

Elihu Root and the Pacification of the Philippines, 1899-1903

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For the past several decades there has been a conscious attempt on the part of Filipino historians to rewrite Philippine history to make it Filipino oriented. The initiative aims to move away from the Hispano-centric and Yankee-oriented history textbooks that students have been using for years. It has resulted to the increase in the number studies that deal with local history and political personalities who in the past were not given due consideration. Needless to say, the proliferation of Filipino oriented history books is a welcome development in Philippine historiography. But experience will tell us that as one goes to the extreme, there is a great possibility that he will end up getting a very limited and parochial view of the whole picture. For the sake of scholarship, it is advisable to take into consider all the personalities involved in history regardless of their nationality and political affiliation.

This study will analyze the contribution of a colonial official who played a very important role in the American colonization of the Philippines. Elihu Root never stepped in Philippine soil, but his influence in the life of many Filipinos during the early American period is enormous. Hence, any study that will focus on his participation in Philippine politics would be a welcome addition to Philippine historiography. Personally, I do not consider the present study anti-Filipino even if the person under consideration is regarded by many as colonial official *par excellence*. I find the topic

relevant because it will give the readers an idea how an enemy of the Filipino nationalist movement reengineered Philippine society to make it subservient to American interest. It is an essential preliminary if Filipinos really want to disengage themselves from the colonial institutions that the Americans established. Any attempt to reconstruct Philippine history based on a Filipino perspective should undo first the colonial infrastructure that suppressed the development of Filipino nationalism. In the same way as war generals study the psychology and tactics of their enemies, Filipino nationalist historians should do likewise.

Imperialism, no matter how people sugarcoat it, will remain a bitter and detestable experience on the part of the colonized. This impression is widespread because in the past imperialism is always accompanied with exploitation, suppression of certain rights, violence and lopsided trade relations. In most cases its victims greeted it with resistance movements, guerilla warfare, sabotage, boycott and other forms of upheavals. In taking up this topic, I do not intend to inflame old wounds or create new ones, but simply to help creating a more peaceful Philippine society and along the way to help in developing a more mature Filipino-American relation.

Like many other Americans, the ancestors of Elihu Root originated from England. They arrived in America sometime in 1639 and settled as farmers in Connecticut. Later they moved westward passing through Massachusetts and finally established their domicile in Central New York. His grandfather, also named Elihu, was a farmer and using his meager income sent his son Oren to school. Oren earned a degree in education and spent the rest of his life in the teaching profession. He married Nancy Whitney Buttrick and had four sons (Elihu was the third).¹

Elihu Root was born in the state of New York on February 7, 1845. He had his formal schooling in Hamilton College where he graduated valedictorian in 1864. After teaching one year in Rome Academy, he decided to take up law. He entered New York University Law School in 1865 and was admitted to the bar in the middle of 1867. It appears that he started well that in the second

¹ "Elihu Root" *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplements 1-2: To 1940. American Council of Learned Societies, 1944-1958.

year of his career as lawyer, his salary was already five times higher than his father's income. Roots success as a lawyer could be attributed to the amount of time and effort he exerted before he appears in the courtroom. His retentive memory and his mastery of the law made him devastating and invincible in cross examination.

Root's public image was greatly affected by those persons who sought his service. In the second year of his career as a lawyer, he served as junior counsel of William M. Tweed, who was then accused of bribery and gross fraud in the awarding of New York City contracts. Although his participation in the trial was very minimal, it gave him the title "defender of a corrupt boss."² Several years later, he was retained by Henry Havemeyer, the organizer of the infamous Sugar Trust and Whitney-Ryan, the person behind the traction syndicate in New York. Root helped the former recover payments for excessive duties and suggested some tips on how to avoid needless litigation. As regards the latter, he assisted him in consolidating his hold of the Manhattan's railways system. His association with powerful corporations earned him the reputation of being a "mercenary lawyer" who would accept anyone as client so long as they could afford his price. This reputation haunted him throughout his political career and it prompted him to give way to Taft in the 1908 presidential election.

Before he joined the McKinley administration, he was virtually unknown in American national politics. In fact, he only held two government positions and both of them were not part of the executive branch. He had been US Attorney for the District of Southern New York from 1883-1885 and served the New York Constitutional Convention of 1894. His involvement in politics started in 1886 when he was appointed chairman of the Republican county committee and worked closely with Theodore Roosevelt in the latter's unsuccessful campaign for mayor of New York. Root's affiliation with Roosevelt goes back in 1881, a year after Roosevelt graduated from Harvard. His association with the latter gave him many opportunities to establish connections with the leading

² Richard Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954), p. 12.

Republican stalwarts like Secretary of Interior Cornelius N. Bliss, Secretary of State John Hay, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and Judge William H. Taft.

Prior to his appointment, Root was an active Republican but never held any elective office nor exhibited interest in foreign affairs. He was not prominent in Washington's political circles and was unknown to the American public at large. He was only famous in the legal circles in New York and the business world where he was earning a big fortune. His photographic memory, brilliance in cross examination and his tendency to keep his mouth shut on corporate matters earned him the title the "most skillful lawyer on Wall Street."³ He was considered an expert in devising means by which big-business groups could organize, consolidate and operate without fear of litigation or state interference. Before he became Secretary of War, his service was sought by leading corporations and he was receiving over \$100,000 a year in retainers alone.

Towards the latter part of his life, Root became more involved in national politics. In 1896, he contributed significant amount of money to the campaign fund of William McKinley. He also helped McKinley in persuading Cornelius N. Bliss to reconsider his decision to turn down the offer of the former to join his cabinet. As a form of political payback, McKinley asked Root if he is willing to go to Madrid as government representative who will negotiate the settlement of the Cuban controversy. Root found the offer unattractive and delicate because at that time Spain and the United States were on the brink of war. He politely told McKinley that he had very little experience in diplomacy and he considered his ignorance of the Spanish language a major liability in any serious negotiation.⁴

At the time Root entered the political arena, America was already emerging as a world power. Like Britain and other capitalist countries at that time, the United States was experiencing problems in sourcing out raw material for their burgeoning economy and the manufacturing sectors were in dire need of

³ Luzviminda Francisco and Jonathan Fast, *Conspiracy for Empire: Big Business, Corruption and the Politics of Imperialism in America, 1876-1907* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1985), p. 55.

⁴ Healy, *U.S. Expansionism*, p. 145.

market where they could dump their surplus products. Spain turned out to be the first victim of American imperialism. Using the Maine tragedy and the political conflict in Cuba as moral bases, McKinley engaged the Spaniards in what turned out to be a very lopsided war. After three months of sporadic fighting, Spain sought for peace and gave up their remaining colonies in exchange for 20 million dollars.

During the Spanish-American War, Secretary of War Russell Alger became McKinley's biggest liability. He appeared to be incapable of coping with the demands placed upon his office by America's emergence as imperial power. His record during the war had been constantly under fire.⁵ Accusation of inefficiency and the series of scandals that put his department in bad light forced the President to create an investigating body (Dodge Commission) that will look into the charges against Secretary Alger. In 1899, McKinley was already scouting for somebody who could replace his controversial war secretary.⁶ He told his close advisers that he was not looking for a battle-tested general but somebody who could restore sanity in the War Department and could help him establish a sense of direction in what had been sorely confused Cuban and Philippine policy.⁷

McKinley personally selected Root because he was in need of a lawyer and he wanted to dignify the recommendation of his intimate friend, Horace Porter.⁸ He knew that Root was not an expert in military affairs but what he needed at that time was somebody who could handle the legal complexities of managing

⁵ Some of the charges against Alger were; the army was not prepared, the death of soldiers due to illness, the "round robin" controversy, the refrigerated canned beef with alleged poisonous preservatives and the disorganized army. The press even coined a term, i.e. Algerism which means cynical dereliction of duty coupled with imputation of corruption and venality. Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: The Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998) p. 632.

⁶ Alger reluctantly resigned on July 10, 1899 and subsequently decided to run for a seat in the senate.

⁷ Healy, *U.S. Expansionism*, p. 147.

⁸ Cruz, *America's Colonial Desk and the Philippines*, p. 46.

offshore territories. He was also hoping that Root could give back to the War Department the public trust it lost during Alger's term. For him, the formulation of a colonial policy and the administration of the insular territories were far much important than the management of the army. When Congressman Quigg approached Root to offer the War portfolio, he said, "President McKinley directs me to say that he is not looking for any one who knows anything about war or for any one who knows anything about the army; he has got to have a lawyer to direct the government of these Spanish islands and you are the lawyer he wants."⁹

Root assumed his position as Secretary of War on August 1, 1899. His first few months in office were spent in reading books. He also asked the old timers in the War Department to give him an overview of the organizational structure of the chain of command. Being the one running the affairs in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, he was shocked when he realized that he was legislating laws for millions of people through executive orders. He once remarked, "Now I can sign my name to a decree which makes laws for ten million people without the slightest tremor."¹⁰ Previously unknown outside New York City, his appointment to the post of Secretary of War and his participation in the formulation of American colonial policy made him a central figure in McKinley's administration. His job gave him opportunities to transact business with leading political figures like John Hay, Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt.

Three days after the resignation of Alger was made public, McKinley announced the appointment of Root as Secretary of War. The new position made Root responsible for the military governments that ruled the former Spanish colonies and he became a central figure in American political circles. His appointment made him a public figure and it launched his political career that would later make him Secretary of State, U.S. Senator and Republican elder statesman. The first thing that he did after he assumed office was to buy books which deal with the practice and the principles of colonial government and for the next few months spent his spare

⁹ As quoted in Leech, *In the Days of McKinley*, p. 379.

¹⁰ Francisco and Fast, *Conspiracy for Empire*, p. 207.

time reading them.¹¹ McKinley was so impressed with the work ethic of Root and his management style. He said:

*"How wise and skillful he was! how modest and self effacing! how deep his insight into the human heart! how swift the intuitions of his sympathy! how compelling the charm of his gracious presence! He was so unselfish, so thoughtful of the happiness of others, so genuine a lover of his country and kind. And he was the kindest and tenderest friend who ever grasped another's hand."*¹²

When Root began his duties on August 1, 1899, the debate whether to take the Philippines or not was already over. The primary concern of the administration then was how to manage the former Spanish colonies. One of the reforms that McKinley adopted after the ratification of the Treaty of Paris was to transfer the management of the Philippines from the State to the War Department. Because of this, the Philippine problem became a primary preoccupation of Root. Some of the problems that beset him during this period were the restoration of the integrity of the War Department, suppression of the armed uprising in the Philippines, preparation of the Filipinos for self government, formulation of a colonial policy for the United States and the readjustment of the tariff laws so that the new acquisitions would not pose a threat to American business interests.

War in the Philippines was already six months old when Root assumed office. By this time Aguinaldo's army was already reduced to smaller groups but the end of the war was not yet in sight. Root during this period was under pressure to end the uprising because some sectors of the American society were already upset of the cost of the war and the growing number of American casualties. McKinley's critics alleged that the Philippine affair was "a waste of national treasure"¹³ and "the most stupendous blunder of the

¹¹ Healy, *U.S. Expansionism*, p. 21.

¹² James Ford Rhodes, *The McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations: 1897-1909* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1923) p. 196.

¹³ James Blount, *American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898-1912* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), p. 117.

age.”¹⁴ Because of this, McKinley instructed Root to explore non-military means in pacifying the Filipinos. He instructed the American officials to adopt measures that would persuade the Filipinos to accept American rule peacefully.

McKinley's decision to put a non-military in the War Department brought significant changes in the American policy in the Philippines. Root dignified the recommendations of the Schurman Commission that it was to the best interest of the Americans if the military government in the Philippines will be replaced with a civilian one.¹⁵ Root prepared the ground work for this and on March 15, 1900 he dispatched William H. Taft to head the Second Philippine Commission. Taft was tasked to replace the military government that had been ruling the colony for a couple of years already. Initially, Taft ran into conflict with Gen. Arthur MacArthur who at that time was not yet inclined to give up his post. The former believed that the task of the military was still far from over and military rule was still the best form of government in the Philippines.¹⁶ The move of the Taft Commission to create a constabulary force that would act as auxiliary of the army also aggravated the tension between the military and the Commission.¹⁷ MacArthur frowned on the proposal and rejected the theory that a native constabulary was more effective in suppressing the rebellion than the regular army. On his part, Taft argued that the creation of a constabulary was a positive development because it would ease the pressure on the military and would ultimately pave the way for the withdrawal of American troops in the Philippines.¹⁸ It would also show that the Americans were sincere in their promise to allow the Filipinos to take part in government.

¹⁴ This was the expression used by Congressman Robinson of Nebraska. *Congressional Records*, 57th Cong. 1st Sess., p. 7,132.

¹⁵ The major recommendations of the Schurman Commissions are found in U.S. Philippine Commission, *Report of the Philippine Commission to the President*, Vol. 1, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), pp. 31, 121, 136, 149.

¹⁶ “Taft to Root,” July 26, 1900, *Taft Papers*, Roll 463, p. 5.

¹⁷ “Taft to Senator John C. Spooner” September 3, 1900. *Taft Papers*, Roll 31, p. 3.

¹⁸ “Taft to Root,” July 30, 1900, *Taft Papers*, Roll 463, p. 19.

Administratively, the measure would be beneficial to the Commission because it would be easier for the Commissioners to control the local constabulary than to supervise the army troops who were mostly loyal to the Military Governor. In his letter to Root, Taft wrote:

General Wright and I are strongly convinced that it is possible to effect great good in these Islands by the establishment of a constabulary and also of a militia, but we have been embarrassed in considering these questions by the indisposition of General MacArthur to enter into a discussion of the subject or to co-operate in any way. What his attitude will be after the first of September I am unable to say, but my strong impression is that the country is now ripe for the formation of a local militia which in many respects will be more effective than the American soldier in suppressing the ladrones and relieving the people from the terrorism which has paralyzed so many parts of the Islands.¹⁹

The conflict of Taft and MacArthur simmered down to the men in the field. Many soldiers were antagonized when Taft showed compassion and friendly attitude towards some Filipinos. In his public appearances, Taft remarked that Filipinos are his "little brown brothers." He also treated them with dignity everytime they visited him in his office and residence. He also attended their concerts and even watched cockfights. The soldiers could not take these actions of Taft and they ridiculed him by saying "he may be a brother of Taft but he aint friend of mine."²⁰ To prevent the conflict from becoming an open confrontation, Root dissolved the military government on June 21, 1901 and replaced it with a civilian government. He also ordered the recall of MacArthur to give Taft more leeway in implementing his policies. The other highlights of the order were:

On and after the 4th day of July, 1901, until it shall otherwise be ordered, the President of the Philippine Commission will exercise the executive authority in all civil affairs in

¹⁹ "Taft to Root," August 6, 1900, Ibid., p. 13.

²⁰ Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 167.

*the government of the Philippine Islands hereto exercised in such affairs by the Military Governor of the Philippines, and to that end the Hon. William H. Taft, President of the said Commission, is hereby appointed Civil Governor of the Philippine islands.*²¹

Root had the right thing in mind when he recalled the military government and replaced it with a civilian one. Moreover, his selection of Taft as civil governor was also a laudable move because the latter was very diplomatic and conciliatory in dealing with Filipinos. Instead of using guns and bullets, Root and Taft introduced measures all meant to win the heart of the local folks. The civilian government built roads, introduced sanitation, promoted public health and opened public education. Root also supported the move to lower the tariff rates for Philippine products exported to the United States. Those who benefited from this new trade relation were co-opted and decided to accept colonial rule. Lastly, Taft's policy to share power with the local elite attracted many Filipinos to abandon the resistance movement and collaborate with the new hegemony.

Another colonial policy of Root that proved to be very effective and cost efficient was the creation of a national Constabulary consisting of Filipino troops under American officers and controlled by the civil government. Using the British model, Root created "American sepoys" who could help the government promote peace and order in the colony. The local constabulary, particularly the Macabebes, proved to be effective fighters and on numerous instances manifested heroism and fidelity. For instance, the successful operation to capture Aguinaldo could not be attributed solely to the military genius of Col. Frederick Funston but also to the loyalty and cooperation of his local assets. The Philippine Constabulary also relieved the American tax payers of the financial pressure of the war. The cost of the constabulary was shouldered wholly by the insular treasury and no contribution came from United States except the normal pay of the seven or eight army officers.²²

²¹ "Civil Rule in the Philippines," *New York Times* (June 22, 1901), p. 6.

²² William Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1945), p. 118.

In September 1901, Root experienced two major setbacks which historians called the "September tragedies." The first happened in Buffalo, New York and the other in Samar. Although the assassination of McKinley had lesser impact compared to the military setback that the U.S army suffered in Samar, it created uncertainty on the part of Republican Party.²³ When Root heard the news that McKinley was assassinated, he was deeply saddened but the unfortunate event did not create any insecurity on his part because he knew Vice President Roosevelt will not fire him. He and Roosevelt were close friend way before he became War Secretary. As mentioned earlier, he actively supported the candidacy of Roosevelt when the latter ran for mayor of New York City. In the years that followed, Roosevelt, Root and Taft's chemistry blended nicely that the press called them "The Three Musketeers." Roosevelt was D'Artagnan, Root was Athos, and Taft was Porthos.²⁴

Compared with the death of McKinley, the Balangiga massacre was more devastating and it affected not only the Americans in the Philippines but also those in the mainland. One observer noted, "No single event in the Philippine war shocked the American people as did the massacre of Balangiga. They called it the worst disaster for the U.S. army since Custer's fate at Little Big Horn."²⁵ As far as Root was concerned, the incident put into question the veracity of his public pronouncement that war in the Philippines had already ended and the country was already pacified. It also boosted the claim of some of his tormentors that his decision to establish a civilian government was still premature. But despite all these setbacks, Root did not backtrack from his earlier stand and considered the Samar incident an isolated case.

The pronouncement of the War Department that war in the Philippines had already ended created some problems at home. Critics of the administration argued that since war was already

²³ For more details about the assassination of McKinley, see "Bulletin Story of the President's Case," *New York Times* (September 14, 1901), p. 5 and "Official Report of the Assassination," *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁴ Mrs. William Howard Taft, *Recollections of Full Years* (New York: Dood, Mead and Company, 1914), p. 302.

²⁵ Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, p. 204.

over, the President should give up the legislative powers given to him at the height of the Spanish-American War. Secretary Root did not want this to happen because it would result to delays in legislation and it would deprive the Philippine Commission of its vital powers. Hence, he persuaded his allies in Capitol Hill to enact a law that would allow the insular government to legislate much needed laws. A few months before the establishment of the civil government, Sen. John Spooner filed a bill giving unprecedented powers to the executive branch in the crafting of colonial policies in the Philippines. According to his biographer, Root authored the first paragraph of the Spooner amendment in which the executive was empowered to establish civilian rule in the Philippines. He was also responsible for the provision that gave the president the power to alter, amend, and repeal all franchises granted under the Act.²⁶ The bill proved to be a difficult task for the Republicans in both houses of Congress. The Democrats vigorously attacked the bill and resurrected the anti-imperialist arguments they employed at the time the Treaty of Paris was under deliberation. Sensing that it would not pass the House, the Republican legislators inserted the needed presidential privilege in the army appropriation bill. They knew that it would surely pass because no lawmaker in his sane mind would take the political risk of denying funds for the army in time of war. The Army Appropriation Bill passed the Senate on March 2, 1901 and two days later the House approved it.²⁷

Officials of the War Department were not satisfied with the final wording of the Spooner Amendment. They found it too general and it did not provide the necessary powers that could help colonial administrators handle the affairs in the Philippines. Because of this, Root persuaded his allies in Congress to come up

²⁶ Leopold, *Elihu Root*, p. 36.

²⁷ In the Senate, the voting was 45 to 27 with 43 Republicans, one Democrat and one Silverite voting for the amendment and 19 Democrats, 4 Populists, 2 Silverites, one Republican and one silver Republican voting against it. In the House, the voting was 161 to 139, with 159 Republicans and 2 Democrats voting yea and 132 Democrats, 3 Republicans, 3 Populists and 2 Silverites voting nay. Garel A Grunder and William Livezey, *The Philippines and the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 74.

with a legislative measure that would spell out the guidelines on how to conduct the administration of civil government in the Philippines and clarify the status of the Philippines in relation with the United States. By the end 1901, the War Department had already finalized the draft of the Philippine bill. It was simultaneously introduced in the Senate and the House on January 7, 1902 as S.B. 2295 and H.R. 13445, respectively. The latter was sponsored by Congressman Henry W. Cooper of Wisconsin and the former by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts.

The Committee of Insular Affairs of both Houses of Congress conducted a legislative inquiry and invited those who were privy of Philippines affairs. The hearing started on January 31, 1902 and lasted more than two months.²⁸ Taft was the first person who took the witness stand and was followed by David P. Barrows, the chief of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. The other resource persons were former men in uniform like MacArthur, Otis, and Hughes. All of them helped the legislators understand the needs of the Filipinos and clarified unfamiliar points during the discussion.

During the deliberation of the Philippine bill, the minority kept on questioning the legality and morality of the Republican's foreign policy. In the course of the discussion, administration officials claimed that war in the Philippines had already ended and Filipinos had accepted American rule. For instance, Taft recounted the warm reception that he experienced when he toured the provinces to insinuate that all was well in the Philippines. He also directed the attention of the senators to the reports of at least twenty-three provincial governors who attested that the country was now moving towards political stability.²⁹ In the course of the

²⁸ Aside from Lodge, the other members of the Committee were William Boyd Allison (R., Iowa), Albert Jeremiah Beveridge (Rep., Indiana), Julius Ceasar Burrows (Rep., Michigan), Edward Ward Carmack (Dem., Tennessee), Charles Allen Culberson (Dem., Texas), Charles Henry Dietrich (Rep., Nebraska), Fred Thomas Dubois (Rep., Idaho), Eugene Hale (Rep., Maine), Louis Emery McComas (Rep., Maryland), Thomas MacDonald Patterson (Dem., Colorado), Rafael Proctor (Rep., Vermont) and Joseph Lafayette Rawlins (Dem., Utah).

²⁹ These provinces include Bulacan, Rizal, Pampanga, La Union, Ilocos Sur, Ambos Camarines, Tarlac, Albay, Iloilo, Cavite, Zambales, Pangasinan, Sorsogon, Bataan, Leyte, Capiz, Abra, Marinduque, Cagayan, Negros Occidental, Cebu,

discussion, a member of the minority brought to the attention of the committee the report of Col. Cornelius Gardener, the provincial governor of Tayabas.³⁰ Unlike the other provincial reports that Taft submitted, Gardener's report contained narratives of military operations in the province. Moreover, the report described vividly how American soldiers brutalized the residents of Tayabas. Part of the report says:

Of late, by reason of the conduct of troops, such as the extensive burning of barrios trying to lay waste the country so that the insurgents cannot occupy it, the torturing of natives by so-called "water cure"³¹ and other methods in order to obtain information, the harsh treatment of natives generally, and the failure of the inexperienced, lately appointed lieutenants commanding posts to distinguish between those who are friendly and those unfriendly ... The course now being pursued in this province and in the provinces of Batangas, Laguna, and Samar is, in my opinion, sowing the seeds of perpetual revolution against us hereafter whenever a good opportunity offers. Under present conditions the political situation in this province is slowly retrograding, and the American sentiment is decreasing and we are daily making permanent enemies.³²

Taft and Root were caught flat footed and they did not know how the minority got a copy of the report of Gov. Gardener. In a letter that he sent to Acting Governor Luke Wright, Taft admitted

Bohol and Ilocos Norte. U.S. Congress, *Congressional Records*, Part 6, p. 5,624-5, 627; 6,038-6,041.

³⁰ "Tayabas" is the old name of the province of Quezon.

³¹ This was the most common torture used by the Americans to extract information from captured enemies. The process consisted of laying the victim flat on his back and his mouth held open with a stick. Water (the dirtier the better) was poured in the victim's mouth until his stomach became so filled that no more water could be absorbed. Then someone would sit on the victim's stomach until water was vomited. The process was repeated until the victim confessed the whereabouts of the guerillas. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Sun*, as quoted in Gleeck, *The American Half-Century*, p. 43.

³² U.S. Congress, *Congressional Records*, Part 6, p. 5,975. (italics supplied)

that he deliberately withheld Gardener's report in compliance with the direction of Secretary Root.³³ When senators asked him why Gardener's report was not presented to the committee, he tried to hide the true story. Taft explained that at the time he left Manila, all the provincial reports had not been obtained. Because he was in a hurry to go home, he decided to collate all of them once he arrived in Washington where all these reports will be forwarded. The minority bloc dismissed Taft's explanation and Senator Culberson charged him of deliberately withholding information and giving evasive and misleading testimony.³⁴ Taft was deeply saddened by these remarks and in his letter to Root, he complained that he was hurt when the senators accused him of deliberately misrepresenting the true state of affairs in the Philippines. He specifically singled out Senator Patterson who called him a liar.³⁵

Root was furious with the way Gardener's report was handled by his department and ordered a thorough investigation of the source of the leakage. He later found out that General Nelson Miles was the person behind the conspiracy to put him in bad light. General Miles wanted to get even with Root because his career was affected by the reform that Root implemented in the War Department. Moreover, Root established a vertical military organization where power emanated from the Secretary of War down to the chain of command. General Miles, the Commanding General of the army, was not happy with new organizational structure. He openly attacked Root and accused him of creating a monarchical-militarist organization like that of the Kaiser of Germany. He added that he would rather resign than submit to the "despotism" of the War Department.³⁶ The gap between Root and Miles widened further after the former rejected the request

³³ "Taft to Wright," April 11, 1902 *William H. Taft Papers*, Reel 35, p. 2. Aside from Tayabas, Taft also withheld the report of the provincial governor of Batangas, Laguna and Samar. These provinces were still in a state of war in the early part of 1902.

³⁴ Anderson, *William Howard Taft: An Intimate History*, p. 80.

³⁵ "Taft to Root" February 21, 1902, *William H. Taft Papers*, Reel 35, p. 2.

³⁶ Morris, *Theodore Rex*, p. 99.

of the latter to go to the Philippines.³⁷ When he read the report of Gardener, Miles took it a golden opportunity to embarrass Root and make himself a political hero.

The Committee on Insular Affairs published Gardener's report on April 11, 1902 and it caused national outrage. Two days later, the opposition released an even more shocking confession of Major C.M. Waller who was then on trial for genocide in Samar. Great emphasis was given to the answer of General Jacob Smith who said, "I wish you to kill and burn. The more you kill and the more you burn, the better you please me." In the next few days, more military atrocities in the Philippines came out in the American press. Senator Patterson reported that in Batangas alone, "100,000 people of one province are now in their graves out of a population of 300,000."³⁸ According to the New Orleans' *Times-Democrat*, "If we are to 'benevolently assimilate' Filipinos by such method, we should frankly so state, and drop our canting hypocrisy about having to wage war on these people for their own betterment."³⁹ Other newspapers accused Root of cover-up and demanded his resignation.

The Gardener report and the Waller trial were big embarrassment to the Republican administration. They contradicted the earlier declaration of the War Department that war in the Philippines had already ended. Moreover, they also showed that the pacification program appears to be ineffective. Amid mounting cries of revulsion, President Roosevelt met his cabinet on April 15, 1902 and demanded a full briefing on the situation in the Philippines. He ordered Secretary Root to direct General Adna Chaffee, Commander of the Philippine Army, to investigate the charges against the military and make sure that those who were guilty were punished.⁴⁰ On May 4, 1902, Chaffee submitted to

³⁷ Miles letter to Root dated February 17, 1902 is printed in "Gen. Miles's plan to end the War," *New York Times*, March 30, 1902, p. 1.

³⁸ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Records*, Part 6, p. 5,972.

³⁹ As quoted in Morris, *Theodore Rex*, p. 101.

⁴⁰ The last paragraph of Root's letter says, "The President desires to know in the fullest and most circumstantial manner all the facts, nothing being concealed and no man being of any reason favored or shielded. "More Courts Martial in the Philippines," *New York Times*, April 16, 1902, p. 1.

Root the results of his investigation on the alleged Tayabas atrocities.

By May 1902, the Republican stalwarts realized that it would be foolish to cover up the excesses of the military in the Philippines. In his letter to the Senate Committee on Insular Affairs, Root acknowledged forty-four cases of documented cruelty, of which thirty-nine had already resulted in convictions under the military justice system. However, he pointed out that these atrocities were "isolated lapses" and that the war in the Philippines had been conducted with self restraint and humaneness.⁴¹ He added that Filipinos were also guilty of similar offenses. He alleged that they tortured to death American prisoners, buried alive both Americans and friendly natives, and mutilated the bodies of Americans who died in the battle.⁴² Senator Lodge on his part admitted with regret that a number of American soldiers had indeed tortured and killed Filipino guerillas. Following the line of Root, he enumerated a catalogue of horrors that shocked the American public.

Administration senators took turns in countering the accusations of the opposition. Sen. Lodge for instance downplayed the claim of the minority that the cruelties committed in the Philippines were unparalleled in history. He cited that the cruelties perpetuated by Nero against the Christians and the wiping out of French villages by the Germans in 1870 were far more detestable than those documented in the Philippines.⁴³ For him, the burning of houses and the use of torture to extract information were mere collateral damages of the war and should not be given primary attention. Senator Foraker, on his part, tried to downplay the atrocities committed by the army particularly those that happened in Samar. He reminded his fellow senators that these abuses were not new because similar excesses had been committed during the Civil War. Using biblical passages, he argued that General

⁴¹ As quoted in Morris, *Theodore Rex*, p. 98.

⁴² H.W Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 56. See also Blount, *American Occupation of the Philippines*, p. 388.

⁴³ "Philippine Bill Debate," *New York Times*, March 27, 1898, p. 1.

Smith's order was not as bad as Joshua's orders when he drove the different tribes out of the Promised Land.⁴⁴

During Taft's visit to Washington, Root and Roosevelt asked him what he could suggest to accelerate the pacification of the Philippines. In the course of their conversation, the issue of the friar lands was extensively discussed. Taft informed his superiors that this problem had been pestering his administration and it would be to the best interest of the United States if it would be settled once and for all. He suggested that the best thing to do is to buy these lands and sell them to the tenants. On February 18, 1902, Root, Taft, Roosevelt, and Archbishop Ireland had an informal meeting at the White House. They discussed the problems of the Catholic Church in the Philippines particularly the friar lands. All of them agreed that it was advantageous to parties concerned to purchase the friar lands and sell them to the tenants. They also took seriously the proposal of Ireland that the negotiation for the purchase of the friar lands be done in Rome rather than in the Philippines.

Roosevelt ordered Root to draft a Letter of Instruction that would serve as the framework of the Taft Mission to Rome. It was agreed that it should be properly worded so that Protestant at home would not be antagonized. In the letter Root explained that the mission to Rome was not diplomatic in nature. He stressed that Taft will go to Rome as a representative of the president for the sole purpose of settling the friar lands issue.⁴⁵ This is to assure the Protestant prelates that his mission will not violate the constitutional provision separating the Church and the State. Root also included other pertinent provisions that will guide the negotiations. First, he instructed Taft to inform the Vatican that the Church will no longer enjoy the patronage of the state and therefore they should adjust to the American system of government. Second, he told Taft to assure the Vatican that full and fair compensation will be given to the Church in exchange for the land

⁴⁴ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Records*, Part 6, p. 5,484.

⁴⁵ Philippine Commission, *Correspondence Between the Holy See and Hon. William H. Taft* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1902), p. 10.

they will sell.⁴⁶ Lastly, it was also insinuated that the American government was expecting that once the purchase is consummated, the friars would leave the Islands.

By the second quarter of 1903, Root had already informed President Roosevelt of his plan to give up his post. He cited his wife's distaste of Washington society as the chief reason of his resignation and also mentioned that he had completed already the task that McKinley asked him to do.⁴⁷ Roosevelt considered Root's impending departure a big loss. During his five-year stint in Washington, Root had made significant contributions to the two presidents he served. He established a functioning colonial system, modernized the army's chain of command, and created the General Staff Corps. When McKinley was shot in 1901, he supervised the affairs in the White House until Vice President Roosevelt took over. In 1902, he was the person assigned to settle the labor problems that led to the anthracite strike. The problem was considered a major one and if mishandled would have plunged the country into economic disaster. Lastly, when England submitted the vexing Alaska boundary problem to arbitration, Root was one of the three American representatives who helped find an acceptable settlement to both countries.⁴⁸

Root's resignation in 1903 proved to be a temporary break only because in 1905 he was back again in Washington to assume the position of Secretary of State. He held the position for four years and during his tenure, he reengineered America's foreign policy so that it will suit the country's new role in world affairs. He also promoted peace with other powers and injected a spirit of good diplomacy with the countries of the Western hemisphere. By 1908, many Republicans considered him possible candidate for president. But because of his close identification with the businessmen of New York, he declined the offer and run for senator of New York instead. After he finished his six-year term, he retired from politics and became an elder statesman of the Republican Party.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁷ Secretary Root to Resign, *New York Times* (August 12, 1903), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Leopold, *Elihu Root*, p. 44.

During the First World War, he championed the allied cause, criticized Wilson's neutrality and advocated American intervention. On 1937, Root joined his creator at the age of ninety-one.

What was just narrated is a story of a lawyer turned politician who left a significant mark in American history and in the history of the Philippines. The narrative shows that Root played a significant role in the colonization and pacification of the Philippines. He was the one who persuaded McKinley to adopt the policy of attraction in the Philippines. Coming from a purely civilian background, he did not believe that military operation is the best weapon against the resistance movement. Instead of sending soldiers, he sent educators, engineers, public health practitioners, entrepreneurs, developers and preachers in the Philippines. They were scattered all over the country to help convince the Filipinos to accept American rule. Compared with the militaristic approach of his predecessor, Root's strategy was more economical, less violent and the effects were lasting. It also transformed the image of America from being a brutal colonizer to a benevolent nation builder. As a result, opposition to American rule mellowed down in America and the Philippines after Root became Secretary of War.

The discussion above showed the political and economic repercussions of President McKinley's decision to adopt an expansionist policy. Obviously, to conquer a foreign territory is an easy task for a powerful and wealthy country. But to subdue and force the people to adopt the way of life of the colonizer is a long and tedious process. In this particular study, military operations proved to be an ineffective tool. McKinley made the right move when he appointed a seasoned lawyer to head the War Department and the insular government in the Philippines in the person of Root and Taft respectively. Their legal background and their exposure to judicial process prompted them to abide with the principle of due process and consultative decision making process. They also allowed some local leaders to occupy key positions in the government. While doing so, colonial officials launched a propaganda campaign declaring that they were doing so to help prepare the Filipinos run a democratic government. □