

The Road to Independence for the Philippines

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Abstract: Throughout its history, the United States has incorporated annexed territory by allowing territories that have met certain population and political requirements to organize and be admitted as co-equal states. This paper examines the reasons as to why the Philippines, annexed in the wake of the Spanish American War, was not incorporated and organized for statehood. Through the examination of the events, writings, and speeches of Americans and Filipinos during the war and the approximately 15 years prior to the passage of the Jones amendment, this paper examines the motivations behind the decisions that led to the unique status of the Philippines. The racial attitudes of white Americans meant that Filipinos were undesirable for inclusion in the US, preventing their incorporation as a potential new state, yet they were also deemed unable to self-govern, preventing immediate independence. Anti-imperialism and a republican spirit with many Americans also pushed back against the type of imperial control seen in European colonial empires over the Philippines. Finally, the Filipinos themselves pushed for independence. The interaction of these forces led to the Philippines onto the path toward a delayed independence instead of either statehood like Hawai'i or commonwealth status like Puerto Rico.

The United States annexed the Philippine Islands in the 1898 Treaty of Paris that ended the Spanish-American War, confronting Americans with the question: What to do with this new territory? Since its founding, the United States steadily enlarged, but unlike other empires, it typically incorporated new territories into the metropole through the system of states with the same rights and responsibilities as the original thirteen. The question of the Philippines was more difficult than it would seem at first glance. American leaders had several options for what to do with these newly acquired, far-flung islands, including incorporation as a territory or recognition of the self-declared Philippine Republic. The United States, after a long debate, eventually put the Philippines on a path of delayed independence, the question is what made them different and not on the path toward eventual statehood. In this essay I argue that the interplay of race, democratic ideals among American anti-imperialists, and business interests put the Philippines on an early track toward independence instead of integration.

The value of the Philippines to the US seemed self-evident. Like the Spanish before them, Americans saw the Philippines as a gateway to trade with the lucrative markets in Asia, especially with China.¹ The Philippines gave American companies a local base of operations to conduct trade throughout the region. The American military could use the islands as a springboard for military operations in Asia, such as when the US deployed thousands of troops from the Philippines to participate in allied operations in China during the Boxer Rebellion.² Or as political scientist Paul Reinsch described it in his 1904

¹ Nell I. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: A Grassroots History of the Progressive Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 146; Luis H. Francia, *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos* (New York: Abrams Press, 2021), 161.

² Allen Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 310.

justification for annexation, “it was felt that they [the Philippines] would assure the United States a position of leadership in the settlement of the Oriental and Pacific questions.”³ Yet, despite these strategic benefits, the occupation stirred opposition at home and resistance in the colony. The combination of these led the Philippines on a different path than other occupied and annexed territories. Instead of being a traditional settler colony like Utah, Alaska, or Hawai’i, the archipelago became an administrative colony, a land to be ruled from afar and not integrated into the homeland.⁴

During the 1898 Spanish American War, the Spanish colony of the Philippines very quickly became a theater of war. Americans defeated the Spanish fleet and joined Filipino rebels in the siege of Manila, which led to the defeat of Spanish forces in Asia. The rebels, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, had begun their war for independence in 1896 and by June 1898 had forced Spanish forces into a few urban areas, including the colonial capital of Manila.⁵

Almost from the outset of the American intervention, there was confusion among the rebels towards US intentions for the colony. Aguinaldo claimed that American officials in Hong Kong and Commodore Dewey’s Asiatic Squadron had promised that the US had no intention of staying in the Philippines, which would have cleared the way for independence from Spain.⁶ With that in mind, Aguinaldo declared a revolutionary government in June and an independent republic on January 23, 1899.⁷

Unfortunately for Aguinaldo and the Filipino leadership, attitudes among the American leadership had already shifted toward a further extension of American empire. On May 1 Dewey and his Asiatic Squadron destroyed the Spanish fleet anchored in Manila Bay. The lack of an American ground force meant that it was the Filipino rebels who were fighting and gaining ground in Luzon.⁸ By August 1898, with the arrival of new army leadership and the landing of an American expeditionary force on Luzon, American forces sought to exclude the Filipino rebels from any role in the control of the capital, Manila.⁹ The Americans took Manila after a mock battle on August 13, 1898, meant to satisfy Spanish honor that led to occupation of the city by the Americans which left a distrustful Filipino army on the outskirts.¹⁰ Relations between the

³ Paul Reinsch, “Colonial Autonomy, with Special Reference to the Government of the Philippine Islands,” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association 1904*, vol. 1 (1904): 116.

⁴ Julian Go. “Global Perspectives on the U.S. Colonial State in the Philippines.” In *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*, ed. Go, Julian and Annie Foster, 7. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

⁵ Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 129.

⁶ Brian M. Linn, *The Philippine War: 1899-1902*, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 21.

⁷ Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 113; Linn, *The Philippine War*, 21.

⁸ Millet and Maslowski, *For the Common Defense*, 292.

⁹ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 25.

¹⁰ Linn, 24.

Americans and Aguinaldo's forces collapsed, and war between them eventually broke out. Major fighting continued into 1902, with low levels of resistance to American rule continuing for a decade.

One could ask why the Americans would fight for territory whose people appeared to violently resist and which had not played into the popular imagination prior to the war in the same way that Cuba or Hawaii had. Allan Millett and Peter Maslowski, in their history of the US military, articulated the choices facing the US in the immediate aftermath of the war as: offer immediate independence, acquire a naval base, institute a protectorate, annex one or two islands such as Luzon, or fully annex the Philippines.¹¹ Most historians now view Filipino resistance and insurgency against the American occupation as a natural continuation of their struggle for independence. Daniel Immerwahr called it "the trilemma": the US had to choose between "republicanism, white supremacy, and overseas expansion;" it could have two but one would have to go, and many Americans were initially willing to jettison republicanism for the sake of white supremacy and empire.¹² Many of the Filipino leaders of the resistance were educated and, in the words of historian Vincente Pilapil, "were not a group voicing the anguishes of a maligned race; they were the leaders who envisioned new dawns and vistas for their countrymen."¹³

Part of the answer of why the US wanted to hold onto the Philippines lies in their geo-strategic position relative to Asian markets, especially China. This was pursued by a small circle of American businessmen and politicians, but never gained traction among the larger American population. Once companies realized that the Philippines did not give American merchants an advantage over the other colonizing states like Great Britain or Japan who felt they had vested national interests in the Chinese market, enthusiasm among American business dried up.¹⁴ The 1902 Philippine Tariff Act, which Congress designed to protect US farmers and producers from the importation of Filipino agricultural products like sugar and tobacco, reflected the lack of American corporate interest in potentially unprofitable investment in the islands and the lobbying of mainland farmers.¹⁵

Other stated purposes rose to the surface of the colonial debate. The war against the Filipino rebels became wrapped up in "Anglo-Saxon" ideology. According to this theory, Americans, and the English (and sometimes Germans and other northern Europeans) formed an Anglo-Saxon race that was at the height of civilization. Supporters saw Anglo-Saxon Americans as spreading democracy and civilization to "inferior

¹¹ Millett and Maslowski, *For the Common Defense*, 300-301.

¹² Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide and Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, (New York: Farrar, Strous, and Giroux, 2019), 80.

¹³ Vincente R. Pilapil, "The Cause of the Philippine Revolution," *Pacific Historical Review* 34, no. 3 (Aug. 1965), 264.

¹⁴ Vince Boudreau, "Methods of Domination and Modes of Resistance: The US Colonial State and Philippine Mobilization in Comparative Perspective." in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*, ed. Go, Julian and Annie Foster (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 265.

¹⁵ Julian Go, "Chains of Empire: State Building and 'Political Education' in Puerto Rico and the Philippines." In *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*, ed. Go, Julian and Annie Foster, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 198.

racess.”¹⁶ Politicians and pundits extolled the virtues of the Anglo-Saxons as members of an advanced, martial race whose destiny lay in dominating others and spreading their version of civilization.¹⁷ In 1904, political scientist Bernard Moses summed up the imperial Anglo-Saxonism justification in simple terms: “the first step necessary to make the barbarian accept the ideas of civilization is to let him know that the civilized man is his superior in physical force.”¹⁸ Daniel Williams, a member of the Philippine Commission, created to lay the framework for governance of the islands, cast the war as a struggle between the virtues of Anglo-Saxon civilization and the “half-devil and half-child” Filipino.¹⁹

This racialized view of the world fit how many Americans already saw and experienced life in the US. Widespread segregation and disenfranchisement of non-whites in the US fueled a perception of superiority that shaped how Americans viewed the people of the Philippines. Race was seen as something that endowed certain biological qualities, a common view that was exposed by many proponents of an expansive American empire. Since white Americans put Filipinos outside of the Anglo-Saxon race, proponents of Anglo-Saxonism deemed them unable to achieve self-government, and therefore it was the duty of Americans to rule the Philippines for them.²⁰ The pro-imperialist newspaper, *The Conservative* of Nebraska City, NE, wrote of Filipinos having the “sluggish blood of the tropics” and “six thousand years of an inferior ancestry” as reasons why they were unprepared and needed to learn “Anglo-Saxon sturdiness and self-control.”²¹

In many Americans’ eyes, the Philippines was a wild, backward place. As contact and knowledge of the new colony increased, Americans applied a system of “races” to the Philippines. The Spanish had thought of islands in terms of religion, dividing the people between “civilized” Catholics Filipinos and “uncivilized” Muslims, who they called Moros, and the “savage” polytheistic tribes of the interior.²² The newly arrived Americans instead thought in terms more familiar to them: race. They classified the people of the Philippines into different races and tribes, ascribing different attributes and levels of civilization to

¹⁶ Paul Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons.” in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*. ed. Go, Julian and Annie Foster (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 59.

¹⁷ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 150-151.

¹⁸ Bernard Moses, “Colonial Policy with Reference to the Philippines,” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association 1904*, vol. 1 (1904): 98.

¹⁹ Daniel Williams, *The Odyssey of the Philippine Commission*, (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1913) 321.

²⁰ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 152.

²¹ “Anti-Expansionist Sentiment.” *The Conservative* (Nebraska City, NE). 08 Dec. 1898. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn96080161/1898-12-08/ed-1/seq-12/>

²² Donna J. Amoroso, “Inheriting the ‘Moro Problem’: Muslim Authority and Colonial Rule in British Malaya and the Philippines” in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*, ed. Go, Julian and Annie Foster (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 125.

them. US administrators used the term “Filipino” for the more educated, mostly Tagalog speakers who administrators felt were the most civilized and most ready for self-rule.²³

This division of the people of the Philippines translated into different governance solutions in the early years of the occupation. For the Muslim-majority southern islands of Sulu and Mindanao, the Army remained in charge, establishing a military government. They worked with local leaders, empowering some to act as municipal and regional leaders, but unlike their European counterparts who tended to empower local Muslim leaders in their colonies, worked toward the end goal of integrating them with their Christian counterparts as one whole body politic.²⁴

The colonial authorities also created the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes to help raise the perceived level of civilization for the non-Christian peoples. American authorities mentally linked these “tribes” with the Native American tribes they were used to dealing with, and so prepared to treat them in the same paternalistic way.²⁵ Common American thinking centered on the idea that just as Native Americans were incapable of self-government and, according to Theodore Roosevelt, needed to be “taught” how to be more like Anglo-Saxons, so too did these “uncivilized” Filipino tribes need to be protected from exploitation from Christian Tagalogs and educated in Western ways.²⁶

By espousing the mission of bringing “civilization” and democracy to the Philippines, US leaders brought the destiny of the colony into focus. The ardor to build an Anglo-Saxon empire gave way to the goal of actively building up the social and political infrastructure of the Philippine people. President McKinley’s instructions in 1900 to the War Department and the Philippine Commission, which shared responsibility of governing the Philippines, were clear. He ordered the establishment of local municipal governments which were to be staffed and led by Filipinos to “manage their own local affairs to the fullest extent of which they are capable.”²⁷

What emerged was as a “tutelage” government. American leaders began to think of their occupation as a chance assist the Filipinos in developing a modern, democratic republic in the Western mold. In the words of historian Julian Go, “the United States would rule foreign peoples while using its colonial power to uplift them towards the light of democratic self-government.”²⁸ Since many of the newly arriving

²³ Amoroso, “Inheriting the Moro Problem,” 119; Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 124.

²⁴ Amoroso, “Inheriting the Moro Problem,” 142.

²⁵ War Department, *Acts of Congress and Treaties Pertaining to the Philippine Islands in Force and Effect July 1, 1919* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 129.

²⁶ Theodore Roosevelt. “Roosevelt’s Ringing Letter of Acceptance,” *The Chanute Times*, October 05, 1900.

²⁷ War Department, *Acts of Congress*, 126.

²⁸ Julian Go, “The Provinciality of American Empire: ‘Liberal Exceptionalism’ and U.S. Colonial Rule,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 49, no. 1 (January 2007): 76.

soldiers were militia and not regulars, they held skills from their civilian lives that were used in bringing about progressive ideas of government. A Filipino-American Army Board of Health was organized to conduct health inspections, engineer units improved roads and bridges for civilian use, and soldiers opened and taught in schools.²⁹

As the colonial administration shifted from military government to civilian government under the Philippine Commission, increasing numbers of Filipinos were recruited into the civil service. By 1903, the US had organized over a thousand municipalities and thirty-one provincial governments with Filipino participation.³⁰ This was a major shift from the Spanish colonial government, which seldom reached beyond the major towns and plantations and in many respects still resembled the feudal and religious administration of the earlier Spanish centuries.³¹ Security passed from the Army, which saw troop cuts to less than 18,000 from a peak of over 70,000, to a Filipino staffed, but American led, Philippine Constabulary.³² American and Filipino officials credited the Constabulary with reducing resistance to American rule and building support for American rule among Filipinos.³³

The Insular Government, as the Philippine Commission became known with the passage of the 1902 Organic Act, encouraged the organizing of political parties among the Filipino elite, leading to the formation of the *Federalista* and *Nacionalista* parties. These parties played an important role in shaping the future of the colony. The *Federalista* party initially flirted with pushing for the archipelago to become “a State like those which form the Union,” only to find reluctance among Americans.³⁴ The *Federalistas* eventually joined the *Nacionalistas* and began to push for a clear path toward independence.

American views of Race played a major role in steering the Philippines away from the path toward statehood. Unlike Hawaii, which had a small but dominant American settler population, or Puerto Rico, where Americans considered many of the residents white or at least white-adjacent, Americans classified Filipinos as Asiatic or Mongrel and therefore outside the potential of being assimilated.³⁵ Given the racial climate of the US at the time, some pro- and anti-imperialists argued that Filipinos could not master American republican virtues and would destroy America’s racially construction institutions at home, either

²⁹ Stanley Sandler, *Glad to See them Come and Sorry to See Them Go: A History of US Army Tactical Civil Affairs/Military Government* (Fort Bragg, NC: US Army Special Operations Command History and Archives Division, 1993), 115-118.

³⁰ Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 135.

³¹ Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 122-123.

³² Boudreau, “Domination and Resistance,” 265; Linn, *The Philippine War*, 325.

³³ Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come*, 122.

³⁴ “Want to be Territory.” *The Savannah Morning News*. 13 Feb. 1902. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress; T. H. Pardo De Tavera, Benito Legarda, and Jose Ruiz De Luzuriaga, “Filipino Views of American Rule,” *The North American Review* 174, no. 542 (Jan., 1902), 77.

³⁵ Rick Baldoz and Cesar Ayala, “The Bordering of America: Colonialism and Citizenship in the Philippines and Puerto Rico,” *Centro Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2013), 83.

through the disruptive nature of mass immigration or through the sending of Filipino congressmen in the event of statehood.³⁶ This seemingly contradictory agreement led some anti-imperialists to believe that citizenship would mean increasing numbers of Filipinos immigrating to the mainland, disrupting American society. For pro-imperialists, this meant that it was the “White Man’s Burden” to care for them in a very paternalistic sense.³⁷

The anti-imperialist camp rejected the occupation and annexation of the Philippines. Some opponents of annexation feared that as citizens, Filipinos would be free to migrate to the mainland in an “Asiatic invasion” like fears held against Chinese and Japanese immigrants.³⁸ Indeed, Filipinos immigrated to Hawaii and (in smaller numbers) to California to work in the fields, though politicians successfully worked to limit their ability to naturalize and become full citizens.³⁹

Other opponents believed that the occupation was un-American. Formed at the beginning of the Philippine-American War, the Anti-Imperialist League spoke out against the war and against what it saw as rising militarism among Americans. For anti-imperialists, “imperialism [was] hostile to liberty” and was “an evil” to be resisted.⁴⁰ Their 1899 platform linked the Filipino Revolution against both the Spanish and now the US, to America’s own revolution, calling their struggle “the spirit of 1776.”⁴¹ For them, not only was the war and occupation a betrayal of American values such as self-government and consent of the governed, but the very idea that America could bring liberty to a people already struggling for it by killing them was ridiculous. Indeed, political activist Herbert Welsh wrote in his scathing 1900 article against the occupation that “If our Administration at Washington had been actuated by the high purpose of promoting the welfare of the inhabitants . . . it would not have treated with Spain alone . . . but would have granted the fullest opportunity to the Filipinos themselves to make known their wishes.”⁴² One commentator made the link with the Philippines not being a US state (“and ought not to be”) with the fact that “they will continue to suffer in one way or another from taxation without representation.”⁴³

Mark Twain, a member of the Anti-Imperialist League, used his quick wit to shed light on the absurdity of the Republican platform’s pro-imperialist stance. In his “War Prayer,” he openly mocks the idea that war was beneficial for the Filipinos. With the lines “O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldier to bloody

³⁶ Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The making of Modern America, 1877-1920*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 215; Baldoz and Ayala, “The Bordering of America,” 84.

³⁷ Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 149.

³⁸ Baldoz and Ayala, “The Bordering of America,” 83.

³⁹ Baldoz and Ayala, 87-88.

⁴⁰ Anti-Imperialist League. “Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League, 1899.” *Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League, 1899*.

⁴¹ Anti-Imperialist League.

⁴² Herbert Welsh, “The Ethics of Our Philippine Policy,” *International Journal of Ethics* 10, no 3 (Apr. 1900), 308.

⁴³ James H. Blount, “Philippine Independence: Why?” *The North American Review* 185, no. 617 (June 21, 1907), 373.

shreds,” and “help us to turn them out roofless with little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land,” as well as others, he showed the hypocrisy of using war to bring “civilization.”⁴⁴

Other anti-imperialists noted the similarities between the destructiveness of the Spanish war against Filipino rebels and the conduct of American troops against them. In this view, the war was waged by an army that embraced a racist view of their enemy, allowing them to commit atrocities such as burning villages, killing civilians, and torturing prisoners.⁴⁵ One newspaper compared the US to other empires: “if in its determination to subjugate them it is justified in slaughtering and burning and looting; then the Russian empire was similarly justified in its atrocities in Poland; the unspeakable Turk was an angel of mercy in Armenia, Bulgaria and Herzegovina...”⁴⁶ Herbert Welsh declared the war “criminal aggression.”⁴⁷ Despite an increasingly successful emphasis on what would be termed as “Civic Action” by the Army, for many back home, the war would be synonymous with the brutal campaigns on islands like Sumar and Batangas.⁴⁸

Indeed, many of the same racial arguments anti-imperialists used against annexation of the Philippines were also those used against the annexation of Hawaii. After a coup against the queen in 1893 led to consolidation of the kingdom into the hands of Americans who quickly enacted property qualifications for suffrage, enabling them to lock out non-white native Hawaiians and Asian migrants who made up the majority, from power.⁴⁹ After annexation, when US suffrage and citizenship laws took effect, debates in Congress focused on how to legally restrict the vote for indigenous Hawaiians, finally settling on literacy tests in either English or Hawaiian. Those seeking to restrict the voting power of minorities on the mainland routinely used literacy, especially in the South.⁵⁰ For many, being American was synonymous with being “white,” with native Hawaiians being racially categorized as being inferior and incapable of participating in government, without realizing the inherent irony of that position considering Hawai’i’s status as an independent kingdom prior to annexation.⁵¹

To prevent the incorporation of the Philippines into the union of states, and the inevitable struggle over citizenship and voting rights for non-whites, a series of court cases created a new category of territory: the unincorporated, insular territory. These court cases put the Philippines and Puerto Rico outside of the provisions of the incorporated territories as established by the Northwest Ordinance. The distinction

⁴⁴ Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 215.

⁴⁵ Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 153-154; Linn, *The Philippine War*, 327-328.

⁴⁶ “Imperialism,” *The Dakota Farmers Leader*, August 18, 1899.

⁴⁷ Welsh, “The Ethics of Our Philippine Policy,” 314.

⁴⁸ Linn, 321.; Sadler, *Glad to See Them Come*, 122.

⁴⁹ Lauren L. Basson, “Fit for Annexation but Unfit to Vote? Debating Hawaiian Suffrage Qualifications at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Social Science History*, 29, no. 4 (Winter, 2005), 581-582.

⁵⁰ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 228.

⁵¹ Basson, 592.

between incorporated and unincorporated was important. Incorporated territories like New Mexico still had an expectation of eventual statehood while the courts deemed statehood for the unincorporated Philippines as outside the intention of Congress since it was neither included in the Treaty of Paris nor in a separate resolution. Unlike previous treaties that had granted citizenship for the people living in newly annexed territory, the Treaty of Paris did not include such a clause. For Puerto Rico, which many Americans viewed as having a population that was more assimilable, Congress was split on what the future should hold for the island, with some advocating statehood and others wanting an upgraded status short of it becoming a state.⁵² Without strong American advocates, this put the Filipinos outside of American citizenship, and instead put them in the category of “American Nationals” where they did not have the rights and protections of the Constitution but were still considered Americans when traveling outside of the Philippines and other American territories.⁵³

Colonial officials worked to “educate” the Filipinos through “tutelage” government and began the process of “Filipinization” of governance of the islands. The question about the ultimate fate of the islands forced Americans to fall back on what they felt was their legacy: representative democracy. For the Philippines, this meant greater involvement of Filipinos in government at the expense of American officials. The political scientist Bernard Moses claimed in 1904 that by starting with the Filipino elite, by which he meant English or Spanish speaking property owners, the circle of Filipinos ready for participation in republican government could be slowly expanded, an opportunity he felt was lost with the indigenous population of Hawaii, where all locals had been granted citizenship without restriction.⁵⁴ The first elections were held in 1901 to establish the municipalities, and in 1907 voters “graduated” to elections for a colony-wide Philippine Assembly.⁵⁵ This reduced American control and increased the perception among Filipinos of being on the path toward independence.

Modern empire is often derided as being the product of the greed of corporations, but ironically it was those very corporations that helped prevent further integration of the Philippines into the US system of states. Industrialist Andrew Carnegie was among the more prominent anti-imperialists, drawing similarities between the Filipino’s nationalism and their struggle for independence and that of Americans’ love of country and struggle for independence.⁵⁶ More practically, sugar and tobacco interests pushed for high tariffs for both the Philippines and Puerto Rico, though Congress established restrictive tariffs only for the

⁵² Baldoz and Ayala, “The Bordering of America”, 88.

⁵³ Baldoz and Ayala, “The Bordering of America”, 87.

⁵⁴ Moses, *Colonial Policy*, 103-104.

⁵⁵ Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 135.

⁵⁶ Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 217.

Philippines. One newspaper observed “if the interests of these [sugar and tobacco] trusts are of paramount importance, then the Philippines are worthless to the United States, except as a naval station.”⁵⁷

The Philippine Tariff Act of 1902 provided some reduction in tariffs on goods from the islands, but not enough to increase the flow of capital investment into the colony since anything produced in the Philippines remained prohibitively expensive in the US.⁵⁸ This reduced Philippine income enough to prevent the colonial government from fulfilling its plan to improve and expand infrastructure to make the islands more attractive for American businesses and settlers. Instead, administrators looked for more domestic taxation and toward more modest improvements, particularly in education and health. Former Governor-General of the Philippines and Theodore Roosevelt’s Secretary of War, William H. Taft, recognized the issue as having political consequences. In his report of 1908, he stated “another great difficulty in working out our policy in these islands has been the reluctance of capitalists to invest money here. Political privileges, if unaccompanied by opportunities to better their condition, are not likely to produce permanent contentment among a people.”⁵⁹

Taft’s 1908 report implied that so long as there was “constant agitation for independence in the islands, apparently supported by the minority [Democratic] party in the United States, and the well-founded fear that an independent Philippine Government . . . would not be permanent and stable have made capitalists chary of attempting to develop the natural resources of the islands.”⁶⁰ Taft feared that the Filipinos were incapable of self-government and felt their calls for independence were a roadblock to economic integration with the US and therefore prevented economic expansion. The Payne Tariff Act of 1909 offered some relief by reducing tariffs for the Philippines. Then-Secretary of War Jacob Dickinson, reported to President Taft in 1910 that the Philippines enjoyed increased exports, especially for sugar and tobacco.⁶¹ The report also noted that most imports to the Philippines came from outside the US, with less than 27% coming from the US in 1910. This shows that despite Tariff Act, the Philippines still had greater economic integration with other economies than it had with its colonial masters.

For its part, the Democratic Party took up an anti-imperialist position. Its 1900 party platform said, “We condemn and denounce the Philippine policy of the present Administration.”⁶² It was not purely from altruism or democratic principles, as the plank went on to state “the Filipinos cannot be citizens without endangering our civilization” and “we warn the American people that imperialism abroad will lead quickly

⁵⁷ “Anti-Expansionist Sentiment.” *The Conservative* (Nebraska City, NE). 08 Dec. 1898

⁵⁸ Go, “Chains of Empire,” 196.

⁵⁹ War Office, *Special Reports on the Philippines to the President*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 78.

⁶⁰ War Office, 78.

⁶¹ War Office, *Special Reports*, 119.

⁶² Maximo Kalaw, *The Case for the Filipinos*, (New York: The Century Co., 1916), 337.

and inevitably to despotism at home.”⁶³ Once again, racism and anti-imperialism came together to push the Philippines away from further integration and toward eventual independence. Party leader and presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan and his allies depicted the quest for empire as a class issue in which only business interests would benefit, as working-class soldiers paid the sacrifice.⁶⁴ They also claimed the introduction of millions of non-whites would disrupt labor markets and race relations. By positioning themselves as the party advocating for the working white man, they put themselves into a position where they would have to push policies that would lead to Filipino independence simply to “protect” their political base.

The election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912 put the Democrats and the anti-imperialists in control of Philippine policy. Members of the Philippine Assembly lobbied for greater autonomy and independence, and Wilson responded by appointing Francis Harrison as the governor general of the colony. Harrison accelerated the “Filipinization” of the colony’s administration.⁶⁵ In practice, this meant that Governor Harrison “encouraged” American administrators to resign, opening their positions to the newly educated and expanding Filipino middle class.⁶⁶ When Harrison took over, there were over 2,600 Americans in the insular government; by the end of his term that number, except for teachers and a few specialized positions, fell to fewer than sixty.⁶⁷ The result was increased power and self-governance by Filipinos at all levels of government.

The anti-imperialist push at home, as well as insistent lobbying on the part of Filipino politicians, finally set in motion the adoption of the Jones Act of 1916. Also known as the Philippine Autonomy Act, it devolved power away from Congress to the Assembly and the governor, gave the courts in the Philippines greater power and oversight over the governor and the Assembly, and gave an promise of independence for the colony, though it set no timetable.⁶⁸ Filipino politicians and leaders used the powers granted in this act to push for greater autonomy and self-government throughout the 1920s and 1930s, culminating in the Tydings-McDuffie Act which promised independence by 1946.⁶⁹

For the Philippines, multiple reasons came together that led to her not sharing the fate of Hawaii, which eventually became a state in 1959, or Puerto Rico, whose residents became citizens in 1919 and whose territorial status was modified into that of “commonwealth,” and which her on the path toward eventual

⁶³ Kalaw, 337.

⁶⁴ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 159.

⁶⁵ Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 168.

⁶⁶ Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society*, 140.

⁶⁷ Abinales and Amoroso.

⁶⁸ Michael Onorato, “The Jones Act and the Establishment of a Filipino Government, 1916-1921,” *Philippines Studies* 14, no. 3 (July 1966), 450-451.

⁶⁹ Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire*, 160-161; Francia, *A History of the Philippines*, 171-172

independence. One was the racial bias against Filipinos that meant many Americans could not see them as becoming fellow citizens. This was rooted in the Anglo-Saxonism that saw the Filipinos as Asian and therefore fell outside of the racialized naturalization laws of the time.⁷⁰ This led to the sense among some in the US that the inferior Filipinos needed to be taught by Americans how to self-govern in the Western way. Paradoxically, there was also a widespread revulsion toward the idea of forcing millions of people to be ruled from afar without their consent. Many Americans feared that an integrated Philippines would flood the US with products and migrants, disrupting profits and labor at home. And most importantly, the people of the Philippines desired independence.

These factors combined to lead the US colonial administrators and political leaders down a path where autonomy and independence seemed like the natural and logical conclusion. The general trends of the Progressive Era, with its beliefs that society could be improved through education, but still grounded in ideas about racial hierarchy and the supremacy of white or Anglo-Saxon Americans, all alongside the rise of corporations and their ability to lobby government, led to the Philippines to their eventual path of independence.

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⁷⁰ Baldoz and Ayala, "The Bordering of America," 87.

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