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**“WHITE MAN’S BURDEN?”
THE PARTY POLITICS OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM IN THE
PHILIPPINES
1900-1920**

by

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B.A. New College of the University of South Florida, 2001

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an interpretive analysis of the political background of the American annexation and administration of the Philippine Islands between 1900 and 1920. It seeks to analyze the political value of supporting and opposing imperialism to American political parties and elites. Seeking to capitalize on the American victory over Spain in 1898, the Republican Party embraced the annexation of the Philippines as a way to promote an idea of rising American international power. Subsequently, their tenure in the Philippines can be analyzed as bringing industrialization to the Philippines for political gain, casting themselves in a politically popular role of nation builders and bringers of democracy. In opposing the Republicans, Democrats became anti-imperialists by default. After overcoming the initial unpopularity of that ideology, they were able to redefine it in such a way as to co-opt the original Republican successes in the Philippines. As such, the Democratic tenure in the Philippines emphasizes political gamesmanship and patronage that allowed them to effectively “steal” the credit for the democratization of the Philippines for partisan gains against the Republicans.

This work is dedicated to

Professors
Justus Doenecke,
Laszlo Deme,
& Lee Daniel Snyder

History Department,
New College of the University of South Florida 1997-2001

“I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well.”
--Alexander III of Macedonia

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: A MANDATE FOR EMPIRE	11
CHAPTER 3: THE REPUBLICAN REGIME.....	35
CHAPTER 4: THE DEMOCRATIC ERA	59
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	87
REFERENCES	93
Primary Sources.....	93
Secondary Sources	94

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“Take up the White Man's burden--
Send forth the best ye breed--
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.”*

*--Rudyard Kipling
“The White Man's Burden, 1899.”¹*

These lines by the poet Rudyard Kipling stood as both welcome and warning to the United States of America when it entered the “club” of world empires, the membership to which had been garnered by the American victory over Spain in the war of 1898 and most strongly signified by the American possession of the Philippine Islands.

With American annexation of Cuba denied by the Teller Amendment forwarded by anti-imperialist senators, the Philippines became the largest of the spoils of the war with Spain, an irony since American presence in the islands was the result of little more than a happy military accident: the virtually preemptive strike of the lionized Commodore George Dewey and his squadron of ships on the Spanish at Manila Bay.

Popular humor commented that at the time no one in the United States knew if the Philippines were islands or canned goods; that President William McKinley had to look them up on an atlas to find just where and what archipelago his navy was conquering on the far side of the world. Certainly the Philippine Islands were not in the forefront of American consciousness in the way that Cuba was. And unlike Cuba or even Hawaii, the Philippines were not tied to the

¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man's Bruden” in *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. T.S. Elliot, (Faber and Faber Limited, 1941; reprint, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, 1962), 144-145.

United States economically or politically in any great regard before 1898, thus making the decision to keep the islands as a colonial possession (distinct in definition because it had no possible future being made a state, nor were American citizenship or full constitutional rights extended to the Filipinos) made them the major symbol of the new trend of American imperialism.

The Philippines essentially were America's first step into a modern international state, what the historian Robert Beisner called "the old diplomatic paradigm [giving] way to a new."² The annexation was a symbolic casting off of the United States' isolated past and social malaise infected Gilded Age present, along with the perceived second-class power status among the great empires of the world. It was presented as the embrace of a new future, one where America was not only a respected international power, but also one who controlled the purse strings to the wealth of the Asian trade and was loved as a bringing of the gifts of American democracy to an oppressed nation of people so in awe, they would emulate American society and shine the reflected glory of the United States throughout Asia. Therefore it has been seen as one of the most curious and influential events in the history of this nation's foreign policy.

The American adventure in the Philippines has been attributed to many things. Some historians, like H.W. Brands view the American takeover in terms of international power. In his book *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines*, Brands notes that the Philippines was the birthplace of American twentieth century foreign policy. From the motivations born of hunger for international trade, respect from other empires, and global power, Brands synthesizes the major arguments made by historians regarding the Philippines: namely that its annexation

² Robert Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New: 1865-1900 2d ed.* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1896), 72.

was an exercise in nascent American international power politics, the opening move in the global chess game that the United States would play in the coming decades of the twentieth century.

The other popular view of the Philippine annexation can be seen in the work of the journalist Stanley Karnow: *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*. Karnow views the whole episode as America imprinting itself technologically, politically, and above all culturally, on the Philippines. Partially it was out of the benevolent desire to improve the lives of the Filipinos who had fallen by the fortunes of war into American hands. But there were also another, more self-centered, wish to make little "Americas" across the globe as testament to the superiority of the American way of life.

Brands and Karnow essentially show that the major syntheses of the histories of the Philippines under American rule have generally examined the era between 1900 and 1920--the most pivotal years with the most influential government regimes--in terms of international capitalism, geopolitical gamesmanship, cultural hegemony, and the appropriation of identity. While all of these are important and key factors to defining the first two decades of the American era, an important factor must also be examined: namely the underlying reason why the United States colonized the Philippines to begin with, why the various policies of governor-generals William Howard Taft, W. Cameron Forbes, and Francis Burton Harrison were designed and executed in manner they were. The answer to this lies simply in the realm of American party politics.

From the start, American party politics was the main reason behind the decision to remain in, and rule over, the Philippines. In *The Philippine Reader: A History of Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance* by Daniel B. Schrimmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom, Theodore Green's *American Imperialism in 1898*, and *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, the

collected speeches by leading Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Republican Senatorial hopeful and imperialist booster Albert Beveridge, vice presidential candidate and arch imperialist Theodore Roosevelt, and the incumbent President William McKinley show a clear Republican strategy to link the victory over Spain, economic prosperity based on expansion, and the rise of American international prestige and power to the annexation of the Philippines.

Looking to retain their control of the presidency and congress in the 1900 elections, the Republican Party tied the annexation issue to the popular and victorious war with Spain, along with concepts of heroic destiny and the winning of international acclaim and influence. Thus, the retention of the Philippines became a political symbol of victory over an Old World monarchy, the rise of American power to a status equal with other world empires, respect from all other nations, the spread of American ideologies, and even the concept of creating a new paradigm of benevolent colonization superior to that seen from the European empires.

If the Republicans took on the role of heralds of empire, the Democrats became by default the party of anti-imperialism. This was less than an ideological choice and more a default fact: the Democrats had lost the election of 1896 and their challenge to the Republicans was seriously hampered by the surge in popularity for McKinley and his party in the victorious aftermath of the war with Spain. If they wished to have any hope of defeating McKinley and the Republicans, Democrats had to oppose what was becoming a cornerstone issue of the current regime.

This was not to say there wasn't a real, ideological opposition to the United States; in the Schirmer and Shalom collection, Robert Beisner's *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists 1898-1900*, and Eric Love's *Race Over Empire*, a whole litany of American opposition to the embrace of empire is delineated. Organizations such as *The American Anti-Imperialist League*

counted in its number such elites as psychologist and philosopher William James, Civil War veteran, author, and social commentator Carl Schurz, industrialist tycoon Andrew Carnegie, labor leader Samuel Gompers, and Mugwump elite Charles Adams. Indeed, if the Republicans thought that the glamour of an American empire would be enough to win votes, then the wide spectrum of American society represented by the League's membership, as well as their arguments opposing empire on ideological, economic, and racial terms, seemed to bode well for Democratic chances to court votes, especially from traditionally Republican strongholds such as urban centers.

The eventual failure of the Democrats to win the day on the issue of anti-imperialism is crystallized in what was ironically the leading figure of not only Democratic anti-imperialism, but of the party itself: the iconic William Jennings Bryan. In the collection *Bryan On Imperialism*, Bryan's credentials on anti-imperialism show a clear attempt to sum up all of the outstanding critiques of McKinley and the imperialist lobby, showing a clear desire to galvanize both his party and non-Democrat opponents of empire into a coalition strong enough to beat McKinley.

Nevertheless, Beisner's *Twelve Against Empire* and Michael Kazin's *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* show that Bryan's inconsistent politics, such as his confusing support for the treaty that gave the United States control of Philippines and then his condemning the annexation, as well as the disdain with which Northern elites such as Charles Francis Adams held him, hampered Bryan's attempts to mobilize support.

Furthermore, Republicans used the Philippines to tap into widespread beliefs about the wealth of Asia and the China trade, heralding the opening of new markets for American goods. The Philippines was cast as the crucible of a new American future and, the reality of the situation

firmly aside, this combination of symbolism and speculation provided a potent political platform. Indeed, the failure of William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic Party, and the American Anti-Imperialist movement as a whole to resonate with the electorate comes almost solely from their inability to present their argument in a way to be politically palatable.

Bryan, the Democrats, and the Anti-imperialist League had many valid points, not the least of which was the questionable constitutionality of the annexation. However, the Republicans merged imperialism with a messianic-style divine mandate, a progressive nation-building sense of *noblesse oblige*, the glamour of international power, and the capitalist desires of economic expansion, a heady concoction of images, symbols and prophecies that Americans could not help but be won over by. And at the heart of this political stratagem were the Philippines.

Once the annexation went through, politics still played a key role. The Republican administrations of federal jurist William Howard Taft and businessman adventurer W. Cameron Forbes, set the tone for the Republican era of Philippine rule, focusing almost exclusively on building up Philippine colonial government, infrastructure and industry. In speeches and testimony given by Taft in *The Collected Works of William Howard Taft*, edited by David H. Burton, and *American Imperialism and the Philippine Insurrection: Testimony taken from hearings on affairs in the Philippine Islands before the Senate Committee on the Philippines—1902*, edited by Henry Graf, the reason for the Republican strategy becomes clear: the Republicans goal was establishing American measures of progress that were easily recognizable by American voters and politicians and could be used by the Republican party to show off the successes of their policy of empire.

Indeed, as Forbes reveals in his key work, *The Philippine Islands*, the more the Republicans made the Philippines look and work like the United States, with all the trappings of modernity, the more American people (especially American politicians) would associate it with progress, vindicating the imperialist lobby. It would counteract claims of oppression, allow Republicans to claim the mantle of being a generous philanthropic party “uplifting” the Filipino people, and show the tangible success of American penetration of the Asian world. If the Philippine Islands were made, as Stanley Karnow says, “in America’s image”, then it was because that image was what American voters and Washington politicians wanted to see as success and throw their support behind.

Having lost the imperialist debate to the Republicans for the first three elections of the century, the Democratic Party nevertheless clung to its anti-imperialist stance, for the most part because it had no other options if they wanted to oppose the Republicans. The effect of this hampered the ability of the Democrats to win votes on the issue as anti-imperialism was unpopular, a political liability throughout the first decade of twentieth century American politics. William Jennings Bryan all but crucified himself on the cross of empire in more than one election and the more politically astute Woodrow Wilson chose not to walk down the same martyr’s path for most of the first decade of the century.

The evolution of Wilson’s beliefs shows a perfect understanding of the politics of empire. In *The Wilson Papers*, edited by historian Arthur Link, Wilson is shown to have at first refused to be associated with anti-imperialism and even supported the nation building in the Philippines, echoing much of the sentiments of imperialist Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. Anti-imperialism seemed weak, and cast its adherents as shrewish extremists,

afraid to embrace the challenges and rewards of the strenuous life of being a world power.

Wilson kept them politely, but firmly, at arms length from his political affiliations.

Yet as Filipino leaders began to demand more say over affairs in the islands and imperialism became more unpopular, or more specifically as the Republican administrations became more unpopular and Wilson began preparing for a presidential candidacy, he changed his stance. As *The Wilson Papers* and W. Cameron Forbes's *The Philippine Islands* show, Democrat attacks on the Republicans on their failure to live up to their claim of bringing democracy to the islands allowed Wilson the presidential candidate to "spin" anti-imperialism as the fulfillment of earlier American promises of freedom, linking it to the larger Democratic party platform attacking government corruption, centralization, and high handed intrusion that seemed inherent among the Republican administrations of Taft and Roosevelt.

Once elected president, Wilson's actions were also motivated to make the Democrats profit politically. Rather than repudiate Republican initiatives on the islands, he instead mollified the Filipinos by appointing the patrician politician Francis Burton Harrison, a congressman schooled in the ways of Tammy Hall whose differences with Forbes were more political than policy oriented. Harrison's account of his tenure, *The Cornerstone of Philippine Independence: A Narrative of Seven Years* show how the Democrat regime set out and was able to co-opt Filipino elites with both personal charm and political patronage. While believing that this policy was keeping with the overall Democratic goal of "Filipinization," a necessary step to granting full independence to the Philippines, it nevertheless shows how the Democrats were using partisan methods to win support, both in the Philippines and the United States.

Indeed the Democratic regime was responsible for the most partisan act related to the Philippines: the Jones Act, a pledge of Philippine independence that contained little in the way of

concrete planning for the granting of that independence and instead was a political showpiece designed more to symbolize, to Filipinos and Americans, that it was the Democrats who were committed to the cause of democratic nation building in the islands. Indeed, the Republican initiated public works were not only kept, but Democrats took credit for the economic well being of the islands that resulted from those works, indeed using the economic boom of the war years to downplay any criticisms of Filipinization and the Jones Act. Essentially, Democratic Philippine policy was less about true anti-imperialism than it was about stealing the Republicans' political capital.

Students of history and political science know that policy is dictated by politics and the history of American rule in the Philippines is no different. While paradigms of capitalist drives for market exploitation, Machiavellian and Mahanian strategic maneuvering, or cultural impetuses born of racial beliefs or changing national identities all played their role in the Philippines, at the core of the matter was that Republicans and Democrats wanted to use the islands, and everything they symbolized, as fodder for their political ambitions. Indeed, one can argue that "imperialism" as an American ideology was short lived: it reached a vogue under William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt in the first decade of the twentieth century, lost much of its bloom under the embattled William Howard Taft, and under Woodrow Wilson was branded as his higher realism or morality of internationalism before falling out of favor by the 1920s.

The power of imperialism on American policy then was in its role as a political fashion, on its ability to enchant voters with various icons of imperialism and Americanization were, in true political booster fashion, more about the idea of empire (for good or ill). Asian markets, democratized and Americanized peoples, American internationalism, all the things the

Philippines came to symbolize all served a higher purpose for American policy makers: winning votes for their political party by forwarding the political fashions of imperialism and anti-imperialism.

CHAPTER 2: A MANDATE FOR EMPIRE

*“Take up the White Man's burden--
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another's profit,
And work another's gain.”*

*--Rudyard Kipling,
“The White Man's Burden, 1899.”¹*

In the aftermath of the American navy's surprise victory over Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, political cartoonist Finely Peter Dunne's characters “Mr. Dooley and Hennessy” engaged in the following exchange.

I know what I would do if I were Mack, [McKinley]” said Hennessy. “I'd hist a flag over the Philippeens, an' I'd take in th' lot iv them.” Dooley asked Hennessy: “If yer son Packy was to ask ye where th' Philippeens is cud ye give him anny good idea whether they was in Rooshia or just west iv th' tracks!” “Mebbe, I cudden't,” Hennessy replied. “But I'm for takin' thim anyhow. [Sic]²

As Dunn's satire shows, there is truth in jest: namely that while Americans knew little about the Philippines at the time the islands came into U.S. possession, the desire to retain the islands under American rule was immediately strong enough that the Republican party made the issue of retaining the islands a key plank in the party's campaign platform. Republican support of the Philippine annexation, i.e. “Republican Imperialism,” would become the crux issue of the election of 1900 and a defining characteristic of their party for three presidential administrations, just as the Democratic Party's opposition to the Philippine annexation would mark their party for over two decades.

¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man's Bruden” in *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. T.S. Elliot, (Faber and Faber Limited, 1941; reprint, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, 1962), 144-145.

² Eric T. Love, *Race over Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 169.

Given the long lasting effects of such political ideology, and its importance in the first presidential elections at the start of the twentieth century, it bears some analysis as to why the parties of such rational men as William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan would hold up an obscure Asian archipelago that had not even been in the periphery, let alone the core, of the issues surrounding the Spanish-American War, as a major issue of their campaigns and political ideologies. In essence, the Philippines became a polarizing symbol of the varying views of the future of American power and identity not for any material or intrinsic value so much as for partisan political ideologies.

One of the first rationales for keeping the Philippines were the various arguments of the importance--real and imagined--of the Philippines to American economics. Almost from the moment the guns of Dewey's squadron stopped firing, imperialist arguments were being formed around the speculated value of the islands. The irony, of course, was that the Philippines had never factored into American interests prior to Dewey's attack; Cuba had been the main focus of attention and debate and popular humor jested that most people, including President William McKinley, had to find the islands on atlases and maps to even know that they were a real place.

Nevertheless, the new thought of an American controlled Philippines immediately opened the possibility of greater American entry into the fabled Asian economic markets and additionally reopened the door for the annexation of Hawaii and renewed the desire for the completion of the canal through Panama. Indeed, "not only did the news dissipate all fears of a long and costly war and send stock prices rapidly upward, it seemed to place into American

hands the key to the trade of the orient,” a concept that by 1898 had become something of an American obsession.³

In the minds of many Americans in the mid-1890s, Asia began to emerge as the birthplace of the next international economic boom, a belief that was spurred on by the dynamic explosion of trade with China and Japan. By the mid 1890s, American trade with China and Japan had more than tripled in a three year span, going from marginal positions of value to levels of such importance that the Assistant Secretary of the Navy William McAdoo commented that the demand for American merchant ships was so great, “we could almost use the entire fleet in those [Pacific] waters alone.”⁴ This explosion of the Asian trade, in both value and importance, marked the beginning of a paradigm shift in the country that would eventually lead to the annexation of the Philippines and a change in the ideology of the United States.

General histories of the United States have often characterized the late nineteenth century in America as a highly insular period. This “Gilded Age” focused almost exclusively on industrialization and internal economics, with an almost conscious scorn of international affairs and relations with foreign powers by a laissez-faire government of mediocre, almost parochial minded presidents.

While this perspective and the details of the era have been marked for keen debate by a host of historians, it is clear that by the last decade of the nineteenth century, a wave of interest in international affairs, particularly markets for goods, began to dominate the thinking of a broad cross section of the nation causing something of a revolution in ideology and policy.

³ Julius W. Pratt, “American Business and the Spanish-American War,” *American Imperialism in 1898*, ed. Theodore P. Greene (Boston: DC Heath, 1955), 38.

⁴ Walter Lafeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 301. American trade with China went from \$4 million (roughly 5% of the total trade of the U.S.) in the early part of the 1890s to almost \$7 million in 1896 and to approximately \$12 million in 1897. Trade with Japan ranked some \$3.9 million in 1894, jumped to 7.6 million in 1896 and then increased to \$13 million in 1897.

This shift in American perspective and goals was spurred by threats to the economy, the largest and most striking of which was the Depression of 1893. Laying waste across the economic landscape with bank failures, business bankruptcies, and unemployment, the Depression of 1893 affected everyone from the most rural farmer to the most metropolitan businessman and brought the specter of workers' unrest and revolution to the fore.

This economic chaos at the end of the century forced a kind of self-analysis on the nation that led many to believe that in order to survive, prosper, and be free of unstable boom and bust cycles in the economy, American capitalism had to become more dynamic and, more importantly, expand aggressively. In essence, the Depression of 1893 forced a "Great Debate concerned *not* whether expansion should be pursued, but rather what *kind* of expansion should be undertaken."⁵

In 1894, Secretary of the Treasury John G. Carlisle offered what would become the most widely accepted answer to this debate, in essence that it was only by exporting the products of its agricultural and industrial sectors would America be able to overcome the Depression. Carlisle commented, "Prosperity...depends largely on [its] ability to sell [its] surplus products in foreign markets at remunerative prices."⁶ Almost immediately, Carlisle's thesis was accepted as gospel by the length and breadth of American business and labor; with leading paragons of capitalism, such as the president of Chase National Bank, concurring that competition in world economic markets was essential, only to be echoed by more left leaning labor leaders and spokesmen for

⁵ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), 29.

⁶ Lafeber, *The New Empire* 181.

farmers such as Samuel Gompers and “Sockless” Jerry Simpson who saw the working man’s salvation tied to the profitable sale of surpluses to the rest of the world.⁷

The advocacy of extending American trade was only a single facet, however, of a greater cultural movement forming at the end of the Nineteenth century, namely the belief that if America wanted to secure power, economic and otherwise, it would also have to expand its politics, military and even society.

The new vogue for expansion took on many different perspectives and advocates ranging from the celebrated historian Frederick Jackson Turner with his frontier thesis to the internationalist prophet of sea power Navy Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan to the intellectual Brahmin Brooks Adams, all influential on both the popular and elite levels of American society. The synthesis of these and other expansionists essentially distilled the idea that historically, the success of American culture and economics relied on a constant expansion of population and political and economic hegemony over new territories and markets.⁸

In their view, America had always been a nation devoted to expansion, from its start as a coast-hugging cluster of colonies to its eventual state of expansion through the Midwest to the Pacific and even the Alaskan frontier. This expansion had led to everything from economic wellbeing, derived from the exploitation of new resources, to the creation of releases for societal pressures by the addition of new living spaces in the “frontier” of American power. If expansion had seemingly slowed with the geographical limits of the Pacific Coast, then the next logical step would be to spread outside of the North American boundaries: overseas to Latin America and

⁷ Lafeber, *New Empire* 180; Williams, *Tragedy* 31.

⁸ Williams, *Tragedy*, 32-33.

more importantly across the Pacific to Asia. Economics, politics, even military power and cultural growth were all to march hand in hand.⁹

Indeed, those merchants who were trying to crack the Chinese and Japanese markets knew that “the foreigner in China holds his position by force alone.”¹⁰ Force required colonies, bases for commercial interests and the military presence needed to hold those interests. Traders needed outposts run by friendly home governments that could exert their influence over vast spheres of territory. Certainly, when American merchants looked to their main competitors for the Asian markets (e.g. England, Russia) the possession of extensive colonies by these world empires seemed to be the edge that Americans lacked.

Thus, given such a diverse ideological, economic, and even military advocacy for expansion and growth, if not the outright establishment of an empire, it is not difficult to understand how attractive the seizure of the Philippines could be seen, especially in the light that it would be America’s stepping-stone to the markets of Asia.

One of the first advocates of annexing the Philippines for economic reasons was leading Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts. Even before the war with Spain, Lodge had championed expansion and even naked imperialism as a course for the United States. “We have a record of conquest, colonization and expansion unequalled by any people in the Nineteenth Century [sic],” Lodge publicly declared in 1895 with no false modesty.

“We are not to be curbed now.... For the sake of commercial supremacy in the Pacific we should control the Hawaiian Islands and maintain our influence in Samoa.”¹¹ Thus it is small wonder that, just a month after the Dewey victory and even before final victory in Cuba

⁹ Williams, *Tragedy* 31-33.

¹⁰ Quoted in Lafeber, *New Empire* 302.

¹¹ Quoted in Williams, *Tragedy* 34.

had been achieved, Lodge had already come around to believe the Philippines were of great enough importance to keep.

In an interview with the President, Lodge noted to McKinley that the Republican policy had always been one of protecting and encouraging American business. With the danger of American businesses overproducing and running out of consumer markets at home, he commented “the Philippine islands, its ten million inhabitants, as they advance in civilization, would have to buy our goods, and we should have so much additional market for our home manufactures.”¹²

Lodge further elaborated on this view in a speech before the Senate in 1900, the high point of the debate over the Philippines, commenting that exports to the Philippines could reach as much as \$25 million if the United States would cultivate it as a permanent colony, an economic boom that would benefit Americans across the economic spectrum.

Added to this, Lodge also touched on the subject of trade with China and Japan. American trade, he noted, was growing exponentially with those two key Asian powers, as much as two hundred percent by the end of the nineteenth century.¹³ This growth was only possible, and could only continue to increase, if the United States retained the Philippines. “The mere fact that we hold the Philippine Islands increases our trade with all the East--with China and Japan alike.”¹⁴

Whether or not the Philippines could even live up to this grandiose billing was beside the point. Lodge’s goal was not to sell reality; rather, like the best real estate speculators, he was

¹² Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, “An Interview with President McKinley, May 1898,” *The Philippines Reader: A History of Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*, ed. Daniel B. Schrimmer and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom (Boston: South End Press, 1978) 21.

¹³ Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, “The Philippine Islands: A speech before the United States Senate, March 7, 1900,” *American Imperialism in 1898*, ed. Theodore P. Greene (Boston: DC Heath, 1955) 75.

¹⁴ Lodge in Greene, *American Imperialism* 76.

selling the idea of prosperity *symbolized* by the Philippines, linking it with the economic buzzwords China and Japan to paint the picture of the Philippines potentially becoming America's very own Hong Kong.

The importance of the economic argument, whether it was Lodge's speeches or the words of concurring senators, newspaper editors, and other influential elites, was that it focused on what the Philippines *could* be and tied it to commonly held beliefs about the wealth of the Asian markets. The Philippines came into America's possession, in McKinley's own words in 1899 as "a gift from the gods" a phrase which itself rang with echoes of fortune and riches.¹⁵ Almost immediately they had the effect of spurring dreams of empire, of economic dominance. As more leaders began to tout the islands' value, again in terms both real and imagined, the Philippines became synonymous with wealth, new markets, new resources, and an entrance to the already lionized economics of China.

Indeed in 1901, in what would be his last speech before his assassination, McKinley used trade economics as the foundation of a speech justifying the annexation of the Philippines. Using the backdrop of the Pan American Exposition as a symbol of the technological rise of the United States, McKinley painted the picture of a world where the new technologies of steamship and transoceanic telegraph bound the world closer together. Advances in manufacturing and industry made the threat of overproduction not only a reality but also a looming danger for the American economy.

Our capacity to produce has developed so enormously. And our products have so multiplied that the problem of more markets requires our urgent and immediate action. Only a broad and enlightened policy will keep what we have. No other policy will get more.... What we produce beyond our domestic consumption must have a vent abroad.

¹⁵ President William McKinley, "Remarks to Methodist Delegation, November 21, 1899," in *The Philippine Reader: A History of Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*, ed. Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom (Boston: South End Press, 1978) 22.

The excess must be relieved through a foreign outlet, and we should sell wherever we can....¹⁶

To retain the Philippines could only gain America everything it had wanted. To give them up would be a sure loss; a shameful surrendering of what arch-imperialist Senator Albert J. Beveridge called “this commercial throne of the orient where Providence and our soldiers’ lives have placed us.”¹⁷

With the economic argument for the value of the islands also came the idea that the United States could not leave such essential territory in the hands of the Filipinos. The American imperialist argument had, as a core idea, preached that the Philippines would be better off under American rule than they would have under Filipino rule, an idea of Anglo-Saxon Christian superiority that was certainly at least an implicit part of pro-expansionist works.

This Social Darwinist attitude was clearly reflected in the words of Albert J. Beveridge, the Republican Senator from Indiana who won his seat in 1900 due in no small measure to his ardent support of Philippine annexation and American imperialism. Beveridge’s speeches are central to the imperialist cause, merging key core ideals and arguments in rhetoric that leaves little room to wonder about his true beliefs. Like his fellow senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Beveridge touted the value of the Philippines as a trade hub, a market for American goods, and as a fecund agricultural acquisition.

However, to this he added the idea that the Filipinos, whom he claimed to have observed first hand, were little more elevated than savages, totally incapable of ruling themselves. At best they were children in dire need of guidance after centuries of Spanish misrule. At worst, they

¹⁶ President William McKinley, “On the Rise of the United States to World Power, September 5, 1901,” in *The Diplomacy of World Power: The United States*, ed. Arthur S. Link and William M Leary, Jr. (New York: St. martin’s Press, 1970), 41-42.

¹⁷ Senator Albert J. Beveridge, “Our Philippine Policy: A Speech before the United States Senate,” in Schrimmer and Shalom, *The Philippine Reader*, 24.

were primitives who would need decades of American tutelage to bootstrap themselves to any level of modernity. “They are a barbarous race, modified by three centuries of contact with a decadent race.... It is barely possible that 1,000 men in all the archipelago are capable of self-government in the Anglo-Saxon sense.”¹⁸

Beveridge’s racial justification sets up one of the most important, and longest lasting, views of American imperialism. The Filipinos *needed* Americans to rule them. Occupation, annexation, entry into the United States as a colony (though with no guarantee of constitutional rights or citizenship privileges); these were all for the good of the Filipinos who knew no better and could not be left in charge of the Philippines any more than a child could be let alone by a responsible wiser adult. Naturally it followed that if the Filipino was incapable to rule himself, in contrast Americans (i.e. white men) had inherent advantages. Beveridge expanded on this by stating

It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing.... He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns.... He has marked the American people as his chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man.¹⁹

The combination of race and religion in Beveridge’s remarks tie into another core American idea: manifest destiny. This idea of a divine agenda or God-given fate for the United States and the American people demanded the growth of the nation. Indeed, Beveridge’s words echo the highly popular and influential writings of the minister Josiah Strong.

¹⁸ Beveridge in Schrimmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader* 25.

¹⁹ Beveridge in Schrimmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader* 26.

Strong stated that America was destined to be at the forefront of a kind of latter day crusade where “the Anglo-Saxon, with his two virtues of civil liberty and ‘pure spiritual Christianity,’ would employ his ‘genius for colonizing’” and spread this kind of American Christian civilization to the rest of the world, specifically the less developed parts.²⁰ With the ease of victory over Spain in 1898, it was certainly seductive to subscribe to the belief that some kind of higher power had designs for the greatness of America. By invoking the ideas of destiny and divine will, expansion became justified as the fate, the manifest destiny, of American religious and cultural character, and force beyond the power of any individual to stem or deny.

Naturally, of course, there would also be material rewards. As Strong pointed out over a decade before the Spanish-American War, “the World is to be Christianized and civilized.... Commerce follows the missionary.... A Christian civilization performs the miracles of the loaves and fishes in the desert.... What will be the wants of Asia a century hence?”²¹

Strong’s words not only inspired men such as Beveridge, they eventually became one of the pillars of the imperialist point of view. Indeed, by the presidency of William Howard Taft at the end the twentieth century’s first decade, the view of America’s spread to Asia was such that American rule in the Philippines was seen as providing an example to the rest of the world. American involvement in Asia was seen as being of a higher purpose than European empires. While the latter were involved primarily in profiting from their colonial regimes, the United States, in words of President Taft, who was notably the first American governor-general of the Philippines, “were pioneers in the spreading of Western civilization throughout the Orient.”²²

²⁰ Lafeber, *New Empire* 78.

²¹ Quoted in Lafeber, *New Empire* 78.

²² Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1913; reprinted New York: Da Capo Press, 1984) 517; William Howard Taft, “In Defense of Philippine Policy: An Address to the citizens of Norwood, Ohio,

To Taft, the Philippines were more than a colony; they were a symbol to the rest of the world of the superiority of American republicanism as a form of government. Other colonies were governed, in one way or another, as extensions of monarchist regimes for the benefit of the mother state. The Philippines were given a great deal of freedom, ostensibly to train the Filipinos in the American style of self-government but also as a way to showcase American democracy as the superior way to govern colonial possessions. In this way, the United States was not cast in the role of imperial overseer (and anti-imperialists would be deprived of political ammunition) but as liberator, mentor, and philanthropist, and again superior to the colonial rule of the English, Russians, and the rest of imperial Europe.

Economics and empire also mixed with evangelism at the highest levels of government. In late 1899, President McKinley entertained a delegation of Methodist ministers at the White House where, with characteristic relaxed informality and political deftness, he commented that he had wrestled with the issue of the Philippines. "I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night."²³ While one may question McKinley's sincerity, wondering if he was using religious imagery to pander to a group of voters, it has to be admitted that the choice symbolism of his words shows that religious ideology already integral to the annexation issue and the influence such arguments possessed.

Continuing his story to his visitors, McKinley said that he received a revelation about the Philippines: they could not be returned to Spain or given to another imperial power; the former would be cowardice, the latter bad for American business and political interests. Nor could the

September 19, 1908," *The Collected Works of William Howard Taft*, ed. David H. Burton, vol. II (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2001) 66.

²³ McKinley in Schrimmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader* 22.

Philippines be granted independence. Like Beveridge and so many other Social Darwinists of the time, he also felt the Filipinos were unfit to rule themselves. The one logical course he said was “to take them [the Philippines] all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ died.”²⁴

McKinley’s remarks show the seamless synthesis of the major factors in favor of annexation: not only were the Philippines good for American business, they were also good for religious and even cultural reasons. Indeed, McKinley wrapped all of the diverse arguments for annexation around one crucial word: duty. McKinley himself had commented in private during the Spanish-American war that “duty determines destiny.”²⁵ Now, with the Philippines in American hands by the fortunes of war, with its value seemingly growing by the day, it is clear to see that McKinley, and by extension the advocates of imperialist policy, felt that they were shouldering a moral obligation to the Filipinos, answering a divine calling and profiting economically all in one.

Additionally, McKinley’s statement of “uplifting” the Filipinos, of doing “the very best we could by them” shows one of the most intriguing hallmarks of this American imperialism: the missionary style idea that American rule would ultimately benefit the Filipinos. With significantly less social Darwinist tones than Beveridge, McKinley was able to cast the United States in a more positive light, of liberator and savior. While historians have assumed that McKinley took this tact to curry favor and support with the American religious establishment, or

²⁴ McKinley in Schirmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader* 22-23.

²⁵ McKinley quoted in Richard Hofstadter, “Manifest Destiny and the Philippines,” in Green, *American Imperialism* 67.

as another outgrowth of the Anglo-Saxon superiority complex, it seems that this stance also gave definite and immediate political benefits.

From almost the moment the United States showed it would not relinquish control of the Philippines to the Filipinos, American anti-imperialist began to fire salvos of arguments at the McKinley administration, criticizing what they saw as a radical departure, even a betrayal, of American traditions, principles, and constitutionality; a redefinition *ex post facto* of the Spanish-American War as land grab at gun point.

Thus, if the Philippines were to be kept as a colony, McKinley's administration would have to make them a different kind of colony, one in keeping with the ideals of American government. Essentially, to counter the accusations of the anti-imperialists (especially during an election season), the United States government had to define its imperialism in the Philippines as a new kind of *noblesse oblige*, a colonialism that was for the Filipinos by the Americans. Indeed by the administration of Theodore Roosevelt in 1901, the concept of duty and its benefits became firmly established to the point that Americans viewed themselves as working for the Filipinos even to the detriment of the United States. "In the Philippines, our whole attention was concentrated upon the welfare of the Filipinos themselves, if anything to the neglect of our own interests."²⁶

In the speeches of the elites such as McKinley, Beveridge, Lodge, Roosevelt and Taft, one last telling argument for Philippine annexation can be found, though it was not explicitly stated. The Philippines may not have been one of the main reasons the United States went to war with Spain, but by the end of the war, it was the only major prize of the war. Any dreams of the annexation of Cuba had been denied by the Teller Amendment. Cuba would have its eventual

²⁶ Roosevelt, Autobiography 517.

independence from American occupation and while this would be on terms favorable to the United States, Cuba would still never be a part of the nation and therefore could never be held up as a prize of the war.

Other territories gained in the war, such as Puerto Rico and Guam, were marginal gains at best. Small in size, isolated and with little in the way of immediate value, they would take decades of investment to realize any gains and in the meantime were certainly all but unknown, unglamorous, and unimportant to the mass of American voters. Hawaii had been tethered to American economics (and ruled by a junta of expatriate American planters) for so long it already felt like part of the nation, its annexation essentially an afterthought and a mere formality of accepting the reality of its status.

The Philippines, by default the largest territory, as well as the most exotic, became the de facto grand prize of the war, the most tangible symbol of American victory and a growing imperial might. It had to be retained as proof of victory, something to be pointed to (perhaps by a hopeful political candidate) and lauded as a boon to the economy with its untapped resources, a key to the fabled treasure of the China trade, a symbol of the success of the war, of America, of Republicanism.

Yet if American imperialists spun a good argument, other leading Americans also forwarded equally compelling and passionate points of view decrying the American annexation of the Philippines. In the same year as McKinley's comments the Methodist delegation in the White House where he claims to have a quasi-religious epiphany on the annexation of the Philippines, noted American psychologist and philosopher William James derided McKinley's

policies as “Piracy positive and absolute, and the American people appear as pirates pure and simple....”²⁷

The opposition exhibited by James to the McKinley administration’s Philippine policies reflect his membership in the American Anti-Imperialist League, the leading organization devoted to opposing the annexation of the Philippines and the McKinley administration. Given the highly controversial nature of the Philippine annexation, it was unsurprising that the League was an eclectic gathering, including members of the American elite like millionaire industrialist/”robber baron” Andrew Carnegie, businessman Charles Francis Adams Jr., labor leader Samuel Gompers, Progressive Era reformer Jane Addams, former President Grover Cleveland, and even celebrated writers and humorists Samuel “Mark Twain” Clemens and Finley Peter Dunne.

As a whole, the League decried the McKinley Philippine policy in tones echoing James, claiming “the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends towards militarism, an evil from which it has been our glory to be free.”²⁸ More than that, the League stated,

We more deeply resent the betrayal of American institutions at home. The real firing line is not in the suburbs of Manila. The foe is of our own household. The attempt of 1861 was to divide the country. That of 1899 is to destroy its fundamental principles and noblest ideals...a contest that must go on until the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States are rescued from the hands of their betrayers.²⁹

From the words of James and the League, the core ideal of the anti-imperialist stance is strikingly clear. The imperialists, especially the ones holding political office, were violating the basic precepts of the United States. On ideological, and constitutional grounds, the annexation was not only immoral, it was un-American and contrary to the character of the nation. The

²⁷ William James, “A Letter to the *Boston Evening Transcript*,” in Schrimmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader* 27

²⁸ Carl Schurz, “Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League, 1899” in Schrimmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader* 30.

²⁹ Schurz in Schrimmer and Shalom, *Philippines Reader* 30-31.

Philippines had come as an accidental acquisition and as such keeping them instead of turning them over to the Filipinos for self-rule, indeed waging a violent and bloody war to suppress Philippine insurgents in order to keep the islands as a colony without constitutional protection or a future design to integrate it as a state in the union, seemed to be the textbook definitions of the “militarism” and “piracy” that James and the Anti-Imperialist League had cited.

Indeed, these lines are a direct refutation of the imperialist arguments of duty and destiny: the duty of America was not to take over the islands in direct violation of the Constitution and the destiny of the United States was not some grandiose empire building scheme with militarism and colonization as its bricks and mortar. This moral argument was also supported with others, including refutations of the pleasant pecuniary picture painted by Senators Lodge and Beveridge. Andrew Carnegie, who was the League’s key financier and certainly its key expert on economics, noted that such a far-flung agricultural colony would be a detriment to the American economy, not a blessing.

With a history of opposition to imperialism on business terms, Carnegie prophesied that that a flood of valuable agricultural cash crops from the islands—ranging from tobacco to sugar—would hurt home producers by driving prices down. Because the Philippines would be a colony, that would exempt it from any tariff regulations. Should the United States still impose a tariff, the economy of the islands would suffer, thus negating their initial value and one of the key reasons for keeping them.

Furthermore, the proximity of the Philippines to China and the European colonies in Asia would mean greater chances that the Philippine market would be taken over by non-American entities. Carnegie saw the Philippines as trading more with Chinese, British, and Japanese

entities for the sole reason that they were closer and American trade, hampered by long distances and commensurately higher shipping costs, would be pushed out.³⁰

Carnegie was supported in his economic critique by two other leading men of the times, the labor leader Samuel Gompers and the statesman Carl Schurz. An unlikely ally of the robber baron Carnegie, Gompers had originally supported the expansion of American economic power into other markets on the idea that doing so would provide jobs and other trickled down benefits to industrial workers. However, he joined the anti-imperialists out of a new fear: “the evil influence of the close and open competition of millions of semi-barbaric laborers.”³¹

American goods leaving the country to compete in foreign markets were fine (since they increased the value of the American labor), but foreign workers coming into the U.S. labor market to compete with American workers was another matter. The annexation of Hawaii, Gompers felt, had already created an influx of workers who could work for essentially slave wages thus driving down the wage a homegrown laborer (i.e. a white laborer) could demand. Gompers saw the same thing happening, probably to a greater effect, with the Philippines and its Filipino population.³²

To Carl Schurz, another Anti-Imperialist Leaguer whose writings were financed by Carnegie, the imperialists’ often touted claim that the Philippines could become the steppingstone to China and the nations of the Western Pacific was viewed as unfounded and even unnecessary. Schurz saw Pacific trade as less valuable than the trans-Atlantic trade to Europe already dominated by the United States, which Schurz also saw as being more than

³⁰ Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968) 179.

³¹ Love, *Race over Empire* 184.

³² Love, *Race over Empire* 184.

enough to guarantee American prosperity and gave lie to the imperialist statements of the need for expanded commercial markets.

Moreover, whatever designs on Chinese trade American businessmen could want could be won by simply improving their methods and practices and not by “appearing there with war ships and heavy guns. Trade is developed, not by the best guns, but by the best merchants.”³³ Trade did not necessitate annexation and in fact American involvement in the Philippines would be a future of “wars, and the rumors of wars, and the time will be forever passed when we could look down with condescending pity on the nations of the old world groaning under militarism and its burdens.”³⁴

In addition to his opposition to the Philippine annexation on an economic basis, Schurz also voiced the common argument of racism. Schurz saw the Filipinos as “a large mass of...barbarous Asiatics, descendants of Spaniards, mixtures of Asiatics and Spanish blood.”³⁵ This made them inferior to Americans and unlike Beveridge who saw the inferiority of the Filipinos as a case for the establishment of American rule, Schurz saw the exact opposite. The Filipinos would be a burden to rule and civilize, a drain on American resources best spent on the existing citizenry. “I deny, that the duties we owe...the Filipinos and the Tagals of Asiatic islands absolve us from our duties to the 75 millions of our own people and to their posterity.”³⁶

Yet while Carnegie, Gompers, Schurz, and the whole of the Anti-Imperialist League kept up verbal attack on the McKinley administration, the most important symbol of Anti-Imperialism in the 1898-to-1900 era was undoubtedly William Jennings Bryan. Nationally famous for having

³³ Carl Schurz, “American imperialism: An address opposing annexation of the Philippines, January 4, 1899,” in Greene, *American Imperialism* 81.

³⁴ Schurz in Greene, *American Imperialism* 80.

³⁵ Schurz in Love, *Race over Empire* 182.

³⁶ Schurz in Greene, *American Imperialism* 82.

run a close race against McKinley in 1896, the leader of the Populist movement and presumptive nominee for the Democratic Party to run again against McKinley in 1900, Bryan's involvement in the debate over imperialism started with strange and somewhat telling events.

While Bryan had enlisted in the military during the Spanish-American war (staying in Florida far from the front lines, a situation many of his supporters felt was due in no small part to McKinley wanting to keep Bryan from politically valuable war glory), he had openly opposed the imperialist goals that were already forming with the quick victory over the Spanish in Manila, stating "Is our national character so weak that we cannot withstand the temptation to appropriate the first piece of land that we come across?"³⁷

Despite this clear anti-imperialist statement, Bryan used his political influence among Democrat lawmakers to back the treaty with Spain that gave America control over the Philippines. The reasons from this "flip-flop" of position seem to point to a kind of Machiavellian political maneuver. While Bryan argued that a swift acceptance of the treaty with Spain would allow soldiers to return home, in reality Bryan seemed to be positioning himself for the best all around political situation.

Support for the war had been nearly universal in the United States, with many of Bryan's own Democratic supporters championing the defeat of Spain. Opposing the treaty, essentially opposing victory, would have been politically disadvantageous for Bryan; his political opponents could have easily saddled him with the blame of keeping the soldiers in the field longer than necessary (exposed to the dangers of yellow fever, if not to Spanish bullets) and generally making a mess of what had been an easily won glory.³⁸

³⁷ Quoted in Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006) 89.

³⁸ Kazin, *Godly Hero* 90

Bryan also believed that acceptance of the treaty did not entirely end the question of Philippine annexation or signify any kind of tacit approval. If anything, the fact that fate of the islands were solely in American hands placed the debate over imperialism in the political forefront and made it a campaign issue for the 1900 election. Thus, by supporting the treaty, Bryan could claim to be working for the interests of the American soldier and the cause of national glory while still being able to cast himself as the champion of the anti-imperialist cause, a stance he hoped would add by winning anti-imperialist Republicans away from McKinley.

Bryan's anti-imperialist ideology was essentially a combination of all the major arguments of the anti-imperialist movement. He believed that imperialism was incompatible with the American system of democratic government, stating in an 1899 campaign speech that

The American People cannot apply the European and monarchial doctrine of force in the subjugation and government of alien races and at the same time stand forth as defenders of principles embodied in our declaration of independence and constitution.... As soon as we establish two forms of government, one by consent in this country and the other by force in Asia, we shall cease to have the influence of a republic and shall join in the spoliation of a helpless people....³⁹

Also, Bryan charged the McKinley administration as launching on a militaristic turn of government stating, "such a transfer will lessen the nation's wealth producing power and at the same time exact a larger annual tribute from those who toil."⁴⁰ With militarism, Bryan was able to link higher taxes, the fear of forced conscription, the diversion of government revenue from the United States to the war in the Philippines, and the idea of armed dictatorial rule all under the imperialist banner, welding the arguments of business and labor leaders like Carnegie and Gompers with the general morality argument of the Anti-Imperialist League.

³⁹ William Jennings Bryan, *Bryan On Imperialism: Speeches*, (1900; New York: Arno Press, 1970) 19.

⁴⁰ Bryan, *On Imperialism* 30.

Specifically, Bryan noted that the main character of American occupation of the Philippines would be colonial overseers and military personnel, thus leading to inevitable military spending increases and an overall rise in a militarist American state both in the Philippine islands and in the American mainland.⁴¹

Bryan's national stature, role as Democratic nominee to oppose McKinley in the 1900 election, and public anti-imperialism should have won him the support, even the leadership, of the anti-imperialist movement. However, most anti-imperialists came from the middle to upper-class intellectual Northeastern "Mugwump" tradition that was highly suspicious and disdainful of Bryan and his coalition of Midwestern Populists and Southern Democrats. Charles Adams, who combined anti-imperialism with northeastern intellectual elitism, loathed Bryan as a political charlatan, calling him a "natural product of a half baked civilization and the freshwater college."⁴²

This view perhaps sums up best the cool attitude towards Bryan found in many of the leading anti-imperialists. While Bryan might speak to their point of view as an anti-imperialist, the rest of his platform (a rehash of old issues ranging from the silver standard to anti-trust laws), his political base, and his personal background left the Mugwumps little reason to support "The Great Commoner." Moreover, some felt that Bryan's support of the initial treaty with Spain made him a hypocritical opportunist trying to straddle an issue with more concern to the politically popular than to his own real beliefs.⁴³

Bryan's unpalatability to intellectual anti-imperialists like Charles Adams notwithstanding, the ultimate failure of anti-imperialism in the election of 1900 was that the

⁴¹ Bryan, *On Imperialism* 76.

⁴² Adams quoted in Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire* 125.

⁴³ Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire* 131.

Republicans succeeded in making the Philippines synonymous with victory, success, well being and wealth. Lodge, Beveridge, McKinley, and the rest of their clique of expansionists had the advantage of drawing upon established and popular beliefs, whether it was the frontier thesis or adventure capitalism. Regardless of the facts, they were able to invest the Philippines with the legend of wealth, of Asian trade and world power.

Furthermore, the idea of Americans helping to undertake the national duty of the United States for the Filipinos was hard to refute. No American could argue that American rule over the Philippines would be infinitely better than that of Spain, or that Americans could improve the standard of living for the Filipinos by a massive order of magnitude. Certainly, the idea that the Filipinos could improve their own lives any faster or better without American help was never even considered a remote possibility. Indeed, if an American did care for Filipino wellbeing, then it would only be logical to undertake the role of benevolent teacher than to leave them alone to struggle without help to be quote probably victimized by another, less benevolent, imperialist power such as Germany or Japan.

Finally, the imperialist faction had the advantage of religion, whether in the form of missionary selflessness or manifest destiny, to cast the Philippine annexation as something more than economics or politics; it was a crusade, a quest only a great nation could undertake. To leave the islands, to deny this fate, would smack of cowardice, of lacking ambition. It would be throwing away wealth and victory.

Politically, this argument was a huge strategic advantage: one either supported the United States and by extension a missionary attitude that would bring the light of American civilization to the Filipinos or one opposed this and was not only selfish and unchristian in spirit, one was also cowardly. In such a dichotomy, it is little wonder that most Americans chose the former.

The election of 1900 that returned McKinley to the White House with a Republican majority in Congress and a mandate at the polls effectively ended the political debate over the Philippine annexation. But the effects of over three years of public debate left their mark. Imperialism was now a permanent part of the Republican political platform and every governor-general appointed to the Philippines had a mission codified with every major promise and goal that the imperialist wing of the Republican Party had made. The Philippines was to be modernized and improved for the good of the Filipinos, the good of American prestige and trade, and most importantly, to reiterate the successes promised by the Republicans.

While the message of the Anti-Imperialists had failed to turn into political capital in 1900, anti-imperialism became an integral part of the Democratic platform and played well with the key demographics of the party, from intellectuals who loathed the ideology of empire, to Southerners with a fear of agricultural competition and “Yellow Dog Democrat” loyalty, to Northern urbanites who feared the possibility of a threat to labor. With the ascension of Woodrow Wilson (who coincidentally had William Jennings Bryan at his side as Secretary of State), the issue of Philippine independence and the withdrawal of American rule from the islands became the forefront of the Wilson Philippine policy from the first day. In America’s colonial adventure, ideology was often the foundation of policy.

CHAPTER 3: THE REPUBLICAN REGIME

*“Take up the White Man's burden--
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard--
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:--
'Why brought he us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?'"*

*--Rudyard Kipling,
“The White Man's Burden, 1899.”¹*

In April 1900, William Howard Taft and a chosen cadre of American civil servants set sail for the Philippine Islands. The goal of this Philippine Commission was to begin the process of building a civilian government in what had been, up to that point, a theater of war.

More to the point, the government that Taft and his men were charged in building was to be a testament to the value of the Philippines to the United States, tangible proof that made true the promises and dreams that been spun around the islands by imperialist enchanted Americans at home, and, not the least of which, tied this triumphant Americanization of the islands to the triumph of the Republican Party, the standard bearer of this new push into the frontiers of world power. In essence, Taft was to turn the Philippines into a governmental success so that it could in turn be held up as a political success for party.

Taft would be the public face of the United States in the Philippines and more importantly, the methods and goals he focused on--infrastructure and economic development--would become the core of Republican policy in the Philippines. Continued by his handpicked successor (and perhaps truest disciple) W. Cameron Forbes, the United States colonial

¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man's Bruden” in *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. T.S. Elliot, (Faber and Faber Limited, 1941; reprint, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, 1962), 144-145.

government defined its mission to the islands, and its show of successes to politicians back home in the United States, in the simplest of terms: make the Philippines as American as possible.

From the basic nature of his personality, Taft was at first glance a surprising choice for a colonial ruler. A product of midwestern gentry, the son of a prominent Republican Party insider who had been rewarded by the Grant administration with patronage postings in Europe, Taft had gravitated towards law before his appointment to the Philippines. Serving as solicitor-general in the Gilded Age administration of Benjamin Harrison and on the bench of the federal circuit court, Judge Taft was a loyal party man with a comfortable life and an assured future who nursed, as his highest aspiration, an appointment to the Supreme Court and certainly not the brand new, and somewhat ill defined position of governor-general of the Philippines.²

Indeed, in contrast to McKinley, Taft was mildly anti-imperialist and while legally, he saw no constitutional provision strictly preventing American colonial expansion, he personally “did not favor going into the Philippine Islands.”³ He made his feelings clear to McKinley when the President approached him to lead a commission to the islands stating “We [the United States] had quite enough to do at home,” that he thought it unwise to seize the Philippines and add another task to the list of American governmental duties.⁴

While he agreed with McKinley’s pragmatism that what had been done could not be reversed and the United States would have to make the best of the Philippine acquisition, he was certainly more than a little reluctant to uproot his life in order to undertake the difficult and most probably thankless job of colonial administrator, one who would bear the blame for any and all

² Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America’s Empire in the Philippines* ((New York: Random House, 1989), 167-168; Henry F. Graf, ed., *American Imperialism and the Philippine Insurrection: Testimony taken from Hearings on Affairs in the Philippine islands before the Senate Committee on the Philippines—1902* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 35.

³ Quoted in Graf, *American Imperialism* 48.

⁴ Quoted in Karnow, *In Our Image* 168.

failures in the Philippines and the most prominent target of the anti-imperialist faction in American politics.

It would take an appeal to Taft's patriotism, to his sense of civil duty and manhood by Secretary of War Elihu Root (who would be Taft's superior in administering the islands) and to his ambition with a personal promise of the next seat on the Supreme Court by McKinley himself to secure the Midwestern jurist's consent to be the man on the ground and lead a corps of experts to undertake the United States first foray into nation building in the Twentieth century.

Based on his career path, his personal point of view, and the reluctance of his acceptance, a certain enigma arises around the Taft selection that begs the question of why he was even chosen, indeed courted and pressured so strongly to take up the governor-generalship of the Philippines. Other prominent Republicans, notably Theodore Roosevelt, had already expressed interest in taking up the role of governor-general with greater ardor. Famously, Roosevelt commented that he even preferred it to the vice presidency.⁵ Certainly, among the victory flush Republicans, many of whom were basking on the reflected glory of the victory over Spain, a candidate for the high profile post of the first American Raj could have easily been found.

Furthermore the military leaders in the Philippines, such as General Arthur Macarthur, the current military governor of the islands and a decorated war hero, had the experience in day-to-day rule, knowledge of local customs, a host of contacts among the Filipinos, and the ability to keep the peace with force if necessary. On the surface, it was questionable what, if anything, Taft possessed that trumped the claim of these others. However, for the purposes of the

⁵ H.W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: the United States and the Philippines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 63.

Republican political party line that was already being formulated in support of annexing the Philippines, Taft was the perfect choice to kick off America's colonial experiment.

Firstly, the fact that Taft was not an ardent imperialist played to his favor. In their interview, McKinley had wryly commented "I think I can trust the man who didn't want them better than I can the man who did."⁶ A known passionate supporter of imperialism, such as Roosevelt, would have been greeted by anti-imperialists with scorn and held up as a sign of negative, undemocratic trends in the government of the islands, would be seen as a product of cronyism, the political spoils system, and even the use of the Spanish-American war for base political opportunism. Taft on the other hand, as a more or less moderate quantity, could win the benefit of the doubt.

Taft's legal background was another point in his favor. As a federal judge with a strong understanding of the constitution, reinforced by an Ivy League education and an already established career on the bench to remove any doubt of his credentials, Taft could craft a government and a set of laws for the islands that met the requirements of establishing order with as many constitutional and democratic rights and liberties as could be afforded to the Filipinos.

The Republican promise that the United States was in the Philippines for the sake and betterment of the Filipinos would be fulfilled while control of the islands would still be firmly in the hands of American authorities. While the laws would undoubtedly benefit the Filipinos, they would also serve to counteract the claims of anti-imperialists that the American regime was dictatorial or somehow un-American.

Finally the definite non-military nature of Taft and his fellow commissioners, all chosen from civilian fields and experts in civil administration, would counteract attempts to characterize

⁶ Quoted in Karnow, *In Our Image* 168.

American rule over the Philippines as militaristic. American military operations in the Philippines had achieved a level of lurid notoriety in the popular press, especially given the violence of the Philippine insurrection under Filipino General Emilio Aguinaldo and the ensuing response from American Generals Macarthur and Otis Ewell. In putting down Aguinaldo's resistance, a popular army song had U.S. troops "civilizing" Filipinos with their Krag (rifles), highlighting the brutal atmosphere where torture, search and destroy style tactics, and summary executions were quickly becoming the standard procedures. These actions were naturally both shocking and disturbing to a country flush with heroic pride from defeating a Spain painted as villainous oppressors.⁷

The violence with which the insurrection had been put down had provided anti-imperialists in America with much ammunition to criticize the president's policy, claiming that McKinley had promised the American colonization would uplift the Filipinos, it was instead slaughtering them with the violent militarism warmed of by the anti-imperialists. The civilian and judicial Taft would be a massive sign of the change in American policy and the ultimate dedication to civilian government and the rule of law, neatly countering any claims of government by armed force.

The goal of creating rule by law and restoring civil order was not lost on Taft. Indeed, from the start, it was Taft's intention to define his governorship as diametrically opposed to military rule, stating "We should look upon the Filipinos as our little brown brothers," a phrase that succinctly summed up the overall goal of the United States in the Philippines.⁸ The

⁷ Karnow, *In Our Image* 154.

⁸ Arthur S. Pier, *American Apostles to the Philippines* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press 1950; reprint : New York: Beacon Press, 1971), 29.

Filipinos were not a conquered people as much as they were wards of the United States, a mentality that rang true to the Republican Party line of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Beveridge.

Indeed, Taft's superior Elihu Root had given the Philippine Commission a letter of instructions that frankly stated "the Commission should bear in mind that the government which they are establishing is designed not for our satisfaction...but for the happiness, peace and prosperity of the people of the Philippine Islands."⁹

Peace and prosperity in the islands, aside from easing the burdens of American rule, would work in favor to forward the Republican policy of benevolent imperialism and allow them to quickly recreate the Philippines into a model for success. For Taft and the other members of the Philippine Commission, the interpretation of this mission statement and the success of the policy also entailed the material improvement of the islands.

To the American mindset, the lack of infrastructure, particularly hallmarks of western civilization such as railroads and paved highways, was the most egregious symbol of the problems plaguing the Philippines. Coming from a country that was one of the most technologically advanced nations on earth, the possession of a colony approaching an almost medieval (and in some cases positively stone age) level of technology was patently unacceptable.

As bad as this was, Taft and his commissioners were even more affronted by the widespread corruption in the various bureaucratic agencies of the Philippines, a leftover legacy from the Spanish colonial era. This all had to be purged and replaced with an American style of government that emphasized efficiency, not only to signify the regime change but merely to allow for the other work of nation building in the Philippines to even begin. To this end it comes as no surprise that the Taft regime of the Philippine government was almost wholly preoccupied

⁹ Quoted in W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 132.

with governmental organization that led to the creation of infrastructure and fundamental economic development.

Organizing the colonial government was undoubtedly the most far-reaching legacy of the Taft regime. His Philippine Commission organized itself into various divisions to oversee almost every aspect of Philippine governance essentially becoming the nerve center for the islands' government and overseeing everything from agriculture to ports, from surveys and census to printing and the massive amounts of public works.¹⁰ Disease in both humans and livestock were identified and steps towards inoculation and treatment undertaken, provisions for safe drinking water were enacted, electrical companies were established to further modernize the islands and bring them up to par with the modernity of the United States. Taft's regime even negotiated the purchase of land from the Vatican in order to redistribute them to the Filipinos for agriculture and industry.¹¹

With efficiency minded Americans firmly in the lead, the Commission essentially initiated a wide scale plan of public works and modernization where "the debris and wreckage of the what was undesirable in the Spanish system had to be cleared away."¹² Proud of the efficiency and successes achieved by his government, Taft himself praised the Commission in a later speech in 1908--made, notably, during his campaign for the presidency--stating that it had established a widespread system of education across the Philippines by building schools and training teachers, improved essential facilities such as the harbor at Manila to the point where it was on par with any other port of call in the Far East, and built highways and railroads in a

¹⁰ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands* vol. 1, 142.

¹¹ *The Collected Works of William Howard Taft*, ed. David H. Burton, vol. 2, *Political Issues and Outlooks; Speeches Delivered between August 1908 and February 1909* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 61-62; Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1, 369-409.

¹² Forbes, *the Philippine Islands*, vol. 1, 141.

greater abundance and quality of any that existed under the era Spanish rule.¹³ In short, the Philippines, and the Filipinos, were better off thanks to the management and engineering skills of Americans of the Taft regime, and by extension, the efforts of the Republican Party.

Taft also strongly encouraged private business to invest in the Philippines and fought for strong trade ties between the islands and the United States, things he continued to push for as president of the United States, in order to make the Philippines as organic a part of America as possible. Indeed, that ultimate goal, of tying the Philippines as close as possible to the United States make the goals of such a broad spectrum of initiatives clear: the Philippines had to become, in as short a timeframe as possible, a kind of junior America. More to the point, policy makers in Washington had to be able to point the Philippines and be able to show marked progress and measurable successes, the easiest and most visible of which were such things as roads, efficient government, and booming economics.

Despite the short timeframe of Taft's tenure the Philippines (he left just over two years into his term of office in 1903 for health reasons and subsequently stayed in Washington to assume the position of Secretary of War and chosen successor of President Theodore Roosevelt) his policies left their mark on the islands.¹⁴ Indeed, the Taft era of colonial government set the standard for the characteristic Republican rule of the islands: a preeminent focus on material development as a way to showcase the measurable improvements being made to the islands for the benefit of the Filipinos.

¹³ Taft, *Collected Works*, 58-62.

¹⁴ Not the least of which was to leave a certain cachet of glamour on the position of governor-general. Given Taft's rapid rise to prominence within both his party and the American political system, many Americans in government service came to regard the position of governor-general as a road to promotions and higher postings and offices, making the office one of the most plum patronages for a president to bestow.

Taft's most prominent successor and perhaps the most influential governor general of the Philippines, William Cameron Forbes, further codified this Taft style of government into the bedrock of Philippine colonial policy. Like Taft, Forbes came from the elite strata of American gentry. The son of a wealthy Bell Telephone Company president, he also counted celebrated poet Ralph Waldo Emerson as a grandfather, a pedigree that certainly denoted his life at the top of Gilded Age America's social pyramid.

Educated at Harvard, Forbes found his way into business with the kind of almost natural progression one might expect of the scion of a wealthy North Eastern industrial clan: starting as a clerk at a Boston brokerage firm as a kind of apprenticeship, then rising to head the financial office of a utilities holding company, and eventually assuming a partnership in the family firm of J.M. Forbes and Company, Cameron Forbes's course in life was seemingly set and chartered to be one of affluence and stability among the top tier of America's industrial gentry.¹⁵

Despite this comfortable existence, Forbes exhibited a taste for the "strenuous life" to which Theodore Roosevelt was so devoted. Indeed one of the most telling characteristics of Forbes was his competitive sportsman nature. He was most proud of having had played and then coached football at Harvard and was even a world-renowned polo player who had even published an internationally respected tract on the sport. This side of Forbes clearly showed a love of action and a streak of determination and competitiveness that colored and influenced all other aspects of his life.¹⁶

¹⁵ Peter W. Stanley, "William Cameron Forbes," in *Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement 6: 1956-1960*. American Council of Learned Societies, 1980. Reprinted in *Biography Resource Center*. (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2006) [database on line at <http://galenet.galegroup.com.ucfproxy.fcla.edu/servlet/BioRC>], ED.

¹⁶ Peter W. Stanley, *A Nation in the Making: the Philippines and the United States 1899-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 99.

It is easy to see how Forbes the athlete could be easily bored with life as Forbes the desk-bound executive. By the end of the Spanish American War this restlessness began to exhibit itself, as Forbes began to dabble in the new possibilities of international adventurism that the war had created for the United States.

Already personally friends with General Leonard Wood, the Harvard doctor turned Rough Rider turned military governor of Cuba, Forbes devoted himself to the cause of bringing a corps of elite Cuban teachers to Harvard to be educated and returned to Cuba to assist in Wood's reforms for the island.¹⁷ After this first taste of colonial organization, his appetite for international politics seemingly whetted, Forbes energetically but ultimately unsuccessfully lobbied for a place on the high profile Panama Canal Commission.

Despite being turned down for Panama, Forbes had succeeded in garnering the attention of then president Theodore Roosevelt who recognized the value of Forbes's background in business and industry (as well as the similarities in background and personality with himself) and suggested that Forbes join the Taft Commission in the Philippines. Quite bluntly, Roosevelt told Forbes "I advise you to take this place; it is doing some of the world's work; it is more important work than you can get otherwise."¹⁸

The appointment fired Forbes's imagination; indeed it seemed to hearken to his own ancestry as his grandfather John Murray Forbes had been a railroad builder and merchant in China as part of the firm of Russell and Sturgis.¹⁹ By working in the Philippines, America's supposedly new Hong Kong and stepping stone to China, Forbes would complement his

¹⁷ Jack McCallum, *Leonard Wood: Rough Rider, Surgeon, Architect of American Imperialism* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 159.

¹⁸ Quoted in Stanley, *A Nation in the Making* 101.

¹⁹ Stanley, *A Nation in the Making* 99; ED <http://galenet.galegroup.com.ucfproxy.fcla.edu/servlet/BioRC>

ancestor's own adventures in the Orient and perhaps find an outlet for the restlessness of his spirit that a life manning a desk at a Boston counting house could never provide.

From the start, Forbes embraced his role as Commissioner of Commerce and Police, treating his time in the Philippines as a kind of adventure and crusade. In romanticized prose, he later reminisced

The Commission, with their keen American minds, their sense of justice and dislike of delay, display, sham, and subterfuge, were turned loose like a group of knight-errants looking for wrongs to right and abuses to end. They found plenty of these and literally worked themselves sick in their efforts to bring into the Islands the blessing of the kind of administration to which Americans have become so accustomed that they take it as a matter of course.²⁰

Clearly, Forbes was a man who subscribed heart and soul to the ideals of Roosevelt and Taft.

The defining quest for Cameron Forbes was the creation of modern roadways across the islands, which he saw as the most critical thing the new American administration had to build. From the start of his tenure as a Philippine Commissioner, Forbes knew that all of the material improvements, all of the intended reforms that the Taft government were planning for the islands would critically rely on a modern network of roads.

In a public letter to the Filipino people aimed at getting their support for taxes for internal improvements, Forbes stated

These Islands can never expect any real measure of prosperity until a complete change has been made.... The people are poor, industries in their infancy, railroads in most parts nonexistent and the number and extent of manufactories very small. Here, we cannot afford to make mistakes, we cannot afford to lose money, we cannot afford to have roads which have cost us...through failure to properly care for or property.²¹

²⁰ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1, 141.

²¹ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, 455, 458.

To this end, Forbes spearheaded the building, and improvement of the roadway network in the Philippines. Through his tenure as both Commissioner and governor-general Forbes oversaw an increase of 128 percent in the mileage of first class roads (i.e. paved, modern roads) and over 6000 bridges and road-related construction projects across the islands.²²

Additionally, Forbes pushed for laws and incentive programs to get Filipino farmers and cart drivers to convert their vehicles to models that would be less destructive on the roads and even organized a prison labor program to secure workers for his projects.²³ Such was Forbes's reputation as a road builder that on a trip to a Philippine province, a welcoming party had a banner which read "*Forbes significa grandes obras*"—"Forbes means large public works." Forbes, proud of his reputation and the progress of his road building, commented that it was "the kind of think I like to have them think."²⁴

Forbes's obsession with roads, public works, and civil engineering projects dovetails perfectly into the overall ideology of the Republican's goal of making the Philippines a success to reflect the success of their party and the value of their internationalist/imperialist platform. To anyone seeking a sign of the success promised by McKinley, a road or a bridge redolent of American engineering was the simplest and most telling sign. Public works were easy to measure, easy to hold up as a milestone of success and, most importantly, something tangible and relatable to any American. The reasoning would be simple: the more roads and bridges, the more modern the islands would be and therefore the better the economy and quality of life as provided by the U.S.

²² Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1. 383, 386.

²³ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1, 381-382, 384-386.

²⁴ Forbes quoted in Brands, *Bound to Empire* 89.

This fact was not lost on the ultra competitive Forbes who noted publicly “everybody knows Napoleon is considered one of the greatest administrative officers that ever lived, a man of unequalled genius and yet of the administration of Napoleon the most noteworthy things that remain today are the roads which he built.”²⁵

The success of this policy was not overlooked. In 1908, Roosevelt promoted Forbes to vice-governor general and a year later, he was personally appointed to become the Philippines’s chief executive by his former boss, the newly elected President Taft. Indeed, of all Republican appointed governor-generals, Forbes would continue the Taft legacy truer than anyone else (to the point where he even noted his term as governor as merely an extension of the Taft regime).

Like Taft he continued to cultivate an atmosphere of progress, emphasizing business and industry. Utilizing strict management coupled with booster-like attempts to attract American capital and investors, Forbes increased the revenue of the Philippine government by half and doubled trade with the United States.²⁶ Forbes the bored businessman had become the new CEO of America’s premier colony, symbolizing the Republican policies of successful rule.

The massive engineering projects of the Taft regime were touted as political successes for another reason: they had to make up for the economic disappointment surrounding the islands. For all of their efforts at uplifting the Filipinos, Taft and Forbes ultimately has a less than glowing record in their overall goal of economically tying the Philippines to the United States. The key reason for this failure was that most Americans literally never bought into the idea of investing in the Philippines.

²⁵ Forbes *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, 456

²⁶ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, 459-460.

There is a certain irony to this inability of Republicans to cash in on the islands. Given Forbes's attempts to win over American investment and Taft's goal of tying the Philippines closer to the United States via trade (something he continued even as president), coupled with the general view of imperialism as the exploitation of colonies for the good of the conquering state, it would be natural to assume that the Philippines was ripe for economic exploitation.

Certainly the speeches of arch-imperialists like Senator Albert Beveridge would have led many to believe that along with Taft, Forbes, and the American Commission, American corporations would have come along ready to reap the economic and resource benefits of empire, that all the infrastructure development that had been Forbes's claim to fame was the first step in an American economic rush to the islands. This was, however, not the case.

Ironically, the United States government itself erected barriers that discouraged such actions and essentially spared the Philippines from exploitation. Anti-imperialists in America from the start had watched the Philippines like hawks, ready for any signs of American commercial piracy with which to attack the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations and the imperialist lobby as a whole.²⁷

Furthermore, Progressive era attitudes about the negative impact of the corporation and the trust were in full swing, with legislation to curb their power being crafted and enacted. Any attempts to economically rape the Philippines would be met with swift counterforce by a partisan group who had been all but waiting for the chance to challenge imperialism in open legal and political combat.

A prime of example of this was when Governor Taft tried to attract mining investors to the Philippines in 1902. Congress placed harsh limits on the amount of land an American

²⁷ Karnow, *In Our Image*, 221.

individual or corporation could claim, discouraging the widespread influx of capital and American workers that Taft had hoped would jumpstart his efforts at nation modernization. This policy of land grant limitation also extended across the board to other areas of agribusiness and industry, as Southern politicians venomously condemned “carpetbagger” behavior and were in turn supported by reform minded Northern colleagues who saw the Philippines as another theater of possible corporate exploitation.

Even Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the ardent imperialist who sat the right hand of William McKinley during the entire crafting for the Philippine annexation and touted the wealth of the islands for American investment, switched his position and went along with the restrictions, justifying his actions with the excuse that “ultimate peace, prosperity and good government,” were a better benefit than American commercial profits.²⁸

Lodge’s claims aside, there were other, more political, reasons the United States limited attempts at economic intercourse between the United States and its new colony. Encouraging investment and economic ties with the Philippines naturally meant a lowering of trade restrictions and tariffs on Philippine goods, a hot button issue in turn-of-the-century politics. Americans in states focused on agribusiness (e.g. California, the Midwest, and the American South) feared the free trade with the Philippines that Taft pushed ardently for as a way to weld the islands closer to the United States.

To farmers in these states Philippine sugar, wood, tobacco, produce, and other cash crops would compete with American grown goods, a situation they were not willing to accept no matter how much closer free trade would have brought the new colony to the United States. With cheaper production costs in the Philippines and no protective tariff due to Taft sponsored

²⁸ Karnow, *In Our Image* 217, 221.

free trade, American producers feared they would be pushed out of their home markets or forced to lower their own prices, cutting into their profits, an echo of the arguments raised by American Anti-Imperialist League.

Thus, congressmen and senators from agriculturally powerful states were all too quick to enact protective measures, limiting the amount of investment, maintaining strong trade barriers on key commodities (naturally the ones most Americans would have invested in) and even granting more power to Filipino leaders over land grants, counting on Philippine nationalism and fear of American corporations to counteract American investment.²⁹

Not surprisingly, most major American investors, ranging from small wildcat miners to high level corporate players like the House of Morgan never expanded operations to the Philippines past the most minor and token of holdings, opting instead for restriction-free profits in the United States or greater gains in established markets such as Europe. Barring the occasional plantation, mine, or merchant house, the Philippine market was kept essentially at arms length from the U.S. for almost a decade and left for all intents and purposes exclusively to Filipino firms and businessmen to dominate. Naturally, this frustrated men like Taft and Forbes, who wondered how the United States could claim to want the islands with such imperialist zeal and yet refrained from tying it closer with economic bonds, a core hallmark of any imperial power.

While the Philippines eventually became tied to the American economy, the long fight over regulation took its toll. In the final analysis the Philippines never materialized as a colony with the same value to the U.S. as India had for England or Manchuria for Japan. Over half of American foreign trade still went to Europe in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century

²⁹ Karnow, *In Our Image* 221.

and while it was at lower levels than trade had been in the late 1800s, the coming of the First World War would boost American trade with the European powers to new heights and cement the idea that Europe, not Asia, was the most valuable market for American businesses.³⁰

Also, America's proximity and political hegemony in the Caribbean (via control of the Panama Canal, islands like Puerto Rico and essentially Cuba, and the government policy of "Dollar Diplomacy" that supported American businesses to dominate the region in order to exclude European interests) made investment in Latin America easier and therefore more attractive than far-flung Asia.

Indeed, between 1905 and 1912 (the eras of Republican rule) trade with China, that economic holy grail the Philippines was supposed to allow America to participate in as a major player, *dropped* from \$53 million to \$24 million; caused among other things by the political instability of the region which discouraged investors in the big money projects of railroads and mercantilism.³¹ While the Philippines had its own independent value (mostly in agribusiness), it was for the most part negligible and certainly the profits garnered by the islands were far smaller than the promised riches of the China trade, which had been the core reason for the islands annexation in the first place.

Thus economically, the Philippines was a marginally successful acquisition, at most a modest producer of raw materials exclusively for the American market, but hardly a major prize or key territory that the U.S. would be loath to lose. Thus, the reality of the Philippine annexation underscores this basic truth: the United States' involvement in the Philippines was never really a case of imperialism in the traditional sense of resource or market seeking.

³⁰ Sidney Ratner, James Soltow, and Richard Sylla, *The Evolution of the American Economy: Growth, Welfare and Decision Making* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), 387.

³¹ Joseph A. Fry, "In Search of an Orderly World: U.S. Imperialism, 1898-1912," in *Modern American Diplomacy*, ed. John M. Carroll and George C. Herring (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1986), 18.

Rather, as with Cameron Forbes's celebrated roadways, the islands' main value became its use for partisan politics, namely to win votes for the Republican Party in the post-Spanish American War elections. Republicans claimed the islands to give a tangible trophy of the war with Spain, since Cuba was denied to them, and to symbolize their new policy of establishing the United States as a Great Power, a force in international politics and, in rhetoric if not in fact, as a symbol of wealth from international trade. Improving the Philippines was to be a symbol of the superiority of the United States, and showcase the supremacy of American government for the audience of American voters.

To this end, "uplifting" the Filipinos was the core policy because of the ease of using such benchmarks as economic gain, roads, bridges, and other public works projects as signs of progress to Americans. But any policy that threatened ultimate American prosperity *at home*, any policy that proved a political liability, would be cast aside and never implemented, no matter how "imperialist" it might be, as was the case with Lodge's switch of stance and support for restrictions on American investment in the Philippines. Thus, trade and investment in the Philippines might have tied the islands to the United States in true imperial fashion, such as India was to Great Britain or Manchuria to Russia and then Japan, but a true empire with the resultant economics was not the object. Political gain and capital was the real treasure of the Philippines.

The material successes the Taft regime brought the Filipinos also had the effect of proving and codifying the Republican imperialist view that the Philippines were not ready for independence. When questioned specifically on the matter before the United States Congress in

1902, Taft noted that it would be at least two to three generations before the mere question of independence should even be raised.³²

Based on the material primitivism of the islands and the total unfitness of the Filipinos to government and provide for their nation in any level even approximating the technological and political levels of the United States, Taft came away with the view that the U.S. had to keep and continue to uplift the civilization of the islands or else the entire annexation would be a waste.

Moreover, Taft noted that giving the islands independence before that time, indeed even noting that independence was an issue on the table, would lead to chaos and anarchy in the islands.³³ Filipino demagogues would rise up and incite ignorant or shortsighted Filipinos to pursue independence despite any material gains they realized from the United States. Indeed, a core issue that Taft noted to Congress was that “it is almost impossible to impress on the average Filipinos of intelligence and education the idea that an office is to be managed for anything but the personal emolument of the person holding it.”

He further elaborated, stating “they are an oriental people, and the oriental believes in saying to the person with whom he is talking what that person would like to hear...a Filipino will talk to you in language so that, if you do not weigh it in the light of that trait, you are quite certain to misunderstand him, and be misled by that trait.”³⁴

If anything, Cameron Forbes was even more convinced than his predecessor that the Filipinos needed the United States. From the start, his fellow Boston Brahmins had warned him of what he might find in the Philippines, namely that Filipinos were “abysses of crudity in some

³² Graf, *American Imperialism* 36.

³³ Graf, *American Imperialism* 37.

³⁴ Graf *American Imperialism* 39, 158.

of [American] popular notions,” a belief that was only strengthened when Forbes was confronted with the difficulties of nation building.

Indeed, while he was engrossed with his road building plans, the Filipino newspaper *El Ideal*, which he characterized as a wholly partisan engine of the Filipino independence lobby, assailed Forbes. *El Ideal* criticized that Forbes’s roads were siphoning money away from agricultural projects. Forbes, who saw roads as critical to the Philippine economy as a whole, and agriculture in particular, dismissed this as a sign of the ignorance on the part of the paper, and the reporter in particular, but also as a sign of the ignorance of Filipinos in general as a people who had never experienced modernization and the prosperity it brought.³⁵

Certainly the attitudes the jibe of *El Ideal* raised in Forbes can be seen in a letter to Taft, where he commented, “I don’t write or speak in favor of the independence, as I don’t believe in it.” Clearly, Forbes believed that since almost all of the advances and high qualities of life in the Philippines were the work of Americans, an American withdrawal would lead almost immediately to chaos.³⁶

More to the point, Forbes felt that Filipinos wanted “independence very much as a baby wants a candle, because it is held out to them.”³⁷ There was no thought as to the burdens, responsibilities, and dangers of independence because most Filipinos were infants in the realm of self-rule. Just as they had displayed ignorance with their attacks on his road projects because of their lack of experience in running a successful and prosperous government, they would ultimately be unable to fend for themselves.

³⁵ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1, 384.

³⁶ Quoted in Brands, *Bound to Empire* 89-90.

³⁷ Karnow, *In Our Image* 217.

As with Taft, Forbes saw independence as coming only when the Philippines had a sound economy that could sustain the advances made by the United States. In private, Forbes told Taft that

I really expect when the time [for Philippine independence] comes, that they have reached...say five times as much per capita [in trade] as they are today, the islands will then for the first time be strong enough to maintain a separate government. But...each advance should be made tentatively under such circumstances that the step could be withdrawn if the ice seemed to be too thin.³⁸

Forbes's view that the Philippines needed the United States also stemmed from his less than glowing opinion of Filipino leaders. Under Taft, Filipino elites--known as *illustrados*--had been welcomed into a sort of junior partnership in independence, encouraged to form a popularly elected National Assembly along the lines of the American Congress. Naturally, the National Assembly was under the authority of the governor-general and the "upper house" of the Philippine Commission and had no real power to enact legislation that the U.S. policy makers themselves did not approve.³⁹

In essence, the Assembly was a kind of debating society and political training academy where Americans, like Taft and Forbes, hoped to exhibit how Filipinos were learning American style government as well as cultivate a pro-American coterie among the leading figures of the Philippines. Indeed, "it was suggested to these leaders that it would undoubtedly produce an extremely good impression on the United States if the first act of the Philippine Legislature was

³⁸ Quoted in Brands, *Bound to Empire* 90.

³⁹ The Philippine Commission was essentially the cabinet of the Philippine government, with each commissioner heading up the various offices of the civil government. The Commission was made up of five Americans and four Filipinos, however, it should be noted that the commissioners were all answerable to the governor-general, who appointed the individual commissioners, who in turn was under the secretary of war, who of course ultimately served at the pleasure of the President of the United States. Basically, the commissioners, regardless of race, were expected to enact policy set forth by Washington. Indeed, Taft's promotion or election to all of these offices made sure that he was in control of the Philippines in one way or another until the election of Woodrow Wilson, almost a decade and half.

to be one recognizing the sovereignty of the United States, an expression of appreciation for concessions already granted.”⁴⁰

With the creation of popular elections in the Philippines, American leaders in the Philippines, especially Forbes, were surprised at the duality of Filipino politicians. The same leaders who would, on a regular basis, publicly call for Americans to leave the islands would almost immediately after, in private consultation with Forbes, show their support for the American regime, even to the point of stating that Forbes should not take their nationalistic rhetoric seriously as it was merely a case of showmanship for Filipino voters, a hallmark of Filipinos known as *palabas*--a case of playing a persona in public that was expected by the masses, even if it differed from private beliefs.⁴¹

To colonial leaders, like Forbes, this attitude was key sign of the incapability of the Filipinos for self-rule, a sign of immature venality left over from Spanish colonial times. In his experience,

One trait of the Filipino must always be borne in mind. Not in vain were the years of Spanish dominion, and the Filipino learned something of the Castilian practice of being superlatively polite. It is a national trait to endeavor to say the thing that will please, and the Filipino is very apt to talk to the desire of his hearer.⁴²

Filipino politicians may say in public that they wanted independence, may castigate Americans as oppressive, unfair, even exorbitant in the spending of public funds, but all of this was show, *palabas*. In reality, Filipino elites enjoyed the benefits of American rule and patronage and while some nationalist sentiment was of course natural and authentic for the most part *ilustrados*, occupying positions of power in the American regime and benefiting from the

⁴⁰ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, 136.

⁴¹ Brands, *Bound to Empire* 90-91.

⁴² Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1, 69.

wealth generated by the public works and policies of Taft and Forbes, knew which side their bread was buttered on and never seriously mounted any serious campaign.

Indeed, Forbes and Sergio Osmena, the speaker of the Philippine assembly and the leading Filipino politician worked as a two-man government, privately discussing bills (really requests) of the Philippine Assembly and coming to agreements on what would be passed.⁴³ As Osmena himself told to Forbes “the Filipinos wanted independence only when it seemed it was getting farther off, and the minute it began to get near they would begin to get very much frightened.”⁴⁴ This remark only naturally reinforced Forbes’s belief that Filipinos were unfit for self-rule and continued to ignore Filipino politicians’ demands for independence.

The opposition to granting independence that Taft and Forbes thus exhibited did not stem from any desire to oppress the Filipinos or to keep the Philippines because of their value to the United States. More simply, they opposed independence because if the Americans left the islands prematurely, they believed that Filipino leaders would be incapable of running the country and the ensuing chaos would not only ruin all the work done by the United States in the islands, it would reflect poorly on the United States as a world power.

Americans had claimed the superiority of their system of government, especially in comparison to traditional imperial colonies such as in Africa, India and Indochina and leaving the Philippines to turmoil would make these claims ring false. More specifically, the Republican Party would lose credibility and become vulnerable as it retreated from the policy of benevolent imperialism it had so ardently espoused and fought—politically and militarily—so hard for. So

⁴³ Bonifacio S. Salamanca, *The Filipino Reaction to American Rule 1901-1913* (New Haven: the Shoe String Press, 1968), 64.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Karnow, *In Our Image* 239.

to save face, and political capital, the Philippines had to be retained and improved and touted as the great symbol of American—and Republican—success.

The era of Taft and Forbes, spanning from 1901 to 1912, saw the strongest entrenchment of Republican imperialist policy. From first moment that President McKinley decided to keep the islands, the Republican Party defined the American mission as a benevolent one, bringing the blessing of American civilization on the Filipinos. This partisan political stance was carefully designed to win over the maximum amount of support from Americans by showing off the success of American rule in the Philippines, instilling national pride and giving the Republican Party the aura of conquer, missionary, patron, and nation builder.

When one sees the Taft and Forbes concentration on efficient government, on public works, on highly visible, tangible, quantifiable improvements and projects, it is easy to see what the Republican imperialists measured as a success and how their era of rule was designed to bring maximum political dividends in America. Naturally, imperialist attitudes and dreams of empire were present, but the bottom line was always that the Philippines would support and show off political policy. Anything that detracted from this, such as issues of increased Philippine independence, would be prevented, not from any sense of imperial policy, but from a sense that it would look bad for the United States and become a liability for the party in power, i.e. the Republicans. America's empire in the Philippines was not undertaken for any love of the White Man's burden, it was undertaken for the love of the American man's votes.

CHAPTER 4: THE DEMOCRATIC ERA

*“Take up the White Man's burden--
Ye dare not stoop to less--
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloak your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your gods and you.”*

*--Rudyard Kipling
“The White Man's Burden, 1899.”¹*

“The Philippines are our present frontier, and we don't know what rich things are happening out there and are presently, I hope to deprive ourselves of that frontier.”² With that statement, itself little more than a throwaway line in a longer victory speech, president-elect Woodrow Wilson foreshadowed one of the most controversial and pivotal eras of the American rule of the Philippines.

By the end of President William Howard Taft's administration, the Philippines had been under the firm control of Republican administrations and their policies of tutelage and slow movement towards more and more autonomy. Taft and his successor Cameron Forbes had focused on making the islands economically successful, technologically advanced, and efficiently run, at least to a level never experienced under Spanish rule.

However, with the Republican Party's defeat in the 1912 election, the policy governing the Philippines was soon to change. Wilson's Democratic administration had a distinctly different view of the role the Philippines was to play in American government, specifically that

¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man's Bruden” in *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. T.S. Elliot, (Faber and Faber Limited, 1941; reprint, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, 1962), 144-145.

² *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Arthur S. Link, vol. 25, 1912 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 635.

the United States had a duty to let the Philippines have more independence, perhaps even total independence if possible, but also to find a way to steal the credit of success in the islands from the Republicans.

Influenced by the traditional opposition to imperialism in the Democratic Party's platform, the machinations of Filipino politicians that were themselves products of Taft's and Forbes's policies, and not in the least his own views and "higher realism," Wilson's policies showed perhaps even more sharply than McKinley's, Roosevelt's or Taft's, that the Philippine colonial policy was a clear extension of American political agendas.

The roots of the Democratic opposition to the imperialism have already been commented upon in this thesis. Both southern and northern Democrats had feared that the rise of imperialism would lead to economic challenges to homegrown agriculture and labor. Additionally racially biased attitudes of the day balked at allowing more non-whites to enter the country. Politically, the William Jennings Bryan's campaigns against both William McKinley and William Howard Taft had tried, in varying degrees, to use anti-imperialism as a vote issue to mobilize Democrats and win over anti-imperialists. Against McKinley, Bryan had used words and imagery in his famous and powerful speeches, stating that the election was more than a contest between political parties but was more akin to the arguments of the American Revolution where "the colonists must choose between liberty and slavery."³

Continuing in this vein, Bryan peppered his rhetoric with symbolism and analogy, calling attention to the Philippines as a battleground where liberty was being slaughtered, at the attitude of militarism and monarchist arrogance cultivated by the Republican Party's imperialism and asserting that a vote for him and the Democratic Party was a pledge to support the idea that the

³ Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 102-103.

United States was “a republic in which every citizen is a sovereign, but where no one cares to wear a crown.”⁴

Later, when running against Taft, Bryan reaffirmed his pledge to end American dominion over the islands, tying it to his platform of overall reform and opposition to trusts and the moneyed corporate elite.⁵ In both cases, anti-imperialism had not been enough to win the necessary votes and support to swing the elections in Bryan’s way. However, Bryan’s status as a party leader even after his failed campaigns helped make anti-imperialism and immediate independence for the Philippines a core partisan issue for the Democrats.

In his campaign against Theodore Roosevelt, Judge Alton Parker characterized the members of the American government in the Philippines as “at the best inefficient, at worst dishonest, corrupt, and despotic. The islands seem to have succeeded in getting the very dregs of our people.”⁶ Clearly Parker’s goal was to use this claim to characterize Roosevelt and the Republicans as responsible for colonial corruption and failure.

Another Democratic partisan critic was the Congressman William Jones of Virginia who had been brought around to the idea of Philippine independence by his close friendship with Manuel Quezon, a savvy Filipino politician who had managed to have himself appointed Resident Commissioner from the Philippines--a non-voting representative post to the United States Congress that, ironically, had been created by Taft as way to send Filipino politicians to Washington to both reward them for their loyalty and have them learn the American democratic process.

⁴ Quoted in Kazin, *A Godly Hero* 103.

⁵ *The Collected Works of William Howard Taft*, ed. David H. Burton, vol. 2, *Political Issues and Outlooks; Speeches Delivered between August 1908 and February 1909* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001) 58-67, Kazin, *A Godly Hero* 142-143.

⁶ W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 1, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 150.

Jones attacked the Forbes run regime as a wasteful government that had abandoned any claims of being for the good of the Filipinos. The congressman criticized aspects ranging from what he considered the exorbitant salaries of the American commissioners to the public works Forbes and the Republicans were so proud of, stating

That much of [the money spent on the administration of the Philippines]...was needlessly and shamefully wasted and that the benefits derived from its expenditure, even in those cases where the expenditure was proper, have rarely, if ever, been commensurate with the cost...the government we have imposed upon the Filipinos has been extravagant and wasteful.⁷

Parker's and Jones's comments lacked factual accuracy and were vehemently rebuffed by leading supporters of the Taft regime, most notably Cameron Forbes. An incensed Forbes fired back strong refutations of the Democrats' critiques, claiming they were based solely on partisanship and even stating that the Democrats were being deliberately misinformed by Filipino political schemers (i.e. Quezon), who were using the American politicians to circumvent Forbes's policies for their own political gain.

Partisanship or not, the attacks of Judge Parker and Congressman Jones show that anti-colonialism had become a stock critique used by Democrats against the Republicans and one that was popular enough to last from election season to election season. To Democrats, the Republican regime in the Philippines was a perfect target for criticism not only for its imperialist nature, but also because it could be used as a symbol of both government waste and corruption, a popular target of Progressive era politicians who were advocating reform. Furthermore, Democrats gained more ammunition thanks to the Filipinos themselves and the political rivalry forming in the islands between Filipino elites and American leaders, especially during the Forbes administration.

⁷ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, 190.

As previously seen, during his tenure as governor-general Cameron Forbes had a penchant to portray any disagreements between Filipinos and Americans as stemming from self-centered motives of native politicians trying to use a kind of “race card” to benefit themselves. Forbes was always quick to point out that the majority of Filipinos--the working class laborers, the small farmers, even members of the middle classes—were happy with the tangible benefits of the American administration.

The Filipino who owns and works his own land is no fool. He is representative of the great mass of people. He knows when he is well off. He appreciates peace, justice as between man and man, good roads, good schooling for his children at public expense, efficient public health service...and last, but by no means least, good prices for his own products.... This very important element of the population, commonly spoken of as the *tao*, is contented.⁸

While the truth of Forbes’s claim is not without merit, it is important to note that it wasn’t the mass of the *tao* that garnered the attention of American politicians but the more vocal and official groups in the Philippines, such as newspapers and nationalist politicians in the Philippine Assembly who represented a totally different point of view and provided a greater political opportunity for Democrats.

In 1908, on the eve of William Howard Taft’s assumption of the presidency, the firebrand Manila newspaper *El Renacimiento* published an article attacking Taft’s continued beliefs that Filipinos were still not ready for self-rule, stating that

Ten long years passed in this preparation, ten years of guardianship, ten years of painful experience, ten years of bitter deception and yet the problem remains unsolved.... The most conservative Filipinos, the friends of the government, those who have been ardent partisans of the American sovereignty...do not hesitate to denounce the educational period of two generations which Taft has indicated. The Philippine nation aspires more ardently with every passing day to be independent.⁹

⁸ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2., 67-68

⁹ *El Renacimiento* “Taft’s terms of Probation” in *The Philippine Reader: A History of Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*, ed. Daniel B. Schrimmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom (Boston: South End Press, 1978), 50.

The words of *El Renacimiento* were gleefully reprinted in the United States by anti-imperialists as a sign that Taft's claims of benevolent imperialism, used in its campaign to refute Democratic attacks, had a false ring to them. Again, while the biases of both sides of the issue could blur the truth of the matter, the point remains that Democrats looking for an issue with which to attack the Republicans were presented with a nice opportunity represented by the claims of this publication.

Indeed, the complaints stated in *El Renacimiento* were not limited to what Taft and Forbes constantly described as a tiny segment of demagogues and malcontents to be ignored as a lunatic fringe. These complaints were also a constant theme in the meetings of the Philippine Assembly. As stated in the previous chapter, Taft had encouraged the *illustardo* class of Filipinos to run for office and form a Philippine National Assembly or Legislature, which was envisioned to be part debating society, part statesman training and totally submissive to the governor-general and the American dominated Philippine Commission in any political action.¹⁰

Additionally, Taft had intended the Assembly to first and foremost foster closer ties between American and Filipinos, specifically to cultivate loyalty among the leading Filipinos. Feeling that the more educated *illustrados* would know the value of remaining a client state of the United States, Taft saw their assumption of elected office as only adding to the stability of the American position in the islands.

However, as soon as they were presented with a political platform, these Filipino politicians began to advocate independence from the United States. The reasons for this were

¹⁰ The Commission was the effective "Upper House" of the Philippine government and could veto any of the "bills" (really requests) of the "Lower House," the Philippine legislature. Because the Commission had a majority of Americans appointed by the governor-generals to it, this effectively limited the Philippine Legislature to the point where it had no political power except that which the governor-general decided to extend to it, which was exactly what Taft and Forbes wanted.

quite simple: any Filipino who wanted to win a seat in the Legislature had to advocate immediate independence, even if he personally felt that such a push for independence was unwise or contrary to Philippine interests. To do otherwise would offend Filipino pride by essentially stating that Filipinos were not good enough to run their own country and had to essentially remain dependants of a greater power, a loss of face that would inevitably translate to a loss of votes.¹¹

A clear example of this was the 1907 Philippine legislature election, where the brand new *Nacionalista* Party, advocating immediate independence for the Philippines, won fifty nine out of eighty seats in the legislature, compared to sixteen seats for their rival, the more conservative *Progresistas* Party, which advocated eventual independence at an undefined time and under undefined circumstances.¹² Inevitably then, the Philippine Assembly was overwhelmingly filled with Filipinos who were publicly stating their desire for immediate independence and, because of the formal nature of the body (ironically due once again to Taft, who wanted to make the assembly look as close to the American congress as possible), this became the view of Filipino public opinion as a whole.

Indeed, while Taft and the Republican Party's loss in the 1912 election had more to do with party divisions at home than issues of empire, the Philippines nevertheless was a nice source of critique against the former governor-general and even more so against the third party candidate running against both Taft and the Democrats, Teddy Roosevelt.

The Democrats could easily point to the numerous and constant stream of speeches coming from the Philippine Assembly, a popularly elected, official organ of representative government, and charge that Republican and Bull Moose-er alike had a history of forcing heavy

¹¹Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Random House, 1989), 238.

¹²H.W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: the United States and the Philippines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 87

handed rule down the Filipinos throats. Thus, by the advent of Woodrow Wilson's candidacy in 1912, anti-imperialism had become a standard part of the Democratic Party's platform and with his victory, an expectation that he would follow through with dismantling the Republican built regime.¹³

Unlike William Jennings Bryan, the father of Democratic opposition to empire, Woodrow Wilson was not an ardent anti-imperialist from the beginning. Ironically, Wilson shared much of the Republican view of imperialism, not the least of which was the idea that a democracy and an empire were not necessarily mutually exclusive ideas. In an interview in early 1903, while the Taft regime was setting up rule over the islands and the very question of imperialism was still a powerful partisan issue, Wilson noted that the establishment of an empire with colonies supporting a strong central government could also show broad respect for individual rights and liberties.¹⁴

Indeed, in a speech to the University Club of St. Louis a few months later, Wilson further elaborated on his views of imperialism by noting that the expansionist mood of the United States in the aftermath of the war with Spain was similar to the other historical waves of expansion in American history, such as the Louisiana Purchase and even the English establishment of the first thirteen colonies.¹⁵ In essence, Wilson was, from almost the beginning, excusing the seizure of the Philippines as an action symbolizing pure Americanism rather than some atavism or betrayal of basic American principles.

Yet if Wilson's words seem ironically reminiscent of the sentiments of arch-imperialists like Senator Albert Beveridge, he nevertheless believed in imperialism for a higher moral reason.

¹³ Karnow, *In Our Image*, 238-240, 242-243

¹⁴ *Wilson Papers*, vol. 14, 325.

¹⁵ *Wilson Papers*, vol. 14, 433.

Like many of the anti-imperialists, such as his party's leader William Jennings Bryan, Wilson believed in a democratic government that worked to preserve the freedoms of its citizens and opposed tyranny. This view extended to the Philippines and the Filipinos and Wilson felt that the United States had at least some responsibility for the welfare of the islands even if they were not to be fully integrated into the nation with full statehood.

To Wilson, democracy was "the most advanced, humane, and Christian form of government" and, similar to the arguments of the more moderate imperialists such as Taft, the spread of democracy even by imperialist means could only lead to an overall gain for any colonized peoples.¹⁶ Naturally of course, a period of tutelage was necessary and Wilson believed that democracy "is a stage of development. It is not created by aspirations or by new faith; it is built up by slow habit.... It comes, like manhood, as the fruit of youth: immature people cannot have it...."¹⁷

Morality and personal beliefs aside, there was a more realistic reason that Wilson was reluctant to get on board the anti-imperialism platform in the first phase of imperialist rule in the Philippines: politics. In a 1907 public lecture at Columbia University, Wilson showed that he understood the prevailing political winds.

The war with Spain has changed the balance of parts. The nation has risen to the first rank in power and resources.... Our president can never again be the mere domestic figure he has been throughout so late a part of our history.... Our president must always, henceforth, be one of the great powers of the world....¹⁸

As Wilson saw it, the victory over Spain, of which the Philippines was the most tangible symbol and prize, was linked in the popular (electoral) mind with the rise of America to the

¹⁶ Quoted in Arthur S. Link, *The Higher Reality of Woodrow Wilson and other essays* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 77.

¹⁷ Quoted in Link, *The Higher Reality of Woodrow Wilson* 77.

¹⁸ Quoted in Link, *The Higher Reality of Woodrow Wilson* 76.

status of a leading world power. Opposing it would be tantamount to opposing victory and success for America, obviously the weakest of political positions for a man to espouse.

Even constantly advocating independence for the Philippines was distasteful to Wilson, who saw it as smacking of whining weakness. In a speech delivered in 1904, when the Democrats were trying to use anti-imperialism as a way to attack Theodore Roosevelt's bid for reelection, Wilson openly criticized the American Anti-Imperialist League, stating

Because of our Americanism, we had no patience with the anti-imperialist weepings and wailings that came out of Boston [home of the League]...we knew that the crying time was over and that the time had come for men to look out of dry eyes and see the world as it is. There is no use crying over spilt milk; that isn't the American spirit. The only reformer worth his salt is the one who will do the thing he can do and not mope over things he can't accomplish.¹⁹

Unsurprisingly, a month later Wilson somewhat tersely wrote to the League's secretary Edward Ordway, stating he found their position was neither "wise or opportune" and flatly refused to be associated with them.²⁰

Wilson's somewhat harsh view of the idealism of the League clearly show his streak of political realism. While he openly stated his respect for the League's right to voice their opposition, he nevertheless saw them as a political liability and carefully structured his public comments to distance himself from their ideology and from being cast as a member of their organization. Thus, unlike the more ardently anti-imperialist, and therefore more politically vulnerable Bryan, Wilson's comments on Americanism and realism prevented himself from being painted as a kind of Caspar Milquetoast, a weakling too afraid to accept the role of world power and destiny of empire.

¹⁹ *Wilson Papers*, vol. 15, 143.

²⁰ *Wilson Papers*, vol. 15, 175.

However, it would be unfair to paint Wilson as a cynical opportunist who just went with the prevailing political wind. “Wilsonian Imperialism” believed that its overall goal was to spread democracy and the other fruits of enlightened American government, not to pillage colonial acquisitions. It was the service of mankind, not mammon (or politics), which justified imperialism and the spread of American rule, the assumption of the role of “custodians of the spirit of righteousness, of the spirit of equal-handed justice, of the spirit of hope,” not the spirit of commercial enterprise or international *real politik*.²¹

There is a certain irony in Wilson’s beliefs, mostly in that while he was essentially of the same view of Taft, his feelings were nevertheless the seed that would, upon his assumption of the presidency, lead to his formulation of the Filipinization policy that so offended Cameron Forbes and other Republican stalwarts of the American empire in the Philippines.

Wilson’s views on the Philippines did not so much change as, in his opinion, the Republicans forgot the basic goal for the Philippines that some of them, specifically William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt, had espoused. Wilson always believed that the goal of the United States was to impart democracy to the Philippines and with that done, then ultimately grant them home rule at the least or leave the islands to the Filipinos to govern themselves, similar to a viewpoint espoused by Theodore Roosevelt, though perhaps Wilson understood this in a different way than his presidential rival.²²

²¹ Wilson quoted in Link, *The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson*, 78.

²² Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1913; reprinted New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), 516-517. Roosevelt stated, “We are governing and have been governing the islands in the interests of the Filipinos themselves. If after due time the Filipinos themselves decide that they do not wish to be thus governed, then I trust that we will leave; but when we do leave it must be distinctly understood that we retain no protectorate—and above all that we take part in no joint protectorate—over the islands and give them no guarantee of neutrality or otherwise; that in short we are absolutely quit of responsibility for them, of every kind and description.” Clearly, Roosevelt’s speech was a not-so-veiled warning to the Filipinos that their national fate could be far worse without American management (i.e. they could be conquered by a far less liberal state like Japan) and they should be happy for the Americans and stop vocal opposition.

Wilson felt that the Republicans, so concerned with a smooth running government that created roads, bridges and other public works—those visible tangible measures of success—had forgotten their mission of teaching and training for democracy. “We have annexed territories,” Wilson said in an address to a gathering of college presidents and chancellors in 1907, just three years after his rebuffing of the Anti-Imperialist League and show of support for the spread of American rule. “And not known how to govern and unite them to those that are older and more established in their forms of instruction.... We have missed the meaning of education....”²³

While this seems an oblique criticism, one can see how Wilson’s position was being formulated with the insinuation that the Republicans had lost sight of the main goal of their “democratic imperialism” and were now open to attack on their policy that would not seem weak or contrary to American international power and prestige.

In a 1908 book of lectures, released in time to coincide with former Philippine governor-general William Howard Taft’s bid for the presidency, Wilson opined

We have dependencies to deal with and must deal with them in the true spirit of our institutions. We can give the Filipinos constitutional government, a government which they may count upon to be just, a government that is based on some clear and equitable understanding, intended for their good and not for our aggrandizement...it may confidently be hoped that they will become a community under the wholesome and salutary influences of just laws and a sympathetic administration.²⁴

In 1911, just one year before his run for the presidency, Wilson put the fine point on his argument in a short letter stating “I believe that they [the Philippines] should be prepared for independence by a steady increasing measure of self-government.”²⁵

A final and telling sign of Wilson’s shift in opinion, and political instincts, came during his 1912 presidential campaign. Again spurred on by Manuel Quezon, Congressman William

²³ *Wilson Papers*, vol. 17, 545.

²⁴ *Wilson Papers*, vol. 18, 104.

²⁵ *Wilson Papers*, vol. 23, 26.

Jones, the afore-mentioned critic of Forbes's government, forwarded a bill calling for process to grant the Philippines independence. Clearly a partisan issue designed to provoke an outburst of Republican imperialism during an election year thus refreshing the issue for debate, Jones's bill was expected to be vetoed and therefore act as a way to get votes and support for Jones and enhance Quezon's status among Filipino elites by casting him as an ardent nationalist and an insider with the ear of Washington power players.²⁶

What is intriguing is that Wilson, the same man who had avoided advocating Philippine independence in any of the previous national elections, showed sympathy for Jones's bill and even considered using it as a counter to the arch-imperialist Theodore Roosevelt (who was making his bid for a third presidential term with the Bull Moose Party). Writing to party leader Senator Oscar Underwood, he noted, "I shall be perfectly willing to have the [Jones] bill brought up at any time it seems best to [House Democrats]. I do not think it will embarrass the campaign in anyway and that perhaps there is a slight preponderance of argument in favor of the immediate passage of the bill."²⁷

While Roosevelt never brought up the issue of empire or the Philippines in his platform (and Wilson won less on issues and mostly due to the Republican Party splitting itself and forcing its stalwarts to choose either Roosevelt or Taft), the point is clear that Wilson no longer opposed the idea of Philippine independence if it was reached through American "education" and, of course, a Democratic administration.

Taken together, these statements show clearly Wilson's ultimate philosophy regarding the Philippines and foreshadow the policies of his presidency. The success of American

²⁶ Karnow, *In Our Image*, 241-242.

²⁷ *Wilson Papers*, vol. 24, 560.

international power stemming from the victory over Spain was never questioned, indeed even supported as something that would ultimately benefit Filipinos with the establishment of democracy, thus preventing the Republicans from rebutting his attacks with the examples of their success in managing the Philippines, such as those public works so dear to Forbes.

Wilson also steered clear of embracing the call for immediate independence and thus opening himself to attack for being an irresponsible reactionary who would do away with the decade-plus of progress in the Philippines, preventing himself from being lumped in with political impotents like the Anti-Imperialist League. His attack was not so much on the idea of imperialism (therefore he dodging the political trap Bryan fell into) but on the Republican policy, which he states had not trained the Filipinos well enough in the arts of democracy. The only way the Filipinos could learn those arts would be to actually take a hand in the administration of the islands, taking up positions in the civil government at all levels.

However, the Republican administration established by Taft and presided over by Forbes seemed to be dominated by Americans and unwilling to allow more Filipino participation. Democrats such as Parker and Jones had laid the foundation for criticizing the Republican regime, linking it to corruption and mismanagement. While those charges were vague, biased, and in some cases blatantly untrue assertions they were nevertheless ones that were difficult to disprove and stayed in the public mind, playing well to the stereotypes of imperial colonial governments and corruption in the high offices. With Filipino political leaders openly calling for independence, Wilson's critique was a subtle and clever way to cast aspersions on the Republicans as failures in imperial American democratic nation building and offer a solution that in which everyone would win.

Another thing that aided Wilson was the relative failure of the China trade to live up to the expectations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century imperialist “boosters.” A perfect example of this was in 1911 when the Taft administration’s Secretary of State Philander Knox demanded American entry into a complicated international economic consortium of English, French, German, Russian and Japanese banks and industries that would build railroads in Manchuria.²⁸

Ironically, while Taft and Knox saw involvement in the consortium as critical to supporting American policy in China, such as the Open Door, and fought a protracted diplomatic war to gain American firms access to the business of Manchurian rail, the American businessmen involved, led by J.P. Morgan, ever the realist, saw the whole deal as worthless, requiring too many concessions to their European and Asian partners to be profitable.²⁹

Additionally, the disintegration of the Chinese government under the Manchu dynasty made the threat of a scramble for the remnants of the China empire by the other consortium members seem inevitable. After being all but drafted into participating in the consortium, the American financiers demanded guarantees that the United States would protect their investment in the volatile region by any means, up to and including use of force.³⁰

Not surprisingly, when the Democrats took power in 1913 Wilson refused to support the reluctant businessmen with military involvement and pulled American involvement from the consortium, a move that resulted in little opposition from his cabinet, the press, the public or even the business community.³¹

²⁸ Roy Watson Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy 1913-1921* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968), 19.

²⁹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, 20.

³⁰ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, 21.

³¹ Curry, *Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, 24.

The importance of the consortium controversy to the Philippine situation is that with the reluctance of Americans to get involved in China, with its fragmenting government and the rising hegemony of other predatory powers in the region such as Japan, the Philippine became much less important to the United States. The Philippines had been sold to the American people as the key to the treasure room that was China. With the decline of American interest in the region, there would be a commensurate decline in reasons to keep the Philippines, whose intrinsic value was marginal at best. Thus, Wilson could fulfill his party's promise of independence and face no opposition from business interests.

Furthermore, the Manchurian consortium affair seemed to symbolize all of the negative connotations of empire and the previous Gilded Age. From foreign entanglement to the involvement of robber barons and their monopolies to the use of the American government for the profit of private corporations to the threat of war, the consortium was almost a perfect example of the corruption inherent to empire and its adherents. Wilson, who had opposed Taft and Roosevelt on grounds of reforming corrupt government, could use a reformulation of foreign policy that seemed to cater only to militarists and financiers to show he was keeping his campaign pledge and win political points at home.³²

Finally, if Wilson could give the Filipinos more responsibility and defacto independence, the United States could finally withdraw from the islands and declare that it had "won" with the establishment of a democracy. Credit for this would of course be transferred to the Democrats and Wilson, effectively stealing the Republican party's thunder. The key to this policy was the

³² Curry, *Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, 24.

appointment of the right governor-general. Just as Cameron Forbes was the perfect governor-general for Taft, Wilson's choice of Francis Burton Harrison was a perfect fit for his agenda.

“A ‘well born Tammany Democrat’ whose style was that of a ‘Virginia gentleman,’” Harrison seemed at first glance, to be cut from the same cloth, or at least the same class of cloth, as the man he was replacing.³³ Like Forbes, Harrison was born to the upper strata of the American elite, in his case to a noted novelist mother and a Virginia planter father who proudly claimed ancestry among English gentry and had served Jefferson Davis as a private secretary. Despite Confederate allegiance, the post Civil War years seemed to have been good for the family, where a move to New York afforded the young Harrison the Ivy League education and patrician connections of Yale and its Skull and Bones Society.

However, unlike Forbes who had entered business before his life of public service, Harrison was a career politician. A stalwart of the Tammany Hall Democratic political machine, he served as a New York congressman for a decade, making his name in the House of Representatives by advocating stricter narcotics laws, lower tariffs, and the Democratic Party line.³⁴ This status as a loyal Democrat would put Harrison in the same orbit as the Filipino residential commissioner, Manuel Quezon, who would become the strongest Filipino in America, one that even Wilson knew and would certainly consult about the new governor-general appointment.

Aside from the role he played with Congressman Jones and his independence bill, Quezon had used his position as Filipino Resident Commissioner to become the de facto voice

33 Willard B. Gatewood, "Francis Burton Harrison" in *Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement 6: 1956-1960*. American Council of Learned Societies, 1980. Reprinted in *Biography Resource Center*. (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2006) [database on line at <http://galenet.galegroup.com.ucfproxy.fcla.edu/servlet/BioRC>], ED.

³⁴ Peter W. Stanley, *A Nation in the Making: the Philippines and the United States 1899-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 202; Karnow, *In Our Image*, 244.

and face of the Philippines in the minds of American politicians. Charming, sophisticated, ambitious to the point of being Machiavellian, Quezon insinuated himself throughout the various strata of American politics, appearing at political conventions and party dinners from Capitol Hill to Tammany hall. His ubiquitous presence and innate instincts for political gamesmanship allowed him to build up an impressive network of political contacts to help both the concerns of the Philippines and his own personal ambitions.³⁵

Naturally, he was most successful among members of the Democratic Party, with its ostensibly sympathetic view for the Filipinos and their demands for independence. In a surprisingly short time Quezon had become a social darling of Democrats, winning himself the chance to voice his opinion on Philippine policy, such as with Congressman William Jones, and ultimately was sought to weigh in on the choice of the next governor-general.³⁶

Naturally, cozying up to the Democrats meant making friends with Tammany Hall, something Quezon was more than happy to do and indeed seems to have achieved with uncanny skill. Through this connection with the powerful cadre to which Harrison owed allegiance to, Quezon easily knew the name and reputation of Francis Burton Harrison the cultured New York Representative who had a country gentleman's relaxed charm, love of life, and a fondness for women that led him to three marriages; all of which the urbane and worldly Quezon related to.³⁷

Nevertheless, Harrison's appointment was still something of a fortuitous event. Whereas Forbes had actively sought a foreign posting to relieve his boredom and embraced the imperialist era as a challenge for a man of action, Harrison certainly felt fulfilled with the comforts, camaraderie, connections and companionship afforded by the House, New York society, and

³⁵ Karnow, *In Our Image* 241.

³⁶ Karnow, *In Our Image* 243.

³⁷ Karnow, *In Our Image* 241.

Tammany Hall. Indeed, Harrison had approached Manuel Quezon to promote not his candidacy, but that of a friend.

Quezon rejected Harrison's candidate (a businessman with Philippine holdings) and then asked Harrison if he would be interested, bringing up his reputation as a good party man whose political fortunes and standing would only be enhanced by the governor-generalship. Harrison agreed, amused by the request, and with surprising quickness was vetted and approved by Congress.³⁸

Quezon's preference for Harrison was based on the main fact that Harrison believed independence had to be the inevitable goal for the Philippines and, more importantly, he advocated more power being transferred to the Filipino leadership.³⁹ While he had hardly been the most radical opponent of the Philippine annexation, Harrison had at the very least been nominally for Philippine independence, if for no other reason than as a loyal democrat.

Once he came around to the idea of being governor-general and overseeing the move towards independence, he seemed to warm to the idea of with astonishing quickness. Regarding the Republican administrations he was replacing, Harrison criticized that Taft "strongly believed that the Filipinos could be won over to complete acquiescence in American domination; that they would be so well satisfied with the liberal and generous treatment he accorded them that all national longings would gradually disappear. This was an entire misconception of the feelings of conquered races towards the invader."⁴⁰

Indeed, the more Harrison focused on his new appointment, the more ardent he became in his belief that the Philippines government had been grossly mismanaged by the Republicans and

³⁸ Karnow, *In Our Image* 244.

³⁹ Stanley, *A Nation in the Making* 203.

⁴⁰ Francis Burton Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence: A Narrative of Seven Years* (New York: The Century Co., 1922), 41-42.

their ideology. He took a contrary view to the opinions of his immediate predecessor Forbes's view that the Filipinos were immature, unready for democracy, and that most Filipinos were happy with American rule, stating "It was the fashion among Americans [i.e. Forbes] to explain that the demand for independence came only from a few agitators or hotheads or demagogues working for their own advantage.... The story went round that the Filipinos think independence is some sort of toy that will given them in a box."⁴¹

This view offended Harrison as exactly the kind of high-handed imperialism that the United States was supposed to have eschewed in the Philippines. Indeed, he saw this as a sign that "the United States Government was succumbing rapidly to the accepted standards of European colonial administrations, of which the incapacity of the "native" was the principle article of faith, and the invincibility of the white man is every human affair a religious tenet to be maintained at any cost and in any way."⁴²

Harrison's zeal for Philippine independence became such that Manuel Quezon, who had been lobbying his contacts in the Democratic Party and Tammy Hall for Harrison's appointment, was even taken aback, perhaps to the point where he wondered if he had succeeded too well. "My god," he noted privately to General Frank McIntyre, Wilson's head of Insular Affairs, the War Department chief who was directly over Harrison. "I think he believes in independence. He thinks he can turn us loose in about four years. He believes in it."⁴³

⁴¹ Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 46

⁴² Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 46.

⁴³ Quoted in Frank McIntyre, "An interview with Manuel Quezon" in Shalom and Schrimmer, *The Philippines Reader* 52. It should be noted that while Quezon was a nationalist, he was also a realist and his goal was not so much for immediate independence than an increase in power sharing between American administrators and Filipino politicians (undoubtedly to his benefit). As such, Quezon also secretly met with McIntyre to slow the trend of independence to the point where the Filipinos had more home rule but were still under American protection from outside forces such as Japan.

Upon arriving to the Philippines, Harrison read a letter from Wilson to the Filipinos which reiterated this goal and, more importantly, stated “the administration will take one step [towards independence] at once and give to the native citizens of the Philippines a majority in the Appointive Commission, and thus in the Upper as well as in the Lower House of the Legislature a majority representation will be secured to them.”⁴⁴ It was as much a declaration of war on the Republican old order as an inaugural political speech.

Harrison’s announcement of new policy could not have come a politically better time. By the end of the Republicans’ tenure, tensions between Forbes and the Filipino elite had reached a breaking point. Where before Forbes had always been able to conduct a kind of private dialogue and back room negotiation with the Filipino leadership, his relationship with the Speaker of the Assembly Sergio Osmeña had broken down to the point where the Assembly would criticize Forbes and pass bill after bill demanding more responsibility, which Forbes would inevitably veto.⁴⁵

Naturally, the problem was that the more Forbes ruled by fiat, the less the situation in the Philippines looked like an experiment in democracy and more like oppressive colonial imperialism, which of course Republicans had openly disavowed. Harrison’s announcement of the Wilson Administration granting the Filipinos more representation on the Commission went more than give the Filipinos a significant concession of political power, it also went a long way towards winning him much good will from the Filipino leadership.

The increase of Filipino membership of the Commission was the first sign of the Democratic policy known as Filipinization, the appointment of more and more Filipinos to

⁴⁴ Wilson quoted in Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 50.

⁴⁵ Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 91-93.

various branches of the Islands' government, replacing Americans at all levels of the administration. Harrison had felt that too many Americans were given offices in the Philippine administration indeed commenting "In 1913 the Americans in the Philippine Civil Service numbered 2600, with half as many more in the unclassified or temporary lists. When it is realized that the British Indian Civil Service, which directly or indirectly governs 319,000,000 people, consists of only 1200 officials from England, the situation seems extraordinary."⁴⁶ Obviously, Harrison would have to de-"raj" the Philippines and the key to this was to swap out Americans for Filipinos.

More than the numbers of American civil servants, Harrison saw that Filipinos would only learn the art of government if they were given opportunities and responsibilities of importance. Indeed, the longer the Philippine civil service remained dominated by Americans the more Harrison saw them feeling both that they were entitled to their positions of power simply by their race and believing constantly in the inability of Filipinos to rule themselves (a trait that Forbes seemed to have exhibited more in the waning days of his tenure). Replacing Americans would remove these prejudices and open spaces to train more Filipinos.⁴⁷

The key significance of Filipinization was the appointment of Filipinos to positions of power. In defending his administration of the Taft regime, Forbes stated that while there were some 2600 Americans in the Civil Service, there were over 6000 Filipinos.⁴⁸ However, the key distinction discerned by Harrison was that the vast majority of those Filipinos were placed in

⁴⁶ Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 44.

⁴⁷ Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 109.

⁴⁸ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, p 467.

lower level positions. His Filipinization appointments placed 30 of 38 bureaus and offices under the control of Filipino chiefs and administrators.⁴⁹

If these men were still novices at government, Harrison was willing to sacrifice the efficiency that was the gospel of the Taft and Forbes regime for the sake of “the gain of contentment of the people, the growth of respect and friendship for the United States and the valuable lessons in self-government secured by the Filipinos.”⁵⁰ By the end of the Wilson administration, the Philippine Civil Service numbered 12,807, of which only 760 were Americans.⁵¹

These policies also extended to Harrison’s cabinet of the highest-ranking commissioners and department heads, all of whom Harrison delegated greater and greater decision-making power to. Obviously, it was no surprise that Harrison’s eight years in the Philippines lacked the acrimony that cast a shadow on the Republican regime. However there was more to Harrison’s working relationship with the Filipinos than granting political concessions. Unlike Forbes, Harrison was a career politician and while he may have had the reputation of being a playboy and an elitist whose discomfort with the masses of common men led him to rarely leave Manila or associate with anyone but the highest class *illustados*, he nevertheless had the ability to understand and work with the Filipino leadership in a way that no other American governor-general before or after ever achieved.⁵²

Harrison understood the give-and-take that was required to form the personal friendships that greased the wheels of all government and his “gentry” demeanor certainly allowed him to relate to the *illustado* class of Filipinos, the lawmakers and key political allies. Forbes, with his

⁴⁹ Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 86.

⁵⁰ Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 88.

⁵¹ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, p 467.

⁵² Stanley, *A Nation in the Making* 203.

engineer's eye for efficiency and his businessman's eye for the bottom line, was driven to exasperation by the Filipinos and saw them in the extremes of primitivism and self-interest. Furthermore, Forbes's patrician snobbery prevented him from comfortably socializing with even the *illustro* class in all but the most formal official events, thus locking him in a frame of mind that the best kind of Filipinos, the kind he liked, were the ones who took orders and kept themselves discreetly at arms length at almost all times.⁵³

In contrast, Harrison was more comfortable with the Filipinos, seeing them as Asian versions of his Tammany Hall associates. With his interpersonal skills already honed by a career in New York politics to great effect, he was able to smooth over any problems in his administration with a few words poured in the right ear over a comfortably disarming dinner or soiree. Indeed, Harrison claimed, "My relations with each and every one of these [governmental leaders], both professional and personal, were exceedingly satisfactory and harmonious, and I look back with the deepest feeling of pleasure to the days and years associated with them."⁵⁴ Certainly, for a governor-general with the mandate of handing over more authority to the Filipinos while keeping them well disposed to the U.S. as a way of showing off the superior "imperialist" plan of the Democrats, the personal touch was key.

Moreover, Harrison proudly claimed that under Filipinization, all of the public works efforts near and dear to the hearts of men like Forbes were continued, with road construction doubling, other public works proliferating in similar numbers, and the agrarian economy—the

⁵³ Karnow, *In Our Image*, 212-213. Forbes, like almost all of the Americans stationed in the Philippines, spent his free time in the company of other Americans. Private clubs such as the Elks and the Army and Navy Clubs were segregated, so that Filipinos were barred from membership and even entry under all but the most special circumstances (or in their capacity as servants). Indeed Forbes, a keen and noted sportsman, even established his own Polo Club, which in keeping with the social incest of the time and place was naturally for whites only.

⁵⁴ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, p 467.

back bone of the islands—expanding to the point that government revenues were up almost quadruple what they were when Forbes left.⁵⁵

While the reasons for this may have had more to do to the boom in agricultural prices caused the First World War than any real initiatives on his part, nevertheless the ultimate effect was a win for the Democrats. Republicans could mount all sorts of criticisms about venal and inexperienced Filipinos ruining the advances made under Taft and Forbes but the material tangible success (ironically the benchmark of the Taft and Forbes administrations) this time was on the Democrats' side. Wilson and Harrison could simply counter Republican critics with the equally, if not more, effective arguments of having smoothed over relations with the Filipinos, overseen a rocketing economy that only added to America's war time economic boom, and most importantly, an exit strategy that fed into American prestige, the spread of democracy and the creation of a friendly state.⁵⁶

The dénouement to the Democrats' tenure in the Philippines was the Jones Act, a refurbished version of the independence act that forwarded by Congressman William Jones in the waning days of the Taft administration. The new bill, which passed the House and Senate on an almost purely partisan lines--with the tie breaking vote in the Senate coming from Democratic Vice President Thomas Marshall--reaffirmed the American government's commitment (or at least the government's commitment as long as it was under the Wilson administration), to the independence of the Filipino people as soon as a stable government could be formed.⁵⁷

To this end, it established a system of government in the islands beyond all previous Filipinization efforts. A formal Congress and Senate of popularly elected officials was

⁵⁵ Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 90-91.

⁵⁶ Karnow, *In Our Image*, 245; Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 111; Forbes, *The Philippine Islands v2*, 460-461. These are trade statistics showing the economic boom during the war years.

⁵⁷ Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 192.

established and Filipinos were given control of almost all aspects of the government. More importantly, the only American officials to remain in the Philippines with any significant power were the auditor and vice-auditor, the justices of the Philippine Supreme Court, and of course, the governor-general and his deputy.⁵⁸ While the United States Congress and President still had ultimate authority over the islands, it was understood that for all intents and purposes, the Filipinos would have effective home rule and that American control of the islands was irrevocably on the road to phasing out.

The fact that the definition of “stable government” was solely at the discretion of the President and that no specific time-table for withdrawal was given are telling factors in the real purpose of the Jones Act. While the Democrats were more or less sincere in their belief in anti-imperialism and independence for the Philippines, the Filipinos, as Forbes had always stated, were no fools and certainly did not want to lose the advantages of American trade and protection.⁵⁹ In fact, the only thing the Filipino leadership wanted was more political power over affairs in the islands, for the Philippine Assembly to actually become something more than the “debating society” that Taft had viewed it as and that Forbes paid attention to with polite condescension.

For their part, the Democrats did not want to cut the Philippines loose only to see it implode under bad government or be conquered by another Asian power (i.e. Japan). Such a fate would not only be a black mark on American nation building, but also saddle the Democrats with the blame for ruining the positive efforts of the previous Republican regimes and making a lie of Wilson’s stated intension for the islands.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Harrison, *The Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence* 196.

⁵⁹ Karnow, *In Our Image*, 246.

⁶⁰ Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 115.

Furthermore, Democrats could use the Jones Act to co-opt the Philippines as a symbol of the success of their party's "Wilsonian idealism," which could only benefit the party in an American political scene overshadowed by the imperialist born militarism cast by First World War. Democracy, the goal the Republicans had touted for so long, was finally established in the Philippines, only this time the Democrats could claim the success of "uplifting" the Filipinos.

Thus, the Jones Act, with its patronage for Filipino lawmakers and its nebulous terms for Philippine independence served everyone's purpose. It did not change any of the material works of the Republicans, or remove the role of America as a protector, but the political shift allowed both the Filipinos and the Democrats to assume both the power and the glory that the Republicans once held monopolies on.⁶¹

With its emphasis on political change and profit, the Jones Act was the perfect climax to the Democratic era in the Philippines. From the very start of the controversy surrounding the annexation of the islands, the Democrats had been the party of opposition, for a combination of political and moral reasons, with the ultimate hopes that arguments about the incompatibility of Americanism with imperialism, the playing of supposedly traditional American distaste for empire and monarchy, would win them votes and cast their political opponents, the Republicans, as villains in a geopolitical morality play.

The challenge of course was how to oppose imperialism without seeming to oppose the triumph of American power and for most of the twentieth century they were unable to overcome this problem. The Republicans reaped the political reward of empire and "democratic imperialism" while the Democrats were painted as weak willed, frightened to embrace the challenge of world power.

⁶¹ Karnow, *In Our Image*, 247.

Woodrow Wilson's distancing of himself from the radicalism of Bryan and the American Anti-Imperialism League show that he understood this and long and complicated route he took to come around to the anti-imperialist ideology can clearly be matched to the decline of Republican political fortunes. Indeed Wilson's whole policy in the Philippines shows just how partisan imperialist policies were: from the first day of Francis Burton Harrison's regime, the goal of his government in the Philippines was to support Wilson's goal of relieving America of her frontier—or at least of turning the Philippines into a success for the Democrats as much as it had been for the Republicans not by paving roads, but by the politics of patronage.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

*“Take up the White Man’s burden--
Have done with childish days--
The lightly proffered laurel
The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgment of your peers!”*

*--Rudyard Kipling
“The White Man’s Burden, 1899.”¹*

After his tenure ended in 1912, obviously disappointed with both the termination of his tenure as governor general and the man who was replacing him, W. Cameron Forbes acidly commented that under Presidents William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, the administration of the Philippines had been distinctly non-political.

“All the governors and the members of the Commission, whether Republican or Democrat, left their domestic partisan views behind them when they sailed from the United States, and served purely as Americans.”² Forbes even commented that Roosevelt had appointed Democrats to share the governor-generalship with Forbes after Taft left and even thought Forbes a Democrat or a Mugwump, neither of which detracted from his appointment to high office.³

While Forbes had a point about the highly political nature of his successor Francis Burton Harrison’s appointment, his assertion has a certain false ring to it. As this thesis has shown, the role of the governor-general was perhaps one of the purest forms of political patronage available

¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” in *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse*, ed. T.S. Elliot, (Faber and Faber Limited, 1941; reprint, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, 1962), 144-145.

² Quoted in W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 200.

³ Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, 200.

to a ruling political party and the choice of the man to fill the office, was critically influenced by the prevailing political winds in Washington.

A Taft, a Forbes or a Harrison were all the products of calculated political planning centered around the political value of the idea of imperialism and how the governor-general would carry out and symbolize the policies in the Philippines that would play well to the political power bases back in the United States. Moreover, the very presence of Americans in the islands and the work they did in trade, government, engineering, education all spoke to the politics of the various political parties, movements and cliques back in Washington.

Beyond ideological titles such as “manifest destiny” and “the white man’s burden,” partisan politics was always at the heart of the American-Filipino relationship. Republicans like William McKinley, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and senatorial hopeful Albert Beveridge used the perceived value of the islands, and its linking to the China trade, not only to convince voters and politicians that the United States should annex the islands, but more importantly to tie the ideas of imperial power, glory, and prosperity to the Republican Party and win votes for the post war election.

In one stroke the Philippines symbolized the rise of American international power to levels that rivaled the British Empire. It promised the opening of the door to the treasures of China. It became the largest and most exotic trophy from the war with Spain. It heralded the spread of American ideology in a magnitude never before achieved. In short, the Philippines were sold to the American people as the first step into the “American Century” where the United States was viewed no longer as a semi-provincial second rate nation, but a respected global power equal to any other nation or empire. All of this, of course, was through the efforts and leadership of the Republican Party.

Conversely, the failure of William Jennings Bryan and the American Anti-Imperialist League to defeat the Republicans by linking imperialism with despotism and other threats to America's democratic legacy lay almost solely in their inability to "spin" their claims in a way that would play well politically. The arguments of Bryan and the League were not only countered by the Republican claims of wealth, power, and even the ultimate benefit to the Filipinos, the anti-imperialist argument, as Democrat Woodrow Wilson noted, just sounded weak and afraid. No voter could be mobilized to vote for a platform that seemed to shirk from world power, global wealth, international respect, and even a messianic destiny.

While American policies in the islands, particularly those of Taft and Forbes, have always been analyzed within the paradigm of Americans playing at a more sentimental brand of colonialism, trying to "uplift and Christianize" their "little brown brothers," as this work has shown these policies were done to play to the politically valuable idea of America expanding her ideologies and influence across the globe, leading to the dividends to greater international respect and exploitation of new markets.

Born of the "splendid little war" with Spain in 1898, American rule over the Philippines was to be an ongoing testament to the new American global power ushered in by that war. The government organized by Taft was meant to train the Filipinos in government, specifically American government with all of its hallmarks right down to an assembly copied from the House of Representatives with its own political parties and even send members to Washington to be tutored, as it were, at the knee of the U.S. Congress. The roads, the industrialization, and the civil engineering projects built by Forbes, along with the prosperity they and other policies such as trade brought to the Philippines were all an exercise in Americanization.

Educated among American lines, working with American technology, erecting American architecture, eventually dressing and speaking like Americans, the more the Philippines—and the Filipinos—were made to look and feel like Taft's Ohio or Forbes's New York, the easier it was for Americans to recognize the signs of American success, and credit them to Republican rule.

The evolution of the Woodrow Wilson's views on the Philippines also shows how central the politics of empire were to issue of America rule over the Philippines. Wilson's reluctance to embrace anti-imperialism, despite its inclusion as a core plank of the Democratic Party's platform, show that he understood the inherent political weakness of the argument as it was presented in Bryan's day. While Bryan and the anti-imperialists had valid points of the questionable constitutionality of the annexation, Wilson saw that to be counted in their number would have been political suicide. To be anti-imperialist was to be weak, afraid of embracing world power and the dynamism of empire, and to be easily painted as a coward.

Wilson's eventual acceptance of anti-imperialism was naturally when it became political viable; when imperialist Republicans could be shown as having failed to bring true democracy to the Philippines, when anti-imperialism could be tied to anti-corruption and attacks on bloated government bureaucracy and its intrusion on American life. Only when anti-imperialism allowed Wilson and the Democrats to effectively steal the Philippines as a symbol, promising to fulfill the promise of creating democracy in the islands and attack the Republicans as heavy handed and inept rulers who had forgotten their goals and antagonized the people they were supposed to be helping and training, did he embrace it as part of his campaign and his policy.

Wilson's choice of Francis Burton Harrison, a man more skilled as a politician than an engineer or administrator, shows the importance of politics. Harrison was charged with creating an administration that visibly transferred power and responsibility to the Filipinos, placing

Democrats in the role of “uplifting” the Filipinos. Furthermore Harrison’s ability to work well with Filipino leaders allowed Democrats to brag that they were better at spreading those American ideals that Taft and Forbes had traded politically upon in the past administration.

An even more politically motivated example lies in the Jones Bill. Other than reorganizing the administration of the Philippines, which was essentially just formalizing the Filipinization policies of Harrison’s regime, the Jones Bill gave strong lip service to the idea of Philippine independence but contained no time table or definitive means or formula towards the realization of the goal. The criteria for the independence of the Philippines under the regime of the “liberating” Democrats were essentially the same as it had been under the “imperialist” Republicans. The only difference was that Democrats were able to work with Filipino leaders and used this to steal the Republican political thunder and claim to be the truly successful regime of the islands through its peaceful coexistence and symbolic but nevertheless explicit commitment to creating an independent democracy in the islands.

Clearly the Jones Bill’s value was a only in a political sense, meant to resonate symbolically with the politically popular tropes of freedom, independence, and democracy while neatly side stepping, indeed outright resisting, any policy altering commitments. In essence, the Jones Bill was pure politics, designed to win votes without making promises.

The reasons for America’s involvement in the Philippines have been deconstructed, debated, and attributed to a host of reasons ranging from a capitalistic desire for markets and resource to a militaristic desire for glory from foreign adventures to a racially motivated urge to take up the “White Man’s Burden” and show off Anglo-Saxon technological superiority in a half benevolent, half arrogant attempt to mold a race of people in their image. While these reasons

are valid and certainly played their parts in the various administrations of the Philippines, they all stem from the same source: the politics of the United States.

As this thesis shows, the Philippines were first and last a political chess piece for the Republican and Democratic Parties. Imperialism was as much about ideology in the islands as it was about votes and how various actions and oppositions to them would play to voters in the American Midwest or South. Indeed, the consideration of the value in votes at home was what motivated politicians from McKinley through Wilson to undertake their various actions.

In the end, the real “White Man’s burden” was not how to carry the banner of America the empire to the far corners of Asia, or even to carry the Filipinos upward the ladder of progress, but simply how American politicians’ stance on the Philippines would help carry the elections of the first decade and a half of the American century.

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