikely to succeed.<sup>575</sup> Therefore, although the Philippines might not have played much of a role in the outcome of the 1912 election, there seemed to be little doubt that the Democratic clean sweep would herald the most significant change of direction in Philippine policy since the islands were annexed. The results of the 1912 election in November gave a new vitality to the dormant Jones proposals, and caused some Democratic congressmen to call rapidly for the 'speedy enactment' of the Jones Bill.<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Stanley, *Nation in the Making*, 173.

<sup>574</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 353.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>576</sup> *Washington Post*, November 13, 1912.

In his fourth and final Annual Message, given on December 3, 1912, Taft spoke at length about the Philippine question. The message allowed Taft a chance to express his views one final time on an auspicious stage, even if he would not be in office beyond March 4, 1913. The focus of much of Taft's ire was, not surprisingly, the Jones Bill. Taft argued that the bill 'revolutionizes the carefully worked out scheme of government under which the Philippine Islands are now governed.' He stressed that the belief that the Filipinos were ready for total self-government and national sovereignty was 'absolutely without justification,' and that the Filipino people would be among the biggest losers from such a change in policy. Taft's warnings over the incoming Democrats' plans echoed many of his speeches from the previous decade. He argued that a 'present declaration even of future independence would retard progress by the dissension and disorder it would arouse. On our part it would be a disingenuous attempt, under the guise of conferring a benefit on them, to relieve ourselves from the heavy and difficult burden which thus far we have been bravely and consistently sustaining. It would be a disguised policy of scuttle. It would make the helpless Filipino the football of oriental politics...'<sup>577</sup> Taft was not breaking new ground with his message, but it did reinforce the fact that he had held a consistent line on the issue of Philippine independence for more than a decade and that he was intent to remain constant on this issue for years to come.

Following Wilson's election, Manuel Quezon, recently re-elected as resident commissioner in Washington D.C., pledged to fight for a promise of independence in Congress adding that he believed Wilson was 'exceptionally committed to the carrying out of the independence policy.'<sup>578</sup> Political scientist Grayson Kirk suggests that Quezon had had prior contact with Wilson as early as March 1912 and argues that

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<sup>577</sup> Taft, "Fourth Annual Message," December 3, 1912.

<sup>578</sup> *Washington Post*, November 22, 1912.

this was ‘canny foresight’ on Quezon’s part, as Wilson ‘had previously not known or cared a great deal about the Philippine question.’<sup>579</sup> In August 1912, Wilson accepted his party’s nomination for the presidency with a statement that the United States was keeping the Philippines ‘in trust’ for the Filipinos.<sup>580</sup> In a speech at Staunton, Virginia, in December 1912 the president elect stated that ‘the Philippines are at present our frontier but I hope that we presently are to deprive ourselves of that frontier,’ leading some to read into this Wilson’s endorsement of a Jones-style independence policy.<sup>581</sup> On December 28, 1912, the *Boston Daily Globe* offered a different interpretation of the president elect’s Philippine policy, suggesting that although Jones was sure Wilson ‘heartily indorsed’ his bill, it appeared that Wilson was less than desirous of putting this opinion on the record.<sup>582</sup>

Just under a week after Taft’s final annual message, the *New York Times* reported: ‘Despite President Taft’s vigorous disapproval in his message to Congress of the pending bill proposing immediate autonomy for the Philippines and absolute independence in eight years, several prominent Democrats are preparing for its consideration in the House.’ The *Times* also noted that Taft had ‘made no secret of his intention to fight the Jones bill with all his might, whether in Presidential office or out of it. He has said that he would veto it should the bill be passed by both houses before his term ends... he would direct a propaganda with the object of preventing the Filipinos from obtaining independence,’ in his ‘desire to take a foremost part in keeping the Philippines under the control of the United States.’ This article illustrates the way Taft made clear his intention not to leave the Philippine question when he left

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<sup>579</sup> Kirk, *Philippine Independence*, 44.

<sup>580</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 106.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>582</sup> *Boston Daily Globe*, December 28, 1912.

the White House, although quite how he would seek to influence matters after March 4, 1913 was yet to become clear.<sup>583</sup>

In January 1913, press reports suggested a sense of unity among Filipino politicians in support of the Jones Bill with Quezon denouncing Taft's opposition to the Jones Bill at a luncheon in his honour held by the Anti-Imperialist League, and former Filipino leader Emilio Aguinaldo calling for 'peace and mutual help' during the period of changeover provided for in the bill.<sup>584</sup> As the end of Taft's presidency approached, the outgoing president did not drop the issue of the Philippines in the face of such pressures, but maintained his stance firmly against the proposed Democratic policy. In a speech before the Ohio Society of New York, Taft declared that the passage of the Jones Bill would be a boon for Republicans, and for the party's future success. Taft argued, 'I could ask nothing better than the pasage [sic] of the Jones bill, but I have the interest of the Islands at heart, and I do not believe that the United States should separate from the Philippine Islands at least within two or three generations, and then only if the Filipinos desire the separation.' In conclusion, Taft claimed that the Filipinos had 'no desire to have their independence. So let us wait until they have that desire, and by so doing fulfill the promise we made when Admiral Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet.'<sup>585</sup>

On January 28, Representative Jones made a speech in Congress denouncing Taft's criticisms of Democratic plans for Philippine independence. Jones questioned the constitutional appropriateness of Taft's denouncing pending legislation and argued that a declaration of future independence would in no way subject the masses to oligarchical exploitation, and that such a supposition was 'opposed to the enlightened opinion and best judgement of a vast majority of the American people.'

<sup>583</sup> *New York Times*, December 9, 1912.

<sup>584</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, January 14, 1913; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 15, 1913.

<sup>585</sup> *New York Times*, January 19, 1913.

Jones then went on to attack Taft's imperial vision for the Philippines and the idea of a future dominion-style relationship, suggesting Taft had only recently come up with such an idea and that it bore no resemblance to the existing relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines. Jones argued that it was futile to bow to the suggestions of a man 'whose administrative policies have been so emphatically discredited and repudiated by the voters of every State of the Union, save only those of Utah and Vermont... But whilst I recognize President Taft's great ability and most cheerfully concede the purity of his motives, it must be admitted, I think, by his most ardent political followers that he has not achieved great success as a political prophet.'

All of this was not surprising coming from a man who had staked his name on backing Philippine independence, especially against a president who was equally attached to retention. In his attempting to undermine Taft's views on the Philippines, Jones was acknowledging Taft as the leading voice on Philippine retention. Jones dismissed those who supported Taft's imperial vision as figures solely interested in saving their jobs: he reasoned they supported Taft for 'purely personal reasons,' fearing a reduction in the size of the armed forces, navy or a reduction in the need for U.S. administrators if the Philippines were given independence.<sup>586</sup> Governor-General Forbes, who was also criticised sharply by Jones, publicly defended his and Taft's policies in direct response to Jones. Forbes claimed that Jones had been 'a willing and credulous listener' to 'soreheads,' or people who bore personal grievances against Forbes or the administration that influenced their opinions. Forbes accused Jones of attempting to discredit the Philippine administration with 'misrepresentations' that were 'plainly malicious.'<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>586</sup> Jones, "Misgovernment in the Philippines" January 28, 1913, 3-4 and 22-23.

<sup>587</sup> Forbes, "Reply to Jones," c.1913, 25-26.



Overall, both Jones and Forbes were clearly arguing from partisan positions, neither man particularly concerned about presenting a balanced appraisal of the Philippine relationship and both were attempting to secure the future for the Philippines that would best serve themselves. Governor-General Forbes sought to defend his record and his future career and Jones sought to further the prospects of the bill that bore his name.<sup>588</sup> However, Taft, as an outgoing president, did not have any immediate political gain to make from embroiling himself further in the Philippine question. Nevertheless, upon handing over the presidency – and much of his political influence – to Woodrow Wilson, Taft did not so freely hand over the issue of Philippine independence.

### *Conclusions*

During his presidency Taft had sought to maintain a *status quo* in relation to Philippine independence. His key policy initiative in the islands was not a new idea, but one he had supported for many years. The Payne-Aldrich Tariff, although disappointing many in the United States with its limited reforms, successfully secured for the Philippines a substantial shift towards free trade with the United States. However, as mentioned above, conditions in 1909 were more favourable for tariff revisions than they had been in previous years when Taft had sought them. The controversial sale of the friar lands was not a canny political move, but illustrated once again Taft's determination to spur on U.S. investment in the islands wherever possible. In many respects Taft's Philippine policy – given so little attention from

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<sup>588</sup> Karnow, *In Our Image*, 241-242.

critics of his presidency as the absence of the issue in the 1912 campaign shows – was one of his most successful. Taft's constant policy had been the forging of lasting bonds with the Philippines, and his presidency not only continued to deny the Philippines a definitive promise of independence, but with increased free trade, as many Filipinos observed, Taft was drawing the Philippines into an ever closer relationship with the United States.

With the Democrats recapturing the House in 1910, and then the Senate and the presidency in November 1912, Taft lost the initiative on Philippine policy, which he had influenced since 1900. With his resounding defeat at the hands of Roosevelt and Wilson, the Taft Era in the Philippines came to a formal close in March 1913. However, as Taft had vowed in the last weeks of his presidency, he would not just fight the Jones Bill until March 4, but he would fight beyond his presidency.

## Chapter Six

### The Chief Retentionist: The Wilderness Years, 1913-1921

#### *Introduction*

In his final State of the Union Address on December 3, 1912, President William H. Taft warned that Democratic plans for Philippine independence constituted a ‘policy of scuttle’ that would make the Philippines the ‘football of oriental politics.’<sup>589</sup> With only three further months in the White House, Taft was aware that his ability to influence Philippine policy was coming to what he considered a premature end. This chapter explores Taft’s continued involvement in the Philippine debate after his presidency and up until Republican President Warren G. Harding appointed him Chief Justice of the United States in 1921. During these wilderness years Taft involved himself politically in a continued fight against the Jones Bill, which proposed a promise of Philippine independence, becoming a figurehead for a movement aimed at retaining the Philippines. During the same period Taft played a high profile role in the post-war League of Nations debate, a debate which touched upon the key issues of self-determination and decolonisation, which had played such substantive a role in the Philippine debate during the period 1900-1912. This chapter analyses the way in which Taft sought to influence Philippine policy during his time in the political wilderness and to what extent, if any, his reputation and ideas had any impact on Philippine policy during the period 1913-1921. It also looks at the way in which Taft’s new status as an elder statesman affected his role in the Philippine

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<sup>589</sup> Taft, “Fourth Annual Message,” December 3, 1912.

debate and whether his reputation as an authority on Philippine affairs appeared to be waning.

### *A Post-Political Career*

Taft was not alone in his quest to maintain a form of U.S. control over the Philippines, though following his departure from the White House and the subsequent arrival of the Democrats in March of 1913, Taft became perhaps the most prominent figure in this retentionist movement. Calls to keep the Philippines under U.S. control came from various interest groups with differing aims and with different visions of what the relationship should entail. The previous chapters have discussed the evolution and gradual solidification of Taft's ideas on retention and the nature of the continuing relationship that he envisioned. However, despite differing views as to the nature of the relationship, when the Democrats came to power with a platform promising independence for the islands, Taft, along with other key figures from the previous, Republican-appointed, colonial governments in the Philippines, became a rallying point for the diverse groups that favoured an ongoing imperial relationship. Having been so long at the forefront of the governing majority on the issue of Philippine affairs, Taft happily fell into the role as leader of the opposition in 1913, and until 1921 he fought against Democratic plans to undo his carefully laid plans for a continuing colonial and eventually dominion-style future for the islands.

Historian Peter Stanley sees figures such as Taft and Governor-General William Cameron Forbes as stubborn to the point of delusion: 'Having committed themselves to a policy, they refused to be budged from it even by the most manifest evidence that it would fail to achieve its ends.' Indeed, Stanley picks out Taft for

particular criticism, arguing that his persistence ‘in the conceit that Filipinos could be attracted more successfully by evading the issue of independence than by facing it was to ignore the last two years of Philippine history.’<sup>590</sup> Although it is evident that the Filipino people and even the Filipino politicians were united in calling for independence, it might therefore have appeared that Taft simply wanted to wish reality away in a fit of self-delusion. However, as the end of the previous chapter discussed, Taft was not as out of touch with reality as his contemporary opponents and some historians might present him. Granted, Taft would have liked to avoid the issue of independence altogether, but in this he had failed. Although he was slow in recognising this, Taft was a skilled operator and did eventually come to terms with it, and focused instead upon the next best thing, and that was not to evade the independence issue, but to attack the subject head on. Taft’s last months in office saw him focus his efforts on what he set up as the most crucial aspect of policy: not to *promise* independence. Taft may have recognised that the policy of attraction had failed to kill talk of independence in the islands, but this did not prove to him that, were the policy given a full two generations to come to fruition, the situation might not alter. To this end, Taft had even conceded that independence was one of a number of possible options for the Philippines’ future, just not the one he would recommend.

As a figurehead of the post-Taft-era retentionist movement, Taft stood at the head of a diverse band of special interest groups. Historian Paul Kramer breaks down the bulk of the retentionist movement into three main distinct groups: U.S. colonial officials, the Philippine-American business lobby, and the Catholic Church in the United States. Kramer sees the ‘former high-level colonial officials’ as the centre of the movement, and among them he specifically mentions Taft, W. Cameron Forbes

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<sup>590</sup> Stanley, *Nation in the Making*, 188.

and Dean Worcester, ‘whose transfer, hiring, or resignation returned them to centers of media and public opinion in the United States, full of resentment for Democratic Filipinization and independence legislation.’<sup>591</sup> Where Kramer’s observations are largely fair, Taft’s situation and profile were markedly different from either Forbes’ or Worcester’s. Taft, unlike the others, had left the Philippines a decade previously. As Secretary of War and President he had associated himself with issues beyond the narrow scope of Philippine affairs in the eyes of the American public, although as is argued here, he always kept a keen eye on the Philippines throughout these years. His role in Roosevelt’s cabinet, and especially his term as Commander in Chief, meant that his profile easily surpassed those of other former Philippine commissioners and governors, such as Worcester and Forbes, in the eyes of the American public. The fact that the period from 1901 to 1913 is commonly labelled the “Taft Era” by historians of the Philippines is testimony to the fact that Taft’s influence was paramount during these years. So, even if Taft represented to many the archetypal partisan on the Philippine question, there can be no doubt that his stature and prominence differed markedly from that of other retentionists.

For anti-imperialists at the time, such as the president of the Anti-Imperialist League, Moorfield Storey, it best suited their needs to present Taft as simply another retentionist:

We can not expect that the defeated party will cease to argue, to protest, and to prophesy all manner of evil, but we have no right on

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<sup>591</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 357. Kramer (358-359) suggests that the leadership of Catholic Church in the islands had ‘powerful political incentives to support retention,’ as the church hierarchy in the islands had become substantially Americanised under the Republican administration of the Taft Era. He also points to the fact that Taft, who advocated Americanisation of the church leadership in the islands, urged Catholic leaders in the U.S. to oppose Democratic plans for the Philippines. However, Taft also approached other religious leaders in late 1912. In one instance he wrote to a Methodist Episcopal bishop that he believed that ‘by a united effort on the part of the Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist and Catholic union... sufficient influence can be brought to bear to take away the majority in the Senate’ that would pass the Jones Bill. See: WHT to Bishop Cranston, November 20, 1912, WHTP 6:363, and similar sentiments in WHT to Father Roche (Episcopal), November 12, 1912.

that account to falter. Those men like President Taft are responsible in large measure for the retention of the islands, and who like him have been especially prominent in their administration, naturally will not admit that they have been wrong... but we must remember that they are not impartial. They are pleading their own case, they are insisting that they have succeeded, and their own reputations are at stake. All their arguments must be taken with that allowance.<sup>592</sup>

Much of what Storey said was true. Taft saw his reputation at stake in the Philippines, and had committed himself to the policies of the previous years, in most cases policies that he had initiated or guided directly. Taft was not blind, however, to attacks such as those from Storey that aimed at painting him as an embittered partisan. The former president spent much time in the following years, presenting a picture of himself as something of a post-political statesman. After all, unlike many of the Republican appointees ousted from the islands by the incoming Democratic administration, Taft was unlikely to seek a place back in Philippine or American political office. Taft's ultimate goal, as was explored in previous chapters, had always been a Supreme Court justiceship, and the nature of his defeat in 1912 meant that running for the presidency in 1916, or afterwards, was virtually out of the question. The Supreme Court target might have been expected to moderate Taft's behaviour, especially in trying not to appear overtly partisan, but when it came to the issue of the Philippines this often did not prove to be the case.

The possibility of a position on the Supreme Court was going to have to wait at least until the Republicans regained the White House, and Taft retired from politics to become a Yale Law Professor on leaving office. During this period, Taft devoted part of his time to supporting various interest groups, not only retentionist groups, but, for example, the League to Enforce Peace, a group aimed at advocating what would later become the League of Nations. Such behaviour fit with Taft's attempt to present

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<sup>592</sup> Storey, "The Democratic Party and Philippine Independence," August 9, 1913, 6.

himself as a post-political elder statesman, whose words and ideas could be vented through political pressure groups that supported his worldview, rather than directly through political office. Although the Philippines were not Taft's sole interest after the presidency, they did prove to be the one that took precedence when clashes of interest occurred, as the later part of this chapter explores.

### *The Retentionist Campaign*

Three days after the press reported Taft's vow to fight against Philippine independence during his lame-duck presidency, an Episcopalian bishop from Chicago, the Reverend Samuel Fallows, wrote to Taft in reference to this subject. Fallows declared himself 'thoroughly in accord' with Taft's policies and that in Fallows' opinion there was 'no more important question before our country today, for which you have offered the only solution.' In this sense Rev. Fallows was one among many citizens that agreed with Taft as to a continued American presence in the Philippines. However, the Rev. Fallows was more noteworthy than most because his son, Edward, had recently organised a 'commercial club of leading business and professional men in different parts of the country...for the development and for the uplifting of the Filipino people,' and, Rev. Fallows noted, *not* for 'exploitation.'<sup>593</sup> This company was called the American-Philippine Company and the Rev. Fallows enclosed a brochure about the organisation for Taft's perusal.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> Rev. Samuel Fallows to WHT, November 13, 1912, WHTP 6:363.

<sup>594</sup> Conversely, in August of 1913, anti-imperialist Moorfield Storey characterised Fallows and his son as profiteers who comprised of 'an inauspicious combination of religion and dollars,' and claimed the Filipinos were not fitted for independence to suit their own selfish ends (Storey, "Philippine Independence," 7-8. The seemingly obvious suspicion about the motives behind the American-Philippine Company, so clearly a financially driven endeavour, kept Taft from joining and as the following sections illustrate, forced him to keep the group at arm's length whenever he might get associated with such motivations.



Historian Paul Kramer describes the American-Philippine Company as ‘an umbrella organization created to develop subordinate companies in specific commercial areas in the Philippines,’ that was ‘meant to provide a revolving door between the colonial state and private enterprise.’<sup>595</sup> Such a company would appear even to neutral observers in the imperial debate as an example of an organisation that had aims based entirely around American commercial exploitation of the Philippines. The pamphlet drawn up by the American-Philippine Company recorded members’ speeches given at a dinner held by the company on October 14, 1912. The speeches varied in content, but generally provided a picture of the American-Philippine Company that had an undeniably imperialist bent. For example, one member, John M. Spitzer of the Pacific Commercial Company, argued that: ‘Cecil Rhodes made an empire out of South Africa. It is up to you fellows to make an empire out of the Philippines.’<sup>596</sup> If Taft had any doubts about the imperialistic leanings of the Company, the pamphlet and its overt use of the term empire should have left him in no doubt.

Edward Fallows was keen to develop a relationship with a figure of such high profile as Taft with his openly retentionist views, not to mention a keen supporter of U.S. investment in the islands. In the months that followed the letter from his father, Edward Fallows wrote frequently to Taft reassuring him that he was not alone in his retentionist beliefs. During December of 1912, Fallows claimed that the American-Philippine Company had located ‘sixty-one geographically dispersed newspaper editorials on the independence issue,’ claiming that only nine supported Wilson’s intention to withdraw eventually from the Philippines.<sup>597</sup> Although Taft was politically astute enough to realise the potential pitfalls of publicly endorsing a

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<sup>595</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 358.

<sup>596</sup> Rev. Samuel Fallows to WHT, November 13, 1912, WHTP 6:363.

<sup>597</sup> Sullivan, *Exemplar of Americanism*, 182.

primarily economically driven venture such as the American-Philippine Company, he maintained regular contact with Fallows during this period. In September of 1913 Taft wrote to Fallows thanking him for his recent hospitality and added that he hoped he would see Fallows during his travels to ‘talk over Philippine matters.’<sup>598</sup> Taft seemed to realise that an organisation such as the American-Philippine Company was a useful resource, which he might want to utilise in the future.

Although Taft was not a member of the American-Philippine Company, he was a member of another retentionist organisation of the time, the Philippine Society. A *New York Times* article of November 1913 noted that the Philippine Society was formed ‘to diffuse among the American people a more accurate knowledge of the islands and their people’ and was seeking additional members ‘interested in the welfare of the inhabitants of the Philippines.’<sup>599</sup> When the Society was formed in April of 1913, Taft was named as the honorary president, Luke E. Wright as acting president, and Forbes as honorary vice president.<sup>600</sup> The first secretary of the society was Richard E. Forrest, who was also the vice president of the American-Philippine Company and, as historian Paul Kramer remarks, this illustrated ‘close ties’ between the two organisations.<sup>601</sup> Unsurprisingly, the similarities in the membership lists of the two groups were quite substantial, and the organisational letterheads contained similar executive committee members.<sup>602</sup> Taft corresponded regularly with Forrest on the issue of the Philippines in the period during and after the formation of the Philippine

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<sup>598</sup> WHT to Edward Fallows, September 30, 1913, WHTP 8:519.

<sup>599</sup> *New York Times*, November 9, 1913.

<sup>600</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 358.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.* Forrest was also a member of the Harmony Society of America- National Committee for Upbuilding the Wards of the Nation under the auspice of the Harmony Club of America (Chair Rt. Rev. Charles Brent, Chair Nat. Ctte. Samuel Fallows) See: Forrest to WHT, December 10, 1913, WHTP 3:133).

<sup>602</sup> When looking at the frequent correspondence between Taft, Forrest and Fallows used in this chapter, for example, the letterheads listing prominent members show a substantial degree of overlap.

Society, as well as Martin Egan, the former editor of the *Manila Times*, who was also closely associated with both of the organisations.

Forrest consulted Taft regularly regarding the evolution of the Philippine Society and there were instances where Taft appeared keen to make sure the society did not veer too far from his retentionist outlook. In April 1913, Taft wrote to Forrest asking whether he felt it was really appropriate to have Manuel Quezon on the Executive Committee as it might ‘interfere... with the position of the Society against separation.’<sup>603</sup> In June, Taft restated his ‘doubts about the wisdom of having [Quezon] in the Society,’ illustrating his interest in making sure that retention remained an unquestioned tenet of the society.<sup>604</sup> Two days later in a handwritten postscript Taft assured Forrest ‘Don’t regret Quezon. He is not worthy. You dignify him too much.’<sup>605</sup> In Taft’s view the Philippine Society was to be a forum of individuals who believed at least broadly along the same lines as he did and the pro-independence Quezon was not within that spectrum.

Martin Egan’s correspondence with Taft increased markedly in late 1913 as the intentions of the Democrats in the Philippines began to become clear. When preparing to travel to Washington in early October, Egan told Taft he aimed to ‘ascertain what has been determined so far,’ regarding the Democratic administration’s Philippine policy.<sup>606</sup> Taft wrote Egan the next day relating his recent discussions with Edward Fallows on the ‘Philippine matter’ and the aims of Democratic policy, arguing that the Democrats ‘were not going to promise freedom to the Philippines in 1920 or at any other time,’ but would focus on Filipinization.<sup>607</sup> The

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<sup>603</sup> WHT to R. E. Forrest, April 22, 1913, WHTP, 8:518. Quezon, formerly the majority leader in the Philippine Assembly was, at this time, one of two resident commissioners in Washington.

<sup>604</sup> WHT to R. E. Forrest, June 27, 1913, WHTP, 8:518.

<sup>605</sup> WHT to R. E. Forrest, June 29, 1913, WHTP, 8:518.

<sup>606</sup> Martin Egan to WHT, October 2, 1913, WHTP 3:131.

<sup>607</sup> WHT to Martin Egan, October 3, 1913, WHTP 8:520.

policy of Filipinization – or gradually replacing American officials with Filipinos – was a policy that dated back to Taft’s time as civil governor. Though Taft would have preferred to keep the number of Filipinos in government to a minimum, until, as he saw it, they were properly prepared, he accepted the practice on a small scale as a pragmatic attempt to win over the support of pro-U.S. elites in the islands. Taft disagreed with taking ultimate control out of U.S. hands in the foreseeable future. However, when Francis Burton Harrison became the new Governor-General replacing Forbes in 1913, the Democratic appointee moved quickly to speed up the process of Filipinization. Historian H. W. Brands, suggests that Wilson’s appointment of Harrison was largely down to the machinations of resident commissioner Manuel Quezon, who had recognised early on Harrison’s sympathy with Filipino moves towards independence.<sup>608</sup> On his arrival Harrison promised immediately to ‘give to the native citizens of the Islands a majority in the Appointive Commission,’ handing control of both houses in the Philippine legislature to Filipino majorities.<sup>609</sup> In addition, just as Taft and Forbes had expected and feared, Harrison replaced Americans with Filipinos in many bureaucratic positions, as well as replacing a number of able Republican appointees with Democrats.<sup>610</sup>

Taft told Egan that, although unfortunate, increased Filipinization was surely ‘better than promising freedom, because if we left the Islands, we would have to go back there and do the work over again.’ Nevertheless Taft felt that Harrison’s rapid Filipinization scheme was ‘heaping up trouble for us’ and that the Democratic platform, the appointment of Bryan as Secretary of State, and the Jones Bill, among other actions, had seemingly all but promised independence to the Filipinos. The end result, Taft assured his colleague, was that the Filipinos would feel ‘deceived.’ Taft

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<sup>608</sup> Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 107-108.

<sup>609</sup> Harrison quoted in *ibid.*, 109.

<sup>610</sup> Karnow, *In Our Image*, 245.

also related a discussion he had with Secretary of War Lindley M. Garrison, in which apparently Garrison had told Taft that ‘he did not believe in independence but that they must do something,’ which Taft, in reply, claimed was unnecessary as the Republicans would support a maintenance of the *status quo*.<sup>611</sup> Taft seemed keen to stress the possibility that the Democrats were not necessarily going to promise the Philippines independence, even though the Democrats would need to make some moves that Taft deemed unwise. Taft’s words seemed to suggest that he was already looking to a future where the Republicans would return to power and have to undo what the Democrats had done, and he expressed his earnest hope that this would not include undoing a promise of independence.

Taft wrote a similar letter to Forrest a week after his correspondence with Egan, with a few differences worth noting. Taft told Forrest that the rumours of Democratic policy were ‘an indication that [the Democrats] will never promise independence, and that they are doing exactly what we did, but in a way much more calculated to mislead the Filipinos.’ Taft summed up the key difference between the Democratic policy and his own: ‘The Filipinos now think that independence is near at hand. They did not think so with me... If this substitution of Filipinos in the Commission [the policy of appointing a Filipino majority in the commission] is to sidetrack the Jones bill, so much the better, because it will leave to future administrations, which we hope may be Republican, and with more sense on the Philippine questions, to retrace the improvident steps now taken.’<sup>612</sup> In this letter Taft suggested that the issue of independence could be delayed even though the Democrats were in control. Taft believed most changes could be rolled back and the damage to his imperial vision could be repaired after an interlude of Democratic control.

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<sup>611</sup> WHT to Martin Egan, October 3, 1913, WHTP 8:520.

<sup>612</sup> WHT to R. E. Forrest, October 12, 1913, WHTP 8:520.

However, Taft saw the promise of independence, and even more so a date or timeline for independence, as something approaching *irreparable* damage to the Philippine relationship he desired. Such convictions are key to understanding his later attempts to derail Democratic policy. It appears at the early stage in the change of administration, Taft was led to believe, by his understanding of Democratic policy, that it might be possible to quash the independence promise until the Republicans returned to office. Once again Taft was acting out the moniker given him by Bryan many years before: the “Great Postponer.”

Taft consulted Egan regularly on his articles and other writings on various subjects, often in the hope of getting them published in influential journals. On October 28, 1913, Taft wrote Egan about a speech he was preparing on the Philippines and how he would be ‘Glad for suggestions on it.’<sup>613</sup> Egan replied:

May I suggest that you sound a general warning in your Brooklyn address about the new administration at Manila? [Governor-General F. B.] Harrison is going very fast and his course has further broken confidence there. He does not know conditions and rides to a fall with both Filipinos and Americans. He has demoralised the civil service by ruthless removals and seems quite in the hands of Quezon. Everything out there depends on American stability and confidence is broken. I believe you can sound an effective warning. I believe you should let the Associated Press and United Press have advanced copies of your Brooklyn speech.<sup>614</sup>

Taft’s response echoed Egan’s concerns about Democratic removals of members of the Philippine civil service: ‘Harrison and Quezon seem to be following Tammany principles in respect to the patronage in the Philippines, and I intend to say something about that.’<sup>615</sup> These concerns were certainly evident in Taft’s address delivered two days later on November 19, which is analysed below. On November 18,

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<sup>613</sup> WHT to Egan, October 28, 1913, WHTP 8:520.

<sup>614</sup> Egan to WHT, November 16, 1913, WHTP 3:132.

<sup>615</sup> WHT to Egan, November 17, 1913, WHTP 8:520. Harrison was a Democratic politician from New York, which might account for Taft’s parallel of his policies with those of Tammany Hall.

Taft wrote to his long-time friend Mabel Boardman and touched upon the upcoming Brooklyn speech. Taft informed her that he wanted to ‘infuse into the address the spirit of complete friendliness with the [Democratic] Administration and only manifest anxiety lest they are tending in a direction which will result in some bitter experiences for them.’ Nevertheless, Taft did lament that ‘a machinery that has built up with such care should receive such a serious blow as this is, but if he does not make the capital mistake of giving too much power to the Filipinos, the Americans can learn, although it is at the cost of the effectiveness of the government while they are learning.’<sup>616</sup> Here is an example, within Taft’s private correspondence, of his professed desire to appear non-partisan and the difficulty he had doing this even in one letter; his address would prove an even less convincing example of non-partisanship.

Taft’s address at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, New York, was the most high profile speech of his retentionist campaign since leaving the White House. The *New York Times* noted that, in Brooklyn, Taft ‘took the attitude of a man who was seeing his own work endangered...for thirteen years with hardly a break he had built up a civil service in the islands, and now he saw Governor-General Harrison refusing to take advice from those who knew the country.’ This hardly seemed like a summary of non-partisan speech. Indeed, Taft’s speech was overtly critical of Wilson’s appointees and policy in the Philippines, as well as Secretary of War Garrison, and a far cry from the non-partisanship that he had suggested he was seeking to provide. Taft warned listeners that the ‘penalty for mistakes in the Philippines is always severe jolts,’ and that he was not simply being a political partisan but rather knew ‘so much more about the Philippine problem and its

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<sup>616</sup> WHT to Mabel Boardman, November 18, 1913, WHTP 8:520.

difficulties than any of the gentlemen in this Administration that I have a duty and a right to call their attention to some of the dangers that beset them.’ Taft focused his attacks upon Democratic policy in terms of inexperience, a theme that would prove recurrent in future discourse, and argued that he had a genuine desire to create a dialogue with Democrats and to share with them the lessons of his own experience. However, such utterances merely added intensity to the criticisms, rather than giving any real credibility to the idea that this was more of a discussion of – rather than an outright attack upon – Democratic policy.

Taft’s speech in Brooklyn addressed the issue of Philippine independence in a slightly different manner from that of previous speeches: ‘The present declaration of the Administration that they are looking forward to ultimate independence has been accepted by the politicians of the Philippine Islands as a great boon, although Mr. McKinley, Mr. Roosevelt, and I have always promised it; but we were always a little more definite in saying that we did not think it was coming for a generation, and probably not for more than that time.’ Here Taft was claiming that the Republicans had promised independence and this, as previous chapters have illustrated, was simply not accurate – Taft was always keen not to make any specific promises. Taft had, during the previous thirteen years, campaigned ardently against a promise of independence. Here again, Taft was careful to note that no *specific* promises had been made, which to him was a critically important factor in the independence debate. Although he had conceded belatedly that independence was a possibility, he stressed that it was only one of a number of options when the time was right, not a guaranteed conclusion of Philippine policy.

In his Brooklyn speech Taft argued that the Filipino people viewed Democratic promises of ultimate independence ‘as a promise of early independence’



and suggested that such promises would only lead to disappointment and discontent. Taft then went on to bemoan the increase in Filipino political appointments and the increase in their powers, as well as the dismissal of experienced colonial officers on what he saw as a partisan basis. Taft concluded his speech by arguing that despite ‘disturbing reports’ from the islands, he was still optimistic that existing structures in the Philippines would not be ‘permanently injured under President Wilson,’ and that he had ‘confidence that he will direct them to retrace any steps which may have led them away from the course marked out a decade ago by McKinley and Root.’ The speech contained many of Taft’s previous themes regarding the dangers of Philippine independence, but differed in the way he expressed his disapproval. In this speech Taft placed far more stress on his personal experience in contrast to the inexperienced Democrats. Taft listed what he saw as remediable mistakes being made under the Democrats and he was keen to emphasise the fact that the incoming Democrats were not completely undoing what he had sought to achieve.<sup>617</sup>

Taft’s younger brother Horace wrote to him following the speech: ‘I see that you are after Wilson and Harrison on the Philippines. That is a subject on which I cannot forgive Wilson... [he] must understand thoroughly down in his heart what an idiotic and destructive course he is inaugurating there.’<sup>618</sup> Taft’s own opinion becomes clear in a letter to his son Robert written on the same day, where although his patience for the Wilson administration seems limited, his anger at the betrayal of Roosevelt in 1912 still seemed far more prominent in his mind:

There is nothing I take more pride in than what has been done in the Philippines, and to have the result of thirteen years of hard work botched with an axe by a conceited pedagogue and an opportunist in politics, a one track mind that is so bent on getting his legislation through that he thrusts aside other important issues that deserve his full attention, is a bit

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<sup>617</sup> *New York Times*, November 20, 1913.

<sup>618</sup> Horace Taft to WHT, November 20, 1913, WHTP 3:133.

trying. I want to maintain a friendly attitude toward the Administration, because I prefer its success so much to the danger of Rooseveltism that I sincerely hope Mr. Wilson may be reelected if the Orthodox Republicans are not to come in, but when they make such asses of themselves as they are now making in the Philippines, I have to speak out in a mild way, but I should think myself derelict in duty if I did not give a friendly warning.<sup>619</sup>

Evidently Taft felt even more strongly in private against Wilson's policy in the Philippines than he allowed himself to illustrate in his Brooklyn speech, despite its critical tone. Even Taft's dislike for Roosevelt was not enough to really temper an attack on Wilson – where this letter shows his feelings better than the speech – but it is also evident that only the Philippine issue was enough to rouse his passion against Wilson so fully.

The address was widely reported in the national press, but Taft's correspondence reveals a further avenue of opportunity through which Taft wished to press home his message. Taft's address was published in full in the *Brooklyn Eagle* and he was happy to encourage the ever-willing Edward Fallows to help further disseminate the article as a retentionist pamphlet to his membership.<sup>620</sup> Taft was keen to have his attack on Democratic policy in the Philippines, couched in terms of a hope for greater non-partisanship, distributed to as many willing readers as possible. Without the pulpit of the presidency Taft knew that he had to find new ways to try and influence policy and he recognised that the American-Philippine Company and likeminded, well-funded organisations, were a good opportunity to achieve this end – even if he had to keep relations largely informal to avoid being tarred with the brush of exploitation.<sup>621</sup> However, there were obvious limits to such a letter campaign as it

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<sup>619</sup> WHT to Robert 'Bob' Taft, November 20-21, 1913, WHTP 3:133.

<sup>620</sup> Edward Fallows to WHT, November 24, 1913, WHTP 3:133.

<sup>621</sup> In late December 1913, Fallows sent to Taft copies of numerous letters he had exchanged with Moorfield Storey, President of the Anti-Imperialist League. Fallows claimed to have mistakenly – though this is very unlikely – sent Storey an invitation to join the American-Philippine Company, unaware of his position, and a fairly heated exchange had followed. Fallows accused Storey of 'violent

was primarily preaching to the converted. With Taft in such aroused passions regarding his vision for the American imperial experiment, he would surely have been cheered when the following day he received a receipt for his pre-paid order of the *Works of Rudyard Kipling*.<sup>622</sup>

The press reports of Taft's speech and the distribution of the *Brooklyn Eagle* article drew a raft of responses from his associates and like-minded individuals. The Taft-nominated Associate U.S. Supreme Court Justice Mahlon Pitney commented that it was 'particularly distressing to observe the readiness of the new Governor-General in committing this country to a radical change of policy.'<sup>623</sup> Henry Stimson, former Secretary of War, informed Taft: 'Almost everyone I meet speaks of it and has read it, and it really seems to awaken again our sleeping national interest in the Philippines. More power to your elbow.'<sup>624</sup> The indication that the speech was widely talked about would certainly have heartened Taft. Taft himself sent copies to correspondents he saw as likely to sympathise with his point of view and among the main figures whose opinions Taft respected most was Elihu Root.<sup>625</sup> On sending Root the speech, Taft warned the senator that 'It is sufficiently long to consume a year in its reading, but you ought to be primed on the subject with reference to the latest phases of it, because

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and unjust' attacks upon Taft (Edward Fallows to Moorfield Storey, December 4, 1913, WHTP 3:134). In response Storey stated: 'I have until now said little or nothing, although I confess that the statements that he [Taft] has made in various magazines, and recently in the press are so reckless, and in many cases so untrue, that I can hardly be expected to say anything in his praise.' (Moorfield Storey to Edward Fallows, December 6, 1913, WHTP 3:134). Storey then went on to attack the Company: 'I am aware that you are entirely opposed to independence of the Philippine Islands, and of your hope to invest American Capital there to your own profit, and then use your investments there as a reason for retaining American control of the islands.' The exchange was somewhat farcical, but nevertheless, would have once again brought to Taft's attention the motivations of Fallows and his associates, and the pitfalls of close association with the group.

<sup>622</sup> Doubleday, Page and Co. to WHT, November 21, 1913, WHTP 3:133.

<sup>623</sup> Mahlon Pitney to WHT, November 26, 1913, WHTP 3:133.

<sup>624</sup> Henry Stimson to WHT, c. November, 1913, WHTP 3:133.

<sup>625</sup> Root had been Secretary of War when Taft was Civil Governor of the Philippines and Secretary of State when Taft was head of the War Department. At this point Root was a U.S. Senator for New York.

I expect it will be made the subject of discussion by the introduction of something like the Jones bill.<sup>626</sup>

On December 26, 1913, Taft wrote confidentially to Dean Worcester regarding the latter's ongoing lectures on the Philippines. Taft hoped that Worcester would stress the 'disaster to the Philippine people and the disgrace to [the Democratic administration] that would be brought by giving the Philippines independence short of two generations or probably a century.'<sup>627</sup> The following day Taft wrote again to Worcester, expressing his frustrations. Taft traced the beginning of the unravelling of his carefully laid plans as far back as his immediate successor as Governor-General, Luke E. Wright. Taft suggested that Wright's criticism of Pardo de Tavera and the pro-American *Federalistas*, and his concessions to the 'irreconcilables,' constituted a 'great mistake.' Taft argued that before Wright's change in direction, sympathetic pro-American Filipinos 'were really in favor of the theories of government that we sought to put into force. They did not in their hearts believe in independence, but the minute our sympathy with them was withdrawn, it destroyed altogether any living nucleus for the maintenance of the ideas that we would have been glad to spread among the Filipinos and form a party among them.'

As the letter continued, Taft went on to explain that he believed the reasons for Wright's poor choices was that he was a Southerner and thus it was 'not natural that he should be as optimistic in respect to any class of Filipinos as I was because of that inborn lack of confidence that a Southerner has in a race of any color.' This sentiment gives a useful insight into the way in which Taft saw himself as more enlightened in racial matters than other Americans. However, Taft did not end his regrets there, adding: 'I believe we made a mistake in giving them a National

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<sup>626</sup> WHT to Elihu Root, November 27, 1913, WHTP 8:521.

<sup>627</sup> WHT to Dean Worcester, December 26, 1913, WHTP 8:521.

Assembly,’ explaining that at the time it seemed necessary to give some evidence ‘in support of our declaration that we were anxious to educate the Filipinos by political experience...’ In conclusion Taft supposed that, although the situation would ‘probably’ have ended up roughly the same as it did, there would still have been stronger ‘Philippine support’ for the U.S. had Wright, and also Forbes, not been so ‘contemptuous’ of sympathetic Filipinos.<sup>628</sup> This letter, perhaps more than any other of the period, was an example of Taft’s frustration at having been taken away from control of Philippine affairs and even shows Taft admitting regret for some moves taken whilst he was in charge. Taft blamed others for the popular will of the Filipino people regarding independence, the Democrats particularly, but here even his retentionist allies such as Forbes. Nobody, it seemed to Taft, understood the Philippine situation like he did, and since he had left the islands as civil governor things had only ever deteriorated.

Shortly before writing the above letter, criticising Forbes, Taft had spoken at a dinner on December 19, 1913, to honour him. The dinner was organised by the Philippine Society and the Harmony Club of America; the latter group containing numerous overlapping administrators with the former. In his speech Taft claimed, as he had in Brooklyn, that his criticisms of the administration were in no way to be construed as ‘partisan,’ but that they were to help ‘make the public acquainted with the problems and opportunities of the islands.’ He went on to claim that by ‘going in and doing the good we have done, we are pledged to stay there until that good shall become not only substantial but permanent.’<sup>629</sup> This is evidence again of Taft’s apparent efforts to stress the non-partisan nature of his criticisms of Governor-General Harrison’s administration. Taft’s speech sought to stress retention, at least until the

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<sup>628</sup> WHT to Dean Worcester, December 27, 1913, WHTP 8:521.

<sup>629</sup> *Philippine Bulletin*, January 1914, Vol. 1, No. 7, 6.

U.S. mission was accomplished, but the *Bulletin's* coverage pointed to Taft's greatest fear: the possibility that the Democrats would promise independence before the Republicans has a chance to regain control of policy. Taft's greatest focus in this regard was surely the Jones Bill, the bane of his last days in office, and it was in mid-1914 that the bill would once again return to the fore, much to Taft's vexation.

### *The Last Crusade against the Jones Bill, 1914-1916*

By July of 1914 the Jones Bill, now back before the House of Representatives, was one of the primary concerns on the minds of Forrest and his fellow retentionists. Forrest informed Taft that there was 'nothing new' in this new Jones Bill, but rather it was 'the same policy in a different binding.'<sup>630</sup> The following day Martin Egan sent Taft a copy of the new Jones Bill, warning him that 'it has several glaring defects and I am hopeful we can induce our friends to change or modify the measure to put it in better shape,' adding, 'I shall treat your comment as confidential.'<sup>631</sup> Taft replied to Forrest a couple of days afterwards, stating resolutely that he was 'opposed to the Jones bill,' and described it as 'only another deceit of the Filipinos' who would 'take the promise as something immediate.' Taft's concern, as ever, focused on the question of promising independence and the too-rapid pace of Filipinization. He also indicated that he could no longer trust the Democrats to see sense: 'I have no confidence that working with the present administration will do any good. They have injured the cause most seriously by their present course, and the only thing that I can hope for is that we will knock them out at the end of four years, and laboriously retrace our steps to the path they have so recklessly abandoned. I hope your call will accomplish

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<sup>630</sup> Forrest to WHT, July 16, 1914, WHTP 3:141.

<sup>631</sup> Egan to WHT, July 18, 1914, WHTP 3:142.

good.<sup>632</sup> The new Jones Bill, it seemed, had destroyed what limited hope Taft had that the Democrats might drop the promise of independence once in power.

Later in July, Forrest sent Taft some press clippings from the Philippines pertaining to the Jones Bill, pointing out that most of them ‘indicate that the editors believe Quezon and Osmeña are traitors to the cause, and that the bill is not far different from the former attitude of the Republican party.’ This comment also suggests, of course, that the same editors were hostile to Republican policies. Forrest noted that in terms of the society working with the Democratic administration ‘no steps in this direction will be taken without referring them to you in detail, for our Executive Committee, of course, rely upon your judgement.’<sup>633</sup> The Philippine Society’s journal, the *Philippine Bulletin*, gave substantial coverage of the new Jones Bill, including a review of press coverage and its reception by the American and Filipino public. Among those cited in criticising the measures in the Jones Bill, and favouring a more Taft-like approach, were the *Outlook*, the *New York Herald* and the *Brooklyn Eagle*, though there is an element of selective quotation that is readily apparent. In the Filipino press it appeared most criticism took the opposite position, being concerned generally, in the eyes of the *Bulletin*, with the lack of a ‘definite date’ for independence.<sup>634</sup> The *Bulletin* presents a view that reaction to the bill was decidedly mixed, but generally critical: the nature of the criticism was very different, however, split between those who favoured immediate independence and those who disagreed with the idea of independence at any time in the foreseeable future. Such a reaction, although predictable, suggested that as extreme as Taft and his supporters saw the changes proposed in the Jones Bill, to many in the Philippines it was regarded

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<sup>632</sup> WHT to Forrest, July 21, 1914, WHTP 8:525.

<sup>633</sup> Forrest to WHT, July 31, 1914, WHTP 3:142. Sergio Osmeña was the first speaker of the Philippine Assembly and the most prominent Nationalist Party member after Quezon.

<sup>634</sup> *Philippine Bulletin*, August, 1914, Vol. 2, No. 2.

as a document of disappointing compromises, though of course this was a vision of Filipino sentiments through a U.S. lens.

At the end of October, Taft told Forrest that he saw the best chance for an end to the Jones Bill in the Senate and he advocated a lobbying operation aimed at both Republican and Democratic U.S. Senators.<sup>635</sup> This correspondence illustrates that the retentionists were waging more than a simple propaganda campaign, and also shows the importance of figures like Taft to the hopes of the movement. As a figure of high profile, with an impressive list of contacts, Taft provided the retentionist movement with hopes of influence among Congress to delay the Jones Bill until the Republicans regained power. In early 1915 Taft was given an opportunity to influence the Senate in a far more direct way than letters or private chats with senators. Given his stature and experience in Philippine affairs, Taft was summoned to speak before the Senate Committee on the Philippines on January 2, 1915.<sup>636</sup> The purpose of these hearings was to gather information to help decide upon H.R. 18459, which aimed to declare the U.S. purpose to recognise Philippine independence eventually and increase the level of autonomy in the islands.<sup>637</sup> The Senate certainly could not have found a more willing speaker on such an issue than the former president.

In these hearings, Taft told the Senate Philippine Committee that he saw three paths as the potential future course of U.S. policy in the Philippines. The first was the policy of leaving entirely; the second, the policy of remaining in control indefinitely; and the third, his preferred policy of gradual devolution over the course of decades

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<sup>635</sup> WHT to Forrest, October 31, 1914, WHTP 8:527.

<sup>636</sup> "Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines, United States Senate [63:3] on H.R. 18459," January 2, 1915, Part 5. All the page numbers in the main text of this chapter within parentheses pertain to this same document.

<sup>637</sup> H.R. 18459. An act to declare the purpose of the people of the United States as to the future political status of the people of the Philippine islands and to provide a more autonomous government for the islands. Among the other figures interviewed by the committee were the following: Lindley Garrison (Secretary of War), Newton Gilbert (former Acting-Governor-General of the Philippines), Gen. Frank McIntyre (Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs), Manuel Quezon (Resident Commissioner of the Philippine Islands), and Dean Worcester (former Member of the Philippine Commission).



with the ultimate option of a permanent dominion-style link in the end. This was familiar territory indeed, though on this occasion Taft cited a selection of President Wilson's own words to support the third option, where the Democrat spoke of 'the long apprenticeship of competence.'<sup>638</sup> Wilson's phrase was a citation from his 1908 work *Constitutional Government in the United States*, where Wilson stated that 'Self-government is not a thing that can be "given" to any people, because it is a form of character and not a form of constitution... Only a long apprenticeship of obedience can secure them the precious possession, a thing no more to be bought than given.'<sup>639</sup> Historian Lewis Gleek, Jr. notes, to this end, that Wilson's 'formula for achieving Philippine independence, as expressed in his textbook... was stricter than any proposed or exercised by President Taft or his successors. Wilson's view however, was one to which Harrison paid utterly no heed,' though of course this view is open to interpretation.<sup>640</sup> However, the point of the Senate hearings were in reference, as Taft was only too aware, to a bill that would provide for a concrete promise of independence for the Philippines, supported by the administration and far more akin to option one than option three.

In his testimony, Taft recapped Republican policy in the islands over the previous fourteen years, declaring that the Democratic Party's promise of independence had always been 'the great obstruction to the carrying out of our plans,' and that were independence granted, anarchy would ensue (367-372). Here, once again, Taft's intent to avoid partisanship – which he had stated at the beginning of proceedings – seemed to be disappearing rapidly. Taft also argued that the Philippines might be in a more suitable economic state than Cuba for self-government (not independence), and that if the U.S. had not been bound (by the Platt Amendment) to

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<sup>638</sup> "Hearings on H.R. 18459," 364-366.

<sup>639</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *Constitutional Government*, 53.

<sup>640</sup> Gleek, *The American Half-Century*, 185.

give Cuba only partially restricted control of its own affairs, ‘a different policy would have been wiser’ (385). Presumably Taft was suggesting that Cuba would have also been better off as a U.S. Dominion rather than a pseudo-protectorate, just as he felt was the case in the Philippines.

When questioned on the nature of desire for independence in the islands, Taft reasserted his old adage: that most people wanted it, but did not understand what it would entail or its possible negative consequences (374). However, Taft went on to point out that there were a number among the very Filipino elites that advocated independence who did fear its consequences, and among such he included Manuel Quezon. As he had for many years, Taft held – with some foundation – that many Filipino politicians secretly feared immediate independence but were unable to express this view publicly for it would mark the end of their careers (374).

Taft’s primary criticism of the bill before the Senate was, as was to be expected, that it promised independence. He felt that the Democratic platform’s policy of proclaiming ultimate independence would ‘hit with an ax’ the policies of education and reform that had garnered the Republican administration much praise in the Philippines, and heralded, in Taft’s mind, ‘one of the grandest works that the United States has ever undertaken’ (376). Taft argued that promising *ultimate* independence was the same as promising *immediate* independence, and that once the issue was in the government’s agenda, it would dominate all: ‘In other words, they are constantly thinking of the government to come and not the government that you are using for the purpose of fitting them for self-government’ (384).

Taft summed up his commitment to long-term involvement with the Philippines with the following reworking of previous speeches on the issue: ‘if we take the time, if we do not think we can accomplish everything the next morning for

breakfast, that we can make this experiment a success out there, so that the people will rise up then, and not until then, to call the United States blessed' (386). This last phrase had been used by Taft before in speeches and was in fact repeated as the final line of his testimony some time later (400). Taft said again later in his testimony that time was the key, 'let us try the experiment of waiting,' again giving a hint of Bryan's Great Postponer (388). He reiterated in his conclusion that only a consistent policy, a continuation of *his* policy at that, could bring about a fitting end when the Philippines would call the United States 'blessed.' (400) Taft's arguments, as he pointed out when citing and asking for previous speeches to be put on the record, had remained consistent over time. What changes there were in Taft's rhetoric were largely as a result of changing conditions brought about by Democratic policy in the islands. These changes saw a rapid increase in the numbers of Filipinos in office in line with Governor-General Harrison's embrace of Filipinization and moves towards promising independence.

Following on from the committee hearings, Forrest assured Taft that 'the testimony you offered in Washington has been filling the newspapers... The reports we now have as to the effect of your and Mr. Worcester's hearings before the Committee indicate the effectiveness of your attack on the Jones' Bill, and I am among the hundred million Americans who owe you a deep gratitude for being a capable executioner. I surmise with regret, however, that I am only one of a few thousand in the country who appreciate what a great service will have been done when the villain has finally been executed.'<sup>641</sup> Forrest, an undoubted Taft supporter, seemed to believe that Taft's testimony might have a positive effect in the mission to delay or even kill off the Jones Bill. The newspaper reportage of Taft's comments

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<sup>641</sup> Forrest to WHT, January 12, 1915, WHTP 3:147.

would certainly have helped spread the message of retention among both citizens and politicians, though whether most would agree with him was another matter altogether.

Later in January of 1915, Forrest related to Taft the details of a dinner he had attended at which Manuel Quezon, the prominent Filipino politician, had been present. Forrest claimed that ‘Mr. Quezon practically admitted that he felt just this same way about [independence], but made a good point in this: He said that, so long as arguments against Philippine independence were primarily based on that the mass of people were ignorant and incompetent to govern themselves, and that those who govern them consist of a handfull [sic] of half-breed politicians who were dishonest, both of these classes would continue to urge independence.’ Forrest added that another diner, Judge Ross, ‘said that Mr. Jones had made the threat that, if this bill did not pass, he would propose a worse one next year – somewhat humorous!’<sup>642</sup> Taft, who would probably not have been heartened by such humour, replied that he had recently heard, from Washington, that Quezon thought the Philippine Bill would fail in the present session of Congress.<sup>643</sup> When Congress amended the Jones Bill, Forrest sent Taft a copy, praising ‘the excellent marksmanship of the big guns which shot to pieces the original bill.’<sup>644</sup> Taft agreed to some extent, commenting that the bill was ‘improved,’ but adding that ‘it still needs a great deal of amendment to make it in any degree useful.’<sup>645</sup> Taft wrote to Henry Stimson the same day, confessing that he was still ‘sad all over about Philippine policy.’<sup>646</sup>

A further indication that, as the Jones Bill looked increasingly likely to succeed, Taft was beginning to lose the guarded optimism of 1913 and 1914 came in a letter to Mabel Boardman on February 17, 1915, when he claimed the Democrats

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<sup>642</sup> Forrest to WHT, January 19, 1915, WHTP 3:147.

<sup>643</sup> WHT to Forrest, January 24, 1915, WHTP 8:529.

<sup>644</sup> Forrest to WHT, February 1, 1915, WHTP 3:148.

<sup>645</sup> WHT to Forrest, February 2, 1915, WHTP 8:529.

<sup>646</sup> WHT to Stimson, February 2, 1915, WHTP 8:529.

‘have produced a condition which I think will lead to disturbance whatever happens whether the [Jones] bill passes now or not, but it is a great deal better not to pass the bill and take what disturbance may come than to pass it and put ourselves in a permanent condition of helplessness.’<sup>647</sup> On March 1, Taft, keeping Boardman updated on the Jones Bill, noted that he had learned from acquaintances that some Republicans in Congress might be willing to compromise on the Jones Bill in order to defeat a shipping bill. Taft told Boardman that he had sent telegrams to congressmen, informing them of his hope that ‘the Philippine bill will not be allowed to come up. It will be a vicious step,’ and had also telegraphed Elihu Root that morning noting that if the bill had to be amended until Taft would advise its passage then ‘there would not be anything left in the bill.’<sup>648</sup>

On September 6, 1915, Taft addressed the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco, where he criticised the administration of Governor-General Harrison. Historian Lewis Gleeck, Jr. sees this speech as the major blast of the ‘last Republican offensive’ against Harrison and the Jones Bill.<sup>649</sup> Taft suggested – in line with his testimony to the Senate Committee earlier in the year – that the continuation of Harrison’s policies would only lead to the need for ‘intervention’ of the American government in the future and that passage of the Jones Bill ‘would make the work of deterioration complete.’ Taft did concede, somewhat uncharacteristically, however, that ‘I am in favor of turning the islands over to their people when they are reasonably fitted... but this will not be for two generations.’<sup>650</sup> Again, it is useful to bear in mind that Taft had, since the fall of the Federalist Party in the Philippines, suggested that he supported the idea of independence as a possibility, but with the conditions that it

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<sup>647</sup> WHT to Mabel Boardman, February 17, 1915, WHTP 8:529.

<sup>648</sup> WHT to Mabel Boardman, March 1, 1915, WHTP 8:529.

<sup>649</sup> Gleeck, *American Half-Century*, 198-199.

<sup>650</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 1915.

should come only when the islands were ready, and only as one of a number of options for their future.

Following Taft's California speech, Harrison replied to his criticisms, unfairly suggesting that Taft was anything but a model of consistency. As the *New York Times* reported: 'Governor Harrison declared that when Mr. Taft was in the Philippines he was the most prominent among those advocating Filipino independence, but was "the leader of the retentionists" when in America.'<sup>651</sup> Secretary of War Garrison showed that he was no more impressed with Taft's words than the Governor-General, when he issued a statement in November. Garrison called Taft's statements on the Philippine issue 'mendacious in character and mischievous in intent,' and he went on to charge that 'Republican politicians are attempting to lay the foundation for campaign material with respect to the Philippine Islands.'<sup>652</sup> Garrison criticised Taft's introduction to a pamphlet critical of the Democratic policies in the Philippines, whose present unhappy conditions Taft attributed to the 'blind and foolish policy of President Wilson and Governor-General Harrison.'<sup>653</sup> In his introduction to the pamphlet in question, Taft had addressed the issue of the politicisation of independence as he saw it: 'The independence campaign was only political. What the Filipino politicians want is the offices. Now that they are dividing these with some Democratic politicians, equally inefficient, they are not quite so eager for independence.' Taft warned that if the Republicans regained control of government, then the system that had been in place prior to Wilson's presidency would have to be retraced and slowly rebuilt, which in turn would incite the anger of Filipinos who had been given office too hastily. The 'evil effects' of Harrison's policy in the islands,

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<sup>651</sup> *New York Times*, September 8, 1915.

<sup>652</sup> *Washington Post*, November 30, 1915.

<sup>653</sup> The pamphlet was published in September 1915 and was made up of a number of articles that had been published in the *Oakland Tribune* by O. Garfield Jones, a former member of the Philippine Department of Education.

Taft warned, would ‘take years to remedy.’<sup>654</sup> Garrison accused Taft of double standards and ‘blind partisanship,’ alleging that the pamphlet's author had written an equally powerful account praising the Democratic administration in the islands, but which he had found no luck in getting published. Garrison concludes that Taft had illustrated his blind partisanship by failing to check corroborating evidence for the charges in the pamphlet, a clear sign of unrestrained ‘partisan zeal.’<sup>655</sup> Whether or not Taft truly made an effort to *be* non-partisan on the Philippine issue rather than simply claim that he was non-partisan, it was clear that his opponents certainly did not believe he was anything of the sort and this was closer to the truth than Taft’s relatively empty claims.

In January of 1916 the *Washington Post* printed a set of correspondence between Taft and former Secretary of State Elihu Root. The letter from Root to Taft, dated January 20, read:

It appears to me that you are engaging in a damnable scheme to get hung for treason... when I contemplate the recent government of the Philippines and reflect that our control of the islands may continue to be the sport of American politics, I doubt whether we can really do them much more good... If Democrats are to turn out Republicans in order to put in deserving Democrats, deserving Democrats before very long will be turned out to make way for deserving Republicans, and so on. If things are to be done in that way, we’d better give the islands their independence promptly; not promise it in the future, but give notice of an election and turn it over as we did Cuba.

In response the newspaper published Taft’s reply: ‘I don’t think we can let go in the way you suggest. We have got hold of the bear, and it isn’t easy to let go of its tail... I think they [the Philippines] will be with us after you and I are gone, and we might as well make our plans accordingly.’<sup>656</sup> This exchange was not indicative of

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<sup>654</sup> Taft, “Introduction,” September 23, 1915, in: O. Garfield Jones, *The Unhappy Conditions in the Philippines Islands*, [no pagination] iii-v.

<sup>655</sup> *Washington Post*, November 30, 1915.

<sup>656</sup> *Washington Post*, January 21, 1916.

Root's long-standing views on Philippine policy. For example, a prefatory note to a book published about U.S. Philippine policy, written in August of 1916, Root claimed that 'we can not relive ourselves from them [the Philippines] except in one way, and that is by carrying our performance to such a point that our *cestuis que trustent* [beneficiaries of the trust] will be competent to take care of themselves... but not until then.'<sup>657</sup> In this exchange, Taft illustrated once again, that for all his posturing about the potential for some distant option on independence, really he thought present policy should be preparing for a long-term relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines.

In early August Taft wrote to Republican presidential candidate Charles Evans Hughes to vent his frustrations with Wilson over the Philippine situation and offer them as a potential issue for the campaign. In the letter, Taft criticised Wilson as performing 'somersaults on the subject of the Philippines,' representing his 'vacillating inconsistency' on the issue. Taft cited various changes in Wilson's ideas, from his comments in his book, *Constitutional Government*, to subsequent support for expedited independence.<sup>658</sup> However, just as Hughes' presidential campaign would meet with disappointment, ultimately Taft's campaign against the Jones Bill failed to keep the Philippine question unanswered until the election.

On August 29, 1916, Congress finally passed the Jones Act (Philippine Organic Act), complete with its controversial preamble. Taft's campaign of the last three years to delay the bill until the Republicans could return to power was at an end. Historian Kendrick Clements suggests that the passage of the Jones Act represented the Democrats making good on an 'old promise,' and this was the promise Taft had

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<sup>657</sup> Charles Burke Elliott, *The Philippines*, prefatory note.

<sup>658</sup> WHT to Charles Evans Hughes, August 6, 1916, WHTP 8:540.



hoped would never be made.<sup>659</sup> By contrast, from Taft's point of view, as historian Peter Stanley recognises, the preamble 'seemed an almost irredeemable error: a promise of independence.'<sup>660</sup> The part of the preamble, to which Taft objected most, read as follows: 'it has always been, the purpose of the people of the United States to withdraw their sovereignty over the Philippine Islands and to recognize their independence as soon as a stable government can be established therein,' and to accomplish this end 'it is desirable to place in the hands of the people of the Philippines as large a control of their domestic affairs as can be given them.'<sup>661</sup>

Taft would no doubt have been unsurprised, though not encouraged, by the reaction in the Philippines to the news that the bill had finally passed. Historian Stanley Karnow gives details of a huge party being thrown by Manuel Quezon, while in Manila 'forty thousand people marched through the streets, and the city sent Wilson a silver tablet inscribed with words of gratitude.'<sup>662</sup> With the passage of the Jones Bill, and the victory of Wilson in the Presidential election of 1916, Taft's hopes that postponement could save his vision for the Philippines were left in tatters. However, Taft did not concede defeat entirely and over the following years, before the return of the Republicans to power in 1921, Taft continued to address the issue of Philippine retention.

### ***The League of Nations and Self-Determination***

During the years between Wilson's assumption of office in 1913 and the end of the Great War in 1918, and despite his dismal showing in the 1912 election, as an

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<sup>659</sup> Clements, *Woodrow Wilson*, 139.

<sup>660</sup> Stanley, *Nation in the Making*, 250.

<sup>661</sup> Philippine Organic Act [Jones Act], August 29, 1916.

<sup>662</sup> Karnow, *In Our Image*, 247.

ex-president Taft had proven himself not to be an outright political partisan. With the exception of the Philippine issue, Taft had shown his willingness to support Wilson on a number of occasions where both men's views coincided: Taft had backed Wilson's anti-war stance prior to 1917, then served on the War Labor Board during the conflict, and strongly advocated U.S. membership in the League of Nations, a cause very close to Wilson's heart. At the end of the First World War, Wilson and Taft together envisioned a new world order organised around arbitration and international negotiation to ensure the previous conflict really was a war to end all wars.<sup>663</sup> As historian David H. Burton notes, Taft's enthusiastic support of the League to Enforce Peace – an association calling for the establishment of an organisation similar to the eventual League of Nations – summed up the post-war vision of Taft and those like him: 'pious hopes for peace, the appeal of negotiated arbitration, and the vision of international lawyers.'<sup>664</sup> However, such ideals jarred with Taft's views on the American empire and the future of the U.S. relationship with the Philippines.

In terms of the Philippine situation, the Great War brought about an unwritten truce for the duration of the conflict, especially in the Philippines themselves, with Filipino demonstrations of support for the U.S. and Filipino leaders declaring their allegiance to the United States. However, the Filipino truce was short-lived, as was the war itself. At the end of the war, Filipino independence advocates entered a renewed phase of campaigning against continued U.S. imperialism. Indeed, the nature of the rhetoric surrounding U.S. entry to the Great War was used as further propaganda to meet the ends of the independence lobby. The Great War was seen as a

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<sup>663</sup> Taft was not the only one who was unable to live up to such a high-minded policy as self-determination. In a recent essay, historian Erez Manela argues that Wilson did not live up to the expectations of many of those in Asian nations, notably China and India. Manela suggests that by early 1919 the realities of the Versailles Treaty in regard to changing the face of international order fell 'far short of [their] expectations.' Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia," 1351.

<sup>664</sup> Burton, *Confident Peacemaker*, 90.

victory for the democracies of the United States, France and Great Britain against the more autocratic regimes of Kaiser Wilhelm and his allies. President Wilson saw the end of the war as heralding a new era of democracy and at the heart of the change would be a commitment to self-determination for the people of Europe, as set out in his Fourteen Points. Wilson's focus upon the doctrine of self-determination, in the opinion of historians Grunder and Livezey, 'partially contributed to renewed Filipino agitation for independence.'<sup>665</sup> For Taft, Wilson's self-determination doctrine was yet another setback for his imperial vision: the United States could hardly be seen to support the suppressed masses of the world while retaining the Philippines against popular consent.

Though the question of self-determination for the peoples of Europe was an integral part of President Wilson's vision, it only really applied to the defeated nations in the Great War. The United States had been an ally of Great Britain and France during the war and self-determination – for the victorious European empires – was a policy best consigned to the former German and Ottoman empires; after all, the vast majority of the British and French empires lay outside of Europe. However, the most notable exception to this rule was Ireland, at this time part of Britain, but with a strong independence movement that had been growing ever stronger since Britain has halted talks on the status of Ireland during the war.<sup>666</sup> Many Americans had a traditional sympathy towards Irish independence, given America's own history and its substantial Irish population.<sup>667</sup> Following the end of the war hopes for American

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<sup>665</sup> Grunder and Livezey, *Philippines and the United States*, 157.

<sup>666</sup> In 1916 Irish nationalists staged the Easter Rising against British rule. The subsequent harsh reprisals against Irish rebels by the British led to a strengthening of pro-Irish independence feeling in the United States and Ireland. The introduction of conscription in Ireland in 1918 further led the general Irish population to favour a more revolutionary tone against the British.

<sup>667</sup> As president, Taft had not displayed particularly strong views on the Irish question, though he began to make overtures to Irish groups as the election of 1912 approached. According to historian Bernadette Whelan, the period running up to the election saw all parties seeking to court the Irish-American vote, a group of voters that had previously been overlooked in presidential elections. Whelan contends that

intervention on behalf of Irish nationalists began to resurface. Irish-American leaders urged President Wilson to ‘use his influence... to bring about the realization of Irish nationalist aspirations.’<sup>668</sup> However, Wilson, even with his doctrine of self-determination, was not keen to support Irish independence.<sup>669</sup> Wilson, like Taft, was only too aware that Britain was a key ally and would be needed if his League of Nations proposals were to gain international standing. Unlike Wilson, who had already sped up the progress for a Philippine path to independence, Taft saw an additional concern in the Irish question relating to the U.S.-Philippine relationship.

In October 1918, Taft wrote on the issue of self-determination in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*: “Let the people themselves decide,” it is said. Every one agrees that this general rule should prevail in post-war arrangements. But how large or how small shall the unit of a people for such a decision be? Shall the units be racial or geographical? Suppose a people as small in number as the Belfast Orangemen compared with the whole population of Ireland insists in a separate government, though geography, trade conditions and every consideration but religious difference and tradition require that the whole islands be under one Government?’ Having made this case, Taft went on to point out the many problems of ascertaining the will of the majority: ‘an ignorant people without the slightest experience in the restraints necessary in successful self-government and subject to the wildest imaginings under the insidious demagoguery of venal leaders may well not know what is best for them.’<sup>670</sup> These sentiments suggested that Taft saw the Irish question much as he saw

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both Taft and Roosevelt showed support for Irish associations within the United States during this period, and in 1912 Taft went so far as to support the release of a Fenian imprisoned in Canada for attempting to dynamite the Welland Canal. See: Whelan, *United States Foreign Policy and Ireland*, 31.

<sup>668</sup> F. M. Carroll, ed., *The American Commission on Irish Independence*, 3.

<sup>669</sup> Maldwyn Jones, *American Immigration*, 246.

<sup>670</sup> Taft, “Self Determination,” *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 3, 1918, cited in: Burton, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 123-124.

the Philippine question: where the best route was to be found in a continuing imperial relationship, rather than the civil disorder that would follow independence.

Taft had always been something of an Anglophile and he was only too aware that the United States needed to remain close to Britain after the war and encourage British membership of the League of Nations. That Taft was of the opinion the British should retain control of Ireland became even clearer when he wrote to British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour in December 1918, at the urging of a friend, to recommend the continuation of the British Pictorial Service Bureau, which had conducted British propaganda in the United States during the war. Taft felt that its abolition would be unwise as the bureau helped in ‘welding America and England together.’ Taft also mentioned the Irish question, writing, ‘We are going to have an ebullition of Irish Sinn Fein sentiment, and it is well to neutralise these extremists who would stir up difficulty between the two countries by such quiet and attractive exhibitions as that of the Bureau of which I write.’<sup>671</sup> In February of 1919, Taft attacked a resolution before Congress to urge President Wilson to take steps to secure a government in Ireland independent of the government of Great Britain. Taft described the issue as ‘a British domestic question’ and one that ‘cannot properly be made otherwise by the intervention of the United States.’ The reason Taft gave was that hopes of world peace would ‘have to be abandoned if the great powers were to look into and discuss the internal affairs of one another.’ Here, Taft was noting the danger posed to the League of Nations project, if empire became too prominent an issue. Taft also listed further examples – in addition to Ireland – of “internal affairs,” that included Japanese and French interests as well as the Philippines.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> WHT to Arthur Balfour, December 10, 1918, WHTP 8:553.

<sup>672</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 16, 1919. The same text is available in citation from the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, Feb. 13, 1919, in: Burton, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 210-212.

Though its relevance to the Philippines might appear somewhat minor, the following section of Taft's article, in reference to Ireland and Great Britain, is almost verbatim of what he had stated time and again in relation to the Philippines and the United States: 'If she could have been made a dominion like Canada, with hardly more than nominal union to Great Britain except in international matters, Ireland would certainly have been satisfied before Sinn Feinism was fanned into flame by the delay in Home Rule.'<sup>673</sup> Taft's suggestion was that perhaps Britain had offered to compromise too late, with the inference being that the situation in the Philippines, despite the Democrats' disruptively provocative promises of independence, could perhaps still be salvaged. In response, the *Boston Daily Globe* reported that President Wilson had been swift to deny that the Irish question was a "domestic issue" for Britain and the newspaper questioned how Taft would reconcile his difference with the president on this issue, considering his overall support for Wilson's post-war policies.<sup>674</sup> Rev. G. S. Treacy, a Boston College philosophy professor, stated that if the Irish question was a domestic one, then 'those of Poland and the other countries, which are looking for their independence must be domestic.'<sup>675</sup> Taft's words certainly met with criticism, though from Democrats, Irish-Americans and Catholics, such criticism was hardly unexpected.<sup>676</sup> Nevertheless it was clear that it was difficult for Taft to square his commitment to Wilson's post-war worldview and its promises of

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> *Boston Daily Globe*, March 2, 1919.

<sup>675</sup> *Boston Daily Globe*, March 18, 1919. Taft wrote two articles on the matter of former German possessions, published in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* during this period William H. Taft, "The League of Nations and the German Colonies I," Dec. 16, 1918, and, "The League of Nations and the German Colonies II," Feb. 3, 1919, both cited in: Burton, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 152-153; 205-208. Taft felt that the German colonies should not be taken over by victorious colonial powers, but instead 'an agency of the league of nations charged with the duty of educating the natives, leading them on in the paths of civilization and extending self-government to them as rapidly as their fitness will permit.' Showing that although he felt the Philippines should remain within the U.S. sphere, he rejected any further imperial expansion.

<sup>676</sup> It is worth noting, however, that many in the U.S. Catholic hierarchy supported retention of the Philippines, while campaigning for Irish independence.

self-determination with his own desire both to secure British membership of the League and to retain the Philippines. When speaking about the League of Nations in 1919, Taft said that ‘it would be as foreign to the subject at issue to include freedom for the Philippines as to force the issue of Ireland upon an ally.’<sup>677</sup>

The comparison between self-determination for Ireland and the Philippines was not the preserve of Taft’s imagination, however, but was also evident in the press bulletins of the Philippine Commission of Independence – an organisation campaigning on behalf of Philippine independence – during 1919 and 1920. ‘The United States does not want another Ireland in the Philippines,’ stated one commentator on October 22, 1919, while another suggested that ‘Filipinos looking for independence should apply to the House of Lords... as many looking for independence for their lands in Europe are making their appeal to the United States Congress.’<sup>678</sup> In March 1920 an editorial pointed out that: ‘For the second time in a period of nine months the United States Senate ... went on record as being in sympathy “with the aspirations of the Irish people for a government of their own choice”.’ The editorial went on to argue that a more ‘impressive argument’ on this point could be made thus: ‘[Philippine] independence would be likely to be accepted by Great Britain as even stronger proof of America’s belief in self-determination than the passage of Irish resolutions, because Great Britain’s councilors [*sic*] of state could not then successfully make the point the American Congress is asking Great Britain to do something that the United States itself has been asked to do and has not done.’<sup>679</sup>

As was the case when it came to conciliation with Japan in 1905 and 1907, the Philippines were not Taft’s only concern in his approach to foreign affairs. Taft was an Anglophile and was well aware of the fact that in the post-war period it was

<sup>677</sup> *New York Times*, June 11, 1919.

<sup>678</sup> *Philippine Commission of Independence - Press Bulletin*, October 22, 1919, Vol. 1, No. 11.

<sup>679</sup> *Press Bulletin*, March 1920, Vol. 2, No. 3.

important to maintain strong relations with Britain, America's wartime ally. As a keen advocate of the League of Nations, Taft knew that any suggestion that joining the League would jeopardise Britain's imperial power would certainly count against the potential success of such an organisation. However, there is compelling evidence that the Philippine issue was certainly among Taft's considerations when approaching the Irish issue. If the U.S. were to press for increased Irish self-determination, then the immediate-independence advocates in the Philippines and anti-imperialist U.S. politicians, who already controlled the government in their respective countries, would have had even more reason to call for hastening the United States' exit from the Philippines. Although the Jones Act of 1916 had secured a promise of future independence and the Democrats would remain in power until 1921, Taft did not draw back in his public endorsement of retention, despite the fact it problematised his general support for the vision he more widely shared with Wilson of a new post-war world order.

### *Conclusions*

With the election of Warren G. Harding in 1920, a Republican and a former chair of the Senate Committee on the Philippines, came a reprieve for the retention campaign. Historian Gerald E. Wheeler writes that Harding's 'known antipathy toward independence' was a matter of record from his days in the Senate, and that this change in the White House was 'generally accepted' as making the realisation of Philippine independence very unlikely. Taft and his supporters had hoped in vain for a Republican victory in 1916 to help stem the tide of increased Filipinization and movement towards independence. With Harding's sweeping victory they could now be certain that the new administration would be more sympathetic to their views than



Wilson and Harrison had been. Indeed, as Wheeler states, Harding looked to prominent retentionists for counsel on Philippine matters, and particularly the last Republican governor-general W. Cameron Forbes.<sup>680</sup> Taft wrote optimistically to Forbes on November 21, 1921: 'I suppose the policy in respect to the Islands will not be determined upon until Mr. Harding has selected his Secretary of War, but I am delighted to know... you are willing to give the benefit of your experience to setting things to going in the right direction out there, after the disastrous treatment of the situation by Wilson, Harrison, et al.'<sup>681</sup> Forbes was soon appointed, along with Leonard Wood, the former Governor of Cuba – who had spent much time in the southern provinces of the Philippines – to head a commission set up by Harding to investigate the Philippine problem.

In March of 1921 Taft spoke on the issue of the Philippine relationship, just as the Harding administration took office, in a 'survey of the Philippine situation.' The *Press Bulletin*, a distinctly pro-independence publication, characterised the message of his statement as wanting to turn 'the wheels of Philippine progress backward.' Taft stated that 'There are many...who have thought the case as of a badly set broken bone, the only remedy for which is to break the bone again and reset it. This would involve the taking back of power, of abolishing the Senate, of putting Americans in charge of departments and bureaus again. Such a course might create disturbance and require strong measures to carry it through the American people are not prepared to make the sacrifice.' The editor lamented Taft's comments, remarking, 'We regret it because it may have a more or less far reaching effect on public sentiment in the islands. Because of Mr. Taft's prominence in American-Philippine affairs, and because of an impression in the islands that Mr. Taft is very close to President

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<sup>680</sup> Wheeler, "Republican Philippine Policy," 377-378.

<sup>681</sup> WHT to Forbes, Nov 21, 1920, WCFP, Select File (T), 290-318, 314.

Harding, some may be led to think that the United States is actually considering some such a policy as Mr. Taft suggests.’ Here, a publication unsympathetic to Taft and his imperial vision was suggesting that he was still influential when it came to Philippine policy. The editor conceded, however, that Taft had probably been ‘imposed upon by those who stand to profit from continued American occupation... Mr. Taft has not been in the islands for fourteen years, and his lack of knowledge of the Philippines of today could easily have been taken advantage of. And it evidently has been.’ In this instance the editor aimed to undermine Taft’s credibility as a Philippine expert, portraying him as out of touch and was markedly different to how Taft regarded himself and his reputation.<sup>682</sup>

However, just as the political spectrum in the United States had realigned to favour the retentionists, their leader was taken out of private life once again. In July 1921 William H. Taft became the new Chief Justice of the United States, a realisation of a long-held ambition. Taft, who had turned down the offer of an associate justiceship twice during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt claiming that his commitment to the Filipinos was more pressing, now embraced his seat at the head of the judicial table. His acceptance of this new position signalled the end of his tenure as head of the Philippine retention campaign.

The period 1913-1921 had seen Taft use what influence he had, although unsuccessfully, to hold back the tide of increased Filipinization and prevent a promise of Philippine independence. Nevertheless, with the sweeping Republican victory in 1920, and the return of retentionists such as Forbes to positions of influence, the expectation was that the next four years would herald a stop to Democratic moves, and most likely, a gradual reversal of policy wherever possible. Having finally gained

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<sup>682</sup> *Press Bulletin*, March 1921, Vol. 3, No. 3.

the position he had so openly aspired to for decades at the age of sixty-four, Taft relished the opportunity to return to his judicial roots and step off of the political stage that had not treated him so well over the past two decades. Taft also felt that the federal judicial system ‘badly needed reorganization and leadership’ and this for him would be the challenge for the rest of his days.<sup>683</sup> For a man who considered himself a far from perfect president, the Supreme Court offered him a chance to end his career on a high note by making a real impact in the field in which most felt at home.

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<sup>683</sup> Burton, *Taft, Holmes and the 1920s Court*, 113.

## Conclusion

The preceding chapters of this thesis analyse the nature and evolution of William H. Taft's distinctive imperial vision. In so doing, they explore Taft's influence over the Philippine policy of the United States and the extent to which he was successful in promoting and implementing his imperial vision. This imperial vision, discussed in detail throughout this thesis, was a somewhat narrow and parochial one, focusing almost exclusively on the future of the U.S.-Philippine relationship. In some respects this factor helps to explain the way in which Taft's imperial vision began to diverge from the wider geo-political outlooks of figures such as Theodore Roosevelt. Taft did not seek to further expand U.S. possessions overseas but he felt that what the U.S. already had should be developed to form a successful, lasting and mutually beneficial relationship. The path Taft sought to lead the United States along in foreign relations, evidenced by his Philippine policy between 1900 and 1921, was a path ultimately not taken by the U.S. in the twentieth century when they intervened in the affairs of other countries. However, though Taft's imperial vision never achieved its ultimate ends, a path not taken can certainly be informative in contextualising and understanding the actual progress of U.S. foreign relations in the years that followed.

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The first three chapters of this thesis evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Taft's "policy of attraction," viewing it as a multi-pronged strategy aimed at achieving his imperial vision. Taft's policy of attraction sought to influence U.S. strategy in the Philippines in three, key spheres: social, economic and political. In the social sphere Taft stressed widespread education and negotiated the friar lands purchase, giving a sense that his aims were indeed those of a benevolent imperialist.

Taft “attracted” Filipinos with displays of respect and his apparent openness to Filipino voices in an attempt to win over popular opinion to the idea of a continued American presence. However, Taft’s assumptions and tactics were often based on broad racial assumptions about the Filipino people. He believed, for example, that Filipinos were impressed by spectacle and that they were best suited only to vocational education, informed by ideas such as Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee model for African Americans in the United States. In the economic sphere, Taft sought to increase American trade with and investment in the Philippines to tie the countries closer together financially. In this instance Taft’s efforts were far from uniformly successful. Perhaps the parochial nature of Taft’s imperial vision was the cause of some of these setbacks, as he did not always seem to take into account the wider implications of policies such as free trade with and Chinese immigration to the Philippines. In these instances Taft fell far short of his goals for increasing American investment in the islands to the levels he desired.

In the political sphere, Taft aimed to create a successful and more democratic form of government in the islands, but simultaneously wished to enshrine the idea of a continued imperial connection within these systems. He oversaw substantial democratisation during the Taft Era, ensured Filipino participation in all levels of government and crowned these achievements when he opened the representative Philippine Assembly in 1907. Taft even went further than his fellow commissioners to argue for Filipino participation on the islands’ ruling commission. However, Taft felt sincerely that the Filipino people were not ready for independence, that independence need not be the ultimate outcome of the imperial venture and that discussion of the subject would serve only to delay the end of guerrilla warfare in the islands and reduce the benefits of American rule. To these ends Taft was willing to go against the

general tenets of the policy of attraction. His favouritism towards and patronage of the pro-U.S. Federal Party in the islands and willingness to re-establish the islands' existing elites undermined the nascent democratisation process. The Federal Party itself proved only a short-lived success that began to unravel soon after he left. Taft also oversaw the passage of a sedition act that outlawed advocacy of independence and ensured that the U.S. would continue to hold the balance of political power by maintaining U.S. veto-wielding powers. In addition, Taft, at least partially, accepted U.S. military brutality as an unfortunate by-product of the guerrilla tactics of the Filipino insurgency.

As secretary of war, from 1904 to 1908, Taft became the "Great Postponer," visiting the Philippines twice, and making clear on both occasions that his position on independence had not changed. Japan became a key player in U.S. foreign relations during this period and, with his somewhat intractable views on Philippine retention, Taft understated the dangers to U.S. strategic security that the islands now seemed to pose. It was at this point, when no longer in charge of the day-to-day running of the islands and during a period of tense relations with Japan and China, that Taft's policy started to run counter to his great patron and friend Theodore Roosevelt.

The year 1907 proved a turning point in the relationship between Taft and Roosevelt regarding their relative approaches to American imperialism. Roosevelt suggested making a promise of independence to the Filipino people, seeing retention both as increasingly unpopular politically and as a strategic problem for the future. Taft saw the military/strategic weaknesses as relatively minor and had clearer long-term aims for the Philippines that he stuck to rigidly, often in spite of the course of events. In both matters, Roosevelt was more in tune with political and strategic realities and practicalities than Taft. The U.S public was beginning to turn against the

Philippine experiment by 1907 and enthusiasm had been waning for some time. Only in the first couple of years after the Spanish-American War was there significant public opinion in favour of annexing and retaining the former Spanish territories. Equally, as events of subsequent decades would show, Japan was more of a threat to U.S. security than Taft had anticipated, and the Philippines were indeed a weak strategic link.

Throughout his career, Roosevelt rose steadily to power on his own steam; he jumped at the chance of heroism in the Spanish-American War, not simply through his love of manly virtues, but with an understanding that few presidents had been elected without a military service record. Taft was quite the opposite. He never really *actively* sought a political position and was appointed to every position in his career other than the presidency. Taft only showed real earnestness in his love of the law and always regarded the Supreme Court as an ultimate career goal. Unlike the more bellicose Roosevelt, Taft was uninterested in the Spanish-American War and was equally against joining the First World War. Taft was motivated more by a view of a well-ordered world of legal treaties and agreements, regulated by multilateral organisations and discourse. He had grand views for a post-war world in 1918-1919, much like his successor to the presidency Woodrow Wilson. However, also like Wilson, Taft failed to convince enough others of his vision's benefits, and the various reciprocity and arbitration attempts during his presidency came to nothing.

During his time in the Philippines, Taft developed an imperial vision that required huge investment in both time and money on the part of the United States, whereas Roosevelt's loyalty to such schemes wavered when tested by wider strategic considerations. Roosevelt was certainly in favour of a Large Policy, but not at the expense of U.S. strategic security; overseas expansion was supposed to have benefits

for the United States and if this was no longer the case then withdrawal had to be a serious consideration. However, as president, Taft was able to continue with his Philippine policy unhindered by Roosevelt's doubts, and when victory in the election of 1912 looked doubtful, he did not surrender to the seeming inevitability of an end to the "Taft Era."

After the presidency Taft doggedly defended his aims to continue the imperial connection. Indeed, one might argue that Taft's stubbornness to retain the Philippines was due to an overriding concern with protecting his legacy and, of course, there is ample evidence that he was concerned that his "good work" would be undone. As noted on numerous occasions, Taft's supporters presented his role in the Philippines as one of his finest achievements, especially when he ran for the presidency in 1908. After the electoral disaster of 1912 his earlier Philippine successes seemed to contrast sharply with his lacklustre presidency. Legacy was certainly a concern for Taft and he saw the ultimate fruition of his imperial vision as of paramount importance. However, Taft was sincere in his beliefs that a continued connection and future dominion relationship would be the right course for both the United States and the Philippines. His prior achievements were very important to him but they were not his exclusive concern.

In June 1921 Taft was nominated as Chief Justice of the United States, and the Senate confirmed him with only four dissenting votes. Just a few months before his long-awaited return to the bench, President Harding had sent a new commission to investigate conditions in the Philippines, the same job that had taken Taft away from the federal courts more than two decades earlier. The joint leadership of Harding's commission fell to the former governor-general under President Taft, William Cameron Forbes, and the man who would go on to become the new Governor-



General, Major General Leonard Wood, who had been a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1920.

The Forbes-Wood Commission's findings – unsurprisingly, given their affiliation to the Republican Party – reiterated what Taft had been saying ever since he left the Oval Office: that under the Republicans things had progressed well and under the Democrats things had gone markedly off course, with the years after 1916 being the 'darkest years in Philippine history.' Historian Jack McCallum argues that the first step the Republicans felt they had to take now that they were back in control of Philippine policy was to re-establish 'colonial control' and 'quash all the loose talk of independence.'<sup>684</sup> In the years following this turn around in policy, as historian Paul Kramer summarises, Republican presidents of the 1920s 'sought to halt or reverse the Filipinization process that had intensified under the Democrats, in an effort to shore up U.S. rule in the islands.'<sup>685</sup> This is just what Taft had been saying would happen throughout his years in the political wilderness: when the Republicans returned to office, they would undo as many of the changes made under the Democratic administration of Governor-General Harrison as possible. In essence, although Taft had taken up a new focus with his long-held goal of becoming Chief Justice, the continuation of his policies was at the same time becoming firmly established with Harding's endorsement and reliance on retentionists such as Forbes and Wood.

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On numerous occasions Taft stated that he saw the imperial experiment as a long-term project that could, if properly undertaken, see the Philippines remain as a

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<sup>684</sup> Jack McCallum, *Leonard Wood*, 289.

<sup>685</sup> Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 388.

U.S. Dominion (like the relationship between Britain and Canada) but only after around a century of tutelage and progress towards responsible self-government. Taft's distinct imperial vision offered a very different view of U.S. intervention, regime change and future relations than was ultimately realised throughout the course of the twentieth century and beyond.

Though the rhetoric of formal imperialism grew increasingly unpopular during the twentieth century, especially following the disintegration of the European empires after the Second World War, the blueprint for U.S. policy that Taft failed to establish provides a useful counterpoint to the path that was ultimately taken. Taft regarded the active pursuit of territorial aggrandisement as ill-advised and favoured, throughout his days, the use of international arbitration and peace-keeping processes. As frequently stated, Taft did not seek to acquire new territories for the United States and he believed that the U.S. had much to do perfecting its own system before it should feel the need to change those of other nations. However, Taft regarded the Philippine experiment as a *fait accompli* once the islands had been annexed, becoming both a burden to the United States and a chance to illustrate how the United States could conduct imperialism differently and more successfully than its European predecessors.

Taft tried to make imperialism something more saleable to a distant nation that had long been a colony and, indeed, his own nation where many regarded themselves as born out of a rejection of empire. Taft believed that success in U.S. intervention in the Philippines could only be accomplished through a long-term commitment of many

decades of investment, education and political tutelage to create a nation that would rise to call the name of the United States ‘blessed.’<sup>686</sup>

During the twentieth century the United States set a very different pattern of intervention, regime change and then, after a forestalled period of “nation building,” what Taft would have termed, ‘scuttle.’<sup>687</sup> For Taft, this sort of policy of scuttle would prove disastrous and the twentieth century might well have proved that Taft was much more far-sighted in this area than he was ever credited with. Even so conservative a historian as Niall Ferguson argues that few outside the United States today ‘doubt the existence of an American empire.’ Ferguson goes on to claim that the continued rejection within the United States that their nation is an imperial nation does actually matter and points to two major mistakes, as he sees it, of an ‘empire in denial’: ‘The first may be to allocate insufficient resources to the non-military aspects of the project. The second, and the more serious, is to attempt economic and political transformation in an unrealistically short time frame... the United States would seem to be making the second of these in both Iraq and Afghanistan.’<sup>688</sup>

In early 2008, while running for the nomination as the Republican Party candidate for the presidential election of that year, Senator John McCain suggested that the United States might have to stay in Iraq for one hundred years or more to achieve success. In response Democratic opponents derided McCain for suggesting a policy that would prove too costly in dollars and lives, not to mention the negative effects on the U.S. public that a projected century-long war might create.<sup>689</sup> However, what the Vietnam War veteran senator did recognise as the crux of the issue was

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<sup>686</sup> Taft, Testimony of William H. Taft before the Senate Philippine Committee, 1902, in: Graff, ed., *American Imperialism*, 37, and “Hearings before the Committee on the Philippines, United States Senate [63:3] on H.R. 18459,” January 2, 1915, Part 5, 386.

<sup>687</sup> Taft, “Fourth Annual Message,” December 3, 1912.

<sup>688</sup> Ferguson, *Colossus*, 294.

<sup>689</sup> Brian Montopoli, “John McCain’s 100 Years in Iraq,” *CBS News Blogs*, April 1, 2008.

similar to Ferguson's suggestion, that for real success in an intervention, long-term commitment was the key. A century before McCain's failed bid for the White House, the 1908 Republican nominee, William Howard Taft, was suggesting a very similar solution in his own imperial vision.

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 BL: British Library, London, UK.  
 HH: Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., USA.  
 HW: Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., USA.  
 LC: Library of Congress, Washington, DC, USA.  
 LCM: Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, DC, USA.  
 MHS: Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, USA.  
 NA: National Archives, Washington, DC, USA.  
 RSC: Roosevelt Study Center, Middelburg, Netherlands.

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