Reluctant Liberator: Theodore Roosevelt's Philosophy of Self-Government and Preparation for Philippine Independence

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Theodore Roosevelt is well known as an imperialist. The common understanding is both too weak and too strong. Too weak, because Roosevelt idealized an imperialism that could last forever in civilizing savages. Too strong, because Roosevelt prepared the American-occupied Philippines for independence within a generation. This article analyzes Roosevelt's philosophy of self-government and reinterprets his Philippines policy in light of the philosophy. Roosevelt emerges as a reluctant anti-imperialist—an imperialist by desire but an anti-imperialist in governance. His imperialist ambitions were thwarted by America's ideals of self-government and its democratic political system, channeled through the powers of Congress and the process of regular elections. At a crest of imperial opportunity, America eschewed empire. Imperial occupation remained a great aberration in American foreign relations.

The United States was born in anticolonial rebellion, but in 1910, its former president exhorted the people of Sudan to submit to British rule forevermore. Theodore Roosevelt, addressing an American Presbyterian mission in Khartoum, declared the Sudanese to "owe a peculiar duty to the Government under which you live—a peculiar duty in the direction of doing your full worth to make the present conditions perpetual" (1910, 3). If independence was an inherent, if eventual, right of peoples the world over, that right was not self-evident to Roosevelt. Twelve years of British rule had, he later explained, achieved "astonishing progress from the most hideous misery to well-being and prosperity"—emphasis on hideous misery. The Mahdis had ruled Sudan cruelly. They slaughtered. They enslaved. On the rest, they imposed their intolerant brand of Islam. Finally, the British expelled the Mahdis, an event that Roosevelt could only cheer. "Independence and self-government in the hands of the Sudanese proved to be much what

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independence and self-government would have been in a wolf pack," Roosevelt concluded (1910, 164). Imperialism so helped the native Sudanese, and the native Sudanese evinced such paltry capacity to help themselves, that Roosevelt wanted the arrangement to go on forever. What was then called the right to self-government and later the right to self-determination—signifying a teleological belief that imperial subjects deserved at least eventual independence—was not a first-order principle in Roosevelt's thought.[1]

Yet Roosevelt had seemed to honor America's anticolonial heritage a year and a half before. Like British rule in Sudan, American rule in the Philippines was doing the natives unequivocal good, Roosevelt boasted in his last annual message to Congress. That good, however, consisted primarily of preparation for independence. Filipinos were taking "real steps in the direction of self-government." The audience could infer that Roosevelt imputed moral significance to obtaining the consent of imperial subjects in their own governance. Indeed, Roosevelt forecast that Filipinos would be ready for independence "within a generation" (1926, 538-59). It was Roosevelt's first public suggestion of a time horizon and, for him, a short one.

What were Roosevelt's true convictions about self-government? How did theory and practice collide when Roosevelt administered the Philippines during his two terms as president? Like most leaders, Roosevelt had to reconcile the ideas that inspired him and many others with the demands of practical politics. Unlike most leaders, America's twenty-sixth president was intellectually serious. His beliefs, ever fervent, might have produced vexing and hazardous conflicts with political realities. While president of the American Historical Association, he preached that "the greatest historian should also be a great moralist" (quoted in Marks 1979, 92). But just beneath Roosevelt's boisterousness was a deep reserve of caution and a respect for the incrementalism that politics required. He aimed to be and regarded himself as, in his words, "a thoroughly practical man of high ideals who did his best to reduce those ideals to actual practice" (1913, 97). Applying Roosevelt's own standard, this essay first analyzes Roosevelt's philosophy of self-government and then reinterprets his Philippines policy in light of that philosophy. Roosevelt emerges as a reluctant anti-imperialist—an imperialist by desire but an anti-imperialist in governance.

In Roosevelt's philosophy of self-government, concern for the consent of the governed, that subject peoples rule themselves, carried no moral weight as long as imperial rule seemed to benefit them more. Roosevelt's animating impulse, from his first public statements, was to extend "civilization" to backward lands. Either civilized settlers should fill and rule empty spaces or imperial powers should uplift native peoples, by instilling a national character that would preserve order and pursue justice. In spreading outward, civilization would also strengthen from within as the imperialists gained in martial vigor and learned to do duties unto others. Such a program needed not to entail the transformation of barbarous lands into self-governing polities. Independence hopefully would result; once uplifted (race permitting), native peoples deserved to govern themselves. In this sense, Roosevelt genuinely desired self-government. But the spread of

1. This article, like its subject, uses the term "self-government." Roosevelt appears to have first employed "self-determination" in 1918 to criticize Woodrow Wilson's concept (1954, 8:1400).

civilization had intrinsic and fundamental value, exceeding its worth as a possible means to independence.

These convictions stayed consistent throughout Roosevelt's public life. They received clearest expression in his utterances on British rule in Africa in 1910. There, Roosevelt set two preconditions for self-government. Subject peoples had to acquire a virtuous moral character—honest, disinterested, and self-controlled. And they had to prove their fitness to their imperial master, namely by waiting patiently for independence to be conferred. Roosevelt's doctrine prescribed an imperial rule likely to last generations and able to go on forever.

All that was the theory. Practice proved another matter. For although Roosevelt's philosophy was rather ordinary in a transatlantic context, it was extraordinary among Americans. At first wishing to retain the Philippines for several generations at a minimum, President Roosevelt ended up preparing the islands for independence. He created in 1907 a Philippine assembly that shared decision making between American appointees and elected Filipinos, and he left office favoring the relinquishment of the islands within a single generation.

To explain Roosevelt's shift, historians have cited external, strategic motivations, principally a fear of Japanese attack. But deeper than the external concern was a domestic one. Roosevelt came to believe that the United States could not sustain long-term imperialism because of its ideals of self-government and its party system. Future presidents would set the Philippines free or fail to govern for Filipinos' benefit. Already, most Democrats and many Republicans demanded that America immediately promise eventual independence, and Congress refused to lower tariffs on Filipino goods despite Roosevelt's pleadings. Roosevelt did fear a Japanese attack, precisely because he feared America would refuse to fortify the Philippines.

America's abstention from further imperial occupation cannot be explained by American material resources or global norms and practices. Theodore Roosevelt presided over the rise of America to great power status at the turn of the twentieth century. America's ascent coincided with the acceleration of imperial expansion over much of the surface of the earth. Europeans scrambled for Africa and vied for Asia, grabbing territories with unprecedented velocity and overwhelming ferocity. The ranks of the great imperial powers swelled with the advent of their first non-European member, Japan. Some native leaders even invited the imperialists in, preferring an outsider's order to self-made combustion.[2] Amid this intensification of imperialism, America's new president was an imperialist through and through. He saw sentimentalism in the pith-helmeted British. When traditionalist American conservatives looked askance at Roosevelt's unintended elevation to the White House following the assassination of William McKinley, they did so with reason.

Despite nursing imperialist convictions, Roosevelt sensed that he could not hold the Philippines without preparing to give them up. More broadly, he never attempted long-term occupation abroad (see Hill 1927, 210). The United States even shrunk in size

2. For example, Malayan chieftains welcomed the British, and Santo Domingo offered itself to Germany, Spain, and, three times, the United States between 1849 and 1903 (Marks 1979, 21-22).

during his presidency, losing slightly more land than it acquired.[3] As imperial opportunity crested in the early twentieth century, America did not behave like a forthright imperial power. Roosevelt's devotion to imperialist ideals and his reluctant honoring of anti-imperialist practices therefore speak to a larger story: the American imperial turn that failed to happen. A two-decade occupation of Haiti began in 1915, but it was an exception that illuminates the rule. With the disappointment of Roosevelt's aspirations, imperial occupation remained a great aberration in American foreign relations.

The Spread of Civilization: Roosevelt's Philosophy of Self-Government

Historians have rightly detected differences between Roosevelt's thought on imperialism and his actions as president. Their narratives, however, have simplistically privileged one dimension over the other: Roosevelt was either an intellectually committed imperialist who must have taken imperialistic actions or an anti- or mildly imperialistic actor whose philosophical regard for imperialism must have been low. Richard Collin, for instance, largely attempts to infer Roosevelt's beliefs from his presidential actions. The upshot: "imperialism is a nineteenth-century European buzzword," unbefitting Roosevelt and America (1985, 103). Such a verdict does follow from Roosevelt's presidential conduct. Yet the policies Roosevelt adopted—in the face of competing priorities, conflicting principles, and limited power—he did not necessarily prefer for more ideal conditions. Roosevelt's pre- and post-presidential expressions show that he consistently championed imperialism for extending world civilization to new areas.

Most studies of Roosevelt's imperialist thought focus on race and Social Darwinism (Burton 1965; Dyer 1980). David Burton's 1968 study arguably remains the best. In Burton's telling, Roosevelt had a "hesitant and temporary commitment to empire . . . typical of his America" (1968, 4-5) that peaked with the Spanish-American War of 1898. To the contrary, Roosevelt's commitment to empire did not waver. That his presidency seems to indicate otherwise may indicate not flagging commitment by Roosevelt but the atypicality of Roosevelt's commitment among Americans. Moreover, in narrating the African tour, Burton omits that Roosevelt pressed the native Sudanese to make British imperial rule "perpetual" and presents Roosevelt as moderate toward Egypt. Burton's Roosevelt, while advocating strong-fisted British rule in the short run, encouraged "nationalistic ambitions" among delighted Egyptians (1968, 183). In truth, Roosevelt condemned any movement toward Egyptian independence, inspiring nationalists' ire.

The following essay seeks to provide a more complex and precise account of Roosevelt's thought on self-government and imperialism before relating his thought to his actions in the Philippines. In particular, it clarifies the moral weight that Roosevelt assigned to obtaining the consent of imperial subjects in their governance and the circumstances under which Roosevelt believed self-rule and independence should be

3. The cession of land in the Alaskan panhandle and two Portland Canal islands exceeded the addition of the Panama Canal zone (Marks 1979, 140).

granted. If such considerations have remained murky in most historical narratives, it is partly because Roosevelt as president obscured his prioritization of the extension of imperialism above the attainment of self-government. Roosevelt longed to see civilization spread to uncivilized areas. The benefits that imperial rule could deliver—including moral enlightenment, law and order, liberalism, and economic prosperity—were paramount. Whether a self-governing polity would emerge was secondary. Roosevelt applied these sensibilities consistently, both to imperialism in general and to America's role in the Philippines.

For Law, Order, and Righteousness: Roosevelt's Early Thought

Later interpreters would cast Roosevelt as an adroit analyst and manager of the alignments of powerful states (Beale 1956; Kissinger 1994; Osgood 1953). Yet one of Roosevelt's earliest works adopted the framework of cooperative empires, not rivalrous nation-states. Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West*, written in the 1880s, began, "During the past three centuries the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces has been not only the most striking feature in the world's history, but also the event of all others most far-reaching in its effects and its importance" (1995, 1:1). One important effect was the creation of a special nation, the United States, but another was transnational and common to imperial expansions over "uncivilized" peoples. At one point, Roosevelt stated outright his four-volume narrative's lesson: "Whether the whites won the land by treaty, by armed conquest, or, as was actually the case, by a mixture of both, mattered comparatively little so long as the land was won. It was all-important that it should be won, for the benefit of civilization, and in the interests of mankind." Roosevelt deemed wars with "savages" to be "the most ultimately righteous of all wars," despite their violence. "The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under a debt to him," Roosevelt wrote. "American and Indian, Boer and Zulu, Cossack and Tartar, New Zealander and Maori—in each case the victor, horrible though many of his deeds are, has laid deep the foundation for the future greatness of a mighty people" (1995, 3:44-45).

Imperialism's ends justified its means wherever it was practiced, Roosevelt contended. When civilization spread, mankind triumphed. Roosevelt nowhere mentioned the transformation of conquered lands into self-governing, much less democratic, polities. Self-government was not the primary purpose of imperialism or a necessary endpoint. In fact, imperialism warranted admittedly "terrible," "inhuman," "horrible" ferocity against savages who stood in the way (1995, 3:44-45).

Roosevelt delivered a similar message, minus the frank acceptance of cruelty, in public addresses between the Spanish-American War in 1898 and his rise to the presidency in 1901. He defended the annexation of the Philippines by espousing imperialism the world over. "Every expansion of a great civilized power"—whether Britain, America, France, or Russia, he said in 1899—"means a victory for law, order, and righteousness" (1906, 31-32). Not all powers made ideal civilizers: Roosevelt regarded Britain and the United States as superior in this regard to Germany and Russia, which he sometimes classified as despotisms, occupying a developmental stage between civilization

and barbarism (Roosevelt 1954, 1:644-9). Nevertheless, if Roosevelt's rhetorical encomium of "every expansion" contained hyperbole, it reflected the foremost importance that Roosevelt placed on the spread of civilization.

The imperial power would benefit by enabling its citizens to lead a character-building "strenuous life" of manly, martial exertion and disinterested service unto others. In the view of Roosevelt and many contemporaries, nations, like individuals, rose and fell on their character, their set of emotional, intellectual, and particularly moral qualities that were partly granted by race and partly molded by experience. A nation of good character combined self-respecting and disinterested attributes, both standing up for its own rights, through violence if necessary, and performing its duties owed to others (Roosevelt 1897, 43; 1913, 176). Pinning Rome's decline on its citizens losing the will to fight and breed,[4] Roosevelt always worried that Americans would grow too accustomed to their easily won peace and too absorbed in self-serving commerce (Roosevelt 1897, 301; 1913, 245). His anxiety stopped short of alarm. The pre-presidential Roosevelt rebutted writers who detected a nascent crisis in recent events. American civilization had progressed since 1812 and would probably keep advancing, he argued.[5] Nevertheless, degeneration seemed a plausible future and warranted significant concern. Races strong in character were "sure to overturn the race whose members have brilliant intellects, but who are cold and selfish and timid, who do not breed well or fight well, and who are not capable of disinterested love of the community" (Roosevelt 1897, 328). Overseas conquest could supplant now-ended frontier settlement in increasing Americans' vigor and sense of justice. Through outward expansion, civilization would revitalize its core.

This belief succored Roosevelt's advocacy of imperialism. Although partially serving nationalistic ends, it comported with—in fact depended on—the uplift of native populations in nonsettler imperialism, the only kind of imperialism that might be permitted by Americans' exceptionalist identity, averse to the permanent settlement of territories that would not be integrated into the federal government as states. Imperial rulers would improve their character only by acting disinterestedly. Roosevelt later reflected that American imperialism in the Philippines "benefited us only as any efficiently done work performed for the benefit of others does incidentally help the character of those who do it" (1913, 544). If merely brutal or narrowly self-interested, imperialism would help neither subject nor ruler. The internal consolidation of civilization, then, was conceived as a by-product rather than the direce object of successful nonsettler imperialism. "In every instance the expansion has been of benefit, not so much to the power

4. As Rome began to decline, "the Roman army became an army no longer of Roman citizens, but of barbarians trained in the Roman manner; it was toward the close of this period that celibacy became so crying an evil as to invoke the vain action of the legislature, and that the Roman race lost the power of self-perpetuation," Roosevelt wrote (1897, 339).

5. Roosevelt wrote that "at present no comparison could be less apt than that of Byzantium, or Rome in its later years," because America was "a great modern state where the thronging millions who make up the bulk of the population are wage-earners, who themselves decide their own destinies; a state which is able in time of need to put into the field armies, composed exclusively of its own citizens, more numerous than any which the world has ever before seen, and with a record of fighting in the immediate past with which there is nothing in the annals of antiquity to compare" (1897, 354; see also 1897, 301).

nominally benefited, as to the whole world," he averred in 1899, even in a speech aimed to convince a skeptical American public (1906, 32).

Civilization was Roosevelt's highest good, its spread his chief desire. Like "modernization" posited by social scientists a half century later, "civilization" served both as a single variable that characterized the essence of every polity and as a program for transformative action. Roosevelt never spelled out its every component, but civilization was no infinitely malleable catchall. Its essential feature was, as Frank Ninkovich writes, civic virtue, a shared moral sense that individuals must cast off their selfish interests for the common good (1986, 228). "In the evolution of humanity the unselfish side has, on the whole, tended steadily to increase at the expense of the selfish, notably in the progressive communities," Roosevelt asserted (1897, 311). Altruism underpinned social order. Typologies of political institutions, by contrast, scarcely figured in Roosevelt's calculus. Liberal internationalists' exaltation of democracy came later in the twentieth century.

Being mostly cultural in character, civilization was usually transmissible. Roosevelt insisted that Japan had attained civilization and thought most others could follow, although the full uplifting of racial inferiors such as the Sudanese and the "Indians, Negroes, and Asiatics" of the Western Hemisphere neared impossibility.[6] But in any event, Roosevelt recommended imperialism: Benign tutelage could give capable races the push they needed, and for the lowest races, perpetual subjugation, if not extermination, was the only way to bring civilization to their lands. From Roosevelt's earliest writings, the enlargement of civilization was the imperative of imperialism. In comparison, the desires of subject peoples mattered little.

For the Good of Filipinos, Like It or Not

In 1898, with Roosevelt first cheering and then fighting, the United States seized Cuba and the Philippines from Spain. While promising the speedy restoration of Cuban sovereignty, President McKinley chose to occupy the Philippines, vowing "to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died" (quoted in Stuntz 1904, 144). Roosevelt claimed to derive his views on the Philippines from the principles he had laid down 20 years prior. "My doctrine is what I preached in my *Winning of the West*," Roosevelt wrote in 1899. The justice of American rule "stands precisely parallel between the Philippines and the Apaches and Sioux" (1954, 2:991). Roosevelt's analogy obscured an important difference—Americans had never contemplated establishing a settler colony in the Philippines. The spread of civilization could be achieved by two very different methods: clearing the natives from the land for settlement by "civilized" people or attempting to improve the local society through imperial rule. Settlement was

6. In a March 1896 article principally on the Monroe Doctrine, Roosevelt deemed British imperialism to be valueless in the Americas, "where the colonizing race has to do its work by means of other inferior races," namely non-Hispanics and, especially, blacks (1897, 236-37). His racism was genuine, but his case against British imperialism probably flowed from adherence to the Monroe Doctrine. Everywhere else, such as in Sudan, Roosevelt cheered imperialism in proportion to the inferiority of natives.

Roosevelt's preference and initial focus. It spelled immediate disaster for many "savages." Uplift, however, seemed to be the only course possible for America in the Philippines, and it dictated the opposite treatment of indigenous people.

For the Philippines, as for nonsettler imperialism in general, Roosevelt made three prescriptions noteworthy here. First, the imperial power was not to exploit imperial subjects but to rule disinterestedly for their benefit by inculcating them with the standards of civilization. During imperial rule, second, subjects' involvement in their own governance had no intrinsic value; in a childlike developmental stage, they were not yet entitled to rule themselves. This implied, finally, that imperial rule should continue indefinitely until imperial subjects acquired an adult moral character, capable of self-restraint. If and only then should "consent of the governed" become relevant and imperial imposition end. Publicly, Roosevelt stressed his desire to see the Philippines become self-governing, and he meant it, albeit on his own imperialist terms: America must stay until Filipinos became civilized, if they did.

Roosevelt's conscious intentions toward the Philippines appear to have been, as David Burton writes, "quite genuine and sincerely altruistic" (1968, 64). With Americans not about to settle the islands, Filipinos were in luck. The Philippines had to be governed "primarily for the benefit of the islanders themselves," Roosevelt mandated, without acknowledging any doubt that the imperial rulers could faithfully serve their imperial subjects (1902, 23). During his presidency, he affirmed, publicly and privately, on every occasion, that American motives were altruistic.[7] Altruism did not preclude brutality. The imperial power was to decide where the best interests of the natives lay. But now, when Roosevelt spoke of the winning of the West, he spoke of uplifting the savage rather than destroying him. "Now we are civilizing the Indian," Vice President Roosevelt said, "and putting him on a level to which he could never have attained under the old conditions" (1906, 280).

Like many contemporaries, Roosevelt foreswore democratic doctrine's relevance to underdeveloped natives. Thomas Jefferson, who authored the Declaration of Independence and concluded the Louisiana Purchase, did not survey savage Indian tribes in the Louisiana territory, Roosevelt noted in his public letter accepting the vice presidency in 1900. "He railed at the sticklers for an impossible application of his principle, saying, in language which at the present day applies to the situation in the Philippines without the change of a word, 'though it is acknowledged that our new fellow-citizens are as yet as incapable of self-government as children, yet some can not bring themselves to suspend its principles for a single moment,' " Roosevelt wrote (1954, 2:1401). As children, Filipinos could assert no valid right to rule themselves or influence their administration. So long as they remained childlike, their will lacked moral significance. Paternalism thus reconciled democracy with imperialism.

Roosevelt did not yet make clear how exactly subject peoples could pass into adulthood and become eligible for independence. On the African tour, he was more

7. For example, "No nation has ever behaved towards the weak with quite the disinterestedness and sanity combined which we have shown as regards Cuba and the Philippines" (Roosevelt 1954, 6:955; see also 4:839, 940).

explicit that the prized quality was a self-controlled moral character. Nevertheless, Roosevelt appears to have held the same idea regarding Filipinos. "Freedom does not mean absence of all restraint," Roosevelt confided in a 1904 draft of a letter to Harvard president Charles Eliot. "It merely means the substitution of self-restraint for external restraint, and therefore, it can be used only by people capable of self-restraint." Only such people were "ethically entitled" to freedom (1954, 4:769). Once self-restrained, a people did deserve to conduct their own affairs. Roosevelt's effusive plaudits of Governor-General William Howard Taft's "unbending rectitude" in Philippine administration probably exhibited a hope that Filipinos would learn by example (1902, 22-23).[8] Still, self-government was to be granted on the imperialist's terms. "We must ourselves be the judges as to when they become 'fit,' " Roosevelt repeated (1954, 4:939). Hence he rebuffed Democrats' calls to promise Filipinos eventual independence. Until America deemed them fit, Filipinos did not deserve independence. Their day of liberation might never come.[9]

Historical narratives have somewhat obscured the low priority that Roosevelt imputed to self-government, likely because Roosevelt himself obscured it though rhetoric and action alike. On ascending to the presidency, Roosevelt promptly recast the goal of American imperial rule. Out, or muted, was the spread of civilization; in was preparation for self-government. "Our aim is high," Roosevelt declared in his first annual message to Congress. "We hope to do for [Filipinos] what has never before been done for any peoples of the tropics—to make them fit for self-government after the fashion of the really free nations" (Richardson 1908, 437). Roosevelt likewise emphasized self-government as the goal of imperialism in his acceptance of the Republican nomination in 1904.[10] Such statements did not contradict his philosophy. Roosevelt wanted to fit Filipinos for self-government. What motivated that desire, however, was a deeper impetus for imperialism: the spread of civilization.

Roosevelt tempered this motive in his rhetoric, and his presidential actions followed suit. In addition to creating an elected assembly in the Philippines, Roosevelt never tried to annex Caribbean lands, whether for settlement or uplift. During his presidency, the Latin American territories under American control were confined to the Panama Canal and naval and coaling stations (Hill 1927, 209-10). When opportunities to remake Cuba fell into his lap, he passed them up, withdrawing America's occupation force in 1903 and conducting a reluctant and fleeting occupation from 1907 to 1909. Even his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, sometimes interpreted as perverting the anti-imperial doctrine into a warrant for aggressive imperialism (Ricard 2006), licensed the exercise of only an "international police power" to prevent European intervention. Police arrest, seize, and stabilize, but they do not rule a people, much less try

8. "Under Judge Taft [Filipinos] are gradually learning what it means to keep faith, what it means to have public officials of unbending rectitude" (Roosevelt 1902, 22-23).

9. "But I cannot be certain when that day will be, and of course there is always the possibility that they may themselves behave in such a fashion as to put it off indefinitely," Roosevelt wrote in 1902. "Now I do not want to make a promise which may not be kept" (1954, 3:277).

10. "Every effort is being made to fit the islanders for self-government," Roosevelt wrote, "and they have already in large measure received it" (1954, 4:940).

to reform character. Indeed, when mounting Dominican debts appeared to invite European intervention on behalf of injured investors, Roosevelt wanted "to do nothing but what a policeman has to do," he wrote in 1904. The United States ultimately ran Dominican customs, and no more. The president had all the enthusiasm for annexation, he famously announced, "as a gorged boa-constrictor might have to swallow a porcupine wrong-end-to" (1954, 4:734). It would seem possible that Roosevelt had lost the will to civilize.

Perpetual Imperialism: Roosevelt in British Africa, 1910

That possibility should be ruled out. After his presidency, in late 1909 and early 1910, Roosevelt toured British Africa, visiting East Africa, Uganda, Sudan, and Egypt. He instructed the Sudanese to obey British authority forever, and Egyptians for generations at the least. Then he scolded the British for thinking Egyptians might have been ready for self-government. "The dominion of modern civilized nations over the dark places of the earth has been fraught with widespread good for mankind," Roosevelt proclaimed in London (1910, 161). Roosevelt the civilizing imperialist was back—suggesting he had never left.

The speeches are perhaps the single best source for comprehending the philosophy of self-government and imperialism that Roosevelt held in 1910 and, we can infer, during his presidency. Roosevelt had been only a year out of office by March 1910. In that year, spent mostly on safari, his philosophy had no reason to change. His candor, on the other hand, might have grown. Roosevelt was unconstrained by political responsibilities and ambitions to the greatest extent in his life; the African tour was nestled between his departure from the presidency and his decision to challenge Taft in the election of 1912. American interests, almost nonexistent in British Africa, should not have dictated Roosevelt's position. Roosevelt did place enormous value on Anglo-American friendship, yet he provoked his British hosts by encouraging their rule to be more forthright than they favored. Not least among the reasons to attend to the African tour, Roosevelt explicitly connected American imperialism in the Philippines with British imperialism in Africa.[11]

Roosevelt entered British Africa as nationalism stirred and British administrators started to doubt the wisdom of continued rule. Even the firm Lord Cromer, Britain's longtime Egypt consul whom Roosevelt admired, wrote in 1908 that Britain should gradually prepare Egypt for self-government. Controlling Egypt was proving tougher than Britain had anticipated. One month before Roosevelt's visit, a young Muslim nationalist had assassinated Prime Minister Boutros Pasha, a Copt friendly with British administrators. As nationalists debated the justice of the murder, the new consul, Sir Eldon Gorst, urged Roosevelt to stay silent on the assassination. But Roosevelt was not about to shrink from defending Britain's civilizing mission. Soon after arriving in Khartoum on March 14, 1910, Roosevelt delivered three speeches, two in Sudan and

11. "It is of interest to all civilized men that a similar success shall attend alike the Englishman and the German as they work in East Africa; exactly as it has been a benefit to every one that America took possession of the Philippines" (Roosevelt 1910, 161).

Egypt in March and one in Britain in May, that reiterated his previous convictions but presented them more starkly (Burton 1968, 178-79).

Forget preparing the Sudanese or East Africans for self-government, Roosevelt said. Spreading civilization was the highest priority for mankind. In Sudan, that meant making British rule "perpetual" (1910, 3). East Africa, for its part, needed the continued promotion of permanent British settlement. The land "can be made a true white man's country," Roosevelt enthused. Now, as in his pre-presidential years, he proudly alluded to brutality. "No alien race should be permitted to come into competition with the settlers," he said, leaving the means—forced resettlement or extermination—to Londoners' imagination (1910, 161-62).[12] Nonsettler colonies, for their part, were "totally different." In Sudan, Egypt, and Uganda, as in the Philippines, civilized Westerners had to uplift native savages. However civilization was best spread, that was how to rule. In governing Egypt, "it is the thing, not the form, which is vital," said Roosevelt (1910, 163, 171).

Roosevelt made clear his main precondition for the granting of self-government: Subject peoples must achieve a virtuous moral character, inculcated by the civilizing power.[13] That, above all, was what Roosevelt meant by "civilization." Institutions and constitutions could not fit a people for self-government, said Roosevelt in Egypt. Rather, "a slow, steady, resolute development of those substantial qualities, such as the love of justice, the love of fair play, the spirit of self-reliance, of moderation . . . alone enable a people to govern themselves" (1910, 25). This character of restraint marked the people's passage from incapable childhood into capable adulthood. Only then did their consent in governance acquire moral significance.

Roosevelt seems to have applied different notions of manhood to the imperial power and the imperial subject. The imperialist was to lead a post-Victorian strenuous life. The imperialized, by contrast, were too "noisy" and "emotional," as Roosevelt described Egyptian nationalist Muslims (1954, 7:351). They had to meet a Victorian ideal of cool rationality.

Because of the importance of moral character, eventual independence was not a right. It could never be certain, always probabilistic. It depended on imperial subjects acquiring the requisite character, which they might never do, and might not be able to do. Roosevelt apparently regarded the Sudanese as incapable, urging them to make British rule perpetual. And despite his presidential rhetoric, Roosevelt privately doubted the capability of Filipinos. "I *believe* that they will gradually grow to fit themselves for" self-government, Roosevelt wrote in 1904, "but I am not *certain* that they will so grow, and I have no idea how long the growth will take" (1954 4:907). Imperialism did not have to lead to self-government. In most cases, including Egypt, Roosevelt foresaw

12. In private, Roosevelt also alluded to the harsh methods of rule that he wanted to employ: "I should greatly like to handle Egypt and India for a few months. At the end of that time I doubtless would be impeached by the House of Commons, but I should have things moving in fine order first" (1954, 7:63).

13. Roosevelt stressed the importance of character in all realms of public life. Roosevelt was inspired by the example of his father, a religious reformer whose church had tried to improve New York City slums (Burton 1968, 9-10).

imperial tutelage lasting "a matter, not of a decade or two, but of generations" (1910, 24). But in principle, there was no limit to how long imperialism could be the superior arrangement.

Moreover, judgment and initiative lay wholly with the civilized imperial power. Violent agitation for independence only proved subjects' unreadiness. After much Rooseveltian pleading, Gorst agreed to permit Roosevelt to denounce the Pasha assassination and its supporters (Burton 1968, 188-89). Roosevelt followed through, first in Egypt, then in London. "When a people treats assassination as the corner-stone of self-government, it forfeits all right to be treated as worthy of self-government," Roosevelt told Cairo. He blamed the Egyptian Nationalist Party by name. Britain should keep order and punish murder, he said, by any means necessary (1910, 170-72). Egyptians were listening. The Young Egypt Committee condemned Roosevelt's Cairo speech as British puppetry—an ironic charge, because behind the scenes, Roosevelt was more pro-British than the British (*New York Times* 1910a, 4). As for the still more provocative London address, the *New York Times* headlined it as the "Speech Which Stirred World" (1910b, 1). One member of the outraged Young Egypt Committee desired to have "shot Roosevelt dead in Cairo" (*New York Times* 1910c, 1). Soon thereafter, Gorst was replaced by Lord Kitchener, who steeled British authority over Sudan (Marks 1979, 176). If President Woodrow Wilson's advocacy of self-determination nine years later produced a "Wilsonian moment" of transnational anticolonial revolt (Manela 2007), this was an opposite Rooseveltian moment that affirmed the justice of imperialism against growing nationalist challenges.

"I am, as I expected I would be, a pretty good Imperialist!" Roosevelt reflected early in his East African travels (1954, 7:32). Roosevelt's expectation was well founded. Since the 1880s, Roosevelt had written of the supreme benefit to mankind of the extension of civilization over uncivilized spaces. The spread of civilization took priority; self-rule or independence of peoples was subordinate. Until imperial subjects acquired a civilized, self-controlled moral character, they had no right to rule. If that day never came, so be it. According to his philosophy, preparing unfit Filipinos for independence was the last thing Roosevelt as president should have done.

Reluctant Liberator: Why Roosevelt Prepared the Philippines for Independence

From 1901 to 1907, Roosevelt's policies and objectives for the Philippines largely followed his philosophy. The United States quelled an insurgency, embarked on a "civilizing" occupation, and professed an intention to stay indefinitely until Filipinos were fit to rule themselves. From 1907 to 1909, however, Roosevelt was an anti-imperialist, albeit a moderate and reluctant one. The United States established an elected Philippine assembly, and Roosevelt pronounced confidence that the Philippines would receive independence within one generation. The manifestations of his shift deserve elaboration before its causes are explored.

The Roosevelt administration pursued a strong imperialist course for its first six years, with Taft making most decisions as chair of the Philippine Commission.[14] The administration's policy was indefinite retention: rule the Philippines until America deemed Filipinos fit to decide whether they wanted to rule themselves or continue to be ruled by America. This process, the administration estimated, would unfold over multiple generations. Ninety percent of Filipinos were as yet too ignorant and credulous to rule themselves, Taft told the House Committee on Insular Affairs (Alfonso 1970, 51-52, 84).

Although refusing to promise even eventual independence, the United States pledged in 1902 to establish an elected Filipino assembly. The impetus for the move lay with Taft. Taft envisioned that the assembly would share legislative powers with the American-appointed and -led Philippine Commission (Lopez 1966, 17). The promise of an assembly would calm the insurgency and Filipinos would learn how to govern, Taft testified before Congress (Alfonso 1970, 85-87). Congress approved, passing the Philippine Government Act on July 1, 1902. Unfortunately, Roosevelt's correspondence barely broaches the assembly. The president did not argue with Taft, whom he gave substantial autonomy over Philippine affairs. It is possible, however, that Roosevelt worked to delay the assembly's creation. In 1901, Taft expected implementation within two years, but the assembly's arrival took six (Alfonso 1970, 86). Publicly, Roosevelt referred to the assembly as an "experiment" whose results "we had better await" before granting more autonomy (1954, 4:940-41).

The administration's actions flowed from Roosevelt's pre-1907 objective: "We shall not relax our hold on the Philippines" (1954, 4:822). The duty of the United States was to civilize Filipinos, not to grant independence. In a private letter in 1904, Roosevelt explained why he did not promise eventual independence. On a practical level, Filipinos would take such a promise to imply that independence was imminent and would channel their attention to "scheming and planning" for postimperial position, the president wrote. Roosevelt's other reason was principled though obliquely stated. Filipinos "certainly will not be fit for independence in the next half dozen or dozen years, probably not in the next score or two score years," Roosevelt wrote. "Further than this we cannot say" (1954, 4:769-70). Roosevelt desired independence merely as the potential by-product of a mission to spread civilization. He did not promise independence because he thought independence might never be right to deliver.

In August 1907, Roosevelt's mind changed. "We shall have to be prepared for giving the islands independence of a more or less complete type," he wrote to Taft. "Personally I should be glad to see the islands made independent." Roosevelt suggested that when launching the assembly in two months, Taft should promise Filipinos that "if they handle themselves wisely in their legislative assembly we shall at the earliest possible moment give them a nearly complete independence" (1954, 5:762). Roosevelt's shift was stark—and all the more striking because Taft, wedded to the former policy,

14. Although Congress legally controlled the Philippines, per the Supreme Court's ruling in the Insular Cases of 1901, Roosevelt nonetheless kept the initiative, commanding the armed forces and proposing and molding legislation.

disagreed. For now Taft prevailed, and Taft affirmed to the Filipinos that America would stay "considerably longer than a generation" (quoted in Alfonso 1970, 52).

But Roosevelt felt strongly. In his final annual message to Congress in December 1908, Roosevelt for the first time predicted, and nearly promised, that independence was near. "I trust that within a generation the time will arrive when the Philippines can decide for themselves whether it is well for them to become independent, or to continue under the protection of a strong and disinterested power," Roosevelt declared. Then he attempted to comport the about-face with his philosophy. Filipinos, he claimed, were nearly fit to rule. "We have every reason to believe that they are gradually acquiring the character which lies at the base of self-government," he wrote. "Hitherto this Philippine legislature has acted with moderation and self-restraint" (1926, 538-39). (Consistent with his earlier views, Roosevelt added, "But no one can prophesy the exact date when it will be wise to consider independence as a fixed and definite policy. It would be worse than folly to try to set down such a date in advance, for it must depend upon the way in which the Philippine people themselves develop the power of self-mastery" [1926, 538-39].)

Roosevelt almost certainly dissembled. He had no reason to sprout a genuine confidence in Filipinos' prior restraint and future growth. The Philippine legislature had already commenced what became its annual tradition of passing resolutions demanding immediate independence. Only candidates committed to independence were electable—so much that the Federal Party, the initially pro-American party that favored annexation, reversed its platform join its rival Nacionalistas in espousing immediate independence (Alfonso 1970, 69-70). Roosevelt himself wrote privately that Filipinos were unready for self-rule. "We shall have to be prepared," he told Taft, "for giving the islands independence of a more or less complete type much sooner than I think advisable from their own standpoint" (1954, 5:762). Why did Roosevelt come to desire independence?

American imperialism in the Philippines has inspired little scholarship, and historians have scarcely perceived Roosevelt's Philippine shift. Burton, notably, portrays no change in Roosevelt's attitude toward the Philippines during the presidency, even as he quotes at length the last annual message to Congress, which downgraded Roosevelt's ambitions (Burton 1968, 89-91, 99-100).

Nevertheless, a dominant explanation for Roosevelt's turn can be identified. In the lone book devoted to Roosevelt's administration of the Philippines, Oscar Alfonso locates the shift's origins exclusively in international strategy. "Diplomatic difficulties with Japan, especially after the manifest demonstration of Japanese strength in the Russo-Japanese War, led Roosevelt to consider the grant of independence to the Philippines earlier than he would have otherwise believed feasible," Alfonso writes, citing Roosevelt's August 1907 warning to Taft that the Philippines were "our heel of Achilles" vis-à-vis Japan (1970, 74).

Similarly, in his study of Japanese–American relations under Roosevelt, Raymond Esthus attributes Roosevelt's reversal on the Philippines solely to fear of Japan. "Roosevelt had been one of the staunchest imperialists at the turn of the century, but now the realities of responsibility and the danger of war with Japan gave him quite a different

view," Esthus finds (1966, 194-95). As the post-presidential African tour would show, however, Roosevelt remained a staunch imperialist in philosophy. His change specifically concerned American imperialism. While fear of Japan was important, it was not Roosevelt's deepest motive.[15]

Roosevelt Blames Domestic Politics

Roosevelt himself did not privilege Pacific geopolitics in explaining his Philippine shift. Instead, he cited domestic political conditions, a factor both independent of and partly causing the strategic one. If his private correspondence of August 1907 is to be believed, the ideals of self-government and anti-imperialism—operating in a political system whose presidential term limits and dual parties made opposition rule a not too distant prospect—convinced Roosevelt that generations-long or perpetual American occupation of the Philippines was undesirable if not impossible. Roosevelt consciously violated his own ideal philosophy, he claimed, because of nonideal domestic political circumstances.

Roosevelt was most expansive in a private letter to newspaper editor Silas McBee. Comporting with his philosophy of self-government and his prior expressions on the Philippines, Roosevelt affirmed that he was "not at all sure" Filipinos would soon deserve self-government. He was "perfectly sure that the best thing for the Philippines would be to have a succession of Tafts administer them for the next century." But much as he wished to rule the Philippines as Lord Cromer ruled Egypt, Roosevelt had to account for "the difference between the United States and any monarchy." The party system and public opinion rendered altruistic occupation chimerical in the long run. Roosevelt resolved, "I am not sure, either that under changing administrations we would get a succession of Tafts, nor yet that our people will patiently submit, as in my judgment they ought to, to doing an onerous duty for which they will get no thanks and no material reward; while from a military standpoint the Philippines form our heel of Achilles" (1954, 5:774-76). That was all Roosevelt's long letter made of the strategic matter, even though "heel of Achilles" is all historians have plucked from the letter (Alfonso 1970, 108).

Roosevelt fingered two sources of American anti-imperialism: ideals of self-government and ignorance of foreign affairs. In so doing, he recognized his own exceptionalism relative to the American public and America's exceptionalism relative to European powers. "Statesmen," he wrote, "have to take into account both the ideals, and the lack of knowledge of the peculiar difficulties in the Philippines, among our people. Our people do not desire to hold foreign dependencies, and do believe in self-government for them." Roosevelt supported his judgment with examples of his administration's nonimperial acts in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, and Santo Domingo. "Not a European nation would have given up Cuba as we gave it up," he avouched (1954, 5:774-75). After

15. In his classic study of Rooseveltian diplomacy, Howard K. Beale comes closest to attributing Roosevelt's turnaround on the Philippines primarily to his perception of domestic ideals of self-government. Beale briefly quotes Roosevelt to this effect but does not investigate the claim, which is a passing detail in Beale's sweeping narrative (1956, 456).

six years as chief executive, Roosevelt apparently deduced that the anti-imperial ideals he encountered were not transient artifacts of recent political squabbles. They were deeply rooted and likely to predominate long after he left office. Roosevelt not once referenced Democrats or Republicans; he assessed Americans as such.

Roosevelt's rendering of his motives should not be taken at face value. Rooseveltian utterances are notoriously hazardous to the trusting. In this case, the president, a skilled manager of public opinion, was writing to a journalist, albeit in private. To press publicly his fears of Japan might have damaged relations with that country. Did Roosevelt deploy the domestic argument to conceal strategic motivations?

Roosevelt seems to have been sincere. First, he delivered a similar message to Taft, whom he was grooming for the presidency. If the future Japanese threat so menaced America's Philippine presence, Roosevelt should have wanted to educate Taft about it and ground the necessity of abandoning the Philippines in it. Second, the domestic argument fits the timing of the shift in August 1907, after Roosevelt had failed for good to push a Philippine tariff reduction through Congress and legislative–executive relations had been broadly poisoned. That said, the shift also coincided with tremors in Japanese–American relations. Both factors converged to produce Roosevelt's shift. But the domestic factor, third, was paramount because it partially spawned the strategic one.

Roosevelt expounded on his changed stance to Taft, now secretary of war, in an August 21 letter. The American people were not "prepared permanently, in a duty-loving spirit . . . to assume the control of the Philippine Islands for the good of the Filipinos," Roosevelt reiterated. Roosevelt adduced two reasons, "domestic and foreign," presenting them always in that order. First, Americans were unlikely to treat Filipinos benevolently, undermining the civilizing mission. Second, they were unlikely to fortify the Philippines and build the navy sufficiently, inviting Japanese attack. Roosevelt wrote, "It is impossible to awaken any public interest in favor of giving [the Philippines] tariff advantages; it is very difficult to awaken any public interest in providing any adequate defense of the islands." Likewise, "To keep the islands without treating them generously and at the same time without adequately fortifying them and without building up a navy second only to that of Great Britain, would be disastrous in the extreme" (1954, 5:761-62).

In this way, the strategic factor regressed to the domestic one. American occupation of the Philippines was not inherently dangerous. What made Roosevelt regard the islands as the heel rather than the arm of Achilles was the public's lack of imperial commitment, transmitted through the Congress. Roosevelt would have preferred to retain the Philippines "if this country were prepared to look ahead fifty years and to build the navy and erect the fortifications which in my judgment it should." But the country was unprepared, Roosevelt lamented. It was for lack of confidence in the imperial will of his people that Roosevelt determined the Philippines to be a strategic liability (1954, 5:761-62).

The Tariff Battle and Anti-Imperial Opinion

Roosevelt had cause to believe that American anti-imperial ideals were immutable and to reach that view by the fall of 1907. Citizens' concern for the consent of the

governed materialized everywhere—in congressional action, political campaigns, and newspaper opinion. Moreover, Roosevelt's political standing suffered as Congress rebelled against executive assertion and the economy experienced a panic. By 1906 and 1907, American character struck Roosevelt as incompatible with altruistic imperialism. He passed up an opportunity to launch a long-term occupation of Cuba, and, despairing at his definitive failure to push a tariff reduction through Congress, he decided the Philippines should be set free.

No empty blusterer, Roosevelt was a tactful and cautious statesman. Ideals must be realizable, he insisted. In international affairs, one of his fundamental precepts held that a nation must never promise more than it would likely perform (Gould 1991, 14; Marks 1979, 139, 152-54; Roosevelt 1913, 543; Wertheim 2007, 44-54). Accordingly, he monitored, managed, and responded to public opinion to a degree unprecedented among his presidential predecessors. In an era before opinion polls, frequent communication with journalists and members of Congress kept Roosevelt attuned to the public mood. Unsympathetic reporters could find themselves banished to the "Ananias Club," for liars of biblical proportions, or banned from the White House altogether (Gould 1991, 154). Roosevelt frequently wrote of the constraints that public and congressional opinion imposed on the making of foreign policy. It would be "well-nigh impossible . . . to carry out any policy save one which had become part of the inherited tradition of the country, like the Monroe Doctrine," Roosevelt explained in 1904. "Not merely could I, for instance, only make such an engagement for four years, but I would have to reckon with a possible overthrow in Congress, with the temper of the people, with many different conditions" (1954, 4:1048). Feasibility was a matter of principle. And so, except in the Philippines, Roosevelt sent not a single American into armed combat during seven and a half years as president (Gould 1991, 14; Marks 1979, 144).

Throughout the years of the Roosevelt administration, the Democratic Party officially endorsed anti-imperialism and self-government. For the moment, the party was scuffling, capturing neither the White House nor congressional majorities. But anti-imperialists inhabited both parties (as did imperialists), and Democratic weakness would surely reverse. Starting in 1900, Democratic platforms called for an immediate guarantee of eventual Philippine independence. They invoked a strong notion of the principle of self-government. Filipinos must be "free and independent to work out their own destiny," the 1904 platform trumpeted. Imperialism was wrong on principle: "Wherever there may exist a people incapable of being governed under American laws, in consonance with the American constitution, the territory of that people ought not to be part of the American domain" (McKee 1904, 387). The American nation-state must either absorb new conquests or set seized lands free: Democrats repudiated the middle ground of empire, with its hierarchical arrangement of several partial sovereignties and its fuzzy boundary between foreign and domestic spheres.

Democrats made Philippine occupation a significant campaign issue in 1904 (Alfonso 1970, 62). The length and spirit of Roosevelt's defense—withdrawal would amount to an "international crime," he wrote—signaled a feeling of vulnerability (1954, 4:939). Roosevelt could probably sense in the fall of 1907 that Democrats would keep campaigning against Philippine imperialism and for self-government. The 1908 plat-

form would indeed charge that "the experiment in imperialism . . . laid our nation open to the charge of abandoning a fundamental doctrine of self-government" (Stanwood and Bolton 1916, 195). As Roosevelt neared the end of his presidency, it was plain that anti-imperialist Democrats could not be compelled to yield their position—not by rhetorical exchanges, not by electoral losses, and not by the example of American administration of the Philippines.

Within Roosevelt's own party, a sizeable minority stalwartly rejected American imperialism. Western and Midwestern Republicans were particular foes, fearing that heavy immigration would flow from engagement in Asian lands. Jacob G. Schurman, Taft's predecessor as president of the Philippine Commission, publicly stated in 1902 that the United States should grant independence as soon as a Filipino government was stable (Alfonso 1970, 53). Massachusetts senator George F. Hoar waxed eloquent about "the great and sacred right of [Filipino] people to judge for themselves" whether to be American ruled or independent (quoted in Alfonso 1970, 54). More broadly, American elites' "anticolonial consensus," having fractured in 1898, returned in 1902 or 1903 (May 1967, 222-23). In 1904, Roosevelt received a bipartisan petition of more than 7,000 citizens, many prominent, such as Schurman and Eliot, that demanded the United States publicly commit to grant independence once a new Filipino government was established. That Filipinos desired independence was, the petition stated, "unquestioned fact" and reason enough to confer freedom (Roosevelt 1954, 4:767; see also Alfonso 1970, 54).

Hotly debated as the Philippines were in 1904, the imperial project still excited some. In the following years, much of the remaining support gave way as venom poured into Roosevelt's relations with Congress. The troubles began at the outset of Roosevelt's second term. The Republican Party split into conservative and progressive factions, whose blistering disputes inevitably entangled Roosevelt, and lost 28 House seats in the elections of 1906 (Gould 1991, 156, 226, 236). In several ways, the president hurt his own cause. Immediately pledging not to seek a third term, Roosevelt was a lame duck throughout his second (Gould 1991, 143-44). His reduced political clout combined poorly with his open contempt for Congress as an institution. "I do not much admire the Senate, because it is such a helpless body when efficient work for good is to be done," Roosevelt wrote, epitomizing the attitude that invited affronted legislators to reassert their authority (quoted in Bishop 1920, 1:433). By the end of 1906, executive–legislative tensions had boiled over (Gould 1991, 244). An economic panic in 1907, which challenged Republican claims to be the only competent managers of the economy, further damaged Roosevelt's position.

In the two years before Roosevelt tempered his goal for the Philippines, congressional enmity crippled the president's already circumspect conduct of foreign relations. Roosevelt had never tried to initiate imperialist conquests, and now he labored to secure the needed assent for marginal actions in Santo Domingo and Morocco. Congressmen, mindful of America's traditional isolation and exceptionalist self-conception, resisted entanglement in foreign affairs and mere involvement in European affairs. Roosevelt, first, struggled mightily to obtain Senate ratification of a protocol establishing an American receivership over Dominican customs. The protocol, signed with the Domini-

can government in February 1905, aimed to prevent European intervention and authorized America temporarily to collect and distribute customs duties. Democrats blocked the treaty for two years, until the administration negotiated a slightly less ambitious pact (Gould 1991, 179). Eight years on, Roosevelt still seethed at the Senate's obstruction. All his opponents had done, Roosevelt wrote, was to "shirk their duty" (1913, 551). Next, at the Algeciras Conference of 1906, the Roosevelt administration helped resolve a European squabble over colonial rights in Morocco. The resulting treaty affected America peripherally, concerning only the rights of commerce and travelers, and, upon signing it, the administration disclaimed any responsibility for enforcing it. The Senate balked nonetheless. Roosevelt was incredulous. "I am literally unable to understand how any human being can find anything whatever to object to in this treaty," he sputtered. The Senate ultimately relented, but only after adding a reservation renouncing any purpose to participate in European political questions (quoted in Gould 1991, 193-94). In the second term, Roosevelt's boa constrictor found the quills of porcupine posteriors even on small mice.

The president noticed. His anti-imperial turn was foreshadowed toward the end of 1906, as he intervened in Cuba with immense caution and overriding concern for domestic opinion. Events in Cuba, taken in isolation, presented Roosevelt with an opportunity to seize the island and embark on the lengthy uplift of its people. After bloody insurrection erupted in August, both Cuban president Estrada Palma and the rebels invited the American military to join their respective sides (Gould 1991, 252). The faction backing the government, in fact, sought outright annexation. But Roosevelt's principal preoccupation was potential domestic discontent. Consequently, he tried everything to avoid sending troops, intervened in the most superficial of ways, and withdrew as soon as was feasible. At first, during September, he dispatched Taft on a last-ditch mediation mission (Millett 1968, 79, 100, 111). As Taft repeatedly nudged Roosevelt to get on with intervention, Roosevelt impressed upon his secretary of war the need to undertake only those actions an anti-imperialist public would countenance. Intervention would provoke "grave dissatisfaction here" unless every chance for peace was exhausted, Roosevelt instructed. "Remember that we have to do not only what is best for the island but what we can get public sentiment in this country to support" (quoted in *New York Times* 1906, 6). The mission failed to sway the intransigent Cuban factions, but it served Roosevelt's domestic purpose.

In the end, the United States established a provisional government whose business was to hold peaceful elections and get out. Five thousand American troops patrolled the island under the Cuban flag, on orders to be "as gentle as possible" (Millett 1968, v; Marks 1979, 187). Roosevelt thereby averted his nightmare scenario of guerilla war. Cuba, however, paid a price as astute belligerents waited out the occupation. One rebel general ordered his troops not to let the American force disarm them because "we know that the American government is willing to grant almost anything before having to fire a gun in Cuba" (Millett 1968, 105). Throughout the intervention, Roosevelt would, in his words, "not even consider the plan of a protectorate." "The good faith of the United States is a mighty valuable asset and must not be impaired," he explained, perhaps implying that any promise to rule Cuba as a protectorate would fall prey to revolt by the

American public (quoted in Millett 1968, 146). As the occupation drew to a close in March 1909, Roosevelt looked back in satisfaction that Congress had stayed quiet (Millett 1968, 148, 258). But what contented American politicians as a quick fix caused others to foretell costly ramifications. James Bryce, the perspicacious British ambassador in Washington, reported that the Roosevelt administration, in heeding its public's aversion to imperialism, had passed up annexation for a course of incessant interventions (Millett 1968, 162).

By 1906, then, Roosevelt acutely perceived that political constraints foreclosed new imperialist adventures or anything that so much as smelled like one. Still, he clung to the hope that the occupation of the Philippines, already underway, could be carried to completion. Over the next year, he came to doubt the wisdom of even this last vestige of his ambition for American imperialism. The dearth of popular interest in holding the Philippines was unmistakable by 1907, observed by imperialists and anti-imperialists alike. The pro-Roosevelt *Independent* magazine noted "a tendency, even among Republicans as well as Democrats and the intolerant and intolerable anti-imperialists, to play with the idea of pretty soon giving up the Philippines, perhaps to [Philippine leader Emilio] Aguinaldo, perhaps to Japan, or in some way to wash our hands of the difficult responsibility" (quoted in Alfonso 1970, 55-56, 83).

The sorry state of congressional support for Filipino uplift confronted Roosevelt most saliently in his final attempt to reduce tariffs on Philippine imports. In what became "one of the most bitter and protracted struggles of his political career," Roosevelt shouldered three efforts to convince Congress to all but eliminate Philippine tariffs (Marks 1979, 94). During the first two, from 1902 to 1903 and then from 1904 to 1906, Roosevelt expected success but fought all-out. Customarily, Roosevelt avoided devoting letters to congressmen to just one piece of legislation. On the tariff bill alone, Roosevelt wrote flurries. His administration wanted tariffs on Philippine goods cut to 25% of the prewar Dingley rates, set in 1897, whereas Congress, led by Republican protectionists, put them far higher at 75% in 1902 (Alfonso 1970, 125; Gould 1991, 58). Roosevelt drummed into members of Congress the vital necessity of a sweeping reduction. Tariff cuts are "of the utmost consequence to the islands." Preserving current rates would generate "the direst suffering in the Philippines," Roosevelt wrote to Republican senators Henry Cabot Lodge and Nelson Aldrich in 1903, and he attended an international monetary conference in order to win over Democratic senators from the Rocky Mountain states (Roosevelt 1954, 3:432-34). But the upper house defeated the bill. Once more, in 1904, Roosevelt implored Speaker of the House Joseph Cannon to make the tariff bill a top priority. It "ought on no account to be allowed to fail" (1954, 4:1075). This time, the bill—now diluted, providing for 50% of Dingley rates and taking effect only in April 1909—did not escape the Senate Committee on the Philippines. The "no" vote split between four Democrats and four Republicans, emblematic of sizeable Republican protectionist opposition all along (Alfonso 1970, 137-38). It is no wonder that Roosevelt's 1907 letters bemoaned the anti-imperial and self-interested motives of Americans in general rather than Democrats only.

Despite the twin rejections, Roosevelt mounted a vigorous third campaign beginning in December 1906 (Richardson 1908, 11:1208-9). Philippine tariff reduction was

his foremost legislative priority, observed the *New York Times* (1907, 6), and Taft toured the country to speak on the Philippines. To his chagrin, Taft found indifference among the people and the press. If he needed to divert attention from other matters, Taft joked, all he had to do was discuss the Philippines, whereupon journalists would vacate the premises (Alfonso 1970, 190). The tariff bill was destined to fail, the *Times* stated in January 1907, just one month after Roosevelt had broached the subject. Observing Congress's fear of general tariff revision, the newspaper concluded that "the President, with all his determination, seems helpless." Sure enough, the bill got nowhere. Roosevelt gave up. "The Senate has turned us down on the Philippine tariff and this has caused great depression, not merely physical but moral, in the Islands," Roosevelt whimpered to Cannon in March, perhaps projecting his own despondency onto Filipinos (1954, 5:605).

This last, overwhelming bipartisan failure—culminating a decade of anti-imperialist sentiment—likely drained Roosevelt's remaining faith in America's ability to uplift Filipinos for generations to come. Four years prior, Roosevelt had foreseen "little question" of achieving the third tariff bill's passage (1954, 3:451). For Filipinos, the alternative was "disaster" that was "difficult to overestimate" (quoted in Alfonso 1970, 128). America's administration of the Philippines was a point of pride for Roosevelt, and his defense of its altruism and efficacy never waned.[16] Despite his impassioned boasts, perhaps because of them, America's seeming selfishness over tariffs had to weigh heavily on his mind. As Roosevelt told Taft, "It is exceedingly difficult to get this people to take a proper view of any emergency that arises" (1954, 5:761). Two months before Taft was scheduled to unveil the Philippine assembly, Roosevelt saw the opening to retreat from the policy of indefinite retention of the Philippines.

The Strategic Motive and the War Scare of 1907

Although domestic considerations were most significant, the strategic factor was important and related. The Japanese–American war scare in the summer of 1907 fits well the August timing of Roosevelt's shift on Philippine objectives. This shift should be understood as stemming primarily from domestic factors and secondarily from strategic factors, which, moreover, were linked by Roosevelt's fear that domestic support for the defense of the Philippines and the expansion of the navy was wanting.

Japanese–American relations, hitherto cordial, became strained around 1905 as the rise of both powers in Asia raised the specter of collision (Esthus 1966, 3; see also Bailey 1964; Neu 1967). The strain was probably never acute. Before and during the war scare, Roosevelt thought that a Japanese attack on the Philippines was improbable, perhaps implausible. In January 1906, he wrote to America's military governor-general in the Philippines, Leonard Wood, that he saw "not the slightest chance of Japan attacking us

16. For example, Roosevelt wrote in 1913, "With the possible exception of Sudan . . . I know of no country ruled and administered by men of the white race where that rule and that administration have been exercised so emphatically with an eye single to the welfare of the natives themselves. The English and Dutch administrators of Malaysia have done admirable work; but the profit to the Europeans in those States has always been one of the chief elements considered; whereas in the Philippines our whole attention was concentrated upon the welfare of the Filipinos themselves, if anything to the neglect of our own interests" (1913, 544).

in the Philippines for a decade or two, or until the present conditions of international politics change." Japan was preoccupied with Korea and Manchuria, and by attacking America would only make enemies of friends, Roosevelt reasoned (1954, 5:135). Then again, although he regarded any attack as distant, Roosevelt's shift on Philippines policy was based precisely on an estimate of conditions decades away.

A war scare underscored the danger of holding the Philippines without sufficient fortification and naval strength. The scare peaked in June 1907 after an arguably anti-Japanese riot broke out in San Francisco. Nationalists in Japan, recalling the previous year's order of the San Francisco school board to segregate Japanese students, demanded retribution. During the crisis, each government deplored the jingoes on its own side and appreciated that the other government was doing the same (Esthus 1966, 181). Roosevelt was alarmed if some distance from the precipice of war. "I am more concerned over this Japanese situation than almost any other," he told Root, and he doubted that Manila could be held in a Japanese–American war (1954, 5:717-19, 738). Roosevelt therefore ordered the entire battleship fleet to the Pacific in what became the Great White Fleet's voyage around the world. The move worked: The display of naval strength quieted the Japanese jingoes without appearing as a hostile act requiring war rather than mere words (Esthus 1966, 185).

Calming Japan was the most immediate necessity, but it was not Roosevelt's only motive for dispatching the battle fleet. "My prime purpose was to impress the American people," he later wrote (1913, 593). The president hoped to spur the revival of his naval construction plans, which were languishing in Congress (Gould 1991, 61). The multipurpose voyage of the American fleet made a fitting end to a crisis that was at once foreign and domestic. Although the war scare doubtless reminded Roosevelt of the vulnerability of the Philippines, reinforcing his continuing concerns for the weakness of Manila Bay fortifications and the American naval fleet, such worries about circumstances beyond America arose from the lack of imperial will Roosevelt found inside America. Both domestic and external factors, not merely the latter, convinced Roosevelt to prepare his country to grant Philippine independence within a generation.

Reappraising the Empire That Wasn't

The most straightforward historical narratives can be the most misleading, if they dwell too closely on the immediately visible aspects of an outcome and fail to explain why plausible alternatives did not prevail instead. Narratives of the ostensibly steady American occupation of the Philippines have suffered from such neglect of history's passed-up courses. In Peter Stanley's telling, the United States under Roosevelt "began an enlightened policy of development and 'benevolent assimilation' from which it seldom thereafter deviated, except to strengthen its commitment to eventual independence for the islands" (1984, 1-2). Similarly, according to Salvador Lopez, "despite the policy improvisations and basic differences between the two parties in 'styles' of colonialism, the progress of Filipino autonomy runs along a fairly straight course from the beginning to the end of the colonial regime" (1966, 15). These interpretations are well founded. Lest they suggest an

unwarranted determinism, however, they should recall that the president who administered the Philippines for the first eight years of American-imposed peace did not want history to turn out as it did. Had Roosevelt been king, the Philippines would have been ruled as he saw best for Filipinos—with free trade with America, ample fortification against invasion, and, not least, a very distant time horizon. His policies of uplift stymied by a wrathful Congress, Roosevelt learned he was far from king.

Domestic anti-imperialism triggered a profound change in Roosevelt's thought. From the beginning of his public life, Roosevelt had extolled the virtues of imperialism and encouraged his country to make the increasingly global practice its own. He believed that extending civilization would benefit subject peoples and the world while strengthening American civilization. By the end of his presidency, American imperialism was no longer his cause. Civilizing missions would not invigorate American character; they might exhaust it. The reversal was dramatic, and it would prove final. "In international affairs we are a short-sighted people," he opined in 1913 (581). "I suppose the United States will always be unready for war, and in consequence will always be exposed to great expense, and to the possibility of the gravest calamity, when the Nation goes to war. This is no new thing. Americans learn only from catastrophes and not from experience" (223).

When the Western world plunged into the Great War, Roosevelt was downright frightened. He became the first major politician to beat the drums for American entry into World War I, lecturing his countrymen to build up the military (see Cooper 1983, 276-86, 303-11, 324-34). Concurrently, he expressed modest and anti-imperial aspirations for America's future role in the world: A bolstered military would simply "defend our own shores and defend the Panama Canal and Hawaii and Alaska and prevent the seizure of territory at the expense of any commonwealth in the Western Hemisphere by any military power of the Old World" (1914, SM5). This balancing of belligerence and caution was classic Roosevelt, but transposed from an era when his dominant, triumphant goal was the spread of civilization. American "fitness" had apparently proven too weak to carry out the practice that was supposed to strengthen it. As an elder, Roosevelt, sapped of one of his foundational ideals, sought to keep a brittle American civilization from crumbling.

America's ambivalent imperialism in the Philippines may illustrate a larger truth about American imperialism in general. Historians as ideologically diverse as William Appleman Williams and Niall Ferguson have written of America's "imperial anticolonialism" and its "imperialism of anti-imperialism" (Williams 1972, 19-57; Ferguson 2004, 61-104). By their logic, even as America performed some imperialistic actions, it maintained an uneasy distance from imperialist principle and practice. The presidency of Theodore Roosevelt complicates that view but ultimately affirms it. Roosevelt defies the schema of leaders who told themselves they loved self-government and hated imperialism. Roosevelt cared not a whit whether imperial subjects governed their own affairs as long as imperialism was bringing them civilization. That Roosevelt's imperialist actions were so meager testifies to the anti-imperial constraints imposed by America's ideals and democratic political system, conveyed through the powers of Congress and the process of regular elections. Roosevelt may have inaugurated the "imperial presidency," achieving many successes thereby (Schlesinger 1973). His Philippines policy, judged against his

own aspirations, was not one of them. As America became a great power, the imperial presidency did not suffice to sustain American imperialism.

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