

Sharing the Burden: The Comparative Dynamics of Anglo-American
Intervention in South Africa and the Philippines, 1899-1902

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To April, Jordan, and Avery,
for the endless supply of love and inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

Between 1899 and 1902, Great Britain and the United States fought two difficult wars of empire. The former struggled to overcome the stiff Boer resistance and emerged victorious only after an enormous investment in blood and treasure. The latter, meanwhile, fought a less organized and less well-armed foe, but, nonetheless, struggled to bring the disparate elements of the Filipino insurgency under control and to establish the structures of government in the archipelago.

The constitutional and administrative structures of British and American political systems and the processes through which demands were transmitted to and instructions were transmitted from the national political authorities, who were ultimately responsible for the formulation and implementation of expansionist policies in South Africa and the Philippines, provides a critical window of examination into the comparative dynamics of British and American decision-making and policy execution. The parliamentary structure in Great Britain, particularly the intra-Cabinet dynamics within the Unionist government, prevented a coordinated policy response to increasing tensions in the months leading up to the South African War. In contrast, the structure and dynamics of the presidential system in the United States enabled the president to maintain control over the pace of events in the Philippines.

War, especially guerrilla war, blurs the boundaries between civil and military responsibilities. This brief examination highlights the fault lines that existed between the senior civilian ministers and military leaders both at home and in the periphery in both conflicts. While they generally agreed on the ultimate strategic objectives, they disagreed, often vehemently, on how to achieve them. Although they possessed a system of experienced colonial administrators,

civil servants, and military officers, the British proved no more able to bring their war to a rapid, satisfactory conclusion than the American “amateurs” they persistently disparaged. The stovepipes within the British system facilitated competing claims for overall leadership of the war effort. While the American occupation of the Philippines underscored the risks associated with expanding abroad with little political or organizational preparation, civil-military relations in Philippines never became as tenuous as that of the British in South Africa.

Introduction

At a little after six a.m. on the morning of 10 October 1899, Joseph Chamberlain, the British colonial secretary, was awakened and read an ultimatum that had just been received from the government of the South African Republic in Pretoria. The Boers, under the leadership of Paul Kruger, their aging, but still powerful president, had not only refused the latest in a series of British demands, but had also preempted an ultimatum that Chamberlain was preparing to send to Kruger by sending one of their own.¹ When the Boer ultimatum expired on 11 October, the South African Republic, commonly referred to as the Transvaal, and its sister Boer state, the Orange Free State, went to war against the world's largest empire. It was widely expected, at least outside the subcontinent, that the war would be brief and over by Christmas. The British had underestimated the tenacity of the Boer resistance, however, and Britain's "last great expansionist imperial war" became its longest and bloodiest war between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War.² It would take three grinding years, require the employment of some 450,000 British and imperial troops, and cost more than £215 million to defeat an army of roughly 65,000 mounted peasants and amateur soldiers. Facing a seemingly intractable insurgent effort, the British resorted to farm burning and concentration camps to cut the Boers off from their sources of support. In the poorly run and unhygienic camps, nearly 30,000 Boer civilians, including 22,000 women and children, perished. Among the combatants,

¹ The word "Boer" literally means "farmer." The word "Afrikaner" is generally used to indicate those of a similar ethnic (Dutch) background who resided in the British South African colonies of the Cape Colony and Natal.

² Denis Judd and Keith Terrance Surridge, *The Boer War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1.

nearly 7,000 Boer and 22,000 British soldiers were killed, roughly three-quarters of the latter from disease. When the war ended in May 1902, tens of thousands of Boers were in concentrations camps and large tracts of the countryside had been devastated or lost to the various African tribes, from whom the Boers had originally taken the territory. In the peace treaty that concluded the conflict, the British granted generous terms to the Boers, including £3 million in war damages, while the Boers formally surrendered the sovereignty of their republics.

Meanwhile, some 7,000 miles to the east-northeast, the United States was involved in a 40-month struggle against Filipino revolutionaries after fighting broke out between American forces in Manila and the Filipino forces surrounding the town in February 1899. The United States had purchased the Philippines from Spain for \$20 million in the Treaty of Paris of December 1898, which had ended the Spanish-American War, but would spend more than 20 times that amount, over \$400 million, fighting to keep it. Of the 126,000 American troops who served in the Philippines, 4,200 died and over 2,800 were wounded in the effort to pacify an enemy force of between 80,000 and 100,000 organized soldiers and “tens of thousands more” in informal, localized organizations.³ Although fighting in an operating environment dramatically different from that in South Africa, the Americans resorted to many of the same repressive methods that the British employed, including crop burning and concentration camps, while inventing some harsh ones of their own such as the “water cure.” In the end, the Filipinos suffered an estimated 12,000 military casualties and the death by violence, dislocation, and

³ Glenn Anthony May, *A Past Recovered* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1987), 157.

disease of an estimated 250,000 civilians.⁴ When Theodore Roosevelt declared the war over in July 1902, the United States had won its first “savage war of peace” and joined the world’s imperial powers.

Both of these conflicts have continued to generate scholarly interest in the century since their conclusions. Inevitably, these discussions have reflected shifts in general historiography. As examples of “unconventional” warfare and policy, they have also attracted the interest of those in the security and international relations communities in search of applicable lessons or parallels for current policy debates. Thus, in recent years, new studies of the Philippine War and American empire have flourished in part because of the burning questions that historians and others are asking about the role of the United States in the world today. It is nearly impossible to peruse the current scholarship on the Philippine War without finding explicit reference to the current conflicts in Iraq and/or Afghanistan or to study the recent scholarship on counterinsurgency warfare without finding the war used as an important case study.⁵ Similarly,

⁴ The number of civilian casualties is still disputed. The estimate of 250,000 is from Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 157.

⁵ For examples of the former, see Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State*, New Perspectives in Southeast Asian Studies (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); David Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902*, 1st ed (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); For some examples of the latter by scholars with connections to military centers of learning, see Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Robert D. Ramsey, *Savage Wars of Peace: Case Studies of Pacification in the Philippines, 1900-1902* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007); *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare, 1898-2007: Anthology and Selected Bibliography* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, United States Marine Corps, 2008); A. J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1998).

recent scholarship on the South African War correlates British difficulties in overcoming a difficult insurgency with American struggles a century later.⁶

In the last three decades, a noticeable shift has taken place from histories that focused on the military and political aspects of both wars⁷ to more nuanced examinations of the conflicts in South Africa and the Philippines.⁸ Paralleling the emergence of new perspectives in historiography as a whole, scholars have recently applied a multitude of social, cultural, racial, and gendered lenses to great effect in their analyses of the South African and Philippine wars. Surprisingly, to date, no scholars have sought to complete this triangle of analysis by linking in close detail the two contemporary interventions: The following analysis is designed to begin correcting this deficiency. Specifically, the following examination will scrutinize the internal debates within the British and American governments' various departments and between the

⁶ Deborah D. Avant, "Political Institutions and Military Effectiveness: Contemporary United States and United Kingdom," in *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, ed. Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 80–105.

⁷ For authoritative examples of the classic military-operational and political approaches, see William Thaddeus Sexton, *Soldiers in the Sun: An Adventure in Imperialism* (Harrisburg, PA: The Military Service Pub. Co., 1939); Brian McAllister Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 1st American ed. (New York: Random House, 1979); Byron Farwell, *The Great Anglo-Boer War*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

⁸ See, for example, Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-century Literature and Culture 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism, and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); John Lambert, "'The Thinking Is Done in London': South Africa's English Language Press and Imperialism," in *Media and the British Empire*, ed. Chandrika Kaul (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 37–54; Eric T. L. Love, *Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

senior members of those departments, and in doing so, it will expose more fully the contrasts between the British and American dynamics of decision-making and policy execution associated with these two contemporary conflicts.

Ever since Charles de Secondat, the Baron de Montesquieu, formulated the theory of the separation of executive, legislative, and judicative powers, there has been disagreement on how to most efficiently and effectively translate the principle into government structures. The principle of checks and balances had the most visible influence on the American framers, who adopted it as the core of the U.S. presidential separation of powers system. James Madison warned about “the danger from legislative usurpations; which by assembling all power in the same hands, must lead to the same tyranny as is threatened by executive usurpations.”⁹ Critics of the American political system have repeatedly charged that its fragmentation of power makes it incapable of governing a modern society. Following Alexis de Tocqueville’s line of argument, Americans are, thanks to the power-sharing structures of their government, particular ill-equipped to “fix on one plan and follow it through with persistence” and are “not capable of devising secret measures” in the foreign policy arena.¹⁰ In the long-standing debate between advocates of parliamentary and presidential systems, the shortcomings of the constitutional system of checks and balance are taken for granted. The fragmentation of power prevents the federal government from making decisive and rapid policy choices and complicates the implementation of those choices. As the number of veto players increases, buck-passing is more

⁹ Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Hay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Cynthia Brantley Johnson (New York: Pocket Books, 2004), 354.

¹⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (New York: Penguin Press, 2003), 267.

common than consensus-building and effective policy making.¹¹ The British parliamentary model is often put forward as both inspiration and exemplar for reforms in the United States. The question, of course, is whether parliamentary systems actually perform better than the American one. This dissertation will demonstrate that the parliamentary structure of the domestic political system in Great Britain, particularly the intra-cabinet dynamics within the Unionist government, prevented a coordinated policy response to increasing tensions in the months leading up to the South African War. In contrast, the structure and dynamics of the presidential system in the United States enabled the president to maintain control over the pace of events in the Philippines.

According to Walter Bagehot, who explored the nature of the constitution of Great Britain and the contrasts between British and American forms of government during the Victorian era, the “nearly complete fusion of the executive and legislative powers” in the cabinet was the “efficient secret” of British government.¹² While various factors, such as the segregation of government business from private members’ business via Order Days, increased the importance of the cabinet in the course of the nineteenth century, and subsequently tightened intra-party cohesion in the House of Commons by the 1890s, the fusion of powers and the trend for more and more questions to be treated as questions of confidence increased the leverage of

¹¹ See, for example, Lloyd N. Cutler, “To Form a Government,” *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 1 (Fall 1980): 126–43; R. Kent Weaver, “Are Parliamentary Systems Better?,” *The Brookings Review* 3, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 16–25; James L. Sundquist, *Constitutional Reform and Effective Government* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1992); R. Kent Weaver and Rockman, eds., *Do Institutions Matter? Government Capabilities in the United States and Abroad* (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 1993); “Conference Issue: Presidential and Parliamentary Democracies: Which Works Best?,” *Political Science Quarterly* 109, no. 3 (Summer 1994).

¹² Walter Bagehot, “The English Constitution,” *Fortnightly Review* 1 (1865): 9.

individual ministers *within* the cabinet.¹³ Some vital issues, such as the defense of the British Empire, also tended to cut across party lines. During the period under consideration, not only did the opposition contain a wing of influential MPs, known as the Liberal Imperialists (or ‘Limps’), who were decidedly pro-empire, but the ruling Unionist government also included several Liberal Unionist ministers, whose imperialism was of “a quite different stamp” than that of Lord Salisbury and most of his fellow Tories.¹⁴ Because a cabinet could be overturned at any moment, party leaders had an incentive to resolve contentious issues privately, particularly when policy entrepreneurs existed inside the government.

One key feature that differentiates the American system from a parliamentary regime is, of course, the strict division between the executive and legislative branches of government. The dissimilarities do not stop there, however, as differences between the typical membership of the American and British cabinets produce fundamentally different decision-making processes. Since most of the president’s principal advisers were not themselves competitors for his office, or indeed for any elective office, they did not take their prospects for their own reelection into account when debating what stand to take on the issues of the day. The president stood at the center of the foreign policy process in the United States even before the establishment of the so-called imperial presidency, and while the views of prominent members of the cabinet and Congress were no doubt important, the president’s role and influence on decision-making were

¹³ For analyses of the evolution of the British political system in the nineteenth century, see Gary W. Cox, *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England*, Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Bernard Porter, *Britannia’s Burden: The Political Evolution of Modern Britain, 1851-1990* (London: E. Arnold, 1994); G. R. Searle, *Country Before Party: Coalition and the Idea of “National Government” in Modern Britain, 1885-1987* (London: Longman, 1995).

¹⁴ Searle, *Country Before Party*, 45.

qualitatively different from those of any other participant. Consequently, President McKinley was able to stand firmly against policy entrepreneurs within the executive branch, unless, of course, he favored their policy recommendations.

The American annexation of the Philippine Islands in 1899 launched them on a nearly half-century venture as colonial rulers of a far-off Asian land and people. This experience was, in many ways, unprecedented for Americans, despite their history of governing and incorporating new territories while the United States extended its boundaries westward during the course of the nineteenth century. American “agents of empire” actively sought comparisons with other states’ imperial projects to help devise effective systems of governance in the Philippines. This dissertation will show that the existence of a sophisticated administrative system staffed by experienced personnel with regional expertise, as the British had in South Africa, is not only not a sufficient condition for conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign, it can, in fact, hinder policy implementation.

The integration of civilian and military efforts is crucial to a successful counterinsurgency campaign.¹⁵ In the opening stanza of his famous poem written in response to the American takeover of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, Rudyard Kipling makes an appeal to the Americans to send forth their best and brightest to assume the “burden” of empire as Great Britain and other European powers had done.¹⁶ The unstated suggestion is that the Americans should fashion their efforts on the British model, which relied on a system of

¹⁵ United States Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24; Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*, University of Chicago Press ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 53–77.

¹⁶ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine*, February 1899.

experienced colonial administrators, civil servants, and military officers to administer the colonies of the British Empire. When they became engaged in the diplomatically and militarily complicated conflict in South Africa, however, the British proved no more able to bring their war to a rapid, satisfactory conclusion than the American “amateurs” they persistently disparaged. The stovepipes within the British system facilitated competing claims for overall leadership of the war effort. While the American occupation of the Philippines “exposed the complications and costs of Washington’s efforts to expand abroad without political or diplomatic preparation,” civil-military relations in Philippines never became as tenuous as that of the British in South Africa.¹⁷

It must be stressed that this line of inquiry does not reject the trends in the recent historiography of both conflicts. Rather, it suggests the value of a comparative approach to the analysis of the British and American actions connected to these conflicts, especially given the absence of such a perspective in the literature. It also suggests the value of incorporating the perspectives offered by the theoretical literature on international relations and decision-making in order to open up new conceptual vistas. While at the macro level, systemic approaches can help historians gauge the relative weight of certain external variables on a state’s behavior, this dissertation will focus on the micro level, where theories of “governmental politics” and group

¹⁷ Jeremi Suri, “Orphaned Diplomats: The American Struggle to Match Diplomacy with Power,” in *The Prudent Use of Power in American National Security Strategy*, ed. Stephen Van Evera and Sidharth Shah (Cambridge: The Tobin Project, 2010), 23.

dynamics provide valuable methods to examine the role of cognition and bureaucratic structures in foreign policy decision-making and policy execution.¹⁸

Additionally, this dissertation adds to the debate on the utility of the concept of empire as a set of practices and institutions. In the current phase of scholarship on issues of empire, most historians have transferred, or at least extended, their interests from the imperial metropole to the imperial periphery. While their historical approaches vary, they have shifted significantly their analyses from a national perspective to an imperial and/or a global one.¹⁹ Postcolonial scholars, meanwhile, have sought to recover the voices of those peoples and groups who are absent from the official records and to investigate the structures of knowledge and the representations of empire that served to create the experiences of both imperial dominance and imperial subservience.²⁰ While both these approaches have unquestionably increased our understanding of the past by highlighting its multifaceted complexities, they also tend to obfuscate the important fact that the British and American governments were, and remain, confusing amalgams of competing jurisdictions and authorities.

¹⁸ For an overview of relatively recent, influential theories on foreign policy decision-making, see Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999); Yaacov Vertzberger, *Risk Taking and Decisionmaking: Foreign Military Intervention Decisions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, *Balancing Risks: Great Power Intervention in the Periphery*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

¹⁹ See Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003); Jeremy Black, *The British Seaborne Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

²⁰ See Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Geeta Chowdhry and Sheila Nair, eds., *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

While hostility to empire has remained a constant theme in American popular discourse, leading Colin Powell to declare with all earnestness, “The United States does not seek a territorial empire. We [Americans] have never been imperialists,” both conflicts were examples of late Victorian-era, formal imperialism, with the requisite establishment of direct sovereignty over, military occupation of, and the imposition of a colonial bureaucracy on the peripheral target state.²¹ While American political leaders may not have established a formal “colonial office,” the examination of the two conflicts demonstrates that the American intervention in the Philippines was in many ways more similar to other nineteenth century wars of imperial conquest than the British intervention in South Africa.²² While it is clear that this dissertation will be too limited in geographical and temporal scope to address the essentialism debate regarding the value of “empire” as an analytical category to any great degree, it will provide analysis into two interesting case-studies that will capture the complex, and often dissimilar, dynamics of imperial expansion.

Most important, in an effort to determine why the British and American governments initiated risky military interventions in these particular areas of the periphery and then persisted

²¹ Quoted in Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 7; Patricio N. Abinales, “The U.S. Army as an Occupying Force in Muslim Mindanao, 1899-1913,” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 410–20; Richard E. Welch, *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Keith Terrance Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899-1902: Politicians v. Generals*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History (London: Royal Historical Society, 1998); Brian Bond, ed., *Victorian Military Campaigns* (London: Hutchinson, 1967).

²² For an analysis that differentiates the South African War from the general British imperial experience in Africa, see Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998).

in them despite mounting military, political, and economic costs, this dissertation will examine the internal debates within both metropolitan governments, highlight the importance of decision-making processes, explore how political leaders framed the discourse on intervention to their various audiences, and emphasize the various organizational impediments to effective joint action while fighting protracted, asymmetrical conflicts. This analysis should prove beneficial to both scholars and to the broader public policy community, particularly those who deal with foreign policy development and implementation.

Scholars have regularly used the South African War, also commonly, if erroneously, known as the Boer War or the Anglo-Boer War, to illuminate the nature of British imperialism at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²³ Most of the early accounts of the war focused extensively, if not exclusively, on military operations. Examples from British authors include highly subjective accounts of specific battles or sieges by commanding officers, more sober analyses by subalterns, and, in some cases, celebratory accounts prematurely published upon the fall of the Boer capital cities.²⁴ The official British history of the war includes very detailed accounts of military operations, but usually, if not unsurprisingly, advocates pro-British points of view, including the tendency to credit highly exaggerated estimates of Boer forces

²³ Also occasionally referred to as the Second Boer War or Second Anglo-British War. (The “first” war between the principle antagonists having occurred in 1880-81.) For the Boers, the war was known as the *die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* (“The Second War for Freedom”).

²⁴ B. F. S. Baden-Powell, *War in Practice: Tactical and Other Lessons of the Campaigns in South Africa, 1899-1902* (London: Isbister, 1903); J. F. C. Fuller, *The Last of the Gentlemen’s Wars: A Subaltern’s Journal of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937); Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1903).

when explaining British defeats.²⁵ Carrying the fight into the literary arena, the Boers wrote their own firsthand accounts of the war, which, like the British versions, are numerous and varied, both in the quality of prose and the perspectives they capture.²⁶

The debate over the origins of the war, particularly the argument over whether gold rather than geopolitical or strategic factors shaped British policy towards the Boer republics, first appeared while the war was still in progress and remains contentious. Writing in 1900, Leo Amery, in the initial volume of *The Times History of the War in South Africa*, firmly located the origins of the war in the political conflict between the British and the South African Republic's governments. Specifically, he argued that President Kruger was determined to maximize the independence of the South African Republic and to extend both its frontiers and its influence over the neighboring states in order to establish his state, the larger and more wealthy of the two Boer republics, "in the position of the paramount power in South Africa."²⁷ J. A. Hobson famously countered that the war illuminated the roots of British imperial expansion in the economics of capitalism. He argued vociferously that the war was fought "to secure for the mines a cheap adequate supply of labor."²⁸ E. J. Hobsbawm concurred with the primacy of economic factors, pithily asserting over eight decades later, "Whatever the ideology, the motive

²⁵ John Frederick Maurice and Maurice Harold Grant, eds., *History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902*, 4 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett Limited, 1906).

²⁶ For just a few examples, see Christiaan Rudolf De Wet, *Three Years' War (October 1899-June 1902)* (Westminster [London]: A. Constable, 1902); Dietlof Van Warmelo, *On Commando* (London: Methuen, 1902); Deneys Reitz, *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War* (London: Farber and Farber, 1929).

²⁷ L. S. Amery, ed., *The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902*, vol. 1 (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1900), 90–1.

²⁸ J. A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Effects* (London: J. Nisbet, 1900), 233.

for the Boer War was gold.”²⁹ While Iain Smith finds little archival evidence in support of the gold argument in his more recent analysis of the war’s origins, he concedes that it continues to exercise great influence.³⁰ Perhaps, Shula Marks best summarized the debate among historians when she declared, “In the end this is an argument about how you think the world works.”³¹

Scholars conducting broader studies of empire and great power relations have incorporated the South African War into their analytical narratives to varying degrees as they examine the diplomatic, economic, and military dynamics of an epoch when the European world was “obsessed with the ideas of imperialism and world policy.”³² As governing elites embraced ever more tightly an outlook on the world order that stressed “struggle, change, competition, the use of force, and the organization of national resources to enhance state power,” British leaders strove to manage the commercial, strategic, political, and cultural components of what John Darwin has described as a “British world-system,” which was driven not by the “official mind” of government, but by the “chaotic pluralism of British interests at home and their agents and allies aboard.”³³ While most scholars concur with Paul Kennedy’s assertion that Great Britain

²⁹ E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 66.

³⁰ Iain R. Smith, “A Century of Controversy over Origins,” in *The South African War Reappraised*, ed. Donal Lowry (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 28.

³¹ Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, “Lord Milner and the South African State Revisited,” in *Imperialism, the State and the Third World*, ed. Michael Twaddle (London and New York: British Academic Press, 1992), 91.

³² William L Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1951), 656.

³³ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 196; John Darwin, *The Empire*

remained “*the* established Great Power, with less to gain than to lose from fundamental alterations in the status quo,” historians’ opinions on the role of the war in “the story of rivalry between European imperialisms” differ widely.³⁴ For William Langer, South Africa was the “touchstone of British imperialism,” which “called forth among European powers a veritable storm of indignation and jealousy”; while for A. J. P. Taylor, the conflict was merely an “episode” in the age of imperialism, overshadowed by more critical events in the Far East.³⁵ While Taylor argues that the South African War was “a triumphant demonstration for ‘splendid isolation’,” John Darwin underscores that it also was “the cause and occasion for the most dramatic review of grand strategy since the 1860s.”³⁶ While these studies provide the global context critical to a comprehensive analysis of the conflict, they, typically, either oversimplify the dynamics of decision-making that led the British government to break the ‘Berlin rules’ and commit itself to armed conflict in South Africa or they fail to dissect the British colonial and military organizations to discover the structural defects that hindered British efforts to bring the war to a rapid termination.

For the first half of the twentieth century, historians studied the South African War predominantly to shed light on the major historical themes in the making of the modern world with issues such as imperialism, capitalism, and nationalism taking center stage. In the late

Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2–3.

³⁴ Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 226 (emphasis in the original); Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 96.

³⁵ Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 213; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 391.

³⁶ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918*, 387; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 258.

1960s and early 1970s, however, innovations in historical inquiry drew new attention to issues of class, society, race, and gender. One of the groundbreaking works that reflects these new developments is *The South African War*, edited by Peter Warwick and S. B. Spies, which contains essays that explore the war's impact on British society, the effect of the war on British and Boer women, the role of anti-war activists, and other social issues that had been neglected previously in the studies of the war.³⁷ A series of newer edited works published around the centennial anniversary continue these historiographical trends. *Writing a Wider War*, *The Impact of the South African War*, and *The South African War Reappraised*, each offer a wide variety of perspectives on the conflict and reflect the continuing desire to re-envision the war in light of the changing events in South African political and social history.³⁸ The very shift in the nomenclature from the "Boer War" to the "South African War" is an indicator of perhaps the most important change in historians' understanding of the conflict over the past two decades. Recent historiography proves that it is no longer possible to conceive of the conflict as a "white man's war."³⁹

³⁷ Peter Warwick and S. B. Spies, eds., *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1980).

³⁸ Greg Cuthbertson, Albert Grundlingh, and Mary-Lynn Cuthbertson, eds., *Writing a Wider War: Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War, 1899-1902* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2002); David E. Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *The Impact of the South African War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002); Donal Lowry, ed., *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).

³⁹ See Peter Warwick, *Black People and the South African War, 1899-1902*, African Studies Series 40 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Bill Nasson, *Abraham Esau's War: A Black South African War in the Cape, 1899-1902*, African Studies Series 68 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Not all historians, however, are satisfied with the direction that historical scholarship on the South African War has taken in the past few decades. Andrew Porter argues that even as recent work has undoubtedly contributed to the complex history of the conflict, the combined effect of these diverse works is costing the South African War its broader significance. He unambiguously warns that “there can be little doubt that the developments in the study of the war are . . . tending more and more to fill gaps in our knowledge of its place in South Africa’s local history rather than enhance our understanding of its imperial or global significance.”⁴⁰ He continues by declaring his hope that, in the future, historians “will have discovered their confident sense that this was indeed a war which continues to illuminate genuinely big issues.”⁴¹ This dissertation is structured to fulfill, to some small degree, his desire.

While firsthand accounts from the Philippine War were slightly slower to emerge than those from the South African War, the historiography of the war in the Philippines is notable for the rapid onset of the often-heated debate on the appropriateness of American policies in the Philippines.⁴² Early pro-imperialist works portrayed the Americans forces as benevolent altruists, who actively aided the Filipinos as they suppressed tyranny and terrorism, while anti-imperialist authors countered by describing the Americans as ruthless conquerors, who stamped out a legitimate independence movement.⁴³ Concerned primarily with attacking or defending

⁴⁰ Andrew Porter, “The South African War and the Historians,” *African Affairs* 99 (October 2000): 643.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 648.

⁴² For only a couple of examples, see Frederick Funston, *Memories of Two Wars: Cuban and Philippine Experiences* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1911); Clarence Lininger, *The Best War at the Time*, 1st ed. (New York: R. Speller, 1964).

⁴³ For examples from the pro-imperialist perspective, see James A. LeRoy, *The Americans in the Philippines: A History of the Conquest and First Years of Occupation, with an Introductory*

existing American policy, these early accounts generally relied more on exciting anecdotes than in-depth research using primary materials. One exception was the first official study of the Philippine War by Captain John R. M. Taylor, who produced a lengthy narrative for a compilation of captured insurgent records.⁴⁴ Although his work was completed in 1906, it remained unpublished in the United States for political reasons; and when it was finally published 1971, it was done in the Philippines.⁴⁵

With Taylor's account unavailable, William B. Sexton's *Soldier in the Sun* provided the public with the first in-depth, non-polemical account of the war from the American point of view.⁴⁶ Relying on congressional documents, memoirs, and secondary accounts as his principle sources, Sexton, another army captain, presents a critical analysis of American strategy. While his criticism of American military leaders, particularly Elwell S. Otis, is often muted, it is notable. He credits "enterprising and courageous lieutenants" for putting down the insurgency and argues that if it is true that England's wars are won on the playfield of Eton then "the [First]

Account of the Spanish Rule, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914); W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1928); for examples from the anti-imperialist perspective, see Albert G. Robinson, *The Philippines: The War and the People; a Record of Personal Observations and Experiences* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1901); Moorfield Storey and Marcial Primitivo Lichauco, *The Conquest of the Philippines by the United States, 1898-1925* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928).

⁴⁴ John R. M. Taylor, *The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States: A Compilation of Documents with Notes and Introduction*, Eugenio Lopez Philippine History Series (Pasay City, Philippines: Eugenio Lopez Foundation, 1971).

⁴⁵ For an analysis of the abandoned project, see John T. Farrell, "An Abandoned Approach to Philippine History: John R. M. Taylor and the Philippine Insurrection Records," *The Catholic Historical Review* 39, no. 4 (January 1954): 385–407.

⁴⁶ For earlier accounts of military operations by journalists, see Karl Irving Faust, *Campaigning in the Philippines* (San Francisco: Hicks-Judd Co., 1899); Marrion Wilcox, ed., *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines* (New York and London: Harper, 1900).

World War was won on the battlefields of the Philippines.”⁴⁷ He does not, however, question the policy decision to acquire the islands or the methods employed to subdue the insurrection.

Critiques of American foreign policy in mid-twentieth-century Asia were reflected in the scholarship on the conflict in the Philippines, especially during the Vietnam-era. In *Little Brown Brother*, the first of the reevaluations of the American’s initial steps toward an overseas empire, Leon Wolff openly declares that the “forcible annexation [of the Philippines] was a moral wrong.”⁴⁸ Wolff devotes considerable attention to the quasi-diplomatic contact between Americans and Filipinos in the months leading up to open conflict and presents the efforts of the anti-imperialists in a generally positive light.⁴⁹ In *Schoolbooks and Kraggs*, John M. Gates counters by arguing that American forces in the Philippines reflected the progressive, reformist values of the age. Among the first historians to use the unpublished diaries and correspondence in the Carlisle Barracks, home of the U.S. Army War College and U.S. Army Military History Institute, he maintains that the army as “the major and in many areas only representative of the United States in the Philippines” successfully transferred American ideas and institutions to the islands.⁵⁰ In *Benevolent Assimilation*, Stuart Miller not only criticizes Gates’ book as merely “the latest attempt to whitewash the army’s conduct,” he goes even farther than Wolff by suggesting that Wesley Merritt and Elwell Otis, the first two American military governors,

⁴⁷ Sexton, *Soldiers in the Sun*, 14.

⁴⁸ Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother: How the United States Purchased and Pacified the Philippine Islands at the Century’s Turn* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 366.

⁴⁹ It must be noted, however, that Wolff’s work is, at best, a semi-scholarly account as many of the sources of the statements he quotes are undocumented.

⁵⁰ John Morgan Gates, *Schoolbooks and Kraggs: The United States Army in the Philippines, 1898-1902*, Contributions in Military History no. 3 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 289.

needlessly exacerbated relations with the Filipinos and by asserting that Otis “may have planned and provoked the war.”⁵¹ While obviously contemptuous of the military officials in the Philippines, Miller contends that the officials in Washington were the real villains. The anti-imperialists, however, do not emerge unscathed from his analysis, which leads him to declare that they were self-righteous egotists, who were “almost invariably race haters.”⁵²

The Philippine War has also been linked, if somewhat less often than the South African War, to broader studies of empire and great power relations. Historians of the “Wisconsin School” provide a comprehensive and forceful argument for the primacy of economic influences in the formulation of foreign policy at the end of the nineteenth century. Led initially by Fred Harvey Harrington and William Appleman Williams, these historians contend that the makers of American foreign policy sought an “informal empire” of markets rather than new territories.⁵³ Although the United States annexed the Philippines and fought a difficult war to maintain control over it, the objective, according to these revisionist, New Left historians, was not the establishment of a colonial empire, but the acquisition of “the minimum territory needed to obtain his [McKinley’s] conquest of world markets, along with the taking of strategic points necessary to protect that conquest.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Stuart Creighton Miller, *“Benevolent Assimilation”: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 277 (fn. 2) and 59.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵³ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 50th-anniversary ed. (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2009); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, 35th-anniversary ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

⁵⁴ Walter LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913*, vol. 2, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 156.

In his various examinations of how the United States emerged as the “seventh power” on the world stage, Ernest May eschews the broader definition of imperialism employed by the New Left historians, and in doing so, he offers a non-economic explanation for the turn of the century, imperialistic “aberration” in American foreign policy.⁵⁵ He contends that disagreement among the men of the elite, cosmopolitan foreign policy “establishment,” who “belonged both to their own and to a larger Atlantic community,” precipitated divisions within their constituency, a “foreign policy public” of perhaps three million Americans, which, in turn, enabled a more simplistic and emotional discourse to influence American foreign policy decision-making.⁵⁶ The growing expansionist sentiment prompted President McKinley, who May argues was principally occupied by domestic concerns, not only to lead the United States “unwillingly toward a war [with Spain] that he did not want for a cause in which he did not believe,” but also to purchase the Philippines in the final peace treaty.⁵⁷ While May’s focus on the decision to go to war with Spain in 1898 leaves him little time to explore how the very different dynamics of the Philippine War influenced opinion within the foreign policy establishment or the foreign policy public, his methods of connecting domestic public opinion to the formation of American foreign policy is a helpful model for the study of public opinion in the years before today’s incessant public opinion polls. While some historians question the value of “empire” as an analytical category, the long-standing debate about nature, duration, and foundations of America’s imperial past continues to

⁵⁵ Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 243–270; Ernest R. May, *American Imperialism: A Speculative Essay* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 4.

⁵⁶ May, *American Imperialism*, 229, 24.

⁵⁷ May, *Imperial Democracy*, 159.

the present day and often dominates the discussion of contemporary American foreign policy.⁵⁸

As postcolonial studies and the increasing use of a transnational frame have become the leading models for research, historians of the war have begun to move beyond metropole-centric narratives of the war. In much the same way as the more recent scholarship on the South African War, recent works on the Philippine War, such as Paul Kramer's *The Blood of Government* and Kristin Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood*, have shed new light on the relationships and intersections of race, gender, and nationhood.⁵⁹ Of particular interest is the way in which recent research has explored "imperial reciprocities," the processes by which developments on the periphery influence the metropole and vice versa.⁶⁰ One of the more fascinating recent examples is *Policing America's Empire*, in which Alfred McCoy argues that the security methods and police practices implemented in the Philippines during the war, and expanded upon during the years of colonial occupation that followed, migrated back to the United States and were employed by the Wilson administration during the First World War to conduct "the most systematic surveillance of its citizens ever conducted by a modern government."⁶¹

⁵⁸ Jeremi Suri, "The Limits of American Empire: Democracy and Militarism in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries," in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 523–40; Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Ferguson, *Colossus*; Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004); Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso, 2003).

⁵⁹ Kramer, *The Blood of Government*; Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁶⁰ Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

⁶¹ McCoy, *Policing America's Empire*, 13.

As in the case of the writing on the South African War, not all historians are content with the direction that historical scholarship on the Philippines has taken in the past few decades. In *The Philippine War*, Brian McAllister Linn tries “to apply some much needed correction” to the idea that American forces “terrorized” the Filipinos into submission.⁶² Criticizing other historians for “imposing their own values on the past,” he argues that the war was neither a brutal, racist war nor one of selfless “benevolent assimilation,” but “a far more complex and challenging phenomenon.”⁶³ While this dissertation turns the analytical lens more inward than recent accounts, its examination of the dynamics of policy formation and implementation does serve to increase our understanding of this “complex” conflict.

This brief examination of the historiography calls attention to the parallel nature of the approaches used in the historical analyses of both conflicts. It also begs the question as to why these contemporary events have not been linked previously. In pursuing a comparative approach, this dissertation examines the complex dynamics of decision-making and policy execution in modern bureaucratic structures in support of prolonged “small wars” overseas. As both wars were harbingers of the unconventional conflicts to be fought later in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this exploration of some of the organizational influences on the use of force has broader implications beyond the study of these specific conflicts.

⁶² Linn, *The Philippine War*, ix.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 221, 328.

Chapter 1: McKinley and the Road to Annexation

There has been considerable scholarly debate surrounding the nature of McKinley's role in and contribution to American imperialist policies at the end of the nineteenth century. The relative paucity of materials he left behind has made a full understanding difficult.⁶⁴ Combing through the relatively small amount of available direct evidence, scholars have come to starkly different positions regarding McKinley's decision to intervene in the Philippines and to annex the islands at the end of the Spanish-American War. For some scholars, McKinley was a sort of conspiring genius, a skillful Machiavellian who had always intended to fully implement a "large policy" and only feigned opposition to the war movement.⁶⁵ They portray McKinley as moving "resolutely to war, following a course mapped out months before," thereby achieving his ultimate goal of establishing an American empire in the Philippines and elsewhere.⁶⁶ While he may have initiated the war over the issue of Cuba, they insist that his secret agenda always called for acquiring an economic and colonial foothold in Asia.

A polar opposite interpretation suggests that McKinley was a weak president who fell under the sway of either public opinion or various influential members of his party and was manipulated into annexing the Philippines. In this version of events, McKinley comes across as an innocent dupe who was manipulated by the real masterminds of American expansionism,

⁶⁴ The McKinley Papers comprise only 98 reels of microfilm. As a means of comparison, the papers of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, McKinley's two immediate successors, comprise 485 and 658 reels of microfilm, respectively.

⁶⁵ See, for example, LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913*; Daniel B. Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War* (Cambridge: Schenkman Pub. Co., 1972).

⁶⁶ Philip Sheldon Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism, 1895-1902*, vol. 1, *Modern Reader* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 307.

namely such men of the large policy camp as Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt.⁶⁷ He implemented a policy devised by others either because he was weak leader, in general, or because he lacked strong convictions on territorial expansion, in particular.⁶⁸

There is, of course, a middle ground between these contradictory views, one that portrays McKinley as a “reluctant expansionist,” who maintained control of the direction the American foreign policy, but whose opinion of territorial expansion, generally, and of the need to establish and maintain sovereignty over the Philippines, more specifically, shifted over time to match those favoring expansion as the proper course for a self-proclaimed, and increasing recognized, great power.⁶⁹ McKinley authorized the attack on the Philippines as a means to quickly draw the Spanish-American War to a close and then, having defeated Spanish forces in the archipelago, concluded that the only reasonable follow-up decision was to annex the islands. This interpretation of events highlights a critical and an undeniable reality—namely that wars inevitably produce unintended and unexpected consequences that alter the political landscape and present decision-makers with an unanticipated set of considerations and available alternatives. Indeed, even if one were to accept either of the first two scholarly interpretations, the fact remains that neither the allegedly scheming McKinley nor the faceless forces that supposedly maneuvered him into annexing the Philippines anticipated the difficulties this

⁶⁷ See, for example, Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1936); May, *Imperial Democracy*.

⁶⁸ A popular joke at the time captured this impression: “Why is McKinley’s mind like a bed? Because it has to made up for him every time he wants to use it.” Quoted in Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays*, 1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 170.

⁶⁹ See, for example, David F. Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898*, The Macmillan Wars of the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1981); Margaret Leech, *In the Days of McKinley* (New York: Harper, 1959).

acquisition would entail. The decision in favor of annexation led to a new outbreak of hostilities that required a considerable investment of manpower and money to counter and ultimately resulted in more than 4,300 American dead. The decision also upset the domestic political landscape by making imperialism a salient political issue—one that split the political parties and became a key issue in future elections.

As mentioned, one reason for the lack of consensus is that McKinley did not leave a substantial record of his thoughts.⁷⁰ His public statements were often ambiguous and open to interpretation and because he was not a prolific letter writer, his private thoughts are often unavailable. Margaret Leech, a discerning biographer of McKinley, concludes, “The inner minds of few public men have been so well concealed.”⁷¹ Ernest May agrees, describing McKinley as “an extraordinarily secret man whose public utterances were oracular and whose private writings hardly exist.”⁷² This impression is not reserved for historians. McKinley’s contemporaries shared very similar opinions. Mark Hanna, McKinley’s campaign manager, fellow Ohioan, and one of his closest personal friends, thought McKinley was the most “self-contained” man he had known either in business or in politics.⁷³ George Cortelyou, his private secretary, described McKinley’s *modus operandi*: “Generally speaking, President McKinley did

⁷⁰ For an overview of relevant scholarship see, Ephraim K. Smith, “McKinley’s Enduring Legacy: The Historiographical Debate on the Taking of the Philippine Islands,” in *Crucible of Empire: The Spanish-American War and Its Aftermath*, ed. James C. Bradford (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 205–49.

⁷¹ Leech, *In the Days of McKinley*, 36.

⁷² Ernest R. May, “McKinley,” in *The Ultimate Decision: The President as Commander in Chief*, ed. Ernest R. May (New York: G. Braziller, 1960), 106.

⁷³ Mark Hanna, *Mark Hanna: His Book* (Boston: Chapple Publishing Co., 1904), 58; available from <http://www.archive.org/details/markhannahisbook00hannrich> (accessed January 24, 2012).

not write letters on important government matters. When occasion arose, members of Congress or others interested were asked to call at the White House, where the matter would be discussed.”⁷⁴ When he did decide to put his thoughts into writing, McKinley seems also to have been extraordinarily conscious of future historians. Consequently, his public papers read, to a certain degree, like a collection of lawyer’s briefs in that they regularly explore almost every possible justification for a particular course of action in a seemingly conscious effort to convince a future reader to react favorably to his final decision.

An examination of the available material makes it clear that McKinley had a firm hand on events leading up to the decision for intervention in and ultimate annexation of the Philippines. Using the tools available to him as the chief executive, he ensured that his supporting cast, whether it was the cabinet or the peace commission, was dependent on his approval for policy formation. Through the deft placement of loyalists within these organizations and the careful manipulation of the division of opinion between their members, McKinley was able to control the pace of events and ensure his freedom of action until he himself decided on the best policy regarding the future of the Philippine Islands.

Governance involves a wide range of activities, most them dealing with routine affairs. Internal infrastructure projects, such as the building of canals and railways, tax policy, and entitlement programs, to name just a few examples, allow time for discussion and planning during policy formation and time for subsequent modifications or refinement after implementation. On other occasions, such as during war, government officials must formulate

⁷⁴ George B. Cortelyou to J. Franklin Jameson, October 31, 1935, quoted in “Introduction” to *Index to the William McKinley Papers*, Presidents’ Papers Index Series (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), v.

and implement official policy far more rapidly in response to unfolding events. During these situations a different kind of governance is both required and appropriate. This type of governance will involve fewer people and different procedures. Part of McKinley's ability to successfully control his administration during the period under examination stems from his ability to manage both the personnel involved in the policy debate and the process by which policy decisions were formulated.

Cabinet positions are generally regarded as the most important of the wide-ranging variety of public sector appointees within an administration. Elected as the candidate of a particular political party, presidents have generally selected members of their cabinet from within their party ranks. Before distinct parties had emerged, George Washington had attempted to unite representatives of opposing political views by appointing both Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson to his cabinet. After Edmund Randolph resigned in 1795, however, the cabinet became distinctly Federalist; and with the accession of Jefferson in 1801, there was a complete change to the Democratic-Republicans. Since then the rule of party agreement in the cabinet has generally been followed with a few, notable exceptions.⁷⁵

There were eight cabinet positions when McKinley took office in 1897. Of these, the positions of secretary of state and secretary of the treasury were the most important, traditionally, as they were charged with handling issues with the most far-reaching policy implications. The secretary of war had retained a significant amount of authority after the Civil War while the War Department had been charged with the enforcement of reconstruction policies in the states of the

⁷⁵ John A. Fairlie, "The President's Cabinet," *The American Political Science Review* 7, no. 1 (February 1913): 40.

former Confederacy from 1865 to 1876. After reconstruction ended, however, the position lost much of its prominence as the department's principle task was reduced to keeping the peace in the frontier regions. The army was small and generally neglected entering 1898. Although some improvements had been initiated in the 1880s to boost its level of modernization, the navy remained undersized relative to the United States' European peers. Consequently, the position of the secretary of the navy was of lesser importance than it would be after the turn of the century. Of less importance to the discussion of the Philippine War were the positions of attorney general, the heads of the Interior and Agriculture Departments, and, lastly, the postmaster general, by far the most political of the cabinet positions.

Cabinet appointees during this period came from diverse backgrounds, making generalization difficult. They were not, on the whole, drawn from the ranks of the very rich, nor were they chosen from among the political bosses. There was a shared understanding, however, about the rules governing appointments, an informal agreement that lasted well beyond the period under examination. It was understood that the political bosses, many of them active senators, were entitled to name people for their "fair share" of the available offices. They would supply a list of names and the president was expected to make his appointments from this list. The procedure even had a name, senatorial privilege, which for twenty years had limited legal backing in the Tenure of Office Act of 1867.⁷⁶ While some negotiation with the party leaders

⁷⁶ Aimed at Andrew Johnson, the act had declared that appointees could not be removed from office without senatorial approval. While Ulysses S. Grant had resisted that demand and had some success in restoring presidential privilege, the act initially prevented Rutherford B. Hayes from removing future president Chester A. Arthur from his political patronage job at the New York Customs House as part of his effort at civil service reform. The act was ultimately repealed in 1887. For more on the Hayes/Arthur conflict, see Thomas C. Reeves, *Gentleman Boss: The Life of Chester Alan Arthur* (New York: Knopf, 1975), 121–38.

was necessary, as an incoming president could simply not afford to ignore them, new chief executives attempted to maintain some independence from the bosses.

With infrequent exceptions, the appointments made in this period stand in contrast to those made by modern presidents in that little attention was paid to the professional background of those named to office, a practice occasionally referred to as amateurism. Political elites were astonishingly indifferent to the requirements and expectations of bureaucratic administration. A lack of practical experience or technical knowledge was not considered as a disqualifying defect as there was a common assumption of a wide-ranging general competence on the part of successful lawyers, businessmen, and politicians. The skill set demonstrated in the creation or management of a firm or business or in the direction of a government agency was presumed to be easily transferable and, consequently, could be applied in a variety of settings.⁷⁷

For any new president, the selection of a cabinet involved delicate matters of balance. The geographical distribution of the cabinet members from different parts of the country was a major concern, at least for those states where a party was based.⁷⁸ The close division in the Senate also presented McKinley with a tricky tactical problem. Any Republican removed from the Senate meant a possible problem of control in the upper house. He had to assure that the successor, chosen by the state's legislature, would be a reliable Republican.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ For various examples of such indifference, see Charles S. Campbell, Jr., *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865-1900*, New American Nation Series (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 77-8, 87, 91-2, and 97.

⁷⁸ The election results of 1896, in which McKinley carried 23 states, the Republicans carried all the states in the Northeast and Midwest, with the South being solidly Democratic.

⁷⁹ The Senate in the 55th Congress had 47 Republicans, 34 Democrats, 5 Populists, and 2 independent Silver members. These raw numbers, which seem to indicate a safe margin for the president's party, obscure the fact that five of the Republicans were Silver Republicans. As the

McKinley's first choice as the secretary of state was William B. Allison, a Republican senator from Iowa. Politically "an impeccable choice," Allison was the chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance and was considered one of the "Big Four" among Senate Republican leaders.⁸⁰ Although Allison, like McKinley, was relatively inexperienced in foreign affairs, this, as mentioned above, was not considered a fatal shortcoming. Allison declined McKinley's offer, however, indicating he did not wish to leave the Senate.⁸¹

After this rebuff, McKinley asked John Sherman, a Republican senator from Ohio, to accept the post. Sherman, a financial expert, had served as the secretary of the treasury in the administration of Rutherford B. Hayes and had unsuccessfully sought the Republican nomination for the presidency three times. Although Sherman was a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1883, and had served as its chairman since 1886 (minus a brief stint as the ranking member in the Democratically-controlled Senate of the 53rd Congress), he had not shown any particular distinction in that field. Having "never been noted for his talents as a diplomat," he was selected more for his standing inside the Republican Party than any diplomatic experience.⁸² He was also nearly seventy-four years old and "no longer in his vigorous prime."⁸³

Silver Republicans had supported the Democratic presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan over McKinley in the recent election, there were many perceivable scenarios that might result in a minority of only 42 reliable Republicans. See Congressional Quarterly, Inc., *Members of Congress Since 1789*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1985), 182.

⁸⁰ Leech, *In the Days of McKinley*, 99.

⁸¹ H. Wayne Morgan, *William McKinley and His America*, Revised ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), 194.

⁸² Leech, *In the Days of McKinley*, 99–100.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 100.

McKinley compensated for Sherman's weaknesses by choosing his good friend, William R. Day, to be the assistant secretary of state. Even though Day, who had served as McKinley's legal and political adviser during latter man's candidacies for Congress, the governorship of Ohio, and the presidency, indicated that he did not want the position, McKinley's insistence was decisive and Day ultimately accepted the position. Day, whose "country-lawyer's bearing" hid a sharp intelligence, had neither a comprehensive knowledge of international law nor experience in diplomacy.⁸⁴ He, nonetheless, gradually became the acting secretary of state over the next two years. With "his hearing and memory all but failed," Sherman's position as head of the department became untenable with the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. Subordinates conducted the department's day-to-day business, and Day regularly attended cabinet meetings in Sherman's place.⁸⁵

For his secretary of war, McKinley chose Russell A. Alger. Alger had not only served in uniform during the Civil War, which ended with him holding the rank of brevet major general, but he had also served as the national commander-in-chief of the politically powerful Grand Army of the Republic. A successful businessman, whose activities primarily centered on the timber industry, Alger had served a single term as governor of Michigan, declining re-nomination in 1886, and had been a favorite son candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in both 1888 and 1892.

McKinley's appointment of Alger was to prove his biggest mistake. "Rich and sometimes indolent because of this bad heart as well as his nature," Alger not only "knew little if

⁸⁴ Morgan, *William McKinley and His America*, 195.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

anything about the War Department,” but he failed to make any effort to learn.⁸⁶ In his book on the American military during this period, Graham Cosmas, describes Alger’s failings in detail:

For all his combat experience in the Civil War, he had no real training in large-scale military administration. . . . He was not well informed about changes in weapons and tactics that were revolutionizing the conduct of war. . . . He possessed little background in politics and government—certainly nothing to fit him for management of a major federal department in wartime. Defects of temperament annoyed and bewildered his colleagues.⁸⁷

Lewis Gould is a bit less critical of Alger, writing that he was not “an utter disaster as secretary of war, but he was over his head when the Spanish-American War came.”⁸⁸

For his secretary of the navy, McKinley quickly settled on John Davis Long, who had been governor of Massachusetts for three one-year terms and had served three terms in the House, where he and McKinley met and became friends. Having been unsuccessful in his efforts to gain a seat in the Senate, the Harvard-educated lawyer had been out of the political limelight for a number of years, increasingly in the shadow of younger and more forceful Henry Cabot Lodge, when McKinley selected him over the wishes of Lodge and other Massachusetts Republicans.⁸⁹ Long had no exceptional aptitude or past training for the position and took pleasure in reminding his friends that he was “a civilian who does not know the stem from the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 198.

⁸⁷ Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War*, 2nd ed. (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane, 1994), 58.

⁸⁸ Lewis L. Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley*, American Presidency Series (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1980), 17.

⁸⁹ Wendell D. Garrett, “John Davis Long, Secretary of the Navy, 1897-1902: A Study in Changing Political Alignments,” *The New England Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (September 1958): 292–5.

stern of a ship.”⁹⁰ Unlike Alger, however, Long displayed a “surprising energy, quickness of mind, and willingness to experiment,” and was, therefore, able to make his department “one of the best in the new administration.”⁹¹

While McKinley had followed the standard procedures of “rewarding the faithful [and] representing the sections,” the resulting cabinet was not a formidable one.⁹² George Cortelyou noted that McKinley’s team was “a good working Cabinet but in some respects not a strong one, not strong in the direction of being trustworthy advisors of the President in great emergencies.”⁹³ Gould agrees with that contemporary assessment, describing the cabinet as “an average, competent group that could easily have handled the anticipated domestic politics of the new government,” but when war came, “McKinley strengthened his official family and grew much more discerning in his choice of subordinates.”⁹⁴ Meeting with his cabinet every Tuesday and Friday morning at eleven, Charles Emory Smith, McKinley’s postmaster general, recalled that while the president occasionally led discussion, he “quite often . . . first elicited the views of his counselors.”⁹⁵ Through his deft management of these meetings, McKinley was able to quickly discern the weak links in his cabinet.

⁹⁰ John D. Long to Beriah Wilkins, May 28, 1898, in *ibid.*, 296.

⁹¹ Morgan, *William McKinley and His America*, 199.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 204.

⁹³ Diary entry, April 16, 1898, box 52, George B. Cortelyou Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Cited hereafter as Cortelyou Papers.)

⁹⁴ Gould, *The Presidency of William McKinley*, 19.

⁹⁵ Charles Emory Smith, “McKinley in the Cabinet Room,” *Saturday Evening Post*, August 30, 1902, 1.

Because his political career had focused on internal politics during an era when international problems were only sporadically an issue, McKinley assumed the office of the presidency without a well-defined record in the field of foreign affairs. The Republicans had used their 1896 platform to promote a new enthusiasm for expansion. They proposed that American foreign policy should be “firm, vigorous, and dignified, and all the interests in the Western Hemisphere carefully watched and guarded.” They also asserted that the Hawaiian Islands should be controlled by the United States, that the country should build and operate the isthmian canal, and that the Monroe Doctrine should be asserted “in its full extent.” They called for naval power commensurate with America’s “position and responsibility,” including a “proper and much needed naval station” in the Caribbean, and proposed that the United States should use its influence and good offices “to restore peace and give independence” to Cuba.⁹⁶ McKinley, however, was determined to be his own secretary of state and to set policy as he saw fit. Shortly after becoming president, he summarized his intended approach to foreign affairs to Carl Schurz, a former senator and secretary of the interior who had fled from Germany after taking part in the revolutionary movement of 1848, informing him, “You may be sure there will be no jingo nonsense under my administration.”⁹⁷ In his inaugural address, he shunned the idea of territorial expansion and firmly denounced aggressive imperialism:

It has been the policy of the United States, since the foundation of the government, to cultivate relations of peace and amity with all the nations of the world, and this accords with my conception of our duty now. We have cherished the policy of non-interference with the affairs of foreign governments. . . . Our diplomacy should seek nothing more and

⁹⁶ *Political Party Platforms: In Presidential Campaigns 1840 to 1904* (Washington, D.C.: Globe Printing Co., 1904), 126–7.

⁹⁷ Carl Schurz, *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*, ed. Frederic Bancroft, vol. 6 (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913), 270–1.

accept nothing less than is due us. We want no wars of conquest; we must avoid the temptation of territorial aggression. War should never be entered upon until every agency of peace has failed; peace is preferable to war in almost every contingency.⁹⁸

Before the end of his first year in office, McKinley had indeed taken the direction of American diplomacy in his own hands. While Sherman wielded influence on issues of international commerce, such as upholding the American interpretation of most-favored-nation treatment in matters relating to international trade and securing American commercial concessions in China, he often diverged from McKinley's foreign policy agenda and became increasingly vocal in his criticism of the administration. As a result, McKinley and other members of the cabinet soon ostracized him and the running of his department passed to Day. Day's close association with McKinley insured the department would follow the president's lead.

McKinley and his team had been in place for roughly fourteen months when Commodore George Dewey, the commander of the U.S. Navy's Asiatic Squadron, committed the American ships under his command to battle with a brief, semi-discretionary command—"You may fire when ready, Gridley"—and opened the door to the establishment of an American empire. The American fleet had entered Manila Bay on the morning of May 1, 1898, to attack the Spanish naval squadron protecting the city of Manila on the island of Luzon, the largest island in the Philippine archipelago. The American fleet had slipped past the Spanish defenses on El Fraile Rock, a small island guarding the entrance to the channel, just after midnight. In the darkness,

⁹⁸ William McKinley, "Inaugural Address, Delivered from East Front of the Capital, Washington, March, 4, 1897," in William McKinley, *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley, from March 1, 1897 to May 30, 1900* (New York: Doubleday & McClure Co., 1900), 11–2.

the Spanish had managed to fire only a single salvo into Dewey's line of ships and it fell harmlessly between the USS *Raleigh* and USS *Pertel*. On board his flagship, the USS *Olympia*, Dewey is reported to have quipped to Captain Charles Gridley, the flagship's commanding officer, "Well, well, they did wake up at last."⁹⁹

At first light, Dewey gave his famous order; and in a matter of hours, Dewey's ships won a crushing naval victory. The American squadron bombarded the Spanish naval squadron, which was drawn up and anchored in line just under a nautical mile away, sinking or forcing the abandonment of all of the Spanish ships. The only serious damage suffered by the American squadron was a single hit on the American cruiser USS *Baltimore*, which resulted in eight American wounded and one of the ship's six-inch guns being knocked out of action. About his historic victory, Dewey would later write: "Before me now was the object for which we had made our arduous preparations, and which indeed must ever be the outcome, though I had not thought that victory would be won at so slight a cost to our side."¹⁰⁰

The road that led to the American intervention in and ultimate annexation of the Philippines originated in a conflict that began on the opposite side of the world, ostensibly undertaken by an American government appalled by atrocities committed against members of the Cuban independence movement by the Spanish colonial administration of General Valeriano Weyler. On February 25, 1898, exactly two months before Congress formally declared war upon Spain, Theodore Roosevelt, the assistant secretary of the navy, sent a cable to Dewey, whose

⁹⁹ Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: The Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century*, 1st ed (New York: H. Holt, 1998), 217.

¹⁰⁰ George Dewey, *Autobiography of George Dewey: Admiral of the Navy* (New York: Scribner, 1913), 213.

squadron was then stationed in Hong Kong. The dispatch read, in part, “In the event of declaration of war [on] Spain, your duty will be to see that the Spanish squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast, and then offensive operations in the Philippines.”¹⁰¹ Secretary Long cabled Dewey on April 24, informing him, “War has commenced between the United States and Spain,” and ordering him to “proceed at once to [the] Philippine Islands,” where he was to “commence operations at once, particularly against the Spanish fleet.”¹⁰²

While the decision to strike at Spanish naval power in the Philippines was a result of the “aggressive tradition that had molded American naval doctrine,” Dewey’s ultimate victory was the result of detailed pre-war planning.¹⁰³ Recognizing that a conflict with Spain was possible, navy planners quite naturally developed plans for just such a contingency. Lieutenant William Kimball of the Office of Naval Intelligence drafted the first of these plans in June 1896. While he assumed that the Caribbean would be the main theatre of operations in any war with Spain, he suggested that the United States could gain the upper hand on the obsolete and poorly maintained Spanish squadron at Manila by augmenting the Asiatic Squadron “by an armored ship or two.”

¹⁰¹ Roosevelt to Dewey, February 25, 1898, in U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1898*, 55th Cong., 3d Sess., H. Doc. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), 23.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 67. It should be noted that Long’s cable was sent the day before McKinley formally asked Congress for a declaration of war.

¹⁰³ Frank Hindman Golay, *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 18; for a brief overview of this planning, see Campbell, Jr., *The Transformation*, 279–80; for more detail, see J. A. S. Grenville and George Berkeley Young, *Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy: Studies in Foreign Policy, 1873-1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 271–8; Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898*, 72–94; Ronald H. Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire: The Life and Career of George Dewey*, Classics in Maritime History (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 32–6; J. A. S. Grenville, “American Naval Preparations for War with Spain, 1896-1898,” *Journal of American Studies* 2, no. 1 (April 1968): 33–47.

He made no suggestion of annexing the Philippines, only of reducing and seizing Manila and, thus, gaining control of the commerce of the islands “so that the release of our hold on them may be used as an inducement to Spain to make peace after the liberation of Cuba.”¹⁰⁴

While this initial planning had taken place during Cleveland’s second administration, Long ordered a review of all current operational plans after the McKinley administration came into office in the spring of 1897, and in June, a group within the Department of the Navy reconsidered and revised Kimball’s plan. The updated version called for the navy to blockade the Spanish forces in Cuba while simultaneously cooperating with the army for an invasion of that island. To occupy Spanish forces elsewhere, the plan called for a flying squadron to harass the Spanish coast and for an attack in the Philippines.¹⁰⁵ During this revision, the naval planners once again did not seek the permanent occupation of the Philippines either as a base or as a

¹⁰⁴ W. W. Kimball, “War with Spain, 1896: General Considerations of the War, the Results Desired, and the Operations to Be Undertaken, 6-1-1896,” box 11, Letters and Reports Received from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and the Office of Naval Intelligence Relating to War Plans Against Spain and to Spanish Vessels and Fortifications in the West Indies (entry 43), Records of the Naval Operating Forces, 1849-1997, Record Group 313 (RG 313), National Archives Building, Washington, DC (NAB).

¹⁰⁵ The relevant paragraph reads: “For the purpose, of further engaging the attention of the Spanish navy, and more particularly in order to improve our position, when the time came for negotiations with a view to peace; the Board thinks it would be well to make an attempt to assist the insurgents in the Philippine Islands. It is understood, that the insurgents have possession of considerable areas in those islands, including some important points in the neighborhood of Manila; and it is thought that if the Asiatic Squadron should go down and show itself in that neighborhood, and arrange for an attack upon that city, in conjunction with the insurgents, the place might fall, and as a consequence, the insurgent cause in those islands might be successful; in which case, we could probably have a controlling voice, as to what should become of the islands, when the final settlement was made. For this purpose, certain reinforcements might be necessary from the Pacific Stations.” Grenville, “American Naval Preparations,” 43.

gateway to China, but simply concluded that Spain's weakness in the islands might allow the capture of Manila, which would wound Spain at little cost to the United States.¹⁰⁶

When writing his book, *The War with Spain*, Lodge had wanted to give full credit to the navy's planners for their role, but they were wary of the publicity, fearing that some might suggest that the navy had gotten out in front of the administration in the decision for war. Lodge's solution was to give credit to Roosevelt, who was "delighted to shoulder the responsibility."¹⁰⁷ Roosevelt, perhaps not surprisingly, praised his own actions in his autobiography, declaring that his intention was to ensure that in the event of war "Dewey could be slipped like a wolf-hound from a leash."¹⁰⁸ While Howard K. Beale declared a half-century after the event that "thus was important history made not by economic forces or democratic decisions but through the grasping of chance by a man with daring and a program," the evidence makes it clear that this stylization of the events "belongs with the legends of history."¹⁰⁹

The destruction of the Spanish naval forces in the Philippines dealt the final blow to a colonial administration that was already facing a severe crisis. The Spanish had been confronted with an aggressive, if fragmented, Filipino independence movement for years. Constant fighting with various rebel bands had greatly weakened the Spanish garrison, and Dewey's victory at Manila Bay meant that the Spanish no longer enjoyed the ability to move their forces by sea

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰⁷ Grenville and Young, *Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy*, 276–8.

¹⁰⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1926), 213.

¹⁰⁹ Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, Albert Shaw Lectures on Diplomatic History 1953 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), 63; Grenville and Young, *Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy*, 269.

among the archipelago's hundreds of inhabited islands. In the aftermath of Dewey's victory, a full-scale revolution spread throughout the Philippines. The revolt against Spanish rule rapidly spread beyond Luzon, with local revolutionary leaders directing uprisings on the islands of Panay and Mindanao.¹¹⁰ Dewey was largely powerless to influence these developments, as he had no ground troops immediately available for deployment on the islands. Dewey had control of the harbor, but without infantry support, he could not hope to invest and capture the city of Manila. "I control [the] bay completely, and can take the city at any time, but I have not sufficient men to hold," Dewey reported in the aftermath of his great victory.¹¹¹

McKinley moved quickly to rectify this situation, authorizing the dispatch of troops to the Philippines immediately after learning of Dewey's victory. On May 3, Major General Nelson A. Miles, a Medal of Honor winner during the Civil War who had gained wider fame as the man who had captured Geronimo and had risen to his position as commanding general of the army in 1895, provided Alger with a list of units recommended for duty in the Philippines. With most of the army's regular forces concentrated in the east for operations in Cuba, the initial force designated for transport to the Philippines consisted of three regiments of volunteer infantry (one each from the states of California, Oregon, and Washington), supported by two battalions of regular infantry, two troops of regular cavalry, and two batteries of heavy artillery.¹¹² The

¹¹⁰ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 22.

¹¹¹ Dewey to Long, May 4, 1898, U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1898*, 68.

¹¹² Miles to McKinley, May 3, 1898, in U.S. Adjutant-General's Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain and Conditions Growing Out of the Same, Including the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands and the China Relief Expedition, Between the Adjutant-General of the Army and Military Commanders in the United States, Cuba, Porto Rico, China,*

following day, McKinley directed the Alger to have those units identified by Miles assemble at San Francisco in accordance with “verbal orders heretofore given” in order that they might render “such service as may be ordered hereafter.”¹¹³

Thus, the American involvement in the Philippines began when McKinley sent the fleet to the Philippines to sink the Spanish fleet there, isolate the garrison on Luzon, and deny Spain access to the revenues she normally received from these islands. Dewey’s attack followed a calculated war plan known to the president and the senior civilian and uniformed leaders in the navy and intended as a prelude to a military conquest of the Philippines.¹¹⁴ For planners, the naval assault on Manila might, in aiding the Filipino insurgents, obtain for the United States, “a controlling voice, as to what should become of the islands, when the final settlement was made.”¹¹⁵ They had acknowledged that American reinforcements might be necessary; and after his victory, Dewey estimated that a “well-equipped force of 5,000 men” would be required to gain and retain possession of Manila and “thus control the Philippine Islands.”¹¹⁶

Major General Wesley Merritt, the commanding officer of the Department of the East who was formally appointed to command the American expeditionary force on May 12, was not

and the Philippine Islands, from April 15, 1898, to July 30, 1902, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 635.

¹¹³ McKinley to Alger, May 4, 1898, in *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ William Reynolds Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1897-1909* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 21–32; Grenville and Young, *Politics, Strategy, and American Diplomacy*, 269–71; Lawrence Shaw Mayo, ed., *America of Yesterday as Reflected in the Journal of John Davis Long* (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1923), 213–5.

¹¹⁵ “Plans of Campaign Against Spain and Japan,” in Grenville, “American Naval Preparations,” 43.

¹¹⁶ Dewey to Long, May 15, 1898, in U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1898*, 97–8.

happy with the initial assignment of forces for his new command.¹¹⁷ He protested to McKinley that the volunteers from the northwest were not sufficiently “drilled or disciplined” and pressed the president for more regular troops.¹¹⁸ In a subsequent letter to Brigadier General Henry Clark Corbin, the army’s adjutant general, Merritt argued that the force assigned to him was “unsuited to the ends to be accomplished” and “insufficient in efficiency for the expedition to the Philippines.” He did not see how he could conquer “a territory 7,000 miles from our base, defended by a regularly trained and acclimated army of from 10,000 to 25,000 men, and inhabited by 14,000,000 people, the majority of whom,” Merritt predicted, “will regard us with the intense hatred born of race and religion.”¹¹⁹ Miles disagreed with Merritt’s assessment of the threat posed by Spanish forces to the Americans, arguing that the number of forces already ordered to deploy were three times the number Dewey had requested. He also pointed out Merritt’s exaggerated population numbers, accurately insisting that the actual population was “near one-half the number stated.”¹²⁰

Merritt had several meetings with McKinley concerning his role as commander of the army that was rapidly assembling for duty in the Philippines. After his first meeting with the president, Merritt was so confused about his orders that he had to inquire of McKinley a few days later “whether it is your desire to subdue and hold all of the Spanish territory in the islands,

¹¹⁷ Corbin to Merritt, May 12, 1898, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:637.

¹¹⁸ Merritt to McKinley, May 13, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:643–4.

¹¹⁹ Merritt to Adjutant-General, May 17, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:648.

¹²⁰ Miles to Alger, May 18, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:648–9.

or merely to seize and hold the capital.”¹²¹ His formal instructions, which were prepared in the White House on May 19 and sent to him through the secretary of war, directed him to destroy completely Spanish power in the Philippines and to give “order and security to the islands” while they were in the possession of the United States. “The first effect of the military occupation,” McKinley directed, “is the severance of the former political relations of the inhabitants, and the establishment of a new political order.” Merritt was ordered to publish a proclamation declaring the American forces came “not to make war upon the people of the Philippines nor upon any party or faction among them, but to protect them in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights.”¹²²

Miles had also been confused as to the mission of the expeditionary force being sent west. In his ongoing correspondence with Alger, Miles outlined no fewer than three different missions. In his initial message regarding the detailing of forces, he described the mission as an impossibly grand one “to occupy the Philippine Islands”; on the May 16, it was a slightly modified, but equally expansive mission to gain “possession” of the islands and to relieve the navy so it could be released for “more important service”; and finally on the May 18, it was reduced to a more realistic mission “to command the harbor of Manila” as it was not expected “to carry on a war to conquer an extensive territory.”¹²³ Miles generally foresaw a limited role for this expeditionary force and assumed it would face little opposition in carrying out its instructions.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Merritt to McKinley, May 15, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:645–6.

¹²² McKinley to Merritt, May 19, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:676–8.

¹²³ Miles to Alger, May 3, 16, and 18, in *ibid.*, 2:635, 647–9.

¹²⁴ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 6.

While an acquaintance of the president quotes him as proclaiming, “When we received the cable from Admiral Dewey telling of the taking of the Philippines I looked up their location on the globe,” McKinley was certainly aware of the Philippines and the Filipino revolutionaries long before war was declared against Spain.¹²⁵ Not only had the navy been planning for action in or near the islands for the last couple of years, but Filipino leaders had also proposed a military alliance with the United States six months earlier. Rounseville Wildman, the American consul in Hong Kong, met with Felipé Agoncillo, a representative of the Filipino junta in Hong Kong in early November 1897.¹²⁶ Referring to the “republic of the Philippines” more than once in his report to the State Department on Agoncillo's visit, Wildman informed his superiors that Agoncillo had presented two proposals. The first proposal was for an offensive-defensive alliance with the United States against Spain when the former declared war on the latter, which, in Agoncillo's opinion, would happen “very soon.” The second proposal was for the United States to supply 20,000 rifles and 200,000 rounds of ammunition to the Filipinos, for which payment would be made when the United States recognized the Filipino government.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Herman Henry Kohlsaatt, *From McKinley to Harding: Personal Recollections of Our Presidents* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1923), 68.

¹²⁶ The group Agoncillo represented was known as the *Katipunan* and was headed by Emilio Aguinaldo. Dr. José Rizal had formed the group as a secret organization in response to the brutal character of Spanish governance in the islands, especially that of the Catholic friars who headed most local governmental bodies. Spanish authorities had discovered the group in 1896, and eventually overwhelmed it in 1897, leading Aguinaldo to sign an agreement with Spanish officials that called for him to leave the islands in exchange for a sizeable cash payment and the institution of minor political reforms.

¹²⁷ Rounseville Wildman to Day, November 3, 1897, roll 19, vol. 19, June 3, 1895 – April 26, 1899, Despatches from United States Consuls in Hong Kong, 1844-1906, National Archives Microfilm Publication No. 108 (M108), Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 (RG 59), National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).

McKinley, however, did not want to complicate American's involvement in the Far East unnecessarily by establishing official relations with a group of insurgent leaders, whose movement had only recently been overwhelmed by the Spanish authorities. The proposal was, therefore, firmly rejected. Thomas W. Cridler, the third assistant secretary of state, informed Wildman that the United States did not negotiate treaties such as the one Agoncillo had proposed and that, hereafter, he should not encourage "any advances" by Filipinos and should "courteously decline to communicate" any further proposals to the State Department.¹²⁸

While there is no indication that this policy of avoiding entangling relations with the Filipino insurgents would be abandoned after the commencement of hostilities with Spain, American representatives in the Far East were not given any specific instructions to continue a hands-off policy. Lacking further guidance, they quickly took the initiative in establishing relations with Filipino leaders. As a result of their actions, McKinley was presented with a situation that could not be ignored. He was able, however, to use his firm control of American diplomacy to put the wayward consuls back into their boxes while disavowing any commitment on the part of the American government to the nascent Filipino régime.

Despite lacking specific instructions from his superiors to do so, Oscar Williams, the American consul in Manila, reported his views on the political conditions in the Philippines at a "critical period" in late February. He informed his superiors that while the Spanish colonial government and the Filipino insurgents had proclaimed publically that a state of peace existed

¹²⁸ Thomas W. Cridler to Rounsevelle Wildman, December 15, 1897, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *A Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain: Message from the President of the United States Transmitting a Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain, Signed at the City of Paris on December 10, 1898*, 55th Cong., 3d Sess., S.Doc. 62, Pt. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 333–4.

between their forces, there was, in reality, no peace. “War exists,” he wrote, “battles are of almost daily occurrence.” As for the organization of the insurgents, he informed Washington that a republic was “organized here as in Cuba” and insurgents were being “armed and drilled” and were “rapidly increasing in numbers and efficiency.”¹²⁹ Three weeks later, while disappointed at receiving “no instructions from you as to these delicate complications,” he again informed the administration about the “serious state” in the islands, arguing that the uprising was “never more threatening to Spain.”¹³⁰ At the end of March, Williams reported that the Filipino insurgents outnumbered the Spanish garrison and inhabitants by a ratio of twenty-to-one and that the only reason Manila had not been captured and burned was because the “vast majority of its population” was in “perfect accord” with the insurgents.¹³¹

E. Spencer Pratt, the American consul in Singapore, went a step farther, meeting clandestinely with Aguinaldo, who had come to Singapore to establish contact once it seemed that a war between the United States and Spain was inevitable. Using Howard W. Bray, an Englishman who had lived in the Philippines for fifteen years, as an intermediary, Pratt met with Aguinaldo twice in late April. While Pratt reported to his superiors that he made it clear to the Filipino revolutionary that he had no authority to speak for his government, both sides agreed on cooperation after Pratt pointed out the danger of “independent action.” Pratt sent a wire to Dewey after the first meeting, informing him of the potential value of Aguinaldo’s services to the American effort in the Philippines. Dewey replied positively and Aguinaldo left Singapore for

¹²⁹ Oscar F. Williams to Thomas W. Cridler, February 22, 1898, roll 6, vol. 13, January 7, 1897 – August 26, 1899, Depatches from United States Consuls in Manila, Philippine Islands, 1817-1899, National Archives Microfilm Publication No. 455 (M455), RG 59, NACP.

¹³⁰ Oscar F. Williams to Thomas W. Cridler, March 19, 1898, Ibid.

¹³¹ Oscar F. Williams to Thomas W. Cridler, March 27, 1898, Ibid.

Hong Kong on April 26, the day after his second meeting with Pratt.¹³² He sailed for Manila three weeks later.

Pratt was in all likelihood proud of his accomplishments. He believed that his actions gave assurance that there would be no “conflict of action” between the American and Filipino forces in the Philippines. He had gained Aguinaldo’s agreement to exercise strict control over Filipino forces to prevent any “excesses” on the part of the insurgents that might run counter to the “modern principles of civilized warfare.” He also warned the administration that Aguinaldo had declared that the independence of the Philippines was the aim of the movement of which he was a leader: “The general further stated [at an interview just before his departure] that he hoped the United States would assume protection of the Philippines, for at least long enough to allow the inhabitants to establish a government of their own, in the organization of which he would desire American advice and assistance.”¹³³

In a report in early June, Pratt informed the State Department that American action in the opening months of the conflict with Spain, including, of course, his vital work with Aguinaldo, had led the Filipinos in Singapore to hold the United States in the highest regard. He reported being serenaded by the a large group of Filipinos, led by Dr. Marcelino Santos, an émigré who was the head of the Filipino colony in the city, who eulogized Pratt and the United States with a warm address in French. Pratt included in his dispatch copies of the *Singapore Free Press* and the *Straits Times*, both of which described the serenade in almost identical terms. In the

¹³² E. Spencer Pratt to Day, April 28, 1898, roll 14, vol. 22, October 5, 1897 – December 29, 1898, Despatches from United States Consuls in Singapore, Straits Settlements, 1833-1906, National Archives Microfilm Publication No. 464 (M464), RG 59, NACP.

¹³³ E. Spencer Pratt to Day, April 30, 1898, roll 14, vol. 22, M464, RG 59, NACP.

newspaper accounts, Pratt is reported to have reciprocated the sentiments of the Filipinos, telling them:

We have the news of the brilliant achievements of your own distinguished leader, General Emilio Aguinaldo, co-operating on land with the Americans at sea. You have just reason to be proud of what has been and is being accomplished by General Aguinaldo and your fellow-countrymen under his command. When, six weeks ago, I learned that General Aguinaldo had arrived *incognito* in Singapore, I immediately sought him out. An hour's interview convinced me that he was the man for the occasion; and having communicated with Admiral Dewey, I accordingly arranged for him to join the latter, which he did at Cavite. The rest you know.¹³⁴

For his superiors in Washington, Pratt had gone too far; and they cracked down on him immediately. In a peremptory telegram, Day, who had officially taken over as the secretary of state on April 28, cabled Pratt instructions to “avoid unauthorized negotiations with Philippine insurgents.”¹³⁵ In a letter of the same date, Day advised Pratt that “in the absence of the fuller report which you promise,” the administration assumed that nothing had been done “to commit this Government to any alliance with the Philippine insurgents.” Obtaining the “unconditional personal assistance” of Aguinaldo was proper only if in doing so Aguinaldo was not “induced to form hopes which it might not be practicable to gratify.” Describing the insurgents as “discontented and rebellious subjects of Spain,” Day claimed ignorance of “their purposes”; and while acknowledging that their “contest with that power” had been a matter of “public notoriety,” Day denied that they had asked for or received any formal recognition. The occupation of the islands by American troops, the first contingent of which was still in transit, would be performed in the “exercise of the rights which the state of war confers” and the

¹³⁴ *The Straits Times*, June 9, 1898, enclosed in E. Spencer Pratt to Day, June 9, 1898, roll 14, vol. 22, M464, RG 59, NACP (emphasis in the original).

¹³⁵ Day to E. Spencer Pratt, June 16, 1898, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *A Treaty of Peace*, 353.

Americans expected from all Filipinos, regardless of their former attitude toward the Spanish, “that obedience which will be lawfully due from them.” Pratt was informed bluntly that if “in the course of your conferences with General Aguinaldo, you acted upon the assumption that this Government would cooperate with him for the furtherance of any plan of his own, or that, in accepting his cooperation, it would consider itself pledged to recognize any political claims which he may put forward, your action was unauthorized and cannot be approved.”¹³⁶

While he promised that he would have no further dealings with the Filipinos, Pratt insisted his actions had been correct, arguing that he had only acted without the department’s authorization because of the limited time there had been take useful action and because of the “practical impossibility of explaining by cable . . . the value of the general’s cooperation.” Pratt was motivated not only by the material aid he believed Aguinaldo could lend the American forces, but also by the need to gain the cooperation of the “recognized leader of the insurgents.” Pratt considered Aguinaldo as the “one best able to direct and influence” the Filipino insurgents and, therefore, the “one most important for our commander to have under immediate control, both as concerned the present and future policy of our Government in the Philippines, whatever that policy might be.”¹³⁷

In case it was not so already, Day wrote to Pratt on again a month later to make it clear that the McKinley administration did not plan to sponsor independence for the Filipinos and that it did not intend to carry out in the Philippines what it had pledged to do in Cuba. Day informed Pratt that his actions had “occasioned a feeling of disquietude and doubt” as to whether Pratt’s

¹³⁶ Day to E. Spencer Pratt, June 16, 1898, in *ibid.*, 354.

¹³⁷ E. Spencer Pratt to John Bassett Moore, June 21, 1898, roll 14, vol. 22, M464, RG 59, NACP.

deeds might have borne a “significance and produced an impression” which the administration “would be compelled to regret.” Day was concerned that Pratt’s reference to Aguinaldo as “the man for the occasion” and his “brining about” the “arrangement” between Aguinaldo and Dewey characterized the events “in a light which causes apprehension lest your actions may have laid the ground of future misunderstanding and complications.” Day refused to forward the articles enclosed in Pratt’s June dispatch to the American press, “lest it might seem thereby to lend a sanction to views the expression of which [the administration] had not authorized.”¹³⁸

While Pratt was being lectured from Washington, Wildman continued to be sympathetic to the cause of the Filipinos from his post in Hong Kong. In his July report, he stressed the “utter impossibility” of the Spanish reestablishing their sovereignty over the Philippines, even if they had the support of the United States in those efforts. Any attempt to do so, he believed, would only throw the islands into a state of anarchy and “reduce them to a level of Acheen.” Advancing his opinion that the Filipinos, or at least those with whom he had been dealing, were superior to the Malays and Cubans, he identified Aguinaldo and Agoncillo as men who were good enough to be leaders of government departments “in any country” and warned the State Department to not be taken in by the systematic smear campaign by the Spanish against Aguinaldo and his cabinet. In closing, Wildman advised that the Filipino insurgents could not be dealt with “as though they were North American Indians,” shunted from reservation to reservation “at the whim of their masters.”¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Day to E. Spencer Pratt, July 20, 1898, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *A Treaty of Peace*, 357.

¹³⁹ Rounseville Wildman to John Bassett Moore, July 18, 1898, roll 19, vol. 19, M108, RG 59, NACP.

State Department pressure soon forced Wildman to retract much of this early supportive language. When the Hong Kong correspondent of the London *Daily Mail* reported part of Wildman's correspondence with Aguinaldo, in which Wildman went beyond his purview as a consul by giving advice and assurances to Aguinaldo, officials in Washington sharply reprimanded the consul. In early August, he was informed by Washington: "If you wrote Aguinaldo, as reported by Hong Kong correspondent of *Daily Mail*, your action is disapproved, and you are forbidden to make pledges or discuss policy."¹⁴⁰ In a long explanation to the State Department, Wildman denied having made pledges or discussing policy with Aguinaldo and asserted that while the Filipino leader was a useful instrument for Dewey and Merritt, he was, at best, "a necessary evil." While convinced that Aguinaldo wanted to be the president of a Filipino republic, Wildman told his superiors that "the great majority of his followers, and all the wealthy educated Filipinos have but one desire—to become citizens of the United States of America."¹⁴¹

For their efforts at independent action, all three consuls ran afoul of their superiors in Washington. In a memorandum submitted to McKinley and Day on July 20 and entitled "Relations of the U.S. to Philippine Insurgents," John Bassett Moore, the new assistant secretary of state, concluded, after reviewing the consular dispatches from April to June, that "no authorized act would therefore appear to have been done that can rightly embarrass the action of

¹⁴⁰ John Bassett Moore to Rounseville Wildman, August 6, 1898, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *A Treaty of Peace*, 338.

¹⁴¹ Rounseville Wildman to John Bassett Moore, August 9, 1898, roll 19, vol. 19, M108, RG 59, NACP.

the Government.”¹⁴² While the State Department could not tell the counsels what future American policy would be in the Philippines, it was quick to communicate to them, in the most explicit terms possible, what they could not do, namely anything that might restrict the administration’s freedom of action.

While the Americans and Filipinos in the region established a working, informal military alliance, it certainly developed independently of any direction from Washington. Built through initiatives taken by American leaders on the ground, it was a *fait accompli* and forced McKinley and his administration to take action to limit its impact, which they were able to achieve. Edwin Wildman, the deputy consul at Hong Kong, and Rounseville Wildman’s younger brother, captured the general impression of the Americans “on the spot” in the Far East:

To properly understand the activities of the American consuls and the action of Admiral Dewey in encouraging the Filipino revolutionaries, it must be remembered that in April, 1898, the idea that American sovereignty would ever exist in the Philippines was hardly in the minds of the most imaginative. . . . Aguinaldo was alarmed lest we should not take the Islands. . . . We were not at war with the natives. . . . We sympathized with them at the time. We received them on friendly terms. We were fighting for them in Cuba. Why not in the Philippines? They impressed use favorably.¹⁴³

As the first contingent of American troops was gathering in San Francisco, McKinley was already weighing his options as to the future of the islands. On May 8, in response to a query from John Hay, the American ambassador to the Court of St. James’s, he privately stipulated several conditions for ending the fighting: Spain must free Cuba, withdraw from the western hemisphere, cede Puerto Rico to the United States, and grant the United States a coaling

¹⁴² “Relations of U.S. to Philippine Insurgents”, July 20, 1898, box 187, John Bassett Moore Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC. (Cited hereafter as Moore Papers.)

¹⁴³ Edwin Wildman, *Aguinaldo: A Narrative of Filipino Ambitions* (Boston: Lothrop Pub. Co., 1901), 66.

station in the Philippines.¹⁴⁴ A few days later, the president discussed possible armistice terms with his cabinet. Alger wanted the United States to take all the Philippines, but both the president and Day rejected this idea and affirmed their desire for a coaling station only.¹⁴⁵ At the beginning of June, Moore captured the general tenor of the cabinet discussion regarding peace terms, noting, “if Spain offered peace terms which the cabinet had previously discussed the United States had to accept or stand condemned in the eyes of the world as pursuing a war of conquest.”¹⁴⁶ On June 3, Day informed Hay that McKinley, “speaking for himself,” would be “inclined” to grant terms of peace if the Spanish evacuated Cuba and ceded Puerto Rico and an island in the Ladrones (or Mariana Islands), most likely Guam, to the United States. As for the Philippines, they would be allowed to remain with Spain, “except a port and necessary appurtenances to be selected by the United States” which would be ceded to the United States.¹⁴⁷ Hay passed this information on to Salisbury, who was impressed by the “generosity of the President’s state of mind.”¹⁴⁸

By mid-June, however, McKinley moved to recover his freedom of action to decide the terms of any settlement with Spain. Arguing that the renewal of fighting between the Filipinos and the Spanish had changed the situation, Day informed Hay on June 14 that the terms of peace

¹⁴⁴ Hay to Day, May 8, 1898, box 1, Records Relating to the Paris Peace Commission: Reference Material Received by United States Commissioners: Correspondence with American Ambassadors in Europe, 1898 (entry 805), Records of International Conferences, Commissions, and Expositions, 1825-1979, Record Group 43 (RG 43), NACP; Memorandum, May 8, 1898, box 192, Moore Papers.

¹⁴⁵ Notation, May 11, 1898, box 192, Moore Papers.

¹⁴⁶ Notation, June 1, 1898, box 192, Moore Papers.

¹⁴⁷ Day to Hay, June 4, 1898, box 1, entry 805, RG 43, NACP.

¹⁴⁸ Hay to Day, June 8, 1898, box 1, entry 805, RG 43, NACP.

would “probably have to be modified.” The insurgents had become an “important factor in the situation” and McKinley insisted that they “must have just consideration in any terms of settlement.”¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, McKinley and Long had already sent instructions to Dewey, which, while more moderate in tone, were very similar to the instructions that would later be sent to the American consuls. Long instructed Dewey on May 26: “It is desirable, as far as possible, and consistent for your success and safety, not to have political alliances with the insurgents or any faction in the islands that would incur liability to maintain their causes in the future.”¹⁵⁰

In June, information began to flow from Europe regarding the desire of the Spanish government to end the war while maintaining control of as much of its empire as possible. On June 15, Hay informed Day that the Spanish had asked the British government to take possession of Manila in order “to save it from destruction,” but that the British had declined.¹⁵¹ A week later, the Spanish government let it be known through James Gordon Bennett, the publisher of the *New York Herald*, that it might be prepared to sue for peace “on the basis of retaining the Philippines.”¹⁵² After the Spanish naval defeat at Santiago Bay, however, Spanish hopes faded. Horace Porter, the American ambassador in Paris, informed Day in mid-July that the Spanish accepted that they would have to sacrifice some of their colonies and would prefer to cede the Philippines rather than Puerto Rico as the latter was quieter and easier to govern.¹⁵³ Faced with serious external and internal pressures, and advised by various European leaders to seek terms,

¹⁴⁹ Day to Hay, June 14, 1898, box 1, entry 805, RG 43, NACP.

¹⁵⁰ Long to Dewey, May 26, 1898, in U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1898*, 101.

¹⁵¹ John Hay to Day, June 15, 1898, box 192, Moore Papers.

¹⁵² James Gordon Bennett to John Russell Young, June 21, 1898, box 192, Moore Papers.

¹⁵³ Horace Porter to Day, July 13, 1898, box 1, entry 805, RG 43, NACP.

the Spanish government finally capitulated and sent its first direct note to McKinley on July 22, seeking terms for an armistice.¹⁵⁴

McKinley approved the beginning of informal talks between his administration and Jules Cambon, the French ambassador in Washington, who was acting on behalf of the Spanish government, which had, like the McKinley administration, withdrawn its ambassador at the outbreak of hostilities. On July 26, Cambon made his first appearance at the White House and presented Spain's first formal peace overture in the form of a note from Duc D'Almodovar del Rio, the Spanish minister for foreign affairs. The note itself was very brief, merely requesting "the basis for establishing a political status in Cuba by which the present war might be ended."¹⁵⁵ No mention was made of the Philippines.

On the evening of the same day that he met with Cambon, McKinley wrote a memorandum outlining his administration's conditions for an armistice. He reiterated his previous pronouncement that Spain must withdraw from the western hemisphere, but he noted his revised his position on the Philippines. McKinley made the future status of these islands "a subject for negotiation" at the peace conference.¹⁵⁶ Day had revealed McKinley's reason for his change of opinion in an earlier letter to Hay, in which he noted, that "the changing political

¹⁵⁴ Notation, July 26, 1898, series 1, reel 4, William McKinley Papers, Microfilm Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society Library, Madison, WI (cited hereafter as McKinley Papers); Entry, July 26, 1898, "Cortelyou Diaries," box 52, Cortelyou Papers.

¹⁵⁵ Entry of July 26, 1898, "Cortelyou Diaries," box 52, Cortelyou Papers. A copy of the note can be found in series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

¹⁵⁶ Notation, July 26, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

situation in the islands” and the “increasingly hostile attitude of the insurgents” had impelled the president “to consider” taking all of the archipelago.¹⁵⁷

In a series of meetings with his cabinet, McKinley discussed the terms of an armistice and the preparation of a formal reply to the Spanish message. The cabinet agreed with the president that Spain must free Cuba and cede Puerto Rico to the United States, but there was no agreement on the future of the Philippines. While it was an exaggeration to note, as the *New York Times* did, that the nine attendees (eight cabinet ministers and the president) offered nine different opinions, the cabinet was clearly divided, offering opinions from complete annexation to complete withdrawal.¹⁵⁸ Day and Long favored the retention of a naval station at Manila. Cornelius N. Bliss, the secretary of the interior, also argued for a port, but he was more concerned with commercial expansion and the possibility of establishing a free-trade zone at Subic Bay. James Wilson, the secretary of agriculture, argued for the retention of all the islands; and John Griggs, the attorney general, who was away on vacation when the cabinet was initially called together, added his vote for full retention upon his return. Smith, the postmaster general, argued for taking only Luzon and establishing a protectorate over the other islands. Alger, whose forces would have to deal with the local response to this decision, was more concerned with the criticism the army was already receiving for its poor mobilization effort against Spain than with the question of what to do with the Philippines. Lyman Gage, the secretary of the treasury, wanted nothing.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Day to Hay, June 14, 1898, box 1, entry 805, RG 43, NACP.

¹⁵⁸ “Plain Terms are Ready for Spain,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1898, 1

¹⁵⁹ John L. Offner, *An Unwanted War: The Diplomacy of the United States and Spain Over Cuba, 1895-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 213.

McKinley was, quite naturally, central to the discussions, which took place in several sessions each day, including an extended excursion down the Potomac River on a lighthouse tender. During the breaks between sessions, the president and Day met separately to capture the cabinet's thoughts in the various drafts of the document.¹⁶⁰ According to Cortelyou, McKinley's "guiding hand could be seen at every point in the discussions." His young aide was impressed by McKinley's attitude, which he described as being "characterized by wisdom, foresight and calm judgment."¹⁶¹

From these lengthy discussions with his cabinet, McKinley devised a set of peace terms, for which he gained the approval of his cabinet after a final five-hour meeting. When Charles Dawes, then an assistant secretary of the treasury, learned of the terms reached by the cabinet, he recorded in his diary that the president "has had his way as usual."¹⁶² When Cortelyou remarked to the president that the terms represented "a good example of the development of a state paper under discussion within the Cabinet," McKinley took from his pocket the memorandum he had "scribbled" after learning from Cambon that Spain had asked for terms. Cortelyou described the terms in that memorandum as being "exactly those on which the Cabinet finally agreed."¹⁶³ The terms placed the blame for the war on Spain, lamented the heavy cost of the war, and stated the American demands.¹⁶⁴ The terms required Spain to "relinquish" her sovereignty over Cuba, cede Puerto Rico and other Spanish islands in the West Indies, as well as an island in the Carolines to

¹⁶⁰ Entry of July 29, 1898, "Cortelyou Diaries," box 52, Cortelyou Papers.

¹⁶¹ Entry of July 30, 1898, "Cortelyou Diaries," box 52, Cortelyou Papers.

¹⁶² Charles G. Dawes, *A Journal of the McKinley Years*, ed. Bascom N. Timmons (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1950), 166.

¹⁶³ Entry of July 31, 1898, "Cortelyou Diaries," box 52, Cortelyou Papers.

¹⁶⁴ Offner, *An Unwanted War*, 214.

serve as a coaling station, to the United States. The final point dealt with the Philippines. The United States formally declared its desire “to occupy and hold the city, bay, and harbor of Manila,” but left the final disposition of the islands to the peace negotiators, who would work out the exact terms of a final peace deal.¹⁶⁵

The American note, which the president and Day presented to Cambon in a meeting that lasted several hours, captured McKinley’s mixed thinking about territorial annexation. While he freely invoked the Monroe Doctrine when he demanded that Spain free Cuba and Puerto Rico, he was less sure about the extent to which he should involve the country in the Far East. While the acquisition of a coaling station would certainly help the United States gain a firmer economic foothold in the region, he was less sure about the value of assuming the responsibility for governing the Philippines. By stipulating that final disposition of the islands was to be left to the peace commissioners in Paris, he left the door open for the annexation of the entire archipelago.

While newspaper reports indicated that the Spanish government had agreed to McKinley’s terms, no official word reached Washington as the Spanish regime considered the political ramifications of accepting the “cruel” conditions demanded by a “reckless superpower.”¹⁶⁶ Finally, on August 10, Cambon officially accepted the American proposal on behalf of the Spanish; and on August 12, he came to the White House and signed the armistice, along with Day, which halted the fighting and established the protocols for the subsequent peace negotiations.¹⁶⁷ Word went out to Dewey that same day, informing him that the peace protocol provided that the United States would “occupy and hold the city, bay, and harbor of Manila

¹⁶⁵ A copy of the note can be found in series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

¹⁶⁶ *New York Times*, August 3, 1898, 1; Offner, *An Unwanted War*, 220.

¹⁶⁷ Entry of August 12, 1898, “Cortelyou Diaries,” box 52, Cortelyou Papers.

pending the conclusion of a treaty of peace, which shall determine the control, disposition, and government of the Philippines.” The fact that the city was still under Spanish control when these “most important” terms were sent to Dewey would be later be used by the Spanish in Paris to protest American plans for the islands.¹⁶⁸

Just as the president had personally managed the protocol negotiation with Cambon, he wanted to control the peace commission and its deliberations in Paris. Because he could not reasonably attend the Paris talks himself, he sought to employ capable but loyal men, who, for the most part, either agreed with his opinions or who were sufficiently malleable. He, thus, spent the remainder of August occupied with the task of recruiting commissioners. While William E. Chandler, a Republican senator from Vermont and a former secretary of the navy, advised the president that he could not appoint senators as peace commissioners because, in his opinion at least, using senators as executive agents violated the constitutional provision of the separation of powers, McKinley felt that it would be advantageous to include some senators on the commission as Senate ratification would be necessary on any peace treaty brought home.¹⁶⁹ Democratic opposition in the Senate also appeared likely; and he hoped to dampen it by appointing one or two eminent Democrats to the commission.

McKinley had no shortage of interested volunteers. Redfield Proctor, the junior Republican senator from Vermont and a former secretary of war, wrote McKinley declaring, “If you want me to serve on the peace commission I would be happy to do so.” He also openly supported McKinley’s own belief that “the commission must do your bidding. The treaty must

¹⁶⁸ Allen to Dewey, August 12, 1898, in U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1898*, 118.

¹⁶⁹ William E. Chandler to McKinley, August 17, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

be yours; you and your administration will be held responsible for it. The commission should be your mouthpiece and should assent to terms as you approve of.”¹⁷⁰ Charles W. Fairbanks, a Republican senator from Indiana, who had delivered the keynote address during the convention that nominated McKinley for president and would later serve as vice president during Theodore Roosevelt’s second term, urged Proctor’s nomination on the President: “The country has confidence in him and this is important. If his views accord with yours, he should be chosen.”¹⁷¹ Proctor, however, was known for a certain independent streak in the Senate and was, thus, too much of a maverick for McKinley.

While Lodge had hoped to gain a place on the commission, McKinley decided to appoint three of his peers on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee while leaving him at home.¹⁷² Cushman Davis, a Republican from Minnesota, was both the chair of the committee and an advocate of expansion. While less vocal and influential than Lodge, McKinley trusted Davis to support expansion if he decided to take that route. McKinley also selected William Frye, a Republican from Maine, who, while supporting the war with Spain, had not taken a firm position on the Philippine issue. The final committee member was George Gray, a Democrat from Delaware, who was the ranking (minority) member. He was a staunch anti-imperialist, a man

¹⁷⁰ Redfield Proctor to McKinley, August 6, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

¹⁷¹ Charles W. Fairbanks to McKinley, August 11, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

¹⁷² Long approached McKinley on Lodge’s behalf. See Long to McKinley, August 12, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

described as “full of doubts about taking the Philippines.”¹⁷³ After initially refusing to serve on commission, Gray reversed himself and accepted the position.¹⁷⁴

To head the commission, McKinley went outside the Senate and appointed the ever-dependable Day. Day had served the president loyally after taking over from Sherman, but now that the crisis appeared over, he wanted to leave the government and return to private law practice in his native Ohio. McKinley, however, convinced Day to take on one last assignment.¹⁷⁵ Although Day was not an ardent expansionist, McKinley believed Day would carry out his instructions in Paris just as he had done while heading the State Department.

For the fifth and final member of the commission, McKinley looked outside of the government. With Day leaving the State Department and John Hay coming back from Great Britain to take his place, McKinley briefly entertained thoughts of appointing Whitelaw Reid, the managing editor of the *New York Tribune* and an influential person in Republican politics who had been the party’s vice presidential candidate in 1892, as the new ambassador to Great Britain. When Senator Thomas Platt, the political boss of New York, warned McKinley that he and many Senate Republicans felt that Reid was “not trustworthy” and “for the good of the Party . . .

¹⁷³ Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 132.

¹⁷⁴ George Gray to McKinley, September 7, 1898, in series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

¹⁷⁵ As it turned out, Day’s service on the peace commission was far from his last public service. Following his return from Europe, McKinley nominated Day to a new seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, which included Day’s home state of Ohio. He would serve on that bench for four years before Theodore Roosevelt nominated him as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court in February 1903. Confirmed by the Senate the following month, he would serve on the court for nearly two decades, retiring in November 1922.

should not be appointed,” the president shifted gears and appointed Reid to the commission instead.¹⁷⁶

McKinley had selected a commission perfect for his purposes, which was to control the pace and scope of the deliberations in Paris. While the selection of Davis and Frye satisfied the “large policy” advocates within his party, with Lodge confident enough to note to Roosevelt that “all will be well” with the Davis as a member of the commission, McKinley had not packed the commission with ardent expansionists.¹⁷⁷ Although the commissioners would argue with McKinley, and among themselves, over the amount of territory the United States should seek to obtain in the islands, none of them possessed the necessary clout to challenge McKinley over his decisions.

The president devoted a significant portion of his formal instructions to defining the spirit in which the commissioners were to conduct the upcoming negotiations and to explaining the national interests and values that they were to support while in Paris. These private instructions to the delegation are revealing. McKinley was convinced of America’s innate moral superiority, and he hoped to use that status as leverage in the negotiations with the Spanish. He reminded the peace commissioners:

We took up arms only in obedience to the dictates of humanity and in fulfillment of high public and moral obligations. We had no design of aggrandizement and no ambition of conquest. Through the long course of repeated representations which preceded and aimed to avert the struggle and in the final arbitration of force this country was impelled

¹⁷⁶ Thomas C. Platt to McKinley, August 14, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers. Roosevelt eventually appointed Reid as the U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s in 1905, and Reid was still serving in that post when he died in 1912.

¹⁷⁷ Lodge to Roosevelt, August 15, 1898, in Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918*, vol. 1 (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1925), 337.

solely by the purpose of relieving grievous wrongs and removing long-existing conditions which disturbed its tranquility, which shocked the moral sense of mankind, and which could no longer be endured.¹⁷⁸

With that background, he continued:

It is my earnest wish that the United States in making peace should follow the same high rule of conduct which guided it in facing war. . . . Our aim in the adjustment of peace should be directed to lasting results and to the achievement of the common good under the demands of civilization, rather than to ambitious designs. . . . The presence and success of our arms at Manila imposes upon us obligations which we cannot disregard. The march of events rules and overrules human action. Avowing unreservedly the purpose which has animated all our effort, and still solicitous to adhere to it, we cannot be unmindful that without any desire or design on our part the war has brought us new duties and responsibilities which we must meet and discharge as becomes a great nations on whose growth and career from the beginning the Ruler of Nations has plainly written the high command and pledge of civilization. . . . In view of what has been stated, the United States cannot accept less than the cession in full right and sovereignty of the island of Luzon.¹⁷⁹

As these instructions were penned in mid-September, it is clear that he had not committed the United States to annexing the entire Philippine archipelago. As his thinking on the rest of the Philippines developed over the course of the next few months, he was able, through careful correspondence with the commissioners in Paris, to manage the deliberations of a divided commission.

In addition to the formal instructions to the commissioners, McKinley gave additional private instructions to Day. He stressed to Day the importance of keeping him personally informed of the situation in Paris at all times.¹⁸⁰ Day complied with McKinley's directions and established direct communications with McKinley rather than depending solely on the formal

¹⁷⁸ "Instructions to the Peace Commissioners," September 16, 1898, box 1, Records Relating to the Paris Peace Commission: Instructions to the United States Commissioners, September – November 1898 (entry 798), RG 43, NACP.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Diary entry, September 16, 1898, box 52, Cortelyou Papers.

State Department channels.¹⁸¹ This additional channel of communications enabled McKinley to keep abreast of the negotiations and, more importantly, allowed him to press his decisions on the commissioners.

A significant obstacle to American control over the Philippines was the nationalist movement led by Aguinaldo. Even during the summer months, when Aguinaldo's forces were cooperating with American forces, it was clear that this armed segment of the Filipino population desired independence from both Spain and the United States, with Aguinaldo asking McKinley to leave the Philippines "free and independent, even if you make peace with Spain."¹⁸² While the insurgents had proclaimed their independence on June 12, it was unclear to McKinley, and to many senior administration officials, how widespread was the support for this group. They were unsure whether it was indicative of a universal antipathy to potential American rule or merely a small group of rebels with little cross-tribal support.

Aguinaldo had initially viewed the American attack as the first step in the island's liberation and had announced in a proclamation issued in advance of Dewey's squadron:

Compatriots: Divine providence is about to place independence within our reach, and in a way the most free and independent nation could hardly wish for. The Americans, not from mercenary motives, but for the sake of humanity and the lamentations of so many persecuted people, have considered it opportune to extend their protection [sic] mantle to our beloved country, not that they have be obliged to sever relations with Spain, owing to the tyranny this nations is exercising in Cuba, causing enormous injury to the Americans, who have such large commercial and other interest there.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ See Day to McKinley correspondence in series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

¹⁸² Aguinaldo to McKinley, June 10, 1898, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *A Treaty of Peace*, 361.

¹⁸³ "America's Allies—The Manifesto of the Filipinos," enclosed in Pratt to Day, May 20, 1898, in *ibid.*, 346.

Urging the Filipinos to disobey the orders of the Spanish governor-general, who had tried to rally the Filipinos to defend the islands against the Americans, Aguinaldo instructed them to “blow your own brains out [rather] than fire a shot or treat as enemies those who are your liberators.” He reminded his countrymen, “Your natural enemies, your executioners, the authors of your misery and unhappiness, are the Spaniards who govern you.” It was against the Spanish, not the Americans, that he wanted the Filipinos to raise their “weapons and odium.”¹⁸⁴

Upon his return to the Philippines, Aguinaldo began what he thought would be the final revolution for Filipino independence. Acting as though his forces, which he mobilized rapidly upon returning, were allied with the United States, his army was able to defeat the isolated Spanish garrisons outside of Manila. By the time the first American troops arrived on Luzon in June, Aguinaldo had already declared himself as the president and had commenced setting up the rudimentary institutions of an independent Filipino government. He had been unable to conquer Manila, however. As American forces moved into position to capture the city, which was the islands’ political, cultural, and commercial center, his Filipino forces moved into position to accomplish the same end. The Spanish faced two armies, which seemed to be operating within a framework of a loose, informal alliance, but which were clearly working independently of each other towards ends that were mutually incompatible.

After Spain capitulated, the tensions between the Americans and the Filipino nationalists quickly rose to the surface. As the Americans took charge in Manila, the Filipinos grew increasingly resentful. With negotiations in Paris about to commence, McKinley was eager to avoid a clash with the Filipino insurgents. He refused to grant them any form of formal

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

recognition and urged Merritt to establish American authority on the islands as thoroughly and rapidly as possible. The information coming into the White House indicated that the army was making progress towards the latter goal. Conveying information that while some 10,000 armed Filipinos were maintaining their position around Manila after he had denied Aguinaldo's request for a joint occupation of the city, Merritt wrote that the "Filipinos and their chief [were] eager to be friendly." While he had "little confidence" in their martial skills, he thought they were more "superior as a people than is generally represented" and their leaders were "mostly men of education and ability."¹⁸⁵ Major General Elwell Otis, who took command of American forces when Merritt departed the islands for the upcoming talks in Paris, was less certain of Filipino cooperation. In his first situation report after Merritt's departure, Otis noted that a while a "large number of remaining natives [in Manila] prefer prolonged American protection" and Aguinaldo desired "peaceful relations," the Filipino army around the city was "resentful" and desired "hostilities against American troops." He warned that it might be necessary to "forcibly eject" the Filipino army from the suburbs of Manila, "in which event war may result."¹⁸⁶ To tamper down this increasing tension, McKinley, through the secretary of war, directed Otis "to exert your influence during the suspension of hostilities between the United States and Spain to restrain insurgent hostilities against Spaniards, and, while maintaining a position of rightful supremacy as to the insurgents, to pursue, as far as possible, a conciliatory course toward all."¹⁸⁷ This was, of course, easier said than done.

¹⁸⁵ Merritt to Corbin August 27, 1898, in U.S. Adjutant-General's Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:765.

¹⁸⁶ Otis to Adjutant-General, September 3, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:786.

¹⁸⁷ Corbin to Otis, September 7, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:788.

As McKinley directed the negotiations with Spain, which began at the beginning of October, the need to ascertain the nature of the wider Philippine situation and of Aguinaldo's role among the Filipinos became increasingly important. McKinley gathered information from American officials who had experience in the Philippines. He met, for example, with Major General Francis Greene on several occasions upon the general's return from the islands where he had played a key role in the attack on Manila in August. Greene advised McKinley to retain the entire archipelago. Returning them to Spain, the general argued, would lead to civil war, while entrusting them to the Filipinos would result in anarchy. He argued that the establishment of a protectorate, while desirable in theory, would be tricky to manage in practice. Greene recorded in his diaries that McKinley was not overly receptive to his proposal and that the president favored only the maintenance of a coaling station and such islands as would be necessary for the projection of naval power. Greene noted, however, that the president told him at the end of their last meeting, "Perhaps when I come back [from my speaking tour] I may think differently from what I now think."¹⁸⁸

McKinley refused, however, to meet officially with two representatives of the Aguinaldo government, Felipé Agoncillo and Sixto Lopez, who, ironically, had traveled to the United States on the same transport as Greene.¹⁸⁹ To do so, McKinley believed, would be tantamount to recognizing Filipino independence.¹⁹⁰ After McKinley refused to grant the two men any official recognition, they agreed to meet with the president as "citizens of the Philippines." After this

¹⁸⁸ The meetings, which took place between September 27 and October 5, are described in Smith, "McKinley's Enduring Legacy," 234–5.

¹⁸⁹ Hay to Day, October 4, 1898, box 1, entry 798, RG 43, NACP.

¹⁹⁰ Personal note, October 1, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

meeting, Agoncillo tried another angle to get Filipino concerns in the official record by presenting a note to Assistant Secretary of State Avery Adee, in which he attempted to justify the independence of the Philippines.¹⁹¹ Adee declined to accept the note as anything other than the “equivalent of an oral communication” designed to save him the time of “taking down such a communication by shorthand report.”¹⁹² After stiff-arming the attempts by Agoncillo and Lopez to attain official recognition as representatives of the Filipino people, the president cabled his commissioners in Paris and instructed them that while they were to receive any representative of Aguinaldo courteously, they should refrain from extending any hint of acknowledgement of Filipino independence.¹⁹³

While McKinley was meeting with Greene, the commissioners in Paris were following the president’s instructions to conduct a broader inquiry into the Philippine situation. The most important of the opinions assembled by the commission was that of Merritt, who had been sent to Paris to provide his “expert” opinion on the islands. When asked how the Filipinos would respond to a hypothetical annexation of the whole or part of the Philippines by the United States, Merritt informed that commissioners that Aguinaldo and his “immediate following” would resist, but downplayed their ability to do so effectively because of the divided nature of Aguinaldo’s forces.¹⁹⁴ Merritt presented the written opinions of several members of his staff, including Surgeon Frank Bourns, who had spent several years in the islands. Bourns insisted, “If a few

¹⁹¹ Copy of Agoncillo’s note, October 3, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers

¹⁹² Hay to Day, October 4, 1898, box 1, entry 798, RG 43, NACP.

¹⁹³ Hay to Day, October 4, 1898, box 1, entry 798, RG 43, NACP.

¹⁹⁴ “Statement of Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt, U.S.A., October 4, 1898, Before the United States peace Commission at Paris, and Accompanying papers,” in U.S. Congress, Senate, *A Treaty of Peace*, 368.

ambitious insurgent chieftains could be disposed of, [then the] masses of natives could be managed by the United States.” He considered the Filipinos “incapable of self-government because [of a] lack of good example, lack of union in Luzon and throughout [the] archipelago, and [the] existence of race, tribal, and religious differences.” While Major J. F. Bell, an engineer assigned as the head of Merritt’s secret service, described Aguinaldo as “the most popular leader,” he believed that the Filipino leader maintained control with difficulty. “Some of his leading men [are] dishonest and many wealthy natives [are] opposed to him. Natives of Manila [are] generally opposed to [the] insurrection.”¹⁹⁵

Dewey would not commit his views to the commissioners on the question of what portion of the Philippines the United States should retain. He commented on the military benefit of retaining the island of Luzon, but beyond that he said little and the restricted scope of his testimony confused the commissioners.¹⁹⁶ In a private conversation with Reid following dinner, Merritt expressed his opinion that Dewey was “carefully nurturing his burgeoning political career” and, therefore, “wanted to avoid making statements about controversial issues which might dim his political prospects.”¹⁹⁷

While Dewey added no insights of value, the Belgian consul at Manila, Edouard André, who had managed the negotiations between Dewey and the Spanish in the city, advised the

¹⁹⁵ Day to Hay, October 7, 1898, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *Papers Relating to the Treaty with Spain*, 56th Cong., 2d Sess., S. Doc 148 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 18.

¹⁹⁶ Day to Hay, October 4, 1898, box 2, Records Relating to the Paris Peace Commission: Telegrams Sent and Received by the Department of State, September – December 1898 (entry 799), RG 43, NACP; Day to McKinley, October 5, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers.

¹⁹⁷ H. Wayne Morgan, ed., *Making Peace with Spain: The Diary of Whitelaw Reid, September-December, 1898* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 58.

commission that the United States should “take all or nothing.” He described the native character as “insincere” and regarded the Filipinos as “inferior and unfit to rule.” He believed Aguinaldo’s forces represented “only half of one per centum of [the Philippine’s] inhabitants,” amounting to only 30,000 rebels. His opinion on the indivisibility of the islands was in accord with that of the other officials who testified before the commission. There was a consensus that a division of authority between the United States on Luzon and any other power on the other islands would be untenable. Disorder in any of the other islands would rapidly spread to Luzon, while the beneficial development of the other islands by a European power would divert trade around the traditional entrepôt of the archipelago and reduce the value of Manila to the United States.¹⁹⁸

To provide an independent (non-American) perspective, John Foreman, an English businessman who had lived in the Philippines for many years and was the author of *The Philippine Islands*, which Reid described as “the best book” on the islands, met with the commissioners on October 8.¹⁹⁹ In July 1898, he had published an article on the Philippines in the English periodical, *Contemporary Review*. This article received a great deal of attention in American newspapers and, understandably, McKinley and several other people in his administration read it. Recognized as something of an authority on the islands, even though his knowledge proved rather superficial, he argued persuasively that many of the islands in the Philippine archipelago were blessed with a rich soil that was particularly good for growing sugar. He provided detailed examples of how the Catholic friars on the islands dominated the other

¹⁹⁸ Day to Hay, October 6, 1898, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

¹⁹⁹ Morgan, *Making Peace with Spain*, 64.

Spanish officials, who were “merely servants” to the church. He used as an example the removal of General Ramon Blanco as governor-general because he was viewed as not being “bloodthirsty” enough for the job. In Foreman’s opinion, the insurrection was a result of the “oppression of the monks.” The native priests, however, would not oppose the United States or resent the introduction of Protestant missionaries.²⁰⁰ He was particularly disdainful of the Philippine insurgents, maintaining that a native government was impossible and that the inhabitants of the Philippines were simple, peace loving people who would gladly accept American rule.²⁰¹ As for where to draw the line, he argued that taking the entire archipelago would “be a favor to Europe,” as it would eliminate the possibility of future imperial contests in the islands, and could be done for “only a little more expense of administration.”²⁰²

The commission interviewed other people less familiar with the actual conditions in the Philippines, but who were for one reason or another considered by the commissioners to be experts on the islands. Commander R. B. Bradford, who had visited the islands several times in the late 1860s, testified to the commission a week after Merritt. He added another dimension to the debate among the commissioners:

I would like to add something with your permission in connection with the Philippines which I think you have omitted. It is the moral aspect of the case. If we take a portion of the islands only, are we not open to the accusation of taking the best and leaving the poorest? Have we a moral right to make a selection? We have driven the Spanish government out of the Philippines; there is no Spanish authority there, or practically none. Are we going to take what we want and leave the remainder in a state of anarchy?

²⁰⁰ “Statement of Mr. John Foreman, October 8, 1898, Before the United States Peace Commission at Paris,” in *A Treaty of Peace*, 441–71.

²⁰¹ Morgan, *Making Peace with Spain*, 64.

²⁰² “Statement of Mr. John Foreman, October 8, 1898, Before the United States Peace Commission at Paris,” in *A Treaty of Peace*, 470.

I believe we have incurred a moral obligation to take all the islands, govern them, civilize the native, and do the best we can with them.²⁰³

While the commissioners did not forward Bradford's opinions to McKinley, they closely mirrored much of the rhetoric the president would deploy on his fall speaking tour. Lieutenant Commander John C. Colwell, the United States naval attaché in London, and Lieutenant William S. Sims, who held the same position in Paris, also presented their views to the commission in October. They both urged the commissioners to demand all the Philippines.²⁰⁴

While a great deal of the testimony and incoming correspondence was in favor of annexation, opposing points of view were not censored. Consul Williams expressed his reservations about American policy in the islands in late August and this information was duly forwarded to the commission. Williams believed that the "tug of our war" in the Philippines was neither the destruction of the Spanish navy nor the taking of Manila, for both had been done with little cost to the Americans. No, the tug of the Philippine War, he predicted, was to be with the forces represented by Aguinaldo, and "unless adroitly managed, by a diplomatic give and take policy," he estimated that it would cost "50,000 American lives and 50,000,000 of American gold" to win the contest. Dismissing the positive pronouncements of the military officers, who he admitted were "superb fighters," Williams warned, "If we act without diplomacy and subdue by war, it will cost tens of millions of gold and army after army will melt away like ice under our tropical sun."²⁰⁵

²⁰³ "Statement of Commander R. B. Bradford, U.S.N., October 14, 1898, Before the United States Peace Commission at Paris," in *ibid.*, 485.

²⁰⁴ Morgan, *Making Peace with Spain*, 41–2.

²⁰⁵ Williams to Day, August 31, 1898, forwarded in Alvey A. Adee to John Bassett Moore, October 20, 1898, box 1, entry 798, RG 43, NACP. It should be noted that not all senior military

His policy recommendations were, naturally, quite different than those expressed by the majority of the “experts.” He suggested that the United States should buy the insurgents’ arms from them and pay the nascent Filipino government a war outlay, including a payment to each insurgent of \$10 in gold, to compensate for the expenses that were “incurred in expelling a common enemy” by which “we have been benefitted.” To ensure stability, he recommended the formation of a police force of “one-half Americans, one-half Filipinos.” By enlisting 5,000 Filipinos as “U.S. soldiers,” the army could send an equal number of “our boys” back to America. Asking rhetorically if the country should “turn back the car of progress” and “make war upon inferiors who for ages have been falsely taught and ‘slaughter the innocents’ simply because we have the power,” he argued that if the United States had a duty in the Philippines it was “on lines of civilization not war.” “We may merit praise or censure,” he cautioned his superiors, “but history will mark *100* or *0*.”²⁰⁶

After all of the written and oral testimony, the commissioners remained divided on the issue of annexing the Philippines. They communicated their differences to the president in a lengthy dispatch at the end of October. Senators Davis and Frye, along with Reid, presented the argument to annex the entire archipelago, arguing that it would be a “naval, political, and

officers agreed with the positive outlook expressed by Merritt and Otis. Brigadier General Anderson, who, as the commander of the initial contingent of American troops to arrive in the islands, had established relations with Aguinaldo and other Filipinos, warned the government that the establishment of a provisional government would probably bring the United States into conflict with the Filipino insurgents. *Communications Between the Executive Departments of the Government and Aguinaldo*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Doc. 208 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 8–13.

²⁰⁶ Williams to Day, August 31, 1898, forwarded in Alvey A. Adee to John Bassett Moore, October 20, 1898, box 1, entry 798, RG 43, NACP (emphasis in the original).

commercial mistake to divide the archipelago.”²⁰⁷ While they did not ignore the commercial value retaining all the islands, they based their case on their fear that a “division of archipelago would not only needlessly establish dangerous rivals at our door, but would impair value of [the] part we kept.”²⁰⁸ They did not fail to link economic considerations with moral duty, however. If there were moral obligations not to return Manila and Luzon to the “oppressive” Spanish power, then those same obligations applied to all the islands in the archipelago. The United States had replaced Spain as the effective ruler of all of the Philippines as far they were concerned. They closed their dispatch with an expression more of hope than an accurate assessment of conditions in the Philippines:

We are convinced that much injustice has been done [to the] inhabitants in published accounts of their character. Even the Mohammedans of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, if left enjoyment of religious liberty and given freedom from oppressive taxation, would be found less intractable, in opinion of the experts, than under the rule of Spain; while the others would be comparatively easy to control, and glad to welcome [the] strong and just rule of United States.²⁰⁹

Day took a more modest position, one in line with the terms laid out by McKinley in his initial instructions to the commission. “Bearing in mind the often declared disinterestedness of purpose and freedom from designs of conquest with which the war was undertaken,” he suggested, “we should be consistent in our demand in making peace.” While agreeing that the United States ought to keep a small portion of the Philippines as a naval and commercial base, he anticipated that the costs of administering all the islands would be prohibitive. The United States

²⁰⁷ Day to Hay, October 25, 1898, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 5, 1898* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1898), 933.

could gain the benefits of new territory without the burden of extensive colonial administration through a partial acquisition of the archipelago. This more moderate approach would give the United States a “practical control of the situation, with a base for the navy and commerce in the East, and responsibility for the people to whom we owe obligation and those most likely to become fit for self-government.”²¹⁰

As far as Gray was concerned, nothing had occurred during the negotiations or in the interviews to cause him to change his mind against expansion. He made the case against annexing any territory in stark terms, arguing that a decision to annex any or all of the islands “would be to reverse [the] accepted continental policy of the country, declared and acted upon throughout our history.” Involvement in the Philippines, unlike that in Cuba and Puerto Rico, whose “propinquity” to the United States put their disposition on different grounds than that of the distant Pacific archipelago, would introduce the United States “into European politics and the entangling alliances against which Washington and all American Statesmen have protested.” “It will make necessary,” he continued, “a navy equal to [the] largest of powers; a greatly increased military establishment; immense sums for fortifications and harbors; multiply occasion for dangerous complications with foreign nations, and increase burdens of taxation.” While the benefits simply did not outweigh the costs in Gray’s opinion, his most impassioned argument against annexation was a moral one. If the United States succumbed to the “selfish and vulgar greed for territory” and the same shameful practices that characterized Europe’s rapacious imperialism, the country would “exchange the moral grandeur and strength to be gained . . . by exhibiting a magnanimity and moderation . . . for doubtful material advantages.” He turned

²¹⁰ Ibid.

McKinley's earlier arguments about humanity around and pleaded, "Above all let us not make a mockery of the injunction contained in [the] instructions, where, after stating that we took up arms only in the dictates of humanity and in the fulfillment of high public and moral obligations, and that we had no design of aggrandizement and no ambition of conquest, the President among other things eloquently says: 'It is my earnest wish that the United States in making peace should follow the same high rule of conduct which guided it in making war.'"²¹¹

McKinley, however, had already decided on the proper course of action. He cabled Day on October 25, praising him and his fellow commissioners for their work, and, for the first time, revealing his intentions regarding the Philippines. Regardless of what he might want to do, the president felt that "America is in a situation where it cannot let go." The interdependency of the islands and their proximity to Luzon presented McKinley with the "grave problem" of what might become of those islands that the United States did not annex. Reflecting his concern for public opinion, even in an era without daily opinion polls, he felt this change of policy would be well received, as "the well-considered opinion of the majority believes duty requires we should take the Philippines."²¹²

Formal instructions were sent to the commissioners a few days later. In them, McKinley, through Hay, insisted that while America's claim to the Philippines existed by right of conquest, the United States "as victors . . . should be governed only by motives which will exalt our nation." "Grave as are the responsibilities and unforeseen as are the difficulties which are before us," McKinley could see only one solution, "one plain path of duty—the acceptance of the

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² McKinley to Day, October 25, 1898, series 1, reel 4, McKinley Papers

archipelago.” While stressing to the commissioners that McKinley had given the “fullest consideration” to their views, Hay insisted that the president had been influenced by the “single consideration of duty and humanity.”²¹³ These instructions were McKinley’s first unambiguous statement on his desire to annex anything more than Luzon. Up until this point, everything he had declared, either orally or in writing, had indicated a certain amount of cautious indecision. McKinley had finally settled on full annexation and had successfully controlled the development of events in Paris to give himself the opportunity to move off his original position.

The commissioners recognized McKinley’s authority to shift the American negotiating position, but questioned the president’s “right of conquest” claim. While McKinley insisted that “destruction of the Spanish fleet . . . was the conquest of Manila,” the extent of Filipino territory remaining outside of American control made this claim questionable at best in the eyes of several commissioners.²¹⁴ Davis suggested that the claim on the entire archipelago should be based on “more valid grounds,” such as an indemnity claim, as the claim of a “perfected territorial conquest” of the archipelago was “untenable.”²¹⁵ While Day also doubted the validity of McKinley’s claim, he, nevertheless, continued to assure the president that the commissioners had not deviated significantly from the president’s instructions and were doing “all in our power to secure [the] treaty in accordance with your views.”²¹⁶ While continuing to support McKinley’s position that conquest was a consideration that “ought not be ignored,” Hay informed the commissioners that the president’s greatest concern was “that a treaty shall be effected in terms

²¹³ Hay to Day, October 28, 1898, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

²¹⁴ Hay to Day, November 3, 1898, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

²¹⁵ Davis to Alvey A. Adee, November 4, 1899, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

which will not only satisfy the present, but, what is more important, be justified in the judgment of posterity.”²¹⁷

The Spanish commissioners objected to McKinley’s claim, arguing that it violated the protocol, which only contemplated the provisional occupation of Manila and did not challenge Spanish sovereignty over the rest of the archipelago.²¹⁸ In the opening days of the negotiations, they had asserted that because the American capture of Manila had occurred following the signature of the protocol, it was illegal.²¹⁹ This objection, however, had been anticipated before the conference had begun and Hay had firmly rejected this contention.²²⁰ Adee relayed and confirmed the administration’s opinion, informing the commissioners even before the issue had been raised, “It certainly could not be said that the capture of Manila on the 13th [of August] derogated from the stipulations of the Protocol of the 12th and substituted an obligation to restore Manila and the surrendered territory to the Spaniards.”²²¹ Faced with continuing Spanish intransigence and the attempts by the Spanish commissioners to link issue of Cuban debt, which they regarded as a usurious condition that violated the terms of the protocol, with the issue of the Philippines, the American commissioners sent McKinley another lengthy dispatch, asking for further guidance after presenting their individual recommendations on how to proceed.

The commission was divided, just as it had been in its previous joint dispatch. Now even the pro-annexationist trio disagreed with each other. Davis remained adamantly in favor of full

²¹⁷ Hay to Day, November 5, 1898, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

²¹⁸ Day to Hay, November 5, 1898, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

²¹⁹ Morgan, *Making Peace with Spain*, 46–7.

²²⁰ Position paper of Secretary of State John Hay to Ambassador Jules Cambon, acting on behalf of Spain, September 16, 1898, box 52, Cortelyou Papers.

²²¹ Alvey A. Adee to John Bassett Moore, September 28, 1898, box 192, Moore Papers.

annexation without conditions. He believed that the Spanish were protracting the negotiations merely to entangle the United States with “some European power” and, therefore, the United States should present “without much delay” an ultimatum insisting on the cession by Spain of the entire Philippine archipelago, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Frye, however, had backed away from unconditional full annexation and favored “taking the entire group and paying ten million dollars in gold.” He was also open to annexing only some of the more important islands if such a course of action was necessary to secure a treaty, something he thought likely. Reid, last of the annexationists, thought it might be prudent to relinquish American claims on some of the islands because the commissioners were at the end of six weeks of “fruitless negotiation, one-half longer than it took France and Germany to agree upon their . . . treaty of peace.” He believed that the Americans should call “time” and give notice that some progress must be made or else the protocol would be closed. The closing of the protocol would lead to a renewal of hostilities despite Spain’s evident weakness, an outcome that would most certainly step on McKinley’s victory message.²²²

Day once again suggested holding only a portion of the islands. While minimizing “our holdings there to the lowest point consistent with our obligations,” the United States would still gain valuable naval and commercial bases in the Far East. “More than this we should not seek,” he declared. Although coming at the issue from a different initial point, Day joined with Frye and Reid in suggesting that McKinley should reconsider his demands and accept only a partial annexation of the islands.²²³

²²² John Bassett Moore to Hay, November 11, 1898, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

²²³ Ibid.

Gray now suggested that it might be more desirable to annex some of the islands, if only to preserve the peace and get a treaty signed. He was aware that the Spanish would be unable to prevent the United States from seizing the entire archipelago in the event of renewed hostilities. “It would . . . be most unfortunate,” he suggested, “if the United States should feel compelled to abandon the high position taken at the beginning of the war and, instead of crowing their triumphs by setting an example of moderation, restraint, and reason in victory, act the part of ruthless conqueror.” While he made it clear that his opinion of annexation had not changed, Gray now sided with Frye, Reid, and Day in recommending only the partial annexation of the Philippines, an option the Spanish seemed disposed to accept.²²⁴

While four out of his five peace commissioners now recommended compromise and a modification of the full-annexation policy, McKinley held firm. Although he would “regret deeply the resumption of hostilities against a prostrate foe,” the president insisted that the United States was “clearly entitled” to an indemnity from Spain; and since Spain was broke, the only form in which this indemnity could be paid was in land, even though “from the standpoint of indemnity both the [the Philippine and the Caroline] archipelagoes are insufficient to pay our war expenses.” Even more important, McKinley argued, via Hay, was the American “obligation to the people of the Philippines which will not permit us to return them to the sovereignty of Spain.” McKinley insisted on the cession of the whole of the Philippine archipelago, although he was willing to pay to Spain ten to twenty million dollars to offset their loss. Any division of the archipelago would only result in future embarrassment. “The trade and commercial side, as well as the indemnity for the cost of war, are questions we might yield,” Hay informed the

²²⁴ Ibid.

commissioners on McKinley's behalf, "they may be waived or compromised, but the questions of duty and humanity appeal to the President so strongly that he can find no appropriate answer but the one here marked out."²²⁵ With his decision made, McKinley ordered Day to work diligently for a speedy transfer of power in the Philippines to the United States.²²⁶

While several more weeks of negotiation would be required before the Spanish government agreed to cede the islands to the United States, the American government began collecting information pertaining to the requirements of a permanent garrison in the islands. Otis had informed Corbin that the situation in the Philippines was deteriorating and that "prudence" dictated that "all troops here and soon to arrive" must be retained for, while "no serious difficulty" was anticipated, it was "necessary to maintain adequate force to meet possible emergencies."²²⁷ When Corbin answered and requested the number of troops required for a "permanent garrison" in the "event of our retaining the entire Philippines," Otis replied that the disposition of American troops depended upon the actions of the Filipinos on the "question of absolute independence." He warned that Aguinaldo would most likely oppose American annexation, and if this occurred, 25,000 men would be required to conduct a pacification campaign.²²⁸ Dewey, for his part, urged the President to issue a proclamation defining his policy and assuring the Filipinos that the Americans intended to interfere in their internal affairs as little as possible. He further suggested the Americans should augment their forces by raising

²²⁵ Hay to Day, November 14, 1898, box 2, entry 799, RG 43, NACP.

²²⁶ Hay to Day, November 18, 1898, box 192, Moore Papers.

²²⁷ Otis to Adjutant-General, November 13, 1898, in U.S. Adjutant-General's Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:836.

²²⁸ Corbin to Otis, November 25, 1898, and Otis to Adjutant-General, November 27, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:839.

American-sponsored Filipino regiments, which he argued would “do much to disarm any opposition to our occupation.”²²⁹

Meanwhile, in Paris, after considerable procrastination on the part of the Spanish commissioners, the treaty was finally signed on December 10. Hay was optimistic that the treaty would be well received and the American commissioners treated as “conquering heroes” upon their return home.²³⁰ In his report to McKinley, Day also sounded an optimistic note as to what now lay ahead: “Like other large properties it will no doubt bring its responsibilities and burdens, but our country has proven itself equal to everything it has undertaken, and will no doubt be able to cope with this situation.”²³¹ Day’s job was done; McKinley’s was not. The ratification struggle was set to begin.

The president intended to send the treaty to the Senate promptly so that it could be reported out of committee without delay and turned over to the entire Senate by the middle of January. Ideally, he wanted a vote on the treaty before the new Congress convened in March. This rapid timeline and even the ultimate success of the ratification were far from guaranteed, however. Lodge had voiced his fear of a rejection of the treaty before it had even been signed, declaring to Roosevelt that it would be a “rejection of the President and a humiliation of the whole country in the eyes of the world, and would show we are unfit as a nation to enter into great questions of foreign policy.”²³² He expected “trouble” over the treaty. How much trouble

²²⁹ Dewey to Long, December 7, 1898, box 70, Cortelyou Papers.

²³⁰ Hay to Whitelaw Reid, November 29, 1898, reel 11, John Hay Papers, Microfilm Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society Library, Madison, WI. (Cited hereafter as Hay Papers.)

²³¹ Day to McKinley, December 12, 1898, series 1, reel 5, McKinley Papers.

²³² Henry Cabot Lodge to Theodore Roosevelt, December 7, 1898, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:368.

he did not know, but he confessed that he could not “think calmly of the rejection of that Treaty by a little more than one-third of the Senate.”²³³ A few weeks after the signing in Paris, he was still despondent, informing Roosevelt, “Reed [, the Republican Speaker of the House,] is terribly bitter, saying all sorts of ugly things about the administration and its policy in private talks, so I keep out of his way, for I am fond of him, and I confess that his attitude is painful and disappointing to me beyond words.”²³⁴

Despite Lodge’s fears, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations reported the treaty out with no amendments or suggestions for change on January 11. Considering the composition of the committee this was not overly surprising. Its Republican members, led by Davis, supported the treaty without reservation. The Democrats offered little opposition with the expansionist John Tyler Morgan of Alabama and the seemingly more amenable Gray on the committee. The administration’s plan to move the treaty quickly through the Senate was, thus far, succeeding. It had been in committee less than a week.

Once the treaty reached the Senate floor, however, the introduction of numerous resolutions led to interminable debate, delaying its progress. Lodge expressed his chagrin in a long letter to Roosevelt, lamenting that “the fight that is being made on the Treaty is disheartening” and warning that “every day that it is delayed increases our difficulties in the Philippines and the danger of bloodshed.” With the Spanish “filling the papers with false reports” in an effort to regain the islands through the rejection of the treaty, Lodge was

²³³ Henry Cabot Lodge to Theodore Roosevelt, December 7, 1898, in *ibid.*

²³⁴ Henry Cabot Lodge to Theodore Roosevelt, December 20, 1898, in *ibid.*, 1:370.

increasingly frustrated that the “attitude of American Senators is helping them.” “It is not very easy to bear,” he admitted.²³⁵

This slow down should not have come as a surprise. The ratification process, which required the approval of two-thirds of the senators voting, was one that had often presented presidents with complex and difficult situations. The Senate had treated every treaty negotiated by the executive branch following the Civil War very harshly. These treaties, including a number of that had implications for American expansion overseas, had been rejected, ignored, or amended to the point where the president in office felt obligated to withdraw his support. Over the preceding twenty-five years, no important treaty had received Senate approval.²³⁶

McKinley was desperate to avoid open conflict with the Filipinos while the debate continued in the Senate. McKinley continued to direct Otis to expand American control, particularly of the strategic points in the archipelago, but to do so “with great prudence,” restoring to force only as the “last extremity” and taking the time to accomplish the “results desired by peaceful means.”²³⁷ Despite being presented with evidence such as Aguinaldo’s proclamation of January 5, in which he warned that the Filipinos would “use force to prevent further occupation of our territory by American forces, the oppressor of the people and the hangman of humanity,” the president continued to hope that the Filipinos would be convinced of

²³⁵ Henry Cabot Lodge to Theodore Roosevelt, January 14, 1899, in *ibid.*, 1:385.

²³⁶ W. Stull Holt, *Treaties Defeated by the Senate: A Study of the Struggle Between President and Senate Over the Conduct of Foreign Relations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), 165.

²³⁷ Alger to Otis, December 29 and 30, 1898, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:863–4.

the futility of resistance and that they would accept American sovereignty without bloodshed.²³⁸ Responding to recent reports that American troops were indeed expanding their footprint in the islands, Senator William V. Allen, a Populist senator from Nebraska, argued that any aggressive action by the American army and navy against the Filipinos would be “an act of war unwarranted on the part of the President and the exercise of constitutional powers vested exclusively in the Congress.”²³⁹ Fearing the effect that open hostilities might have on the treaty’s chances in the Senate, McKinley informed Otis and Dewey that it was “most desirous” for them to avoid conflict; and while the establishment of “good government” could only happen after the Americans had established “complete and unquestioned” sovereignty, kid gloves were required for the moment. He advised them: “Tact and kindness is essential now.”²⁴⁰

Otis remained apprehensive about the chances of avoiding conflict, but he indicated in mid-January that conditions were improving and predicted that if the peace could be kept for a few more days that the “immediate dangers will have passed.”²⁴¹ Otis kept reassuring the president that the majority of the Filipinos welcomed American rule and that even Aguinaldo’s men would be happy with “qualified independence under United States protection.”²⁴² He was not the only American military official to misjudge the situation. On January 30, only five days before fighting began, Dewey cabled Long to inform him that affairs in the islands were

²³⁸ A copy of this proclamation, dated January 5, 1899, may be found in series 1, reel 5, McKinley Papers.

²³⁹ *Congressional Record*, 55th Cong., 3rd sess., vol. 32, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 562.

²⁴⁰ McKinley to Otis and Dewey, January 8, 1899, series 1, reel 5, McKinley Papers.

²⁴¹ Otis to Adjutant-General, January 10, 1898, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:876.

²⁴² Otis to Adjutant-General, January 16, 1898, in *ibid.*, 2:880.

“unusually quiet.” “I do not believe the insurgents will fight,” the admiral confidently predicted.²⁴³

Not everyone in the islands shared this optimism. After his visit to the Philippines, Clay McCauley, an American businessman living in Tokyo, sent McKinley a more accurate description of the situation. Blaming the absence of a definite American policy for creating suspicion among the Filipinos, he informed the president: “At present Manila is practically in a state of siege. Forces on both sides are only a few yards apart. Tension is mounting. Conflict seems inevitable.” He suggested that if the Americans hoped “to annex the Philippines without conflict” they must act “more sympathetic to the Filipinos, recognize them as allies and give Aguinaldo a high place in government.” The ideal outcome, he suggested, would be “freedom for the Philippines under American protection.”²⁴⁴ McKinley had, of course, already rejected McCauley’s policy recommendation and this may have predisposed him to discount the unsolicited observations.

As the debate continued to drag on in the Senate, pro-expansion senators repeatedly turned back resolutions to limit the administration’s ability “to acquire territory to be held and governed permanently as colonies,” in general, or “to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control” over the Philippines, in particular.²⁴⁵ Lodge, who had not participated in the debate to any great extent, finally signaled a push to ratification in an energetic speech on January 24. He couched his argument for acceptance of the treaty in terms of America’s right to acquire territory

²⁴³ Dewey to Long, January 30, 1899, series 1, reel 5, McKinley Papers.

²⁴⁴ Clay McCauley to McKinley, January 15, 1899, series 1, reel 5, McKinley Papers.

²⁴⁵ From joint resolutions by Democratic senators George Vest of Missouri, S. R. 191, and Augustus Bacon of Georgia, S. R. 211, in *Congressional Record*, 55th Cong., 3rd sess., vol. 32, pt.1, 20 and 561.

and her ability to govern it. While acknowledging that the treaty merely “cedes the Philippines to us” and “commits us to no course of action,” he opposed any amendment to the treaty and threatened that rejection of the treaty would repudiate McKinley and continue the war. Just as importantly, it would “brand us as a people incapable of great affairs or of taking rank where we belong, as one of the greatest of the great world powers.” He advised his colleagues that the president “could not be sent back across the Atlantic . . . with hat in hand, to say to Spain with bated breath, ‘I am here in obedience to the mandate of a minority . . . to tell you that we have been too victorious, . . . and that I am sorry that I took the Philippines from you.’”²⁴⁶ Roosevelt, not surprisingly, was impressed by Lodge’s performance, commenting, “Your speech was splendid. I confess I am utterly disheartened and cast down at the thought that the treaty is in such danger.”²⁴⁷ On the same day that Lodge spoke, Davis, the floor manager for the treaty, proposed that the Senate vote on the treaty on February 6, and the Republican majority passed the resolution.

As the debate and negotiations in the Senate progressed, McKinley insisted upon being kept fully informed of the Senate’s reaction to the treaty. He did not allow any meaningful bargaining to be conducted on behalf of the treaty without his knowledge and approval. In an effort to discredit the anti-imperialists, the McKinley administration stressed that the opponents of the treaty offered no practicable alternative to the American annexation of the Philippines. Many influential anti-imperialists questioned the degree of American involvement in the Philippines, but few of them supported an immediate abandonment of the islands. While Edward

²⁴⁶ *Congressional Record*, 55th Cong., 3rd sess., vol. 32, pt.1, 959.

²⁴⁷ Roosevelt to Lodge, January 25, 1899, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:389.

Atkinson, the founder of the Anti-Imperialist League, called for “the neutralization of the islands taken from Spain,” very few senators from either party echoed his call.²⁴⁸

The prestige of the president and the party was wedded to acceptance of the treaty. The rejection of the treaty would constitute a repudiation of McKinley’s foreign policy. So with little real commitment, Republicans came to support the treaty in ever-greater numbers, convinced that they had no other choice. Platt was, according to Roosevelt, “really . . . against the Philippines, but . . . stands by the President.”²⁴⁹ John Spooner from Wisconsin, a rising star in the party and a friend of McKinley, is another example. He did not speak in support of the treaty until just a few days before the vote and even then his support was tepid. “If the treaty irrevocably committed us to the policy of territorial expansion, I could not give it my vote,” he declared.²⁵⁰ Yet he saw no other choice but to ratify the treaty: “There is but one thing to do, and that is to accept the cession of the archipelago as provided in the treaty, and thereby to succeed to the title and sovereignty of Spain and, having succeeded to that title and sovereignty to go forward.”²⁵¹

Events in the Philippines, of course, did not wait on the final vote on the treaty. Hostilities broke out between American and Filipino forces on the evening of February 4, 1899, thereby beginning the Philippine War. Although Roosevelt later declared his thanks “partly to Providence and partly to the Philipinos [sic],” whose actions “just pulled the treaty through for

²⁴⁸ Edward Atkinson to McKinley, January 26, 1899, series 1, reel 5, McKinley Papers.

²⁴⁹ Roosevelt to Lodge, January 23, 1899, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:388.

²⁵⁰ *Congressional Record*, 55th Cong., 3rd sess., vol. 32, pt. 1, 1385-6.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1387.

us,” Lodge was less convinced that the fighting had a significant impact on the final vote.²⁵² “The line of opposition,” he wrote in reply, “stood absolutely firm, to my great astonishment. I thought the news from Manila would have shattered it, but it did not, marvelous as it may seem.”²⁵³ In the end, the Republican whips succeeded in bringing over three of the four “doubtful” senators, mostly through the use of patronage deals. While Democrats John L. McLaurin of South Carolina and Samuel D. McEnery of Louisiana were persuaded before the floor vote began, John P. Jones, a Silver Republican from Nevada, only switched his vote after the first roll call had been completed.²⁵⁴

With the vote on February 6, the Senate gave consent to end Hay’s “splendid little war” by a single vote, 57 to 27.²⁵⁵ It had been a difficult and tiring struggle. Hay later reflected to a friend, “A treaty of peace, in any normal state of things, ought to be ratified with unanimity in twenty-four hours. They wasted six weeks in wrangling over this one, and ratified it with one vote to spare.”²⁵⁶ “It was,” Lodge confessed to Roosevelt, “the closest, hardest fight I have ever known, and probably we shall not see another in our time where there was so much at stake. . . . Until the fight was over I did not realize what a strain it had been, but for half an hour after the

²⁵² Roosevelt to Lodge, February 7, 1899, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:390–1.

²⁵³ Lodge to Roosevelt, February 9, 1899, in *ibid.*, 1:391–2.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; Holt, *Treaties Defeated by the Senate: A Study of the Struggle Between President and Senate Over the Conduct of Foreign Relations*, 165–77.

²⁵⁵ According to Hay, America’s triumph was “a splendid little war, begun with the best of motives, carried on with magnificent intelligence and spirit, and favored by that fortune that loves the brave.” Hay to Roosevelt, July 27, 1898, series 1, reel 2, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Microfilm Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society Library, Madison, WI. (Cited hereafter as Roosevelt Papers.)

²⁵⁶ Hay to Henry Adams, August, 5, 1899, in John Hay, *Letters of John Hay and Extracts from Diary*, vol. 3 (New York: Gordian Press, 1969), 156.

vote was announced I felt as if I had been struggling up the side of a mountain and as if there was not an ounce more of exertion left in any muscle of my body.” As for McKinley’s role, Lodge felt that the president “showed the greatest firmness and strength, and did everything he could do.”²⁵⁷

The closeness of the final vote is misleading, however. Even if the resolution of ratification had been defeated in February, McKinley could have submitted it again when the new Congress assembled in March. Lodge had, in fact, positioned himself next to the Senate secretary to keep track of the votes as they were cast.²⁵⁸ Had the ongoing tally indicated that the vote was going to be against the treaty, Davis would have changed his vote from “aye” to “nay,” thereby enabling him to move for a reconsideration of the question. Once the motion to reconsider was approved by a simple Republican majority, McKinley would have withdrawn the treaty. With their gains from the fall 1898 elections, from which they gained seven seats in the Senate, Republicans would have had an overwhelming majority in the 56th Congress and would have reintroduced and passed the resolution.

Over the course of nine months, McKinley guided the United States along its road to becoming a maritime empire. He authorized the navy’s attack on the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, successfully negotiated the protocols for the peace talks to end the Spanish American War, skillfully selected and managed his peace commissioners, and quietly maneuvered behind the scenes to gain Senate approval on the resolution for ratification of the Treaty of Paris, which ceded the Philippine Islands and other Spanish overseas possessions to the United States. While

²⁵⁷ Henry Cabot Lodge to Theodore Roosevelt, February 9, 1899, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:391–2.

²⁵⁸ *Washington Post*, February 7, 1899, 1.

he was not an ardent expansionist at the outset of the war with Spain, he slowly came to the conclusion that the United States should annex the entire archipelago. While vocal large policy advocates certainly influenced his final decision, they did not manipulate McKinley in any way. He managed to keep them in check, often to their chagrin, and was able to maintain a freedom of action in his formation of policy regarding the future of the islands. Similarly, he firmly reined in American representatives in the Far East when they got too far out in front of the administration.

Using the executive powers available to him to appoint and manage his cabinet and peace commissioners, McKinley was able to control the agenda. As his understanding of the conditions in the islands and their potential value as an imperial possession changed, he was able to modify American demands while maintaining support within his administration and in Congress. This not to say that there was not a vocal anti-imperialist movement—there was. McKinley, however, knew the limits of the movement's influence in the halls of government and was able to control the administration's actions to keep this influence from spreading.

Chapter 2: Salisbury, Cabinet Cacophony, and the Failure of Deterrence

The cabinet is the heart of the British constitutional system. It is the ultimate directing authority of British national policy or, to use Bagehot's description, it is the British "board of control."²⁵⁹ This was especially true in the years before the First World War and the introduction of a more "prime ministerial" form of government. Of the wide variety of functions a cabinet has to perform, its most important ones, the ones that are the "source of its authority," are "to decide on policy and to provide leadership."²⁶⁰

While there have been occasional exceptions, practical convenience, as well as constitutional convention, oblige prime ministers to confer office only upon sitting members of Parliament. While the sovereign has considerable influence on the inclusion or, more often, exclusion of certain persons from office, the prime minister has the final word on the selection of his ministers. If the head of a governmental department is in the House of Lords, his undersecretary must be in the House of Commons. The reverse is not true.²⁶¹ The number of offices to be filled by the prime minister is not precisely defined. During his last ministry,

²⁵⁹ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, New ed. (London: H.S. King, 1872), 13.

²⁶⁰ John P. Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet*, 2nd ed. (London: Stevens, 1968), 257.

²⁶¹ Apparently Salisbury failed to touch on this topic during the pass down from uncle to nephew as Balfour expressed surprise at this convention when writing to Chamberlain about possible candidates for the position of parliamentary undersecretary of state for the colonies: "We are under no legal obligation (as I supposed) to place the office in the Lords. This, however, would seem on the first blush of the thing, to be the natural course, and I still rather incline to it." Balfour to Chamberlain, June 19, 1903, Correspondence and papers of Arthur James Balfour, 1st Earl of Balfour, K.G., Prime Minister 1902-1905, Manuscript Collections, British Library, London, England, Add. MS 49774, ff. 43-7. (Cited hereafter as Balfour Papers.)

Salisbury had nineteen ministers in his cabinet, including the prime minister, himself, and the ministers were divided nearly evenly between peers and members of the House of Commons.²⁶²

In the eighteenth century, the cabinet had been almost purely an executive body. Wide-ranging measures of public policy, it was believed, “were properly the concern of Parliament as a whole” and would normally be introduced by private members and not by the government.²⁶³ By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the cabinet controlled the agenda of the House of Commons. As the influence of party on voting in Parliament grew stronger, the House of Commons, itself, was left with little more than the power to veto or, to a lesser extent, amend legislative proposals of the majority party’s senior leaders operating from within the cabinet.²⁶⁴

As the cabinet ministry became more important, more men wished to belong to it. Consequently, prime ministers were often able to use “the carrot of advancement and the stick of non-advancement” to impose discipline within party ranks.²⁶⁵ The prime minister, however, also had to manage the often difficult task of “conciliating all the elements in the party,” selecting for his ministry men who held diverse political views and who were in fact rivals.²⁶⁶

²⁶² There were ten peers and nine members of the House of Commons at the start of his third ministry and after the cabinet reorganization in November 1900. As a point of comparison, Lord Rosebery had selected six peers and 11 members of the House of Commons for his cabinet, which preceded Salisbury’s.

²⁶³ Oliver MacDonagh, *Early Victorian Government, 1830-1870* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 5.

²⁶⁴ Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, 3.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁶⁶ J. P. Cornford, “The Parliamentary Foundations of the Hotel Cecil,” in *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark*, ed. Robert Robson (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1967), 290.

The principle of collective responsibility was well established before Salisbury's years in office. This had not always been the case, however. Until 1705, there was actually a statute on the books that required all ministers to be accountable for their advice and actions as individuals, not as a cabinet.²⁶⁷ Salisbury firmly accepted the "new" standard of collective responsibility and believed that "for all that passes in Cabinet each member of it who does not resign is absolutely and irretrievable responsible, and has no right afterwards to say that he agreed in one case to a compromise, while in another he was persuaded by his colleagues. . . . It is only on the principle that absolute responsibility is undertaken by every member of the Cabinet, who, after a decision is arrived at, remained a member of it, that the joint responsibility of Ministers to Parliament can be upheld, and one of the most essential principle of parliamentary responsibility established."²⁶⁸ Chamberlain agreed that "absolute frankness in . . . private relations and full discussion of all matters of common interest" was critical because all "decisions freely arrived at should be loyally supported and considered as the decision of the whole of the Government." This did not preclude the possibility that there might be occasions "in which the difference is of so vital a character that it is impossible for the minority . . . to continue their support." In these cases, either the ministry should break up or the member, or members, in the minority should resign.²⁶⁹

While the concept of collective responsibility would seem to level the distribution of power within a cabinet, it was widely accepted in contemporary constitutional commentaries at the end of the nineteenth century that the prime minister occupied a prominent position within

²⁶⁷ Paul Langford, "Prime Ministers and Parliaments: The Long View, Walpole to Blair," *Parliamentary History* 25, no. 3 (2006): 382–3.

²⁶⁸ Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. 2 (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1921), 219–20.

²⁶⁹ Julian Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. 4 (London: Macmillan, 1951), 118.

the British cabinet system. Although all cabinet members stood technically on equal footing, the prime minister was recognized, in John Morley's analogy, as the “the keystone of the Cabinet arch.”²⁷⁰ Despite the general agreement that while all ministers were equal, one was more equal than the others, the precise nature of relations between a prime minister and his fellow cabinet ministers remained ambiguous. Indeed, when *The Times* referred to Lord Salisbury as the “Prime Minister” in an article published in November 1900, it was the first time that the press used the term in reference to the holder of that post.²⁷¹ It was another five years before a royal warrant officially granted the prime minister precedence over all his cabinet colleagues.²⁷²

The way in which power was projected by the cabinet and exercised within it depended on the prime minister. Henry Asquith, who served in several Liberal governments and eventually succeed Henry Campbell-Bannerman as prime minister in 1908, claimed that the office of the prime minister was “what its holder chooses and is able to make it.”²⁷³

Contemplating the nature of late nineteenth-century government, George Hamilton, who served as the first lord of the Admiralty twice and as the secretary of state for India during the South African War, noted that “as an executive and administrative body the cabinet must necessarily from its composition and numbers be a failure unless the Prime Minister is a man of

²⁷⁰ John Morley, *Walpole* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 157.

²⁷¹ “Changes in Government,” *The Times* (London), November 13, 1900, 6.

²⁷² The prime minister was placed immediately after the Archbishop of York in the table of precedence. See Sidney Low, *The Governance of England*, New ed. (London: T.F. Unwin, 1914), xxi, f.n.

²⁷³ H. H. Asquith, *Fifty Years of Parliament*, vol. 2 (London: Cassell, 1926), 185.

determination and strength.”²⁷⁴ The South African War presents an opportunity to examine how an experienced prime minister handled a coalition cabinet of experienced ministers.

After the abrupt fall of Lord Rosebery's short-lived government in June 1895, Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, the third Marquess of Salisbury, the well-liked, yet aloof, leader of the Conservative Party, formed his third and last ministry. While he was less colorful a personality than his Conservative predecessor, Benjamin Disraeli (later Lord Beaconsfield), Salisbury was certainly more successful, if election results and career longevity are of any analytical value. He won four general elections (1886, 1892, 1895, and 1900) to Disraeli's one (1874) and occupied the premiership for thirteen years (1885-6, 1886-92, and 1895-1902) to Disraeli's six and a half (1868 and 1874-80).²⁷⁵

While Arthur Wellesley, the first duke of Wellington and a two-time premier, had expressed his belief that “the prime minister should always be the leader of the House of Commons and that he should be the First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer,” Salisbury was none of these things.²⁷⁶ He was the last prime minister based in the House of Lords and, thus, was in no position to lead the Commons or hold the chancellorship.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ George Francis Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, vol. 1 (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1917), 301.

²⁷⁵ The Conservatives won a plurality of votes and seats in the 1892 general election, but William Gladstone formed a minority Liberal government with the support of the Irish Nationalists.

²⁷⁶ Quoted in Langford, “Prime Ministers and Parliaments,” 384.

²⁷⁷ Alec Douglas-Home was in the House of Lords when he succeeded Harold Macmillan in 1963, but he resigned his earldom, won a by-election to the House of Commons, and served his one-year premiership from there. He returned to the House of Lords in 1974. For more on his career, see Kenneth Young, *Sir Alec Douglas-Home* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971).

Like most of the other peers who had held the premiership after the passing of the first Reform Act, Salisbury had, however, won a solid reputation in the House of Commons before being elevated to the peerage in 1868.²⁷⁸ While Sydney Herbert perhaps went a bit too far in declaring that Salisbury, like all “great Prime Ministers . . . of the nineteenth century,” was a “House of Commons man,” there is no question that he had developed his keen political skills while serving in the Commons for fourteen years, including a stint in Lord Derby’s third ministry as the secretary of state for India.²⁷⁹

In forming his government, Salisbury once again combined the office of prime minister with the demanding job of heading the Foreign Office. Although William Gladstone had criticized him during a previous ministry for holding the two posts in conjunction because it left “no one either to assist or at all check the Foreign Minister,” Salisbury's decision reflected not only his personal interest in foreign affairs, but also his understanding of the British system of cabinet government and of the position of the prime minister within it.²⁸⁰ “Never . . . has the Prime Minister's office been held alone,” he declared to George Curzon, his parliamentary

²⁷⁸ Of the seven peers who held the premiership in the nineteenth century after the passing of the first Reform Act, only two—Lords Aberdeen (1852-5) and Rosebery (1894-5)—never sat in the House of Commons. Lords Grey (1830-4), Melbourne (1834, 1835-41), Derby (1852, 1858-9, 1866-8), Russell (1846-52, 1865-6), and Salisbury all served the Commons before becoming peers. Lord Palmerston (1855-8, 1859-65) was an Irish peer and thus was eligible for membership the House of Commons.

²⁷⁹ Sydney Herbert, “The Premiership and the Presidency,” *Economica* 17 (June 1926): 159.

²⁸⁰ Quoted in Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet*, 265.

undersecretary in the Foreign Office, “It has always been held by the occupant of some other office. In fact it is not an office: it has no bureau, no staff, no pay, no legal power.”²⁸¹

In his study of the office of prime minister, Robert Blake contends that Salisbury's view of the proper relationship between the prime minister and his cabinet ministers was influenced by the conventions established in the years between the first two Reform Acts.²⁸² Although he did not hold regular cabinet meetings as a matter of routine, Salisbury was clearly guided by the principle that in questions of policy all final decisions rested with the cabinet.²⁸³ While he recognized the need for a prime minister to provide sound leadership within the cabinet, Salisbury rejected the dictatorial and demagogic style of his two famous predecessors, Gladstone and Disraeli. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who served in Disraeli's last ministry and all three of Salisbury's ministries, thought Salisbury was too permissive with his cabinet: “Certainly as Prime Minister did he not exercise the control over his colleagues, either in or out of the Cabinet, that Lord Beaconsfield did. . . . Lord Beaconsfield kept a watchful eye on all his colleagues. . . . Lord Salisbury left them very much to themselves unless they consulted him.” While Disraeli was known to enforce his own view on the cabinet, Salisbury “frequently allowed important matters to be decided by a small majority of votes, even against his own opinion.”²⁸⁴ Salisbury's

²⁸¹ Salisbury to Curzon, April 15, 1898, Papers of the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy of India 1898-1905; Lord Privy Seal 1915-19; Foreign Secretary 1919-24, India Office Records and Private Papers, Mss Eur F112/1B, British Library. (Cited hereafter as Curzon Papers.)

²⁸² Robert Blake, *The Office of Prime Minister* (London: Oxford University Press for British Academy, 1975), 37.

²⁸³ J. A. S. Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: The Close of the Nineteenth Century* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1964), 15.

²⁸⁴ Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. 3 (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1921), 169.

habitual preference for “intelligent inaction” and his deference to the views of his colleagues ended up constraining his ability to exercise political leadership of his ministry during the building crisis in South Africa.²⁸⁵

Salisbury’s new ministry was a coalition government in which the smaller party, the Liberal Unionists, was proportionately over-represented in the cabinet.²⁸⁶ While Chamberlain did not “think it possible for the Conservatives to form an administration without our help,” the Conservatives in Parliament, who held an unanticipated absolute majority in the House of Commons, did not appreciate the loss of cabinet positions—a fact of which Salisbury was well aware.²⁸⁷ George Bartley, a Conservative M.P. for Isington North, captured the sentiment of many back-bench Tories when he criticized Salisbury for the composition of his cabinet: “It becomes clearer after every appointment that though men may work their hearts out and make every sacrifice financial and otherwise when the Conservative party is in opposition and in difficulties yet in prosperous times all is forgotten and all honours, emoluments and places are reserved for the friends and relations of the favoured few.”²⁸⁸ Arthur Balfour, Salisbury’s nephew and the new leader of the House of Commons, advised Salisbury regularly on the matter of representation in the cabinet. Balfour recognized the tension within party ranks, but still

²⁸⁵ H. J. Massingham and Hugh Massingham, eds., *The Great Victorians* (London: I. Nicholson & Watson, 1932), 475.

²⁸⁶ Liberal Unionists won 71 seats (or 17.3%) of the 411 seats won by the Unionist alliance in the general election of 1895. See Wesley Ferris, “The Candidates of the Liberal Unionist Party, 1886-1912,” *Parliamentary History* 30, no. 2 (2011): 142–57.

²⁸⁷ Quoted in John France, “Salisbury and the Unionist Alliance,” in *Salisbury: The Man and His Policies*, ed. Robert Blake and Hugh Cecil (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 242.

²⁸⁸ G. C. T. Bartley to Salisbury, October 22, 1898, quoted in Cornford, “The Parliamentary Foundations of the Hotel Cecil,” 268.

recommended a “fixed proportion of places should be determined upon as being, so to speak, due to the Liberal Unionists,” which he suggested should be “somewhat, but not every much, in excess of the number to which they would be entitled on a mere consideration of their relative numbers in the House [of Commons].”²⁸⁹

Three prominent Liberal Unionists, Spencer Cavendish, the eighth duke of Devonshire (formerly Lord Hartington), Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, the fifth marquess of Lansdowne, and Sir Henry James, who was raised to the peerage as the first baron James of Hereford, joined Chamberlain in accepting cabinet positions in Salisbury’s government.²⁹⁰ While the continued existence of the alliance depended upon the harmonious cooperation of Salisbury and Balfour with Devonshire and Chamberlain—the foursome properly described by George Goschen as “the ‘quartette’ who controlled the destinies of the Unionist party”—it was the triumvirate of Salisbury, Balfour, and Chamberlain that dominated the new administration.²⁹¹ Appeasing Chamberlain's aspirations, and thereby keeping him securely within the Unionist alliance, required Salisbury to exhibit tremendous flexibility and exceptional tact. Balfour described the relationship with Chamberlain as one marked by a certain amount of unease: “Joe, though we all love him, does not completely mix, does not form a chemical combination with us.”²⁹²

²⁸⁹ Balfour to Salisbury January 6, 1896, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49690, ff. 139-148.

²⁹⁰ As the chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Lord James of Herford played only a minor role in the events surrounding the South African War.

²⁹¹ George Goschen to Balfour, January 21, 1895, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49706, fo. 158.

²⁹² Quoted in John Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power: A History of the Conservative Party Since 1830* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 178.

Salisbury, for his part, appreciated what Chamberlain could do for the Unionist government, but complained: “I never came across so sensitive a public man before.”²⁹³

As one of the two leading Liberal Unionists in the government, Chamberlain was arguably the most popular and undoubtedly the most ambitious minister in the cabinet. While historian Michael Bentley muses rhetorically, “why an established Conservative Anglican aristocrat should want to bring into this government an (at best) Unitarian screw-salesman from Birmingham with a record of radical destructiveness,” Salisbury brought Chamberlain into the cabinet for good reasons.²⁹⁴ Chamberlain had supported the Unionist alliance in good faith for almost ten years and represented an important section of public opinion. Balfour had expressed the value of having him inside the government years earlier. Writing to Salisbury in 1888, he had expressed his belief that by having Chamberlain on board, the government would gain “the Birmingham seats *certainly*, other doubtful seats in the Midlands *probably*,” and the cabinet would gain, “one of the most useful speakers & debaters in the House.” Appealing to Salisbury to “keep the policy of coalition at least *in view*,” he suggested that Chamberlain might be a good fit for the Home Office when the position came open.²⁹⁵ Just as importantly, however, was the feeling that if he were kept outside the ministry, Chamberlain would be like a wounded tiger—far more dangerous to the government outside than inside, where he might be caged. George Curzon made this point anonymously in an article in *The New Review*, in which he argued, “The

²⁹³ Quoted in Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 597.

²⁹⁴ Michael Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World: Conservative Environments in Late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 289.

²⁹⁵ Balfour to Salisbury, November 11, 1888, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49689, ff. 38-41 (emphasis in the original).

Unionist party must make Mr. Chamberlain a responsible minister at the first opportunity. . . . For no man in England is capable of better and more useful work as long as he is driven and is on no account allowed to drive.”²⁹⁶

The secretary of state for the colonies had not been a particularly important post in the past. For over seventy years (from 1782 until 1854), the Colonial Office had not even been an independent department. Responsibility for the colonies during these years fell to the Home Office and then, in 1801, to the War Office, which was formally renamed the War and Colonial Office. The reestablished, or second, Colonial Office was still not responsible for the entire British Empire.²⁹⁷ Britain’s most important colony, India, had its own cabinet position. The same was true for Britain’s nearest and most contentious imperial possession, Ireland.

Chamberlain’s long-term interest in social reform would have seemed to predispose him to seek one of the cabinet positions with responsibility for domestic matters. Salisbury, himself, thought as much and offered Chamberlain the Home Office, or alternatively, the Exchequer, but Chamberlain insisted upon the Colonial Office. It appeared that in taking a less-prestigious position, he had broken an earlier pledge to his wife to never be “a subordinate member of a Cabinet with whose general policy I am not in hearty favor.”²⁹⁸ While the choice surprised Salisbury, it did not concern him. In fact, the choice likely pleased Salisbury to a certain extent as the demands and duties of overseeing colonial issues would distract Chamberlain from

²⁹⁶ Anonymous, “Two Demagogues: A Parallel and a Moral,” *The New Review* 12, no. 71 (April 1895): 372; For a dissenting opinion on the likelihood of Curzon’s authorship, see David Gilmour, *Curzon: Imperial Statesman* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 122.

²⁹⁷ The first Colonial Office was established in 1768 to deal with colonial affairs in British North America. It was abolished in 1782 after the loss of the American colonies.

²⁹⁸ Quoted in J. L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1933), 625.

pursuing potentially disruptive domestic agendas.²⁹⁹ Salisbury expressed his satisfaction with the arrangement to his son-in-law, William Waldegrave Palmer, the second earl of Selborne and Chamberlain's parliamentary undersecretary in the Colonial Office: "My impression is that Chamberlain's interest in the colonies is entirely theoretic and that when he gets into office he will leave the practical work entirely to you."³⁰⁰ Ostensibly placed in the Colonial Office to keep an eye on Chamberlain, Selborne, a Liberal Unionist himself, instead fell under the influence of his chief and became a strong advocate for a more forceful imperial policy and one of Chamberlain's staunchest defenders.

The Duke of Devonshire was the other leading Liberal Unionist in the cabinet and the most senior minister after Salisbury. Recognized as the leader of the moderate wing of the Liberal Unionist party, he had previously declined the opportunity to become prime minister on three separate occasions. In 1895, Salisbury did not offer him another opportunity to do so and, instead, offered him a choice between the Foreign Office and the lord presidency. Considering Salisbury's traditional interest in foreign affairs, Devonshire made the logical choice to become lord president of the council, a post that would soon include the chairmanship of a defense committee to coordinate the armed forces. A "somewhat lethargic man, who preferred the

²⁹⁹ See Ian Cawood, "Joseph Chamberlain, the Conservative Party and the Leamington Spa Candidature Dispute of 1895," *Historical Research* 79, no. 206 (November 2006): 554–77.

³⁰⁰ Salisbury to Selborne, June 30, 1895, in David George Boyce, ed., *The Crisis of British Power: The Imperial and Naval Papers of the Second Earl of Selborne, 1895-1910* (London: Historians' Press, 1990), 26.

quadrupeds running at Newmarket to the empyrean of strenuous politics,” Devonshire was on the downward slope of a long political career and was past his prime.³⁰¹

Lord Lansdowne joined the cabinet as Salisbury’s secretary of state for war, thereby becoming the third Liberal Unionist in a position of critical importance during the war. A former governor general of Canada and viceroy of India, he was a man well versed in imperial and foreign affairs. Often “ultra-cautious and undecided,” he presided over an unreformed War Office very similar to the one in which he had served as parliamentary undersecretary in the 1870s.³⁰² By accepting the post, he became the first man to head the War Office from the House of Lords in more than forty years.³⁰³

While George Goschen had been the driving force behind the establishment of the new Liberal Unionist party in the mid-1880s, he was formally in the Conservative camp when he agreed to join the cabinet as the first lord of the admiralty.³⁰⁴ He had held the same post in Gladstone’s first ministry.³⁰⁵ As a friend and mentor of a young Alfred Milner, Goschen had supported the moderate Lord Hartington over the more radical Chamberlain as the leader of the

³⁰¹ T.G. Otte, “A Question of Leadership: Lord Salisbury, the Unionist Cabinet and Foreign Policy, 1895-1900,” *Contemporary British History* 14, no. 4 (2000): 11.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁰³ St. John Brodrick, his parliamentary undersecretary, expressed his reservations about representing the department in the House of Commons as a subordinate within the department to Salisbury. Brodrick to Salisbury, July 1, 1895, Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, Papers, Hatfield House Library and Archives, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, England, Class E Special Correspondence, Brodrick, ff. 75-6. (Cited hereafter as Salisbury Papers.)

³⁰⁴ For a detailed examination of Goschen’s role in the foundation of the Liberal Unionist party, see Thomas J. Spinner Jr., “George Joachim Goschen: The Man Lord Randolph Churchill ‘Forgot’,” *The Journal of Modern History* 39, no. 4 (December 1967): 405–24.

³⁰⁵ Goschen, who had first been selected for a cabinet position by Lord John Russell in 1866, initially joined Gladstone’s cabinet as the president of the Poor Law Board.

opposition within the Liberal party. Having resisted Gladstone's efforts to sideline him, Goschen broke with the "Grand Old Man" in 1886 over the issue of Home Rule and, later that year, accepted the position of chancellor of the Exchequer in Salisbury's second ministry, thereby becoming famously known as the man Randolph Churchill "forgot."³⁰⁶ After Hartington was elevated to the peerage in 1891, Goschen did not stand against Chamberlain for leadership of the party and joined the Conservative party officially in 1893.

Sir Michael Hicks Beach was another Conservative politician in the cabinet returning for an encore performance. Having briefly served as the chancellor of the Exchequer during Salisbury's first ministry, Hicks Beach returned to No.11 Downing Street for the second time, even though he seems to have expressed some reservations about cooperating with the Liberal Unionists.³⁰⁷ Having first entered Parliament in the 1860s, he had served in a variety of cabinet-level positions, including time as the secretary of state for the colonies in Disraeli's second ministry and a brief stint as the leader of the House of Commons in Salisbury's first ministry.³⁰⁸ While he was a politician of undoubted national standing, whose counsel carried great weight in Conservative politics, his forbidding asceticism and somewhat detached melancholy earned him the sobriquet of "Black Michael." "He would make a very good Home Secretary," Salisbury once joked rather indelicately, "and would hang everybody."³⁰⁹ "Neither an iron nor an

³⁰⁶ Spinner Jr., "Goschen," 420–3.

³⁰⁷ Lord Wolmer (soon to be Selborne) commented on his impression of Hick Beach's reluctance in a letter to Salisbury, April 7, 1895, in Boyce, *Crisis of British Power*, 22.

³⁰⁸ He returned to the cabinet in Salisbury's second ministry, but Randolph Churchill took over as the leader of the House of Commons.

³⁰⁹ Quoted in Michael Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy: Great Britain, 1815-1914: Perception and Preoccupation in British Government* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 372.

imaginative Chancellor,” Hicks Beach was difficult chancellor to deal with at the best of times.³¹⁰ The financial demands of the South African War further strained his relations with his fellow cabinet ministers.

Once the new ministry was in place, it soon became clear that Salisbury did not always see eye-to-eye with the rest of his cabinet colleagues when it came to an analysis of Great Britain’s place in the world. He was in essence a mid-Victorian optimist, confident of Britain’s relative strength and aware of the weaknesses within and disunity between her rivals.³¹¹ He had once compared Britain’s foreign policy to “float[ing] lazily downstream, occasionally putting out a diplomatic boat-hook to avoid collisions.”³¹² His younger colleagues, by contrast, were less confident of Britain’s position vis-à-vis its continental rivals. They saw Britain as a “nation under assault,” or to use Chamberlain’s suggestive phrase, a “Weary Titan [who] staggers under the too vast orb of his fate.”³¹³ In their view, Britain’s hegemony was under assault and the putting out of an occasional “boat-hook” was an entirely inadequate strategy to protect British national interests. Salisbury was not blind to the changes in the international system that so concerned his younger colleagues. He recognized that foreign affairs had once more become critically important. George Curzon, who would soon move from his parliamentary undersecretary position to become the viceroy of India, captured the essence of his boss’

³¹⁰ Roy Jenkins, *The Chancellors* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 97.

³¹¹ Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy*, 16–20.

³¹² Salisbury to Lytton, March 9, 1877, quoted in Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, 1921, 2:130.

³¹³ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, 4:421; Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 49.

concerns: “The world is unquiet. Uneasy symptoms are abroad. We hear the moaning of sick nations on their couches, and we listen to and witness the struggles of dying men.”³¹⁴

When it comes to the formation of British policy in the “unquiet” region of South Africa, scholars have often criticized Salisbury for leaving the initiative to Chamberlain and/or Milner or some other combination of his younger colleagues. His usual policy of giving his colleagues a wide margin of autonomy within their respective ministries is certainly one of the reasons for this opinion. This general approach to cabinet management was exacerbated by bouts of ill health as control over foreign and colonial policy passed to other members of his cabinet. By the spring of 1899, Salisbury was further removed from the formation of policy due to the illness of his wife, who had suffered a stroke from which she did not recover. She died in November 1899. Salisbury faced the outbreak of war in South Africa, ill, depressed, and with a divided cabinet. Yet, Salisbury was just as responsible as Chamberlain and Milner for pursuing a policy in South Africa that led to war. He generally shared the perspective of Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Milner, his two principle “men on the spot,” in that he saw the struggle in South Africa as one between two competing civilizations with opposing ideals. While Salisbury would have preferred to follow a policy designed to achieve British paramountcy in the region in a more gradual and nonbelligerent manner, he increasingly accepted the likelihood that indirect influence was unlikely to succeed.³¹⁵

Salisbury believed that the British should have never relinquished their direct control of the region in the first place. While in the opposition, he had made several speeches in the House

³¹⁴ Quoted in Gilmour, *Curzon: Imperial Statesman*, 124.

³¹⁵ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 439–40.

of Lords in March 1881, in which he had insisted that the British must vindicate the authority of the Crown before granting self-government.³¹⁶ He had also criticized the Gladstone's Liberal government for abandoning those who had placed their faith in British authority. The Pretoria Convention had been, in Salisbury's opinion, nothing less than an attempt to camouflage the "disgrace" of the British retreat. Gladstone's policy would leave a legacy of distrust of the British in the region, which, he had predicted, would be "fatal" to British rule in South Africa.³¹⁷

After the London Convention was signed in 1884, Salisbury had again voiced his opposition in the House of Lords. He had insisted that this new agreement was yet another reversal of previous British commitments. The new agreement was a demonstration of continued British weakness, which would earn the British nothing but contempt from Kruger's government and which would only reinforce the belief among the Boers that aggression and firmness would always lead to British concessions. He had even opposed the changing of the name of the Transvaal to the South African Republic because he feared that those "of the same blood and race" who lived outside its borders would make similar demands against British authority. The convention sanctioned a Boer nationalist ideology, which would, in time, undermine British influence and authority in the region.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ House of Lords debate, March 11, 1881, *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. 259, cols. 783-5; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1881/mar/11/question-observations> (accessed February 11, 2012).

³¹⁷ House of Lords debate, March 31, 1881, *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. 260, cols. 314-9; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1881/mar/31/south-africa-the-transvaal-negotiations> (accessed February 12, 2012).

³¹⁸ House of Lords debate, March 17, 1884, *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. 286, cols. 10-1; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1884/mar/17/question-observations> (accessed February 12, 2012).

While British public attention had drifted away from events in South Africa to other parts of the world by the time Salisbury's last ministry took over the helm of government, it quickly returned as a result of the Jameson Raid. While Salisbury was untainted by the scandal, he had been aware of an impending revolt in Johannesburg. Writing to Devonshire after the event in early January, he admitted, "It was a matter of common knowledge that the 'Uitlanders' were mediating an attempt to revolt this winter," but insisted that his government had been caught out by "this mad move by Jameson."³¹⁹ He had also been aware of the plan to invade the South African Republic in the event of an Uitlander uprising. Chamberlain had, in fact, informed him in late December that the uprising was imminent and that "it ought to turn to our advantage."³²⁰ Salisbury offered tentative support for Chamberlain's plans and indicated his willingness to use British power to help the Uitlanders and to keep the Germans in line, acknowledging, "If we get to actual fighting, it will be very difficult to keep the Cape forces—or our own—out of the fray." He was not, however, willing to participate in any conspiracy to foment Uitlander agitation as a pretext for an incursion into Boer territory, insisting, "It would be better if the revolution which transfers the Transvaal to British rulers were entirely the result of the action of internal forces, and not of Cecil Rhodes' intervention, or of ours."³²¹

While it is clear that Salisbury did not support the Jameson Raid, which took place after British officials already knew that there would be no widespread Uitlander uprising, he shared Chamberlain's (and Rhodes' and Jameson's) goal of British supremacy. This helps explain why

³¹⁹ Salisbury to Devonshire, January 4, 1896, in Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy*, 99.

³²⁰ Chamberlain to Salisbury, December 26, 1895, in Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, 424.

³²¹ Salisbury to Chamberlain, December 30, 1895, in *ibid.*, 425.

Salisbury stood by Chamberlain when the latter was under intense public scrutiny for his alleged involvement in the raid.

Despite the increased challenges that the British faced across the globe, little was done to provide the cabinet with comprehensive strategic military advice. This does not mean that there were no attempts to bring together the pertinent departments in order to generate wide-ranging discussions on imperial defense. In late 1895, the cabinet discussed the benefits of establishing a standing defense committee of the cabinet. Balfour championed the idea, hoping to create a body that would deal with the strategy of imperial defense, improve coordination among the departments, and settle disputes over the budget estimates.³²² Salisbury hoped the committee would “enable the Defensive Departments to act together on all matters on which the action of one affects the other and similarly to facilitate the consultation of the Defensive Departments with other departments of the Government where such consultation may be required.”³²³ A defense committee was subsequently established within the cabinet. This body spent most of its time, however, trying to resolve inter-departmental disputes, particularly those over funding, instead of collaborating on defense issues. The committee never got around to performing its primary tasks of settling “the broad principles of national and imperial defence upon the basis of information from all interested Departments” and determining “the size and composition of the military and naval forces necessary in peace to make a defence policy possible.”³²⁴ Hicks Beach

³²² John P. Mackintosh, “The Role of the Committee of Imperial Defense before 1914,” *The English Historical Review* 77, no. 304 (July 1962): 491–2.

³²³ Salisbury to Balfour, August 28, 1895, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49690, ff. 119–20.

³²⁴ Norman Henry Gibbs, *The Origins of Imperial Defence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 16–7.

would later note that he had “never thought it possible that the Committee of Defence could undertake . . . the work which was suggested for it.”³²⁵

By the mid-1890s, the Treasury had become increasingly concerned about the high levels of government expenditure. Led by a “true Gladstonian” chancellor, the permanent officials within the department adhered to a strict financial orthodoxy that featured low taxation, low expenditure, and balanced budgets.³²⁶ These officials deplored the ever-increasing calls from other government departments for more money, whether the funds were destined for defense spending, imperial development, or the mitigation of domestic social problems.³²⁷ Officers in the War Office habitually over-estimated the department’s requirements in order to obtain the lower level of funding actually necessary to meet their immediate needs. This attempt to game the system, however, increased the intra-department tension between senior military leaders and their civilian superiors because the latter were forced to shrink “the excessive demands” of the department to fit “within the overall limits imposed by the cabinet.” Adhering to these “arbitrary economies” became more important than meeting “any criteria of military efficiency or the requirements of national security.”³²⁸ Both the uncoordinated system of military planning and a deep-seated hesitancy to take any action that might increase government expenditure prevented

³²⁵ Quoted in Mackintosh, “The Role of the Committee of Imperial Defense before 1914,” 492.

³²⁶ Zara S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 24.

³²⁷ E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics, and Ideology of the Conservative Party, 1880-1914* (London: Routledge, 1995), 48–53.

³²⁸ Edward M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902*, Manchester History of the British Army (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 37–9.

the British government from adequately preparing and putting in place a military force large enough to have any deterrent effect in South Africa.

The strength of the British garrison in the South Africa remained strikingly small prior to 1896. The garrison ranged between 3,500 and 4,000 men, divided almost equally between the Cape Colony and Natal.³²⁹ For Field Marshal Garnet Wolseley, the British commander-in-chief, this number was woefully insufficient.³³⁰ In early January 1896, as the early reports of the Jameson Raid fiasco were arriving in London, he recommended to Queen Victoria that the British should keep more troops in South Africa. He argued to her that having Cape Town, the “most important point in a naval point of view of all your Majesty’s possessions in the Eastern Hemisphere,” protected by such a small force of men was irresponsible.³³¹ Such an opinion was nothing new. A decade earlier, a War Office memorandum had declared that since it was “impossible, for political reasons, to create a Gibraltar out of the Cape Town peninsula . . . the permanent retention of the peninsula . . . is dependent upon the maintenance of British ascendancy in all South African colonies.”³³²

³²⁹ Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa*, vol. XL.1, Cd. 1789 (London: HMSO, 1903), 21.

³³⁰ Lord Wolseley, who had been raised to the peerage (first as a baron and then as a viscount) for his service in Egypt in the 1880s, succeeded Prince George, the second duke of Cambridge, as commander-in-chief in November 1895. Queen Victoria’s cousin had served as commander-in-chief for 39 years.

³³¹ Wolseley to Victoria, January 9, 1896, in Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria. Third Series: A Selection from Her Majesty’s Correspondence and Journal Between the Years 1886 and 1901*, ed. George Earle Buckle, vol. 3 (London: J. Murray, 1932), 14–6.

³³² D. M. Schreuder, *Gladstone and Kruger: Liberal Government and Colonial “Home Rule,” 1880-85*, Studies in Political History (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969), 15.

Wolseley was not the only high ranking official to recommend an increase in the size of the garrison in South Africa in the aftermath of the Jameson Raid. Fearful of the effects of the Raid on British domestic serenity and Great Britain's international reputation, Chamberlain urged Salisbury to consider an "act of vigour" . . . to soothe the wounded pride of the nation." While pronouncing anxiously, "It does not much matter which of our numerous foes we defy but we ought to defy someone," he did recommend one specific response, namely "the immediate preparation of a force of troops for Capetown sufficient to make us the masters of the situation in S. Africa."³³³

Reflecting on the British position in South Africa in the aftermath of the Raid, Lord Selborne came to the same conclusion as his boss. For Selborne, the government needed to devise a policy through which British prestige and supremacy could be reasserted. Selborne argued that the British government needed to persuade President Kruger to mitigate the conditions faced by the Uitlanders inside the Transvaal while simultaneously assuaging Afrikaner opinion in the Cape Colony, which had been antagonized by the Raid and Cecil Rhodes's involvement in it.³³⁴ For Selborne, the long-term objective was to create a confederation among the South African states, which would bind them to Great Britain. To

³³³ Chamberlain to Salisbury, January 4, 1896, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, England, JC5/67/39. (Cited hereafter as Chamberlain Papers.)

³³⁴ Cecil Rhodes, the famous mining magnate and staunch imperialist, was serving as the prime minister of the Cape Colony at the time of the Raid.

achieve this long-term objective, however, the British needed to assert its power in the region in the short term, before it was too late.³³⁵

Writing on his own initiative in early 1896, Wolseley sent a minute to his civilian boss, Lord Lansdowne, in which he downplayed the potential military threat posed by the South African Republic and the Orange Free State to the British colonies in South Africa. While he regarded the threat to British forces in the region as insufficient to warrant any considerable increase in the size of the British garrison there, he did recommend a smaller addition of about 3,500 men. He believed that this contingent of reinforcements, consisting of two battalions of infantry, which would be positioned in the Cape Colony, and a regiment of cavalry and a battery of horse artillery, which would be sent to Natal, would impose a “steadying effect on the Boers.” He judged this force adequate to resist any attack from overseas and also to “put down at once any internal troubles fomented amongst the Boers” by any potential outside foe. He recognized, however, that his recommended course of action would not, in and of itself, restore British prestige in the region. He concluded his memorandum with the warning:

To anyone who knows South Africa well, it must be evident that the present state of things, the existing distribution of power in South Africa cannot long continue. To give any further redistribution of it an English character, we should be strong there. At present, and indeed ever since we pulled down our flag after our defeat at Majuba, the Afrikaner, has believed the Boer power to be superior to ours, and Dr. Jameson’s recent surrender, and the policy it has forced upon us, will inevitably tend to strengthen this belief.³³⁶

³³⁵ Draft Memorandum by Selborne, n.d. [January?] [1896?], in Boyce, *Crisis of British Power*, 30–2.

³³⁶ Appendix V to memorandum by Wolseley, in Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa*, XL.1:225–6.

Lansdowne was not interested in sending any substantial number of reinforcements, nor was he willing to incur the additional expenditure that such an action entailed, unless the need for them was fully demonstrated; and Lansdowne explained to the field marshal that he had failed to do so. Lansdowne concluded that the undersized force that Wolseley had recommend was too small to serve as a deterrent; and since the government would inevitably have to send a much larger expeditionary force to the region in the event of hostilities, the slight augmentation of the existing garrison was unnecessary. Lansdowne also reminded Wolseley that the British garrison already in Natal was to be withdrawn in the near future as the colony was scheduled to take over the responsibility for its own defense in 1898, on fifth anniversary of it being granted self-government.³³⁷

Wolseley acknowledged that political and financial difficulties might arise if the government implemented his recommendation to send the additional troops to South Africa and was prepared to accept the Lansdowne's verdict. He pointed out, however, that the maintenance of domestic tranquility by means of financial austerity in no way diminished the risk faced by the British. He used a simple anecdote to stress his point: "A man may be too poor to pay for coals, and if he is, he is quite right not to order any. But the fact that he is right will not prevent his being frozen if the temperature goes too low—the coals would." Wolseley was also dismissive of Lansdowne's suggestion that the troops in Natal would be withdrawn anytime soon. "There

³³⁷ Memorandum by Lansdowne, July 10, 1896, Records of the Cabinet Office (CAB) 37/42/32, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, England (TNA).

is,” he suggested, “no man who really believes that our garrisons . . . in Natal have the smallest chance of being soon diminished; the probabilities are quite the other way.”³³⁸

Meanwhile at the Colonial Office, Selborne continued to insist that the time had come for the British to increase the size of its garrison. He informed Chamberlain that a memorandum from George Fiddes, the private secretary to Sir Robert Meade, the department’s permanent undersecretary, had impressed him.³³⁹ Fiddes had demonstrated to him that the British were going to be unable to uphold their interests in the region with the small force currently in South Africa. Unless the garrison was significantly reinforced, to the largest size compatible with Britain’s defensive requirements elsewhere, and the “outward and visible signs” of imperial power made manifest in the Cape Colony and Natal, British efforts in the region would continue to be hindered.³⁴⁰

Despite his questioning of some of Selborne’s argument and his expressed intention not to “push matters to an issue” in the region, Chamberlain, nevertheless, urged Lansdowne to increase the size of the British garrison by some 5,000 men.³⁴¹ Lansdowne; however, was no more influenced by his fellow minister than he had been by his senior field marshal. He informed Chamberlain that the government had “for some years been robbing our home establishment of battalion after battalion, for Egypt etc., with the result that we now have, instead

³³⁸ Memorandum by Wolseley, October 30, 1896, in Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa*, XL.1:232–3.

³³⁹ Fiddes, who would go to South Africa with Milner as his secretary in 1897, had written a memorandum entitled “The Case Against the South African Republic.”

³⁴⁰ Selborne to Chamberlain, October 6, 1896, in Boyce, *Crisis of British Power*, 40–1.

³⁴¹ Chamberlain to Selborne, October 14, 1896, in *ibid.*, 42.

of equilibrium, 76 abroad to 65 at home. You will readily understand that I should be more reluctant to part with *my 5000 men*, than I should be if we were starting fair.”³⁴² Therefore, Lansdowne insisted, any increase to the garrison in South Africa would require an augmentation to the army’s end strength, something that would be difficult to achieve because it would require parliamentary approval to alter the army estimate for the year.³⁴³

Chamberlain was not deterred by Lansdowne’s reluctance and insisted on taking his proposal to the whole cabinet. Because the “very ignorant and very arrogant” Boers were “swelled with pride” and “quite misinformed” as to real nature of British power, he argued that the diplomatic benefits of strengthening the garrison would more than offset the financial costs. A larger force would demonstrate British resolve and fortify the resolve of the colonial loyalists by giving them “confidence in the Imperial factor,” which there was “too much readiness to ‘eliminate’ at short notice.” A larger garrison would obviously improve the defensive situation by reducing the risk from potential Boer raids into the Cape Colony and Natal until reinforcements arrived from home. Just as important, however, was Chamberlain’s belief that the Boers were always impressed by displays of military strength. As “a visible demonstration of the determination of the Imperial Government to maintain the *status quo*,” the deployment of the extra troops would “prevent the Boers from putting forward impossible claims and from taking aggressive action.” Mindful of the reservations expressed by Lansdowne, Chamberlain pulled his punches by declaring that the problem was not truly urgent—yet. While arguing that a failure to reinforce the garrison might open the government up to attack “both at home and in the

³⁴² Lansdowne to Chamberlain, November 6, 1896, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/20 (emphasis added).

³⁴³ Ibid.

Colonies . . . for culpable negligence” if “the overwhelming consensus of opinion of their fellow countrymen in South Africa” proved correct and tensions in the region led to armed conflict, he agreed that if the extra troops would, in fact, necessitate a vote on money in Parliament, he would be willing to table the matter for the moment.³⁴⁴

Lansdowne responded formally to the cabinet a few weeks later by informing his colleagues that minor increases to garrisons abroad were required not only in South Africa, but also in Bermuda, Malta, and other locations throughout the empire. These reinforcements were necessary because the Admiralty had declared that it was unable to guarantee the protection of or the safe conveyance of reinforcements to the empire’s widely dispersed coaling stations in the event of a conflict with another maritime power. Lansdowne argued that the garrison in the Cape Colony was already sufficient because it was there solely for the purpose of safeguarding the naval stations at Cape Town and Simon’s Bay and was not tasked with the mission of defending the land frontier. In his view, the colony itself was responsible for maintaining a sufficient force of volunteers for its own defense. In fact, he wanted the cabinet to decide whether some of the extra battalions that had been recently sent to the Cape Colony were to be regarded as “permanently quartered” there.³⁴⁵

In early April, 1897, the Colonial Office informed the War Office that tensions with the South Africa Republic, arising primarily from the recently passed the Aliens Immigration Act, which restricted both the number of immigrants and their right to become citizens of the

³⁴⁴ Memorandum by Chamberlain, November 10, 1896, CAB 37/43/45, TNA, and Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/3/39.

³⁴⁵ Memorandum by Lansdowne, December 4, 1896, in Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa*, XL.1:237–40.

republic, had reached a point where it was necessary, in the Colonial Office's opinion, for the British government to warn Kruger about his government's repeated breaches of the London Convention.³⁴⁶ While no offensive show of force was necessary and the diplomatic message to the Boers was not going to be in the form of an ultimatum, the Colonial Office suggested that, in view of the republic's rapidly improving military capabilities and the comparatively defenseless state of the land frontier between the British colonies and the two Boer states, a military response by the Boers could not be entirely ruled out. Reminding Lansdowne that he had "the responsibility of deciding what military measures should be taken, to safeguard the interests of the Empire in South Africa at the present juncture," Chamberlain stressed that any successful Boer offensive would secure for the Boers the support of a great many Cape Afrikaners.³⁴⁷

Salisbury was absent from the cabinet meeting that was held a few days later at Chamberlain's request to discuss the situation, but Chamberlain kept him fully informed of views expressed during the meeting. While the cabinet agreed that the likelihood of a Boer attack was low, they also recognized that British faced a regional rival that had "armed and is persistently arming until now it has a stock of artillery, rifle and ammunition of all sorts enough to furnish a European Army." Chamberlain stressed the need to support the loyalists who were "alarmed at the apparent indifference of the British government to their danger." Consequently, Chamberlain had asked for a regiment of infantry, a brigade of cavalry, and two field batteries of

³⁴⁶ Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, better known as Paul Kruger, was in his third term as the president of the South African Republic.

³⁴⁷ Colonial Office to War Office, April 5, 1897, War Office and Successors: Registered Files (General Series); Overseas: South Africa; Boer War: State of Affairs in South Africa: Situation and Arrangements for Reinforcements, Transport and Supplies in Event of Hostilities with Boers; Intelligence Reports, Correspondence and Dispatches (WO 32/7844), WO 32/7844/079/8234, TNA.

artillery, altogether about 3,500 men, to be sent out immediately. While Lansdowne continued, in Chamberlain's words, to take "the view that it is desirable to do nothing," Hicks Beach, Balfour, and Goschen agreed with Chamberlain that a force should be sent for political reasons because they believed that when shown proof that the British were "in earnest," the Boers would "give way as they have always done." Chamberlain argued that dispatch of additional troops should be framed as a "purely defensive precaution, motivated by the avowed and persistent arming of the Boers, which now amounts to a distinct threat to the Paramount Power."³⁴⁸

After consulting with his senior military staff, Lansdowne acknowledged that the British garrison could not defend the British colonies against a Boer offensive. The frontier was simply too broad for the small garrisons to secure. Lansdowne remained, however, more dubious than his colleagues that the Boers would actually attack. He, thus, discounted the risk of a Boer raid into the Cape Colony to stir up support among the Cape's Afrikaner community. Such a move, in his opinion, would only "exasperate the loyal colonists." He was convinced that the Boers would, instead, fall back on defensive positions, like the recently built fortresses at Pretoria and Johannesburg, and wait there to meet any British offensive. Unconvinced by the arguments made by Chamberlain and other ministers that the reinforcements would serve an important political purpose, he preferred to withhold any additional troops unless and until an ultimatum was necessary. He argued that only when the "moment for putting our foot down had arrived," should an "overwhelming force" of "not less than 40,000 men" be sent.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ Chamberlain to Salisbury, April 8, 1897, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/76.

³⁴⁹ Lansdowne to Salisbury, April 9, 1897, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 248-54.

By now, other ministers were not content to let Chamberlain or Lansdowne be the only voices in the debate. Balfour wrote to Salisbury recommending that the government should follow Chamberlain's advice because it had already allowed him to provoke the Boers. A failure to follow words with action would only increase the risk. Balfour, like Lansdowne, considered a Boer attack unlikely, but he recognized that if the Boers thought they had an opportunity to attack before British reinforcements arrived, they might do so. He somewhat flippantly mused, "Whether the sending out of 3000 or 4000 men will prove to be a sedative or a stimulant."³⁵⁰

While Salisbury was receptive to Chamberlain's general argument, he, nevertheless, expressed reservations about sending additional troops. He was concerned that if tensions between the British and the Boers continued to rise after the government sent more troops to the region, there would be "a disposition" among the British electorate to accuse the government of having provoked a quarrel deliberately. He felt that the smarter move, politically and strategically, was to back a new plan that had been worked out between Lansdowne, Wolseley, Lieutenant-General Sir Redvers Buller, the army's adjutant-general, and Sir Alfred Milner, the recently appointed high commissioner for South Africa and governor of the Cape Colony, to send a smaller force of reinforcements to Natal in order to guard and fortify Laing's Neck, a strategic spur of mountainous land on the border of Natal, jutting out between the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. "No one," Salisbury argued, "could find fault with us for defending such an important point in the face of Kruger's excessive armaments." In his role as foreign minister, he was also concerned that an impetuous action by either side might lead to

³⁵⁰ Balfour to Salisbury, April 10, 1897, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Balfour, fo. 168.

war, which he asserted would have a “very pernicious” effect on European politics. Fearing a “Krieg’s-Verein [*sic*]” between Germany and Holland against Great Britain in the event of a war in South Africa, he was worried, “for reasons therefore wholly unconnected with Africa,” that a war with the Boers “might mean the necessity of protecting the N[orth]E[ast] of England, as well as the South.”³⁵¹

Chamberlain acknowledged the strength of Salisbury’s reasoning. While, he was not as convinced as Salisbury about the lack of domestic support for a war against the Boers, he agreed that war “might easily strain” British relations with Germany. Chamberlain again insisted that the only way of avoiding both war, with the associated risks that he and Salisbury had both addressed, and the “loss of confidence of the British in South Africa,” which would result from British passivity to recent Boer challenges, and which was “of the two . . . the greatest evil,” was to convince Kruger that the British were prepared to defend their interests with all their strength. If Lansdowne and the military high command thought that the Natal alternative was the best option available, Chamberlain was prepared to accept it and was very likely relieved that Lansdowne had finally consented to sending troops no matter how small the contingent.³⁵²

Meanwhile, Selborne kept Milner, informed of the proceedings at home.³⁵³ He was not impressed by the nature of the actions of his superiors in the cabinet and expressed his outrage to the senior British representative in the region. He found their tendency to place a higher priority on budget numbers, which were “simply incomprehensible” when generated in the War Office,

³⁵¹ Salisbury to Chamberlain, April 16, 1897, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/67/77.

³⁵² Chamberlain to Salisbury, April 19, 1897, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/78.

³⁵³ Milner departed for South Africa to take up his dual posts as the governor of the Cape Colony and the high commissioner for South Africa in April 1897.

instead of a thorough evaluation of the appropriate military policy, and an analysis of the number of troops needed on the ground to execute it, was nothing short of sheer “madness.” While he relayed Chamberlain’s opinion that asking for a more significant expenditure—£500,000 instead of the £200,000 already approved—“would be tantamount to a declaration of war and could not be done, not yet at any rate,” he still urged Milner to ask explicitly for reinforcements. “If you deliberately ask for more troops,” he advised, “I believe you will get them. Mr. Chamberlain and I will back up your request.” He also captured the general feeling inside the Colonial Office when he grumbled about the health of civil-military relations within Whitehall: “I wish our military advisers were more precise in their advise [*sic*] and more business-like in their methods.”³⁵⁴

Although Lansdowne had agreed to support more forceful measures, he continued to downplay the threat to British interests in South Africa. He remained unconvinced by Chamberlain’s obviously pessimistic view of the British position in the region and remained unwilling to authorize any expenditure that he thought was unnecessary. He rebuked Chamberlain for the colonial secretary’s observations in Parliament that the reinforcements that had been ordered to Natal were “substantially and practically a permanent increase of the garrison.”³⁵⁵ To Lansdowne, the extra troops were a temporary measure to support British interests in a moment of crisis. He warned Chamberlain that his comments appeared “to go

³⁵⁴ Selborne to Milner, April 29, 1897, Alfred Milner, 1st Viscount Milner, Papers, Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Oxford, England. MSS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 33-35. (Cited hereafter as Milner Papers.)

³⁵⁵ House of Commons debate, April 29, 1897, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 48, col. 1287; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1897/apr/29/final-balance-sheet> (accessed January 10, 2012).

beyond what was intended.”³⁵⁶ Ultimately, two battalions of infantry and three batteries of field artillery were sent to Natal in May, more than doubling the size of the garrison there from 1,881 men to 4,327 men by June 1897.³⁵⁷

When the Boers repealed the Aliens Immigration Act at the beginning of May, it seemed that the British show of force had done the trick, at least that was the lesson that many in British government service learned. To William Conyngham Greene, the British agent in Pretoria, there was a clear connection between the sending of reinforcements and the reduction in Boer intransigence.³⁵⁸ Writing to Selborne, he expressed his growing belief that the Boers would not fight to get out from under the terms of the London Convention and predicted that the pending arrival of the reinforcements in Natal “will have a splendid effect and will be our best guarantee against having to use them.” The Boers, he argued, were accustomed to dealing “forcibly with those whom they know to be weaker than themselves, and this is the line of treatment they best understand.”³⁵⁹

Chamberlain wrote to Milner in July seeking his opinion on the result of the dispatch of additional troops and the naval demonstration that had accompanied it. He wanted to be able to prove to Sir William Harcourt, the powerful Liberal politician who had succeeded Rosebery as the leader of the opposition in late 1896, that “a military remonstrance may be the best possible

³⁵⁶ Lansdowne to Chamberlain, May 5, 1897, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/28.

³⁵⁷ Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa*, XL.1:21–2.

³⁵⁸ William Conyngham Greene had previously served as the chargé d'affaires at Darmstadt, Athens, and The Hague and was transferred from the Foreign Office to take the position in Pretoria.

³⁵⁹ Conyngham Greene to Selborne, June 18, 1897, in Boyce, *Crisis of British Power*, 52.

way of securing peace.”³⁶⁰ In response, Milner echoed the opinion Conyngham Greene had shared with Selborne. Milner was “quite sure that the two measures between them [had] averted war in South Africa.” “The imminent storm” that he had found on his arrival in May had been rapidly dispersed by “the impression made upon their minds by these two actions, wh[ich] they regarded as a clear indication that we meant business, & that they must yield or fight.” Although he favored a conciliatory approach with the Boers, “remembering how much excuse they have for regarding us with suspicion,” he insisted that this policy could only be pursued from a position of strength. “It is no use being conciliatory,” he argued, “if people think you are only conciliatory because you are afraid.”³⁶¹

Milner had made the same points earlier to Goschen at the Admiralty. Commenting on the impact of the naval demonstration, Milner told his old mentor that it had produced “a great effect” and the increase of the garrison had “heightened it.” In Milner’s opinion, Kruger’s government had made “a distinct retreat” that now enabled the British to “treat them in a conciliatory way *without the loss of credit*.” While British prestige in the region had risen as a result of forceful British action, these recent gains would be quickly forfeited if the government failed to keep the extra troops in South Africa.³⁶²

Despite of the apparent success of the show of force, Lansdowne remained reluctant to commit the War Office to expensive and permanent improvements to size and readiness of British forces in South Africa. The official War Office reply to the Colonial Office letter back in

³⁶⁰ Chamberlain to Milner, July 5, 1897, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/7.

³⁶¹ Milner to Chamberlain, August 2, 1897, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/10.

³⁶² Milner to Goschen, June 22, 1897, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 7, ff. 27-8 (emphasis in the original).

April criticized the Colonial Office for leaving “considerable room for doubt with regard to the attitudes of the Transvaal.” It also included a not so subtle reminder that it was the War Office’s responsibility “to provide whatever force is best suited” to support any policy decided by the cabinet. Lansdowne insisted that he was not indisposed to “strengthening our diplomacy,” but would only take “what steps would, within the financial limits, be most effectual.”³⁶³ Only on hearing of Milner’s “strenuous resistance” to any attempt to reduce the garrison, Lansdowne finally agreed to the need to keep a larger force in South Africa, but only after securing the backing of Wolseley and other senior military officers. He continued to express his hope, however, that the British colonies would assume more responsibility for defending their own borders.³⁶⁴

The Colonial Office had successfully maneuvered the War Office into augmenting the British garrison, but fearful of backsliding, Chamberlain and his administrators continued to forward information to the War Office regarding the Boer threat to the British position in South Africa. Conyngham Greene informed Milner that the Boers were continuing to rearm rapidly. In 1895, the Republic had spent £61,903 on armaments. In 1897, that figure had more than quadrupled to £256,291. “It is a matter of gossip,” he informed Milner, “that it is the aim of the Transvaal Government to arm the Free State Burghers and such of the Colonial Boers as may eventually be induced by their offers.”³⁶⁵

Concern about the growing military strength of the Boers was not limited to officials within the Colonial Office. Some branches inside of the War Office grew concerned about the

³⁶³ War Office to Colonial Office, April 28, 1897, WO 32/7844/079/8234, TNA.

³⁶⁴ Memorandum by Lansdowne, October 6, 1897, CAB 37/45/33, TNA.

³⁶⁵ Conyngham Greene to Milner, February 7, 1898, WO 32/7844/079/8501, TNA.

scale of Boer arms importation even if Lansdowne did not. Major-General Sir John Ardagh, the director of military intelligence and Lansdowne's former private secretary, echoed Conyngham Greene's concern about Boer armaments. Writing to the Colonial Office in March 1898, he emphasized that the Boers seemed to have a "definite policy" underlying their military preparations. They planned to "build up a Dutch Oligarchy in South Africa strong enough to shake off English suzerainty when a favourable opportunity offers, and, perhaps, even to carry out the larger dream of a great Dutch independent state . . . with Delagoa Bay as its seaport."³⁶⁶ In order to call Lansdowne's attention to the opinions of his own subordinates, and to not so subtly point out to secretary of state for war that the Colonial Office was aware of the existing divisions within his own ministry, the Colonial Office sent a copy of Ardagh's report back to the War Office to provide for "facility of reference."³⁶⁷

President Kruger's reelection in early 1898 convinced Milner that things in South Africa were probably going to continue going south. In high commissioner's opinion, Kruger had returned to power "more autocratic & more reactionary than ever." Venturing to express his amateur medical diagnosis, Milner suggested, "It would not be surprising if he suffered from megalomania, seeing what he started from & where he is now." While he remained convinced that Kruger would "never take any step, wh[ich] he thinks will provoke us to fight," Milner warned that any distraction in another region of Britain's empire would led Kruger to "assert his independence in a very pointed way." There was no way out of the political troubles in South Africa except through reforms in the South African Republic or war, and the chances of the

³⁶⁶ John Ardagh to Colonial Office, March 17, 1898, WO 32/7844/079/8501, TNA.

³⁶⁷ Colonial Office to War Office, April 6, 1898, WO 32/7844/079/8501, TNA.

former seemed “worse than ever.” Milner urged Chamberlain that the decision on whether the British should pursue a passive or active policy in South Africa must be based on an analysis of “*the Imperial outlook as a whole*.” If it was to be the former, Milner warned him that the British must be prepared “to put up with a good many minor injuries & slights”; while if it was to be the latter, a much larger army would be required.³⁶⁸

Balfour and several other cabinet ministers remained unconvinced of the legalities of the British position in the region. In a letter to Chamberlain, he explained that his “perplexities” arose principally from his belief that if the South African Republic was dealt with on “ordinary principles,” there did not “seem to be anything like a *casus belli* established.” He questioned whether any “peculiarities” in the nature of British relations with the South African Republic justified British saber rattling. While the “state of things” was “without parallel in history,” he urged a more thorough discussion of British policy within the cabinet. He warned that it could not simply be dismissed as “Metaphysics” as it had been done in a recent meeting. He feared that continued British dispatches, which expressed the government’s unhappiness with the goings on inside the South African Republic, would only “make our position in the eyes of our friends worse than it is at present.”³⁶⁹

After Milner abruptly broke off negotiations at the Bloemfontein conference in early May 1899, Wolseley submitted a memorandum to the cabinet in which he captured his updated views on the situation in South Africa. He recommended that a complete army corps of 50,000 men would have to be sent to South Africa in the event of a war with the Boers. He urged the

³⁶⁸ Milner to Chamberlain, February 23, 1898, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/18 (emphasis in original).

³⁶⁹ Balfour to Chamberlain, May 6, 1899, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49773, (missing folio #).

government to consider “to what extent shall we at once prepare for this contingency” and also requested that the cabinet consider whether the necessary preparations to send such a large force should be kept secret once initiated. He recommended a public display. The mobilization of the army corps on the Salisbury plain, under the guidance of its commanding general, would, in the field marshal’s opinion, demonstrate British determination to the Boers and the rest of the world. Just as importantly, it could be done without calling out the reserves, which meant it could be done without consulting Parliament.³⁷⁰

Salisbury and the cabinet were not prepared to make large-scale military preparations yet, because, as Salisbury informed Queen Victoria, “any actual breach” with Kruger’s government “would not be cordially supported” in Great Britain and would “cleave the Colonial community at the Cape into two hostile camps.”³⁷¹ As a result, the cabinet, while still anxious about the course of events, was not prepared to present anything resembling an ultimatum to Kruger or to go beyond pursuing diplomacy in a non-escalatory manner. While not prepared to send reinforcements, the cabinet did agree to take the steps necessary to put British forces “in a state of full efficiency.”³⁷² Consequently, some special service officers were sent to South Africa to enhance the organization of the garrison in the Cape Colony. Funding was also approved to improve the transportation arrangements of the existing garrison and to expand its stockpile of ammunition. The War Office also formally named Buller, by now the commanding general of

³⁷⁰ Memorandum by Wolseley, June 8, 1899, CAB 37/50/38, TNA.

³⁷¹ Salisbury to Queen Victoria, June 13, 1899, CAB 41/25/12, TNA.

³⁷² Salisbury to Queen Victoria, June 20, 1899, CAB 41/25/13, TNA.

the British First Corps, as the commander of the expeditionary force to be sent to South Africa should that become necessary.³⁷³

After his appointment, Lansdowne brought Buller into the War Department in early July and pressed the newly appointed commander if he support the sending of an additional 10,000 men to South Africa as an enhanced deterrent. Wolseley was simultaneously asked to consider the necessary arrangements to send such a force. A few days later, Buller and Wolseley responded, but expressed differing opinions on the matter. Buller was opposed to sending any portion of the main field force in advance of the rest of the complement. He did not think the additional troops would deter the Boers in any way, but would actually be “rather like putting bait out.” They would not be capable of defending themselves without the rest of the expeditionary force and would “simply be lost.” Wolseley disagreed. He thought sending the 10,000-man, advanced contingent would serve as an “open demonstration” of British “warlike policy” and would, simultaneously be “an efficacious method” of strengthening the British military position in the region.³⁷⁴

Just as these military opinions were being presented to and debated within the cabinet, new diplomatic proposals arrived from South Africa. As the Boer proposals initially seemed to present the British a chance to renew negotiations, the cabinet set aside any plans for sending another contingent of troops while they considered the new concessions offered by the Kruger. Chamberlain informed Milner, “If these [concessions as reported in newspaper telegrams] are

³⁷³ Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa*, vol. XLI.1, Cd. 1791 (London: HMSO, 1903), 185.

³⁷⁴ Memorandum by Buller, July 6, 1899; Wolseley’s comments, July 7, 1899, CAB 37/50/43; *Ibid.*, XLI.1:185.

really substantial it will be practically impossible for us to find a *casus belli* in minor difference.” He believed that the best course of action was to “accept them for what they pretend to be & if they fail of their object or prove subsequently to have been made in bad faith our case will be stronger than it has ever been.”³⁷⁵ Salisbury was thankful for the apparent turn of events and was “much impressed” with the “more pacific tone” of his fellow cabinet ministers.³⁷⁶

Milner, however, was incensed by the government’s unwillingness to take preventive action. Delays in forcing the action only brought the British closer to the summer in the southern hemisphere, when, “with the grass on the veld, the Boer as mounted infantryman, is twice the man he is in winter when he has to transport forage.” He complained to Selborne about the tone of Chamberlain’s telegrams: “He seems now *to wish to patch up*, not merely to wish to show that negotiation [*sic*] is being tried to the uttermost.” This perceived shift in approach was a mistake in Milner’s opinion. He believed the Boers “mean to give nothing real” but to “adroitly cheat us over” the ongoing negotiations.³⁷⁷ To Chamberlain, Milner argued for the need to keep the pressure on Kruger’s regime to make them honor the concessions they had just offered. In order to do that, the balance of forces in South Africa had to be shifted in favor of the British.³⁷⁸

Chamberlain and the rest of the cabinet, however, remained unwilling to appear intransigent after appearing to have won the Boer concessions they desired. When the South African Republic clarified their proposals by reducing the residency requirements for the

³⁷⁵ Chamberlain to Milner, July 7, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/39.

³⁷⁶ Salisbury to Queen Victoria, July 11, 1899, CAB 41/25/16, TNA.

³⁷⁷ Milner to Selborne, July 12, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 165-9 (emphasis in the original).

³⁷⁸ Milner to Chamberlain, July 16, 1899, in Cecil Headlam, ed., *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1897-1899*, vol. 1 (London: Cassell & Company, 1931), 511.

franchise from nine years to seven years, the cabinet was ecstatic. Chamberlain informed Salisbury that “all the news from the Transvaal to-day is satisfactory and that I am really sanguine that the crisis is over.” “If my expectations are justified by official confirmation tomorrow,” Chamberlain continued, “the result will be a triumph of moral pressure—accompanied by Special Service officers and 3 Batteries of Artillery.”³⁷⁹ Salisbury was equally satisfied with the apparent victory. “I congratulate you most heartily for what is really a great diplomatic success,” he wrote to Chamberlain, “It was not easy to persuade . . . Kruger that we were in earnest.” But like Milner, Salisbury warned, “There are other things you still want; and above all, it is necessary to guard against backsliding.” To achieve this Salisbury pressed Chamberlain “at the risk of what I fear you will think is undue iteration” to station troops along the Republic’s northern border where they would be free from the parliamentary “shackle” of the self-governing British colonies.³⁸⁰ Chamberlain agreed that vigilance was necessary because “our present gains may all be taken from us by ‘conditions’ or by acts of bad faith.”³⁸¹

In early August, the cabinet began to realize that the situation was not as rosy as they had hoped. The Boers were apparently unwilling to respond to British proposals to establish a joint commission to investigate how the Boer proposals would actually be implemented. Chamberlain grew increasingly frustrated, informing Salisbury that he was “without any official news from the Transvaal,” and had instructed Milner “to press for an immediate reply & failing this to

³⁷⁹ Chamberlain to Salisbury, July 18, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/160.

³⁸⁰ Salisbury to Chamberlain, July 19, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/67/114.

³⁸¹ Chamberlain to Salisbury, July 20, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Chamberlain, fo. 155.

appoint his own Commission at once.”³⁸² Meanwhile, Lansdowne presented the cabinet a memorandum from his ministry, which provided detailed information on how much time would be necessary “between the occurrence of an event rendering hostilities with the Transvaal inevitable” and the arrival and subsequent “concentration” in the northern region so Natal of Buller’s force.³⁸³

Lansdowne’s timeline was not at all what his fellow ministers expected. He explained that an army corps would take more than a month to embark for South Africa, unless everything had been prepared in advance, which would cost substantial sums of money. Because no preparations had been taken to date and because of the existing shortages in equipment and transport, which would take three months to rectify, any mobilization ordered now would take significantly longer. He estimated that it would take four months before the mobilized corps was in place and ready for operations in South Africa. If the government was willing to spend £1 million to make preliminary preparations, the War Office could shave one month off that timeline.³⁸⁴

Salisbury’s reaction was most certainly not unique among the cabinet members. “I am quite as much afflicted as you can be at the calculation of the War Office,” he informed Chamberlain. He was so flabbergasted that he did not feel it appropriate to make “any detailed criticism” of the War Office “as it might be uncivil.” He, nonetheless, did not think it was worth spending £1 million to reduce the timeline by one month. “I think the wiser plan is not to incur

³⁸² Chamberlain to Salisbury, August 15, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Chamberlain, fo. 156.

³⁸³ Memorandum by Lansdowne, August 12, 1899, CAB 37/50/59, TNA.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

any serious expenditure,” he recommended, “until it is quite clear that we are going to war.” While he recognized that this decision might “add slightly to the initial delay in our operations,” he did not think the “slight addition” would “increase materially the scandal which will certainly be created by the condition of our military preparations.”³⁸⁵

As the cabinet mulled over Lansdowne’s mobilization timeline bombshell, Wolseley attempted to return the cabinet’s attention to the continuing weakness of British defenses in Natal. The field marshal urged the cabinet to order the immediate deployment of a 10,000-man contingent to the colony. These reinforcements would be used to occupy the strategically, and for the loyal colonialists politically, important area in northwest Natal known as the triangle. This force would be used to both secure the triangle and to establish a base for offensive operations once the remainder of the army corps arrived.³⁸⁶

The cabinet rejected Wolseley’s recommendations because favorable news once again arrived from South Africa. While everyone inside the government was aware that these new proposals from Kruger’s government, like those of July, might not pan out, Chamberlain, nevertheless, informed Lansdowne that they “justified some delay in proceeding with preparations which would involve heavy expenditure.”³⁸⁷ When the Boers put conditions on their proposals only a few days after presenting them, the cabinet had to face the fact that firm commitments by the Boers were unlikely in the present state of affairs.

From South Africa, Milner continued to plead with Chamberlain that the results of the ongoing negotiations with the South African Republic all depended on British “staying power.”

³⁸⁵ Salisbury to Chamberlain, August 16, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/67/115.

³⁸⁶ Memorandum by Wolseley, August 18, 1899, CAB 37/50/52, TNA.

³⁸⁷ Chamberlain to Lansdowne, August 18, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/63.

Milner argued that Kruger's regime would eventually capitulate "if we don't weaken, or rather if we go on steadily turning the screw." He, like Chamberlain, complained of the reluctance of the War Office to incur any additional expenses, which Milner declared, "can alone account for proceedings on the part of the W[ar] O[ffice] wh[ich] would otherwise indicate pure imbecility." As a result, the British representatives in the colonies had suffered "the maximum amount of fuss . . . about [the] increase of armaments with the minimum of result."³⁸⁸

Frustrated by Boer backtracking and urged on by Milner's pleas, Chamberlain felt that the time was ripe for an additional, substantial demonstration of British power. Warned by Milner that the interval between the "first certain announcement of [an] expedition and [the] arrival of any considerable portion of it," was the period of greatest danger, during which a "serious mishap" would likely bring the Orange Free State in to the conflict on the side of the South African Republic, a warning which was reinforced by Wolseley's observation that as a result of current British weakness "we shall surrender the initiative to Kruger; and in no recent case that I can think would, or, at least properly handled, could that initiative be more likely to seriously injure our national prestige, or be more hurtful to the party in office," Chamberlain urged Lansdowne once again to dispatch the previously discussed 10,000-man contingent to Natal.³⁸⁹ For once, Lansdowne acquiesced with little resistance. He informed Chamberlain that it was Chamberlain's responsibility to determine the "psychological moment" when troops

³⁸⁸ Milner to Chamberlain, August 16, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/47.

³⁸⁹ Milner to Chamberlain, August 22, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. dep. 229, ff. 83-4; Wolseley to Lansdowne, August 24, 1899, CAB 37/50/56, TNA; Chamberlain to Lansdowne, August 24, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/70.

should be ordered to South Africa.³⁹⁰ If now was that time, he would not stand in the way. While still complaining to Salisbury about the enormous expense that would be incurred in keeping a large force permanently in Natal, Lansdowne nonetheless recognized the need to send the contingent from Britain and to prepare “to send off the Indian contingent at any moment.”³⁹¹

While he was a vocal advocate of sending a strong, and costly, signal to the Boers, Chamberlain was neither altogether ignorant of the costs of the additional troops nor overly optimistic of the effect they might have on the rising tensions in South Africa. He admitted to Salisbury that it was possible that Kruger and his government might be “willing to *reculer pour mieux sauter*.” If this occurred, the British would be forced to maintain a “wholly disproportionate force” in the colonies, thus “incurring great expense and disorganizing our precious 3 battalion system.”³⁹²

When the Boers pulled their latest proposals off the table on September 2, Chamberlain was not surprised. He informed Salisbury that he had no doubt that Kruger would “now only yield, if at all, to the fear of force.”³⁹³ Chamberlain was not altogether confident, however, in the ability of the War Office to provide the necessary fear factor. He complained to Lansdowne about the “fatality” evident in the military advice provided to the cabinet and was worried that

³⁹⁰ Lansdowne to Chamberlain, September 1, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/73.

³⁹¹ Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 1, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 431-2. Of all the difficulties that still had to be overcome, the most humorous was certainly Lansdowne’s gripe that it seemed impossible to keep a sufficient stock of “those wretched mules which are the root of all evil. “Will no one,” he pleaded, “invent a ‘motor mule.’”

³⁹² Chamberlain to Salisbury, August 27, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Chamberlain, fo. 158.

³⁹³ Chamberlain to Salisbury, September 2, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Chamberlain, fo. 159.

the availability of forces for rapid deployment was diminishing as the government approached “the time of action.” He hoped that the army was not affected with an “‘Etat major’ like the French who are ‘ready to the last button’ the day before a crowning disaster and break-down.”³⁹⁴ To Milner, he was even more blunt about his displeasure with events inside the government. “The War Office is not an ideal institution,” he complained, “the other day they were ready ‘to the last button’—now they talk of four months before they can put an army corps to the front.” As for the Treasury, he told Milner he would refrain from open criticism, as “you were yourself an ornament of that great department,” but his censure of the department for its parsimony was still unmistakable.³⁹⁵

Despite Chamberlain’s grumblings, the cabinet now appeared to be united on the need for a more forceful policy in South Africa. One critical issue, however, had somehow escaped their attention. It was up to Buller to break the bad news. He reminded Salisbury, “There must be some period at which the military and the diplomatic or political forces are brought into line, and in my view this ought to be before action is determined on.” It was all well and good for the cabinet to decide what the government wanted, but “before the diplomat proceeds to an ultimatum,” Buller kindly suggested, “the military should be in a position to enforce it.”³⁹⁶

Wolseley supported Buller’s view of the matter and explained his view of the situation at length:

We have lost time—a misfortune in war and in preparing for war. . . . We must endeavour to make up for this military mistake by the skill of our diplomacy. . . . We have committed one of the greatest blunders in war, we have given to our enemy the initiative. The Government are acting without complete knowledge of what the military can do, while the military authorities on their side are equally without full knowledge of

³⁹⁴ Chamberlain to Lansdowne, September 2, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/74.

³⁹⁵ Chamberlain to Milner, September 2, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 180-2.

³⁹⁶ Buller to Salisbury, September 5, 1899, JC 10/3/133.

what the Government expects them to do. . . . I submit that it is urgently necessary that our diplomacy and our military preparations should work hand in hand.³⁹⁷

What was most important now, he stressed, was the need to “stave off actual hostilities for five or six weeks to enable us to collect in Natal the military force I have all along recommended should be sent there.”³⁹⁸

With this warning about the need to match ends and means, Chamberlain continued to press his colleagues in the cabinet and reminded them, for the umpteenth time, of his opinion that the Boers had historically backed down only in the face of force. He warned them that if they failed to resolve the crisis now, “We shall have to maintain permanently in South Africa a very large garrison, at a great expense to the British taxpayer, and involving the utter disorganization of our military system.”³⁹⁹ As a result of Chamberlain’s argument, which was supported by Buller’s and Wolseley’s pleas, the cabinet decided to send an additional 10,000 men to Natal, to augment the 10,000 men ordered there in August.⁴⁰⁰ Chamberlain advised Milner that “a new phase” was being entered and informed him that “important developments” were likely in the immediate future.⁴⁰¹

The cabinet may have shown solidarity in sending this latest contingent of troops, but it remained divided on the issue of a more general mobilization. Chamberlain recognized that “thanks to the imperfect information of the W[ar] Office, we may be in a position of some risk so far as outlying places are concerned,” but he did not think the government would lessen this risk

³⁹⁷ Wolseley to Lansdowne, Memorandum, September 5, 1899, CAB 37/50/69, TNA.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ Memorandum by Chamberlain, September 6, 1899, CAB 37/50/70, TNA.

⁴⁰⁰ Salisbury to Queen Victoria, September 8, 1899, CAB 41/25/18, TNA.

⁴⁰¹ Chamberlain to Milner, September 8, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/52.

by waiting five weeks before announcing the decision to mobilize. He wrote to Salisbury: "I do not see how we are to play the Boers during this time. If they mean to take advantage of our weakness they will move before the Indian Troops arrive." He was also "aghast" at the idea of leaving the populations both at home and in South Africa "in the slightest doubt as to the intentions of the Government." He concluded by arguing that delay would be an "absolutely fatal and . . . impossible policy."⁴⁰²

Salisbury was more hesitant. He did not agree with Chamberlain in the "the matter of pace," nor was he confident in the ability of the forces already in Natal to hold "exposed points," especially if the Orange Free State joined with the South African Republic, which he admitted seemed probable. He suggested that no action should be taken that might precipitate an attack until the latest British reinforcements arrived, which was still five weeks away. While he was not opposed to the general course of British policy toward South Africa, he urged that the government "should not show any symptoms of unjust haste—yet."⁴⁰³ As for Chamberlain's view of placating public opinion, Salisbury thought the issue was much less serious and that it was unwise to run any serious risks in order to "justify for the moment" public opinion either at home or in South Africa. He was particularly dismissive of public opinion in the latter because "as they must come to us—because they have no one else to go to—their wrath does not matter very much."⁴⁰⁴

As was his habit, Lansdowne was reluctant to mobilize too early. He argued that the government's next dispatch, however likely to precipitate hostilities, would not be more likely to

⁴⁰² Chamberlain to Salisbury, September 18, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/180.

⁴⁰³ Salisbury to Chamberlain, September 18, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/67/122.

⁴⁰⁴ Salisbury to Chamberlain, September 19, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/67/124.

do so than the announcement that the British were mobilizing an army corps. He suggested: “If it is desirable—and I think it is—to avoid provocation during the next three or four weeks, will it not be better (if we can do so without ultimate loss of time) to put off mobilization until those three or four weeks are over.” With this delay, Natal would be reinforced to about 15,000 men, including 9 batteries of field artillery and 5 regiments of cavalry, and would be, in his opinion, “thoroughly safe.” Any move to mobilize immediately would both increase the risk of attack during the vulnerable period and pull the reservists away from their employment before the time had come for embarking them for South Africa, “thereby inflicting a hardship upon the men themselves, their families, and their employers.”⁴⁰⁵

While the cabinet finally authorized the arrangement of the necessary transport for the army corps near the end of September, they still did not call out the reserves. Wolseley was frustrated by the inability of the cabinet to take what he saw as the obviously necessary steps. He complained to Ardagh, his director of military intelligence, that the British had lost two months “through the absolute folly of our Cabinet & the incapacity of its members to take in the requirements & difficulties of war.” The army was now, as ever, faced with having to overcome the “obstacles created by the folly & war ignorance of civilian ministers & War Office clerks.”⁴⁰⁶

After losing another week to debate, the cabinet approved the plan for mobilizing the reserves. Lansdowne recommended that the reserves be mobilized by an order of the queen on October 7, with Parliament meeting ten days later, as required, to sanction the action. According

⁴⁰⁵ Memorandum by Lansdowne, September 21, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 435-9.

⁴⁰⁶ Wolseley to Ardagh, September 23, 1899, quoted in SurrIDGE, *Managing the South African War*, 52.

to the memorandum drawn up by him, the mobilization would be completed within two weeks and the first troops would begin arriving in the Cape Colony by mid-November. The entire army corps, however, would not arrive until mid-December.⁴⁰⁷ Referring to this long lead time, Chamberlain reflected to Milner a few days later that it was unfortunate that British troops, unlike the Boers, could not mobilize “with a piece of biltong and a belt of ammunition,” but required “such enormous quantities of transport and impediments” that rapid deployment was an impossibility.⁴⁰⁸

After months of debate and disagreement, the cabinet had finally made the decision for war. While the cabinet was generally confident that everything that needed to be done had been done to bring the crisis to a head while at the same time safeguarding British interests in the region, there remained divisions among its members as to what lay ahead. While Lansdowne warned the cabinet that a war with the Boers would mean “fighting an enemy more formidable than any whom we have encountered for many years past, and we should see to it that we meet him under conditions giving us the incontestable superiority in the field,” other members of the cabinet continued to downplay Boer strength.⁴⁰⁹ “My opinion is, and it has always been, that both Milner & the military authorities greatly exaggerate the risks & dangers of this campaign,” declared Hicks Beach, “I have never believed that the Boers would take the offensive at this stage—nor do I fear a British reverse if they do.”⁴¹⁰ Chamberlain also suggested that Milner had

⁴⁰⁷ Memorandum from Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 30, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 442-3.

⁴⁰⁸ Chamberlain to Milner, October 5, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 187-8.

⁴⁰⁹ Lansdowne memorandum “Strength of South African Force,” October 3, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/3/131.

⁴¹⁰ Hicks Beach to Chamberlain, October 7, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/4/2/53.

“been ‘scared’ about Natal and Mafeking,” and assured Lansdowne that “the Boers would not cross at this stage—and that if they did they would almost certainly find a British garrison in its own fortified position a very hard nut to crack.”⁴¹¹ Wolseley for his part wrote Queen Victoria that if war was to come, “We shall be obliged to send the largest force that has ever left our shores to take part in it, and the distance being great, it will be in all respects the most serious business we have ever had on hand.”⁴¹²

Opinion in South Africa as to the precariousness of the British position was also divided. Milner continued to fret over the interval between the arrival of the first contingent of 10,000 reinforcements due in mid-October and the arrival of the entire army corps in mid-December. He warned Chamberlain that he foresaw that any early reverses without the prospect of further reinforcements until mid-November at the earliest “would discourage our men and give a tremendous impetus to the enemy” and that the British “might lose in a few weeks what it would take months to recover.”⁴¹³ Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, the governor in Natal, on the other hand, believed that as “ominous” as things seemed, the Boers would not be “so crack-brained as to strike the first blow at us.” He informed Chamberlain in late September that the colonial volunteers had been called out and were scheduled to be in place in a few days. More importantly, the first Indian troops were scheduled to begin arriving soon and “a week later we ought to be in a position which will satisfy even those who are most disposed to be timid.”⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹ Chamberlain to Lansdowne, October 7, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/88.

⁴¹² Wolseley to Queen Victoria, September 12, 1899, in Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3:397–9.

⁴¹³ Milner to Chamberlain, October 8, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/71.

⁴¹⁴ Hely-Hutchinson to Chamberlain, September 29, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/7/112.

While Chamberlain was one of those who downplayed the Boer threat, he was already blaming the War Office for the lack of preparations. “If there is any real danger,” he declared to Balfour, “I blame the War Office very much for not having insisted on the despatch of more troops when I first proposed it.” His initial call for reinforcements had been based on his political calculations, but, he insisted, if the British position was so weak militarily “that we cannot hold our own for ten days, the War Office ought to have insisted on reinforcements.” To buy time, Milner was now compelled to engage President Steyn in “some sort of correspondence which may be drawn out till the reinforcements arrive,” and Chamberlain feared that “our controversial position will be weakened in the meantime by the military necessity of playing for delay.”⁴¹⁵

The political considerations of military action were still being debated in the last few days of peace. Writing to Chamberlain in early October, Balfour shared his impression that British relations with the Orange Free State might “prove to be our ‘Achilles Heel.’” He worried that the government’s critics would attack any policy that suggested an intolerance of independence within the sphere of the free republics. “Anything which looks like deliberately picking a quarrel with the Orange Free State will greatly aggravate the rhetorical effect of this accusation,” he declared, “and yet we have committed ourselves (rightly, as I think) to a military policy which makes a breach with the Free State an absolute necessity.”⁴¹⁶ Chamberlain, however, was more concerned with buying time for the reinforcements to arrive: “If we get

⁴¹⁵ Chamberlain to Balfour, October 3, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/5/83, and Balfour Papers, Add MS 49773, ff. 177-8.

⁴¹⁶ Balfour to Chamberlain, October 2, 1899, Balfour Papers, Add MS 49773, ff. 173-6.

through safely till then we shall have to reconsider the position and probably to send a definite summons to the Orange Free State once for all to declare itself.”⁴¹⁷

The British effort to buy time failed. Kruger preempted the ultimatum that Chamberlain was preparing to send by sending one of his own. In it, he demanded the withdrawal of British troops on the borders of the Boer republic, of the reinforcements that had reached South Africa since the beginning of June, and of troops currently en route. By preempting the British, Kruger allowed them to present themselves as the victims of aggression and, in doing so, sacrificed a permanent propaganda advantage for a temporary military advantage.⁴¹⁸ Lansdowne congratulated Chamberlain: “I don’t think Kruger could have played your cards better than he has.”⁴¹⁹ Chamberlain was indeed happy at the turn of events. The move by the Boers, he assured the Queen, had brought on the “inevitable conflict . . . under circumstances which must unite every loyal subject . . . in its energetic prosecution.” He dismissed any concern about British vulnerability caused by the delayed arrival of the most recently mobilized troops because “the peculiar organization of the Boer army makes it difficult for them to endure a long campaign and it even possible that many of them may go home to their farms without waiting for an attack.”⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ Chamberlain to Balfour, October 3, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/5/83, and Balfour Papers, Add MS 49773, ff. 177-8.

⁴¹⁸ Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 221.

⁴¹⁹ Lansdowne to Chamberlain, October 10, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC5/51/89.

⁴²⁰ Chamberlain to Victoria, October 12, 1899, in Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3:406–7.

Chamberlain was wrong. Even as he mobilized the House of Commons to rally around the flag, including a speech that Sir Edward Grey praised as the “fairest and most telling expression of the relations between Great Britain and the Transvaal I have yet seen,” the Boers were on the move in South Africa.⁴²¹ Pre-empting the British military advance was a gamble by the Boers, but it was one based on the Transvaal’s history of successful revolt in the 1880s, which suggested that British ministers would not stand their ground after a sharp setback. The move, however, made the Boers appear as aggressors and contributed to the sense of unforced national unity in Great Britain.

Salisbury clearly failed to exercise the necessary political leadership over his ministry during the building crisis in South Africa. While he was an experienced prime minister working with a cabinet of equally experienced ministers, he failed to reverse his practice of granting significant autonomy to his fellow cabinet members even when it became evident that the country was likely heading towards war. Unlike McKinley, who drove the American government along the road to annexation of the Philippines, Salisbury refused to take the wheel and thus failed to prevent hostilities by negotiation or by deterrence, or some combination of both. If, as he publically acknowledged in a speech to the House of Lords in mid-October, the fundamental question had always been one of suzerainty, he should have taken more care to ensure the War Office made the large-scale military moves necessary to deter the Boers from military action. The defiance of the Boer government might have indeed been so “audacious” that it “liberated” the British government from having to provide lengthy explanations to the

⁴²¹ Grey to Chamberlain, October 20, 1899, in Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/5/2/4.

British public, but this does not excuse the British government from being caught short.⁴²²

While Salisbury deflected blame and dismissed as “exaggerated” any notion that Kruger might have been provoked by overly offensive language in British dispatches, which had warned that the British might intervene militarily if Uitlander rights were not secured through negotiations, Salisbury had failed to connect the ends and means of British strategy in South Africa. While the war was, at least in his mind, a contest to determine whether the region was to be “a growing and increasingly Dutch supremacy or a safe, perfectly established supremacy of the English Queen,” he privately lamented that he had not been able to gain his objectives without war.⁴²³ Writing to Lansdowne in August, he had complained that war in South Africa, should one occur, would be waged “for people whom we despise and for territory which will bring no profit and no power to England.”⁴²⁴ While his acumen in prophesy should be acknowledged, so should his failure in leadership.

⁴²² House of Lords debate, October 17, 1899, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 77, col. 17; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1899/oct/17/address-in-answer-to-her-majestys-most> (accessed January 23, 2012).

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, col. 22.

⁴²⁴ Salisbury to Lansdowne, August 30, 1899, in Grenville, *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy*, 269.

Chapter 3: Root and the War Department

With his administration firmly committed to annexing the Philippines, McKinley needed someone to deal with the consequences of that decision, namely putting down an armed insurrection and establishing some form of colonial administration. The man the president tasked with finding solutions to both problems was Elihu Root, arguably the foremost corporate attorney of the time.⁴²⁵ As the secretary of war under McKinley and Roosevelt, Root served as both presidents' point man on colonial issues and was, therefore, responsible for the formation and implementation of the American colonial policy in the Philippines. William Howard Taft, America's first civil governor in the Philippines, later recalled that Root "more than any other man initiated our Philippine policy" and was responsible for its successful formulation and implementation "from the standpoint of statesmanship and far-sightedness."⁴²⁶ Operating within a constitutional system where institutions are designed to come into conflict and actors within the government often jealously guard their own institutional prerogatives, Root was able to limit congressional oversight and maximize executive and bureaucratic discretion in the management of the Philippines.

In the aftermath of the war with Spain, there was widespread criticism of the War Department's performance. As the huge influx of raw American troops had been assembled into hastily improvised camps, the combination of inexperienced soldiers and an army organization ill-prepared for the organizational and logistical challenges of rapid expansion and the overseas

⁴²⁵ For a general biography Root, see Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 2 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1938); Richard William Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition*, The Library of American Biography (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954).

⁴²⁶ Quoted in Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, 2:500.

deployment of multiple expeditionary forces generated a multitude of problems. Even the rapid victory over Spain did little to suppress the criticism of the army's performance, including most especially that of its most senior leader, Secretary Alger. In response to these complaints, and in an effort to prevent Congress from controlling the scope of any investigation into one of his executive departments, McKinley appointed a commission to investigate the numerous grievances that had been voiced officially or in the press and to inquire into the army's overall management of the war. Although the president of the twelve-man commission, Grenville M. Dodge, a successful businessman and railroad executive who had served as a major general during the Civil War and as a one-term congressman, was sympathetic to Alger, the final report of the Dodge Commission criticized the War Department's overall lack of efficient administration and discipline during the war. It pointed to longstanding organizational problems as the basic culprit and proposed a fundamental reorganization of the military establishment.⁴²⁷ While the report cleared Alger of all charges of corruption and of "intentional neglect of duty" and avoided reprimanding him by name, it did include an unmistakable note of criticism, concluding that "there was lacking in the general administration of the War Department during the continuance of the war with Spain that complete grasp of the situation which was essential to the highest efficiency and discipline of the Army."⁴²⁸ McKinley concluded, however, that Alger

⁴²⁷ Cosmas, *An Army for Empire*, 278–97.

⁴²⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of the Commission Appointed by the President to Investigate the Conduct of the War Department in the War with Spain*, vol. 1, 56th Cong., 1st sess., S. Doc 221 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), 115.

was a political albatross who had to go.⁴²⁹ When Alger resigned under heavy fire in August 1899, the overwhelming challenge of making fundamental changes in the department while simultaneously directing the management of the new empire fell to his successor.

McKinley understood that he needed someone to help him develop a functioning colonial administration and selected Root to fill the department's top spot before Alger's letter even reached his inbox. Although he had never run for public office himself, Root had experience in local and state politics in New York.⁴³⁰ As a Republican activist and a corporate lawyer, Root possessed a unique understanding of both American electoral politics and the fundamentals of corporate organization. According to one scholar of the period, "The late nineteenth century was a time for electoral politics and party organization; the early twentieth century was a time for experts and bureaucratic organization. Root not only adapted to the times, he bridged the gap between new and old organizational models."⁴³¹ McKinley turned to Root not only for his solid Republican credentials, but also for his extensive experience in restructuring complicated organizations.

A New York corporate lawyer with no previous military experience was not the obvious choice to head the War Department.⁴³² Root referred to this fact in his initial response to

⁴²⁹ Roosevelt and Lodge had made the same conclusion months before. See Roosevelt to Lodge, April 27, 1899 and Lodge to Roosevelt, May 11, 1899, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:397–9 and 400–1.

⁴³⁰ Root helped a young Roosevelt gain a nomination for the state assembly and later ran his unsuccessful campaign for mayor of New York City. See Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition*, 22.

⁴³¹ Warren Zimmermann, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 214.

⁴³² While McKinley had served four years with the Union army after enlisting as a private in June 1861, Root, who was two years younger, had remained in college throughout the war years.

McKinley's offer, replying to the president's representative, "Thank the President for me, but it is quite absurd. I know nothing about war; I know nothing about the army." McKinley, however, had no doubts that Root was the man for the job. Undeterred by Root's initial reluctance, he had his representative relay the message that he did not need an expert on war or the army. "I need a lawyer to administer these Spanish islands we've captured," he insisted, "and you are the lawyer I want."⁴³³ Root would later refer indirectly to the president's desire for someone with a strong legal background in a joke to John Griggs, the attorney general: "I think the main feature of the change I am making is the formation of a new law firm of 'Griggs and Root, legal advisers to the President, colonial business a specialty.'"⁴³⁴

Although Root's appointment was generally well received, there were doubts in some quarters about his qualifications. When McKinley asked Nicholas Murray Butler, a mutual friend and future long-serving president of Columbia University, to use his influence to urge Root to accept the appointment, Butler's initial reaction was one of astonishment. "No appointment seemed to me more ridiculous," he recounted years later, "I could not imagine Root as knowing anything about war or of military organization."⁴³⁵ While Roosevelt, who had won the governorship of New York after returning from his "rough rider" experience, professed publicly that he was "overjoyed" at the appointment of "the kind of man every one [sic] should like to see in a responsible position" and that there was "no man upon whose advice and help" he

⁴³³ Elihu Root, *Addresses on Government and Citizenship*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 503–4.

⁴³⁴ Quoted in Philip C. Jessup, *Elihu Root*, vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1938), 219.

⁴³⁵ Address by Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler in Century Association (New York, NY), *Elihu Root, President of the Century Association, 1918-1927: Addresses Made in His Honor* (New York: The Club, 1937), 41.

had “so much relied” in his work as governor, the aggressive and ambitious future president was similarly stunned.⁴³⁶ In a note of congratulations that did not completely conceal his disappointment in the president’s decision, Roosevelt informed Root that the latter’s appointment had been “an utter surprise to me, because it had never entered my head to think of you in connection with the War Department.”⁴³⁷ Privately, Roosevelt confided to Lodge that he thought McKinley’s desire to have a lawyer in the War Department was “simply foolish—so foolish indeed that I can only regard it as an excuse,” an indication that McKinley wanted neither a sweeping reform of the department nor a “too thorough-going” policy in the new colonial possessions. While Root was an “absolutely upright and very able man” and would “make a good Secretary,” Roosevelt lamented that the position had not been given to someone with military experience.⁴³⁸

Root would prove Roosevelt both wrong and right. Root approached the challenge of building the necessary administrative structures for the new American empire in a characteristically lawyerly way, very much in contrast to the direct, confrontational approach Roosevelt expected would be necessary for success. Yet with his superb ability to manage the policy formation and implementation agenda, Root was an exceptional secretary of war for McKinley and Roosevelt. By consistently sounding out key members of Congress over proposed legislation and by attending almost every committee hearing to which he was invited, he managed to establish a solid working relationship with and influence over members of both

⁴³⁶ “Governor Praises Mr. Root,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1899, 1.

⁴³⁷ Roosevelt to Root, July 25, 1899, series 2, reel 321, Letter Press Copy Books, 1897-1916, vol. 18, p. 291, Roosevelt Papers.

⁴³⁸ Roosevelt to Lodge, July 21, 1899, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:411–5.

houses of the legislature. By willingly mixing “with the solons at social functions” and attending “an occasional game of poker with the honorable legislators,” Root made himself available for consultation after-hours as well.⁴³⁹ By proactively providing information on events overseas, Root established for himself a reputation as an indispensable source of information about the islands.

While Root and McKinley were not close personally before Root came to the War Department, the two men forged a strong working partnership. As McKinley’s biographer, Charles S. Olcott, observed, their relationship was “peculiarly intimate,” and Root performed his “duties in close daily conference with the President.”⁴⁴⁰ Through this close observation of the president, Root came to admire McKinley. “He was more thoughtful of others than any other man I ever knew,” Root recollected.⁴⁴¹ The extremely effective style of leadership that had enabled McKinley to control events along the road to annexation was also responsible for Root’s fondness for the president. “He had vast influence with Congress,” Root later recalled, but “he led them by the power of affectionate esteem, not by fear. He never bullied Congress. He never threatened compulsion.”⁴⁴² As for any suggestion that McKinley was anyone’s puppet, Root argued, “That was a *great* mistake.” Root appreciated McKinley’s ability to manipulate men so that they thought his ideas were their own. “He was a man of great power because he was

⁴³⁹ Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition*, 52.

⁴⁴⁰ Charles S. Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley*, vol. 2 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916), 347.

⁴⁴¹ Root, *Addresses on Government and Citizenship*, 503–4.

⁴⁴² Quoted in Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley*, 2:346.

absolutely indifferent to credit,” Root insisted. His only desire was to get things done. “He cared nothing about the credit,” Root observed, “but McKinley *always had his way*.”⁴⁴³

Interestingly, the partnership between the two men almost began three years earlier. When McKinley was elected in 1896, the American relationship with the Spanish was already troubled and a war with Spain over Cuba was a distinct possibility. McKinley was familiar with Root’s work in New York and respected him enough to ask him to take charge of America’s embassy in Spain and help deescalate tensions with that country. Root seriously contemplated the offer, but ultimately refused it, despite McKinley’s willingness to raise the status of the office to entice him. Though loosely connected through party affiliation and a few mutual friends, Root lacked a close working relationship with McKinley. He also had no understanding of the Spanish language. Root thought he needed both if he was to be effective in the position; and thus, Root remained in New York until an opportunity more suited to his particular skill set presented itself.⁴⁴⁴

While Root was initially opposed to the war with Spain, he came to believe in its inevitability. Like many, if not most, of his clients and friends from Wall Street, Root was worried that a war with Spain would undermine the security of American financial arrangements overseas.⁴⁴⁵ Of the major European powers, only Great Britain seemed the least bit supportive of the American position. At the end of March, however, when Spain rejected McKinley’s most recent peace initiatives and congressmen from both parties began revolting against McKinley’s

⁴⁴³ Ibid. (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁴⁴ Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 1938, 1:195–6; Offner, *An Unwanted War*, 54–5.

⁴⁴⁵ Offner, *An Unwanted War*, 229.

diplomatic efforts, Root grudgingly concluded that war with Spain was unavoidable.⁴⁴⁶ In a letter to Cornelius Bliss, a close friend from New York who was already in McKinley's cabinet, he explained what he thought should be McKinley's stance vis-à-vis war with Spain. "If we are to have war with Spain, and I assume that we are," Root wrote, "the President should lead and not be pushed." McKinley had gained an important advantage for the country in the eyes "of the Civilized World" by his "exhibition of calm and deliberate judgment and sincere desire for peace," but Root insisted, "when it is once certain that diplomacy has failed . . . the duty of restraint is ended and the duty of leadership begins." The impression of national unity was critical in his opinion. "No arguments against the inevitable should be exhibited to the public and not a single word of the President should give ground for suspicion on the part of the people that he is not in full and hearty sympathy with what Congress is about to do." Root warned that the president had painted himself into a corner; and having publically demanded that Spain abandon Cuba, he could not back down. Nothing less than the international prestige of the United States was at stake, and Root insisted to Bliss that McKinley's words and deeds had contributed to raising the ante.⁴⁴⁷ The much more bellicose Roosevelt made the same points to Root a few days later, insisting that McKinley had taken a position "from which he cannot back down without ruin to his reputation, ruin to his party, and above all, lasting dishonor to his country."⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 150–1.

⁴⁴⁷ Root to Cornelius N. Bliss, April 2, 1898, box 1, Elihu Root Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Cited hereafter as Root Papers.)

⁴⁴⁸ Roosevelt to Root, April 5, 1898, box 162, Root Papers.

America's international prestige was not the only thing at risk. Root believed that if McKinley allowed Congress to seize the initiative, his political power at home would be severely undermined. Root cautioned Bliss, "Fruitless attempts to hold back or retard the enormous momentum of the people" towards war "would result in the destruction of the President's power and influence, . . . [and] in the destruction of the President's party."⁴⁴⁹ If the Democrats in Congress were able to initiate a popularly-supported war over the publically expressed opposition of a Republican president, it would undermine McKinley's effectiveness for the remainder of his first term, threaten the Republican majorities in the upcoming congressional election, and lay the foundations for a Democratic presidential victory in 1900. While McKinley's first victory over Bryan is often regarded as a watershed moment in American political history, there was, at the time, less confidence that the Republican grip on the White House and both houses of Congress was sufficiently strong. Root feared that the poor handling of the war issue could put an end to the domestic political fortunes of the Republican Party. As far as Root was concerned, McKinley could not let moral values or political principles endanger the Republican Party's hold on domestic political power.

Having determined that efforts at peace with Spain were futile and that both international diplomatic and domestic political considerations necessitated a course of action in which McKinley enthusiastically led the nation to war, Root constructed a lengthy legal rationale for such a course of action while clearly remaining personally opposed to it. In his letter to Bliss, Root expressed both the depth of his opposition to the war and his willingness to put that opposition aside for the greater good of the party and, presumably, the nation:

⁴⁴⁹ Root to Cornelius N. Bliss, April 2, 1898, box 1, Root Papers.

I deplore war. I have earnestly hoped that it might not come. I deny the obligation of the American people to make the tremendous sacrifices which it must entail, not only of treasure but of life, for the purpose of aiding the Cubans or any other people. I agree with the President that it is not his duty to sacrifice his own people for the benefit of others, but I cannot doubt that if the American people wish to make war upon Spain for her acts in Cuba, if they are willing to make the sacrifices required, they have a moral right to do so. The Cuban cause is just. The Cubans are exercising their inalienable rights in their rebellion. They have a hundred times the cause we had in 1776 or that the English had in 1688. When we take up their just quarrel we are doing no wrong to Spain and violating no law divine or international. I prefer that we should not do it; I don't think we are bound to do it; I would prevent it if I could; I think the President has been right in trying to prevent it, but if it is to be done, then every American ought to be for the war heart and soul, and first and foremost and without the slightest uncertainty or question should be the President of the United States.⁴⁵⁰

Bliss found Root's argument convincing enough to warrant discussing it not only with McKinley, but also with many other prominent politicians throughout Washington. "I read the letter to the President on Sunday," Bliss replied, and "later . . . read it to Vice-President Hobart and several Senators, all of whom approved its sentiments." While Bliss expressed general agreement with Root's argument, which he wrote, "expresses my views and those on which I have acted so far as I have had occasion to express my personal sentiments," he disagreed with Root's opinion on the inevitability of the war, asserting, "I think it is fair to believe that there is still a chance of peace being preserved."⁴⁵¹ Roosevelt, with whom Bliss also shared the contents of the letter, was impressed by Root's new-found support for a possible war with Spain, even while ignoring Root's opinion as to the deplorable nature of the resulting conflict. "Amazed and horrified" at the flood of "peace-at-any-price" telegrams of the "most abject description" which had been arriving in Washington from various parts of the country, but particularly from the

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Cornelius N. Bliss to Root, April 6, 1898, box 1, Root Papers.

northeast, Roosevelt was pleased to inform Root that his analysis had “a profound effect in heartening the healthy-minded Americans here.”⁴⁵²

It is not clear what McKinley thought of Root’s letter. He made no sudden shift in his continued effort to avert a war without destroying his presidency. While Root’s connections gave him indirect access into the White House to offer his judgment and advice to the president, he still lacked the direct access that only high political office could provide. On the other hand, Root had managed to have his recommendations put before the president; and knowingly or not, he most certainly improved his chances of gaining a seat inside the administration if and when McKinley decided he needed a lawyer to take an important governmental post. McKinley no doubt recalled Root’s thorough analysis and lawyerly advice when he began to consider a replacement for Alger.

McKinley vainly sought to avoid the war his own policies had helped to bring. In the end, he succeeded in maintaining his party’s political power, and the primacy of the president in foreign affairs, by maintaining a tenuous control over the Congress, through which he was able to slow the pace of escalating tensions long enough to allow some last-gasp diplomatic efforts to play out. By the end of April, Spain responded with a declaration of war and McKinley became the war president he declared he never wanted to be. In fairness to McKinley, avoiding war with Spain would have required him not only to pursue policies contrary to the prevailing wishes of the majority of members of his own political party and an aroused populace, but would also have

⁴⁵² Roosevelt to Root, April 5, 1898, box 162, Root Papers.

required much more conciliatory approach from the Spanish government.⁴⁵³ Nevertheless, McKinley, like Root before him, came to accept war as a necessary policy.

The principal culprit in Root's mind was the unreasoning popular pressure for war. "The political development of our time," Root later declared, was "the increase of popular control over national conduct." With the Spanish-American War doubtless in mind, he continued, "Governments do not make war nowadays unless assured of general and hearty support among their people; and it sometimes happens that governments are driven into war against their will by the pressure of strong popular feeling."⁴⁵⁴ Root distrusted the wisdom and the intelligence of these "new popular masters of diplomacy," and argued that elite "leadership of opinion" was necessary to preserve "the rules and customs which the experience of centuries [has] shown to be essential to the maintenance of peace and good understanding between nations."⁴⁵⁵ Policymaking had to be elite-directed because diplomacy was conducted in a competitive, high-stakes international environment.

As the new secretary of war, Root needed to be able to work with the men under him, as well as with the president he served. As a true outsider, Root recognized that he needed to create a good working relationship with the army's leadership in order to make the extensive changes McKinley wanted. While he had followed the recent course of events in the department over which he was called to preside in the newspapers and through conversations Roosevelt and other

⁴⁵³ Lewis L. Gould, *The Spanish-American War and President McKinley* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1982), 47 and 53.

⁴⁵⁴ Elihu Root, "The Need of Popular Understanding of International Law," in *Addresses on International Subjects*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 3.

⁴⁵⁵ Elihu Root, "The Japanese Treaty," in *Addresses on International Subjects*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 8.

men in government, he had never set foot inside the War Department. In a profile of the secretary of war, Henry MacFarland described Root's status as an outsider:

Without previous personal knowledge of Washington official life and its peculiar ways, without personal acquaintance with more than two or three of the army officers and civilians whom he must take as assistants, without skill, experience, or learning in military affairs, or even a close and accurate familiarity with the current military work of the Department, or with the functions of the twelve bureaus of the Department, he found that he must acquire an enormous number of facts, great and small, which, as he said, threatened him with intellectual indigestion.⁴⁵⁶

Not only did Root have to get up to speed quickly; he also had to tackle rapidly a dysfunctional command environment, where infighting among the staff was practically a way of life. Root found "anything but harmony prevailing" in the War Department. Alger had for much of his last year as secretary practically ignored Miles, who had been left for months in "comparative idleness" at his desk on the floor below the office of the secretary of war. Henry A. Corbin, the adjutant-general of the army, had meanwhile been issuing orders to the army under Miles' name at the direction of Alger. Miles was often unaware of these orders until he received the printed copies published to the rest of the army. When the "envying and wranglings" among the different bureaus of the War Department was thrown into the equation, it was not surprising that one insider commented, "One half of it is capable of anything and the other half is capable of nothing."⁴⁵⁷

Root's first step to address the situation was simple, yet it had a dramatic effect. On his first full day on the job, he and Corbin paid a formal call on Miles, with whom he and Corbin met for nearly a half hour behind the closed door of the commanding general's private office.

⁴⁵⁶ Henry MacFarland, "The New Secretary of War," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* 20, no. 3 (September 1899): 286.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 286–7.

News of this “unprecedented official visit” spread throughout the department. Root managed, thus, to establish “the best relations that ever existed between the War Department proper and army headquarters,” and to restore Miles “to the full exercise of whatever functions could justly be claimed as belonging to the rather anomalous office of commanding general.” This “master stroke of diplomacy,” demonstrated that Root was confident enough in his position to openly seek the advice of the army’s senior leaders. Root and Corbin also visited the different bureau chiefs; and in doing so, they not only learned something of each man and his job, but also conveyed the message that they were now under the direction of a “vigorous, shrewd, resourceful man who would listen more than he would talk, would act quickly and forcefully, who could not be deceived easily, and who could not be cajoled or coerced.”⁴⁵⁸ While the author of this account of Root’s early days in office no doubt used his journalistic license to exaggerate the effect of Root’s gesture, Root did win the support of many key officers in the War Department. This support would prove critical to his mission of creating the framework for governing the country’s new possessions.

Root was also determined to demonstrate his support for the uniformed members of his department publically. While on a campaign tour with McKinley and other members of the cabinet, Root gave a speech at the Marquette Club in Chicago in early October. He was not a particularly good public speaker and freely admitted that he generally tried to avoid public speeches. After initially declining the invitation to speak, Root changed his mind because he saw an opportunity to rally support for McKinley’s war policies in advance of the upcoming November elections. He also saw an opportunity to defend the army against criticisms of its

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 287.

conduct in the Philippines. The guerilla war had already resulted in ugly scenes of brutality by both sides. As historian Brian Linn has noted, when American troops engaged in battle, “clear evidence of troop misconduct, brutality, criminal activity, and atrocities” began to emerge right from the start.⁴⁵⁹ With the 1899 election only one month away, alleged American brutality was becoming an increasingly volatile campaign issue.

Root saw an opportunity to strike back at this criticism and to secure for himself a broader base of support among the army’s senior leadership. Responding to the toast “The American Soldier,” Root observed, “No eloquence is needed to strike the chords of sympathy or of sentiment in loyal souls when the American soldier is the theme.” He praised the soldiers then fighting in the Philippines as “the best youth of America . . . different from all other soldiers of all other countries,” because they carried with them “the traditions of a self-governing people.” To the critics who protested the conduct of American troops and the legitimacy of the war in which they were engaged, Root called on all true Americans to “stand behind the American soldier and he will maintain the honor of the flag and the integrity of the [country].” Recalling that he had very recently stood on the field of Gettysburg with “two gray-haired veterans of the Civil War,” Root declared, “The day will come when the fair fame of these, our brothers of today, is as dear to the American people as that of the heroes of Gettysburg.” He also paid homage to those far from the frontlines, those “many men whose hair has been streaked with gray through the strenuous labors of these days in the staff of the army,” whose names one day

⁴⁵⁹ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 64.

“will be written high in the list of those entitled to their country’s gratitude.”⁴⁶⁰ Root later wrote a more polished version of his speech that was published in pamphlet form and distributed by the War Department and the Republican Party. Root’s friend Luigi P. di Cesnola, the first director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a Medal of Honor winner in the Civil War, read a printed copy of the speech given to him by Root’s father-in-law, then passed it along to “two or more *scores* of old veterans,” who “without a single exception . . . expressed in superlative terms, their delight and gratification.”⁴⁶¹

The battlefield death of General Henry W. Lawton in the Philippines provided another opportunity for Root to show his support for the military traditions of service and sacrifice. The first general officer killed in battle since the Civil War, Lawton was “one of the most admirable officers of the war.” While lacking in strategic ability, he recognized the political dimensions of the conflict and was able to inspire his troops “to almost superhuman efforts.”⁴⁶² Root ensured that the funeral procession of his casket across the country and the burial service at Arlington were well publicized and executed. He also reached out to his network of personal contacts to raise a fund to support Lawton’s widow and provide for their children’s college education. In a letter to John D. Rockefeller, he explained that he had “not tried to make direct appeals generally, but rather to send telegrams to start the subject among different groups of gentlemen whom I know would feel just as I do about it.”⁴⁶³ To Charles Lewis Tiffany, Root wrote, “While

⁴⁶⁰ Address to the Marquette Club in Chicago, October 7, 1899, entitled “The American Solider” in Elihu Root, *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 3–13.

⁴⁶¹ L. P. di Cesnola to Root, December 26, 1899, box 3, Root Papers (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁶² Linn, *The Philippine War*, 160–1.

⁴⁶³ Root to John D. Rockefeller, December 26, 1899, box 178, part 2, Root Papers.

we have been seeking our own fortunes, and building up our own prosperity, he has been serving the country upon the scanty pay which is barely sufficient for support, and now leaves his wife and four young children practically penniless, with nothing but our sense of obligation between them and want.”⁴⁶⁴ Thanks to Root’s private lobbying, a comfortable sum was soon collected.⁴⁶⁵

While Root actively sought to gain the support of the officer corps, there is no doubt that he had a receptive audience. Root always believed that his friendship with Bliss had been instrumental in getting him into the cabinet.⁴⁶⁶ Bliss was certainly supportive and his voice was important, but the support Root received from key voices in the army, including that of Major General Henry C. Corbin, the adjutant general, who had served as a virtual chief-of-staff to the president in place of a dysfunctional command structure during the Spanish-American War, was also vital.⁴⁶⁷ According to Hay, Corbin was “the closest advisor of President McKinley and the immediate subordinate of Secretaries of War Alger and Root in the conduct of the campaigns and the reorganization of the Armies.”⁴⁶⁸ Corbin made numerous enemies in the officer corps and among Washington’s political elites, but he was a voice McKinley trusted and someone upon whom any new secretary of war would need to rely. When McKinley decided to replace

⁴⁶⁴ Root to Charles Lewis Tiffany, December 26, 1899, box 178, part 2, Root Papers.

⁴⁶⁵ “Money for the Lawton Fund,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1899, 1.

⁴⁶⁶ Decades later, he admitted that he never knew how McKinley came to offer him the job, but that he “always supposed it could be traced back to the advice of Cornelius Bliss.” Root to Philip Jessup, November 19, 1934, box 222, Philip Jessup Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁶⁷ “Henry C. Corbin,” *Army and Navy Life and The United Service*, 9, no. 3 (September 1906): 10, box 2, Henry C. Corbin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Cited hereafter as Corbin Papers.)

⁴⁶⁸ John Hay to Root, 23 June 1903, quoted in “Statement of the Military Service of Henry Clarke Corbin,” box 2, Corbin Papers.

Alger, he discussed the matter with Corbin and the two of them “agreed that the best constitutional lawyer within reach should be selected.” Corbin later wrote that after discussing a number of candidates, he “suggested” that Root might be an ideal fit. The general felt that Root had distinguished himself during the recent constitutional convention in the state of New York and that Root’s “character and fitness” were “pre-eminent over those of any other names that suggested themselves.” “That I was in part responsible for that selection,” Corbin reflected later, “will always abide with me in profound satisfaction.”⁴⁶⁹

Root’s initial concern was to ensure that Otis had the troops he needed to defeat what the Americans viewed as an insurrection against the legitimate colonial government. He cabled Otis for the latter’s estimate of the troops he needed “for [the] complete suppression of [the] insurrection,” which “in view of the impatience of the public” needed to be achieved by “rapid and thorough action.”⁴⁷⁰ Otis estimated that he had enough soldiers to conduct successful offensive operations in Luzon, but not enough to “provide permanent protection against returning insurgents.” While he insisted that Americans were still overestimating the insurgents’ “armed strength and cohesion,” he asked that the War Department organize another fifteen volunteer regiments and dispatch them to the islands as soon as possible for “garrison purposes.”⁴⁷¹ Root informed McKinley that he believed that Otis could conquer the Philippines with the troops already available, but that he would need more troops “to garrison the country . . . and protect the really friendly inhabitants from marauding bands of insurgents, to repress the

⁴⁶⁹ Statement of Henry Clarke Corbin (undated), box 11, Corbin Papers.

⁴⁷⁰ Corbin to Otis, August 12, 1899, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1051.

⁴⁷¹ Otis to Adjutant-General, August 14, 1899, in *ibid.*, 2:1052–3.

spirit of savagery which has been relieved from all control, and to restore a settled and peaceful condition of submission to law.”⁴⁷² To supply those troops, Root ordered the recruitment of additional volunteer regiments; and by the end of the year, the size of the army in the Philippines increased to fifty-five thousand men.⁴⁷³ Joseph Choate, Root’s friend and fellow lawyer from New York, who had succeeded John Hay as the American ambassador to the Court of St. James’s, strongly supported the administration’s determination to quash the Philippine rebellion. “I have read with great interest . . . that you are determined to carry out what I have always considered to be the only policy for the occasion,” he wrote from Scotland. Sending reinforcement to the islands would demonstrate to the Filipinos that the administration was in earnest and would “insist upon the restoration of peace and order as a necessary preliminary to any settlement of the government.” “Whether our main object is to be accomplished by force or negotiation,” Choate continued, “we must show them at whatever cost that they are no longer dealing with a power like Spain which could not subdue them, but with a power they cannot withstand.”⁴⁷⁴

After insuring the dispatch of an army sufficient to pacify the Philippine insurgents, Root’s first opportunity for reform was the creation of new governments for the colonies, which was viewed as a vital move in suppressing the revolt in the Philippines and avoiding similar rebellions in the other islands of the nascent American Empire. While Root had privately argued against the wisdom of the war through which the Americans had come into possession of these islands, he seemed eager to begin the task of constructing colonial governments for them. Even

⁴⁷² Root to McKinley, August 15, 1899, box 171, part 1, Root Papers.

⁴⁷³ Golay, *Face of Empire*, 52.

⁴⁷⁴ Joseph H. Choate to Root, September 13, 1899, box 3, Root Papers.

before McKinley had officially offered him the post of secretary of war, Root had written to Cephas Brainerd looking for “a short list of books which would do for a beginning in the colonial business.” Along with his recommended reading list, Brainerd sent his opinion: “I look upon the English system as a development under our own methods of thought and processes of government.”⁴⁷⁵

Root was unambiguous in his belief that the United States could legally govern the Philippines as it saw fit. He described the relationship between the United States and the islands as one of dependency, noting that the Filipinos “have no right to have them treated as States, or to have them treated as the territories previously held by the United States have been treated, or to assert legal right under the provision of the constitution which was established for the people of the United States themselves and to meet the conditions existing upon this continent or to assert against the United States any legal right whatever not found in the treaty.”⁴⁷⁶

It had not been a foregone conclusion that the responsibility for forming and administering the civil government of the Philippines would be delegated to the War Department. Several departments, including State, Interior, and Treasury, attempted to gain some control over the civil government of the archipelago; and for a short time, McKinley considered assigning the responsibility to the State Department.⁴⁷⁷ The history of American territorial administration gave each of the competing departments some claim to have had the

⁴⁷⁵ Cephas Brainerd to Root, July 20, 1899, box 2; Root to Cephas Brainerd, August 3, 1899, box 178, part 1; both in Root Papers.

⁴⁷⁶ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1899: Report of the Secretary of War*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Doc. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 24.

⁴⁷⁷ Romeo V. Cruz, *America's Colonial Desk and the Philippines, 1898-1934* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1974), 29; Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 1938, 1:349–50, 376.

requisite experience in territorial administration. Until the Interior Department took over responsibility for territorial administration in 1873, the State Department had general supervisory powers over American territories. This made sense as until 1848, western problems were in large part international problems; and until 1871, formal treaties established the relationship between the American government and the Native Americans standing in the way of Manifest Destiny. The State Department, however, never had sole responsibility for territorial administration. Financial oversight of the territories was managed by the Treasury Department, while the Office of the Attorney General (and after 1870, the newly-formed Justice Department) managed judicial matters.⁴⁷⁸

In early July, Roosevelt expressed his concern to John Hay that the administration might fumble the ball while establishing a colonial system of governance, thus giving McKinley's opponents an opening to re-attack the newly embarked upon policy of territorial expansion. "I am uneasy at the way things seem to be going both in the Philippines and in Cuba," he wrote the secretary of state, "and also at the muttering of discontent with what we have done in those islands, which can be heard here and there throughout the country even now." "A series of disasters at the very beginning of our colonial policy would shake this administration," he continued, "and therefore our party, and might produce the most serious and far-reaching effects upon the nation as a whole, for if some political cataclysm was the result, it might mean the

⁴⁷⁸ Earl S. Pomeroy, "The American Colonial Office," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 30, no. 4 (March 1944): 521–2.

definite abandonment of the course upon which we have embarked—the only course I think fit for a really great nation.”⁴⁷⁹

Alfred Thayer Mahan, the well-known navy strategist, shared his friend Roosevelt’s concern that the United States lacked the institutional capacity to govern the islands. If the administration failed to make solid progress on the ground, he feared that domestic support would rapidly fade:

Our difficulty at present does not proceed from outside conditions, but from those internal to our own national habits of thought, which in the past have been distinctly averse to studying external political problems, and even admitting their existence, until pressed home upon our consciousness by an immediate emergency. Startling as has been the effect produced upon public sentiment by the recent exigency which threw the Philippines upon our hands, it must be remembered that a mental temperament evolved and ingrained by generations of acceptance, not merely inert, but willing, must tend to revert, as passing time dulls the sharp impressions and lively emotions that followed the war with Spain.⁴⁸⁰

Woodrow Wilson, who would take the United States into its next ocean-spanning war, also lamented the inadequate capacity of the American state to bear the burden of colonial administration. “We shall see now more clearly than ever before that we lack in our domestic arrangements, above all things else, concentration, both in political leadership and in administrative organization,” he warned, “for the lack will be painfully emphasized, and will embarrass us sadly in the career we have now set out upon.”⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ Roosevelt to Hay, July 1, 1899, copy enclosed in Roosevelt to Lodge, July 1, 1899, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:406.

⁴⁸⁰ A. T. Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect Upon International Policies* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1900), 130–1.

⁴⁸¹ Woodrow Wilson, “Democracy and Efficiency,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 87, no. 521 (March 1901): 297.

Root's approach to the colonial problem was consistent with his basic assumptions and his experience as a lawyer. In his first annual report as the secretary of war, he set out his understanding of the relationship between the United States and its new empire, dispensing quickly with claims for independence or statehood for the Filipinos and asserting the Americans possessed absolute sovereignty not unlike the sovereignty the Spanish had claimed, the alleged abuse of which had been the justification for American intervention. The trouble had been with the Spanish administration, Root argued. It was not that Spanish law was "defective or vicious," he wrote, "but that it [had] never been fairly and honestly administered."⁴⁸² He tempered his absolutist view of sovereignty with a liberal interpretation of the positive obligations sovereignty imposed on the United States. "It is our unquestioned duty to make the interests of the people over whom we assert sovereignty the first and controlling consideration," he argued, "and to give them, to the greatest possible extent, individual freedom, self-government in accordance with their capacity, just and equal laws, and opportunity for education, for profitable industry, and for development in civilization."⁴⁸³ He went so far as to assert that through an "implied contract" with the people of the United States, the Filipinos "have acquired a moral right to be treated . . . in accordance with the underlying principles of justice and freedom which we have declared in our Constitution . . . not because those provisions were enacted for them, but because they are essential limitations inherent in the very existence of the American Government."⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1899: Report of the Secretary of War*, 29.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 24–5.

His colonial policies also exposed his belief in a racial hierarchy topped by the Anglo-American peoples. The “poor creatures” in the Philippines who were in open rebellion rather than plaintive submission were simply “half-civilized opponents.” The Philippine people were not a nation, but merely a collection of tribes, incapable of self-government, incapable even of self-protection. He believed that most Filipinos were aware of their inferiority and were ready to accept American sovereignty and learn “the rudiments of government under the tuition of the American soldier.”⁴⁸⁵ In a campaign speech for McKinley in Canton, Ohio, he delighted in quoting with approval the observations some years earlier by the anti-imperialist Carl Schurz that peoples in tropical climates were unfit for self-government because “the tropical sun inflames the imagination to inordinate activity and develops the government of the passions.”⁴⁸⁶ However unfitted they were because of the defects of their race or geography, Root did believe that most of the native peoples could be educated in the art of self-government through an enlightened colonial policy. If the English were the world’s best colonizers, certainly their American cousins could bring civilization to the Filipinos.

Root was not unique in expressing a shared Anglo-American imperial pride. *The Outlook* seemed to endorse Root’s convictions regarding the merit of the English colonial system. “The army among Anglo-Saxon peoples is no longer a mere instrument of destruction,” it declared. The British army was busy “promoting law, order, civilization” and “fighting famine and pestilence, in India” and “lightening taxes, building roads, opening markets, laying the

⁴⁸⁵ Address to the Marquette Club in Chicago, October 7, 1899, entitled “The American Solider” in Root, *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States*, 6 and 9–10.

⁴⁸⁶ Address at Canton, OH, October 24, 1900, entitled “The United States and the Philippines in 1900” in *ibid.*, 43–4.

foundations of justice and liberty, in Egypt.” Having joined the imperial movement, America was already “reorganizing society, on a basis of physical health, fairly paid industry, honest administration, popular rights, and public education, in Cuba.” To continue “this reconstructive work” in Cuba and to begin it in earnest in the Philippines required the presence at the head of the War Department “not an expert soldier, but a man of affairs and a statesman.” As “a civilian and a lawyer,” Root was the perfect man for the job.⁴⁸⁷ With his Anglo-American racial pride and attitude of superiority and privilege toward those in the less developed regions of the world, Root accurately reflected the prevailing racial beliefs that underlay much of American foreign policy during this period.

Root handled the prerogatives of appointment that came with his position in a heavily nuanced manner. He was confronted from day one with stacks of letters seeking appointments, commissions or promotions—tangible evidence of the influence politicians, businessmen, and other elites around the country attempted to exert on the War Department. The need to raise new regiments to fight in the Philippines created openings that supplicants rushed to fill, pushing themselves or their friends for new leadership positions. His letterbooks for August 1899 onward are filled with his responses to letters of that kind. Because he was determined to ensure that only the finest officers available were appointed to command the new regiments, he subjected each candidate to rigorous screening. Consequently, the bulk of his responses were essentially form letters that finished with the sentence: “His name will be considered when

⁴⁸⁷ “What the Country Wants,” *The Outlook* 62, no. 13 (July 29, 1899): 699; available from <http://www.unz.org/Pub/Outlook-1899jul29-00698> (accessed January 31, 2012).

further appointments of this kind are made.”⁴⁸⁸ This was generally true regardless of the recipient. Root even sent Miles such a letter when he attempted to advance the cause of a fellow officer.⁴⁸⁹ Influential politicians were not exempt from this treatment as senators often received the same response as local politicians. This even-handed approach had a positive effect on Root’s public reputation.

There are a few letters among the avalanche of standard responses, however, that convey some level of special attention and care. William Hotchkiss of Buffalo, a longtime friend and ally, wrote Root in support of Lieutenant James B. Webb, and instead of the standard response, Root wrote that he had pulled the file and would make every effort to help, but only if the officer met the basic qualifications.⁴⁹⁰ Paul Cravath, a fellow corporate lawyer who would later create the model for the modern law firm known as the Cravath System, received the good news that Root would be “very glad indeed” to see that his candidate’s cause was given “careful consideration.”⁴⁹¹ The most distinctive responses, however, went to Roosevelt. These letters reflected not only their friendship, but also Root’s willingness, even eagerness, to follow Roosevelt’s recommendations on appointing officers who were either from New York or had fought alongside Roosevelt during the recent war with Spain. While Root stiff-armed most attempts by officers, politicians, and others to influence him, he was generally willing to assist his closest friends.

⁴⁸⁸ For example, see Root to Houser, August 24, 1899, box 171, part 2, Root Papers.

⁴⁸⁹ Root to Nelson Miles, August 15, 1899, box 171, part 1, Root Papers.

⁴⁹⁰ Root to Williams Hotchkiss, August 15, 1899, box 171, part 1, Root Papers.

⁴⁹¹ Root to Paul Cravath, August 15, 1899, box 171, part 1, Root Papers.

Although Root gave special attention and special assistance to those most closely connected to him, he was more circumspect than most politicians at the time in extending his favor and there remained some rules he would not break. When his close friend Franklin Bartlett attempted to get a commission for his son Clifford in one of the new regiments raised for the Philippines, Root sent his regrets. "I am very sorry, I wish I could do something," Root replied, but "a rule was adopted to make no appointments except from the regular army, or from men who had seen actual service in war." He must adhere "rigidly to this rule" as "nothing but absolute consistency makes such a course possible."⁴⁹² He also generally abided by his long held position on the separation of the civil service from partisan politics. "Being a real civil-service reformer," one reporter noted, Root informed his predecessor's private secretary and confidential clerk that they should continue on "indefinitely" and that other positions would only be changed for "real cause."⁴⁹³ While Root was the product of a profession in which access and influence were of critical importance, his tenure as secretary of war was noteworthy in that he most often used his network of friends and colleagues in the service of the government instead of using it to advance his personal interests. Root recognized benefits of privilege, but always kept his employment of it within the bounds of his notions of good government.

Root was determined from the very beginning to protect the administration of the islands from falling under the influence of the system of patronage that was still endemic in the politics of the time. He wanted to centralize the responsibility for and administration of the Philippines in the War Department, while giving significant autonomy the local, American authorities in

⁴⁹² Root to Franklin Bartlett, October 24, 1899, box 2, Root Papers.

⁴⁹³ MacFarland, "The New Secretary of War," 287.

Manila. He believed that the best policy was to keep authority for all aspects of governance of the Philippines unified in one department, thereby avoiding the complications of coordinating policies across several bureaucracies. Fortunately for Root, Hay was not inclined to battle over jurisdiction. Writing to a friend, in the fall of 1899, Hay declared, “A fantastic lie is going round in the Western papers that there is a struggle *à outrance* going on between Root and me as to which shall boss the islands. There is not a shadow of truth in it. There is not dissention in the Cabinet in any quarter.”⁴⁹⁴ Writing to Hay in late 1901, Root expressed his belief that while the “the insular business should be got out of the War Department as early as practicable and the earlier the process begins the better,” the maintenance of a unified system of administration remained critical. He continued:

So long as we have to continue a measure of military government in the Philippines and are unable to prescribe a definite line between civil and military authority there, it is useful to have both sets of officers subject to the same department so that neither can hope for backing against the authority under which the other acts. A good deal of patience is necessary even in a single department to keep the peace in public. Man, both civil and military, is such a jealous and pernicky animal. I hope, however, that this condition of unstable equilibrium will soon be over and the whole business can go where it belongs under civil control in the nearest approach we can make to a Department of Colonial Affairs.⁴⁹⁵

As long as the new colonies remained under the jurisdiction of his department, Root protected his turf jealously. When the Treasury Department attempted to require that the insular government submit revenue reports to it, Root objected because, as he wrote to Senator William Frye, it would create, “an element of double control, which would be quite intolerable.”⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Hay to Henry White, September 8, 1899, in Tyler Dennett, *John Hay: From Poetry to Politics* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934), 203.

⁴⁹⁵ Root to Hay, September 4, 1901, in Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 1938, 1:350.

⁴⁹⁶ Root to Frye, February 7, 1902, quoted in Cruz, *America's Colonial Desk*, 48.

When Root took over the War Department, he acknowledged that the United States had “no precedents, save the simple and meager proceeding under the occupation of California and New Mexico, more than half a century ago” for its current situation. Thus, he was put in a position where he had to decide “every question upon its own merits,” with each choice setting a precedent for the future. The government had “no machinery for the purpose” of administering colonies and “no provision for any administrative machine was made by law.”⁴⁹⁷ To correct for this deficiency, Root took an obscure division inside the department known as the Division of Customs and Insular Affairs and converted it from a records office to the equivalent of an American colonial office. The division, later renamed the Division of Insular Affairs, and ultimately the Bureau of Insular Affairs (BIA), became the focal point of communication between War Department officials in Washington and the colonial government in Manila. In its final form, the bureau had wide ranging responsibilities over “all matters related to civil government in the island possessions of the United States subject to the jurisdiction of the War Department.”⁴⁹⁸ While exact organizational hierarchy was always a bit ambiguous, it was clear that the chief of the bureau was subordinate to the colonial governor in the Philippines.

The organizational hierarchy was perhaps the most distinct difference between the new system of colonial control and past forms of territorial administration. The Philippines would be

⁴⁹⁷ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901: Report of the Secretary of War*, vol. 1, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Doc. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 87.

⁴⁹⁸ Section 87 of the Organic Act gave the organization its final name and established the breadth of its jurisdiction. See U.S. War Department, Bureau of Insular Affairs, *Reports of the Philippine Commission: The Civil Governor and the Heads of the Executive Departments of the Civil Government of the Philippine Islands, 1900-1903* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 460.

run out of one executive department. The BIA was placed directly under the secretary of war and was accountable to no other agency in the department. The issue areas under the purview of the agency varied and it was difficult to delimit its jurisdiction and powers. According to Romero Cruz, “One might even say that it subsumed many functions of all the departments in the American executive branch since it received directly for appropriate actions matters diplomatic, financial, legal, medical, postal, educational, agricultural, commercial, and others.”⁴⁹⁹ As Root acknowledged in 1901, it performed “with admirable and constantly increasing efficiency the great variety of duties which in other countries would be described as belonging to a colonial office, and would be performed by a much more pretentious establishment.”⁵⁰⁰ He described the centralization of the bureau in his annual report:

The policy followed by the American Executive in dealing with the government of the Philippines (and also in dealing with the government of the other islands ceded or yielded by Spain which have been under the control of the War Department) has been to determine and prescribe the framework of insular government; to lay down the rules of policy to be followed upon the greatest questions as they are foreseen or arise; to obtain the best and ablest men possible for insular officers; to distribute and define their powers, and then to hold them responsible for the conduct of government in the islands with the least possible interference from Washington.⁵⁰¹

According to Clarence Edwards, the first chief of the BIA, the role of his bureau was to act as a “clearinghouse for all questions . . . between the government of the Philippine Islands and the government of the United States.” It was a “federal instrumentality” of the United States and was the bureaucratic mechanism upon which the colonial government in the Philippines relied, through the secretary of war, for the “proper presentation to Congress of all legislative

⁴⁹⁹ Cruz, *America's Colonial Desk*, 56.

⁵⁰⁰ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901: Report of the Secretary of War*, 1:87.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1:86.

requirements” necessary for the efficient administration of the islands, and for doing “those things in the United States required by the Philippine Islands of the governmental agency in the mother country.”⁵⁰² In his study of the BIA, Cruz concluded, “insular knowledge of Congress was next to zero.” Whenever the members of the Senate Committee on the Philippines and the House Committee on Insular Affairs needed information on the islands, they received that information from the “Compilation Division and Library of the BIA.”⁵⁰³

When McKinley began to put together a second commission to the islands, there was talk of sending members of Congress along with the appointed commissioners to judge conditions for themselves. “As to the question of again sending a commission to the Philippines,” the *New York Times* reported, “it has been suggested in the Congress . . . that a joint committee of members might be named for that purpose. It would be very popular, and also very expensive, but it is insisted that it would be a better way of preparing Congress for legislative action than the plan of making up a commission outside of Congress and expecting members of both houses to read their report after it had been made in order to become more informed.”⁵⁰⁴ When the second commission departed, however, it was not accompanied by any congressional delegation. Congress would be forced to read the commission’s reports, when forwarded from the BIA, to become more informed about the islands.

Centralizing the control of the islands under one agency, an agency isolated from the rest of the War Department, limited Congress’ ability to receive independent assessments or to

⁵⁰² Clarence R. Edwards, “The Work of the Bureau of Insular Affairs,” *National Geographic Magazine* 15, no. 6 (June 1904): 244.

⁵⁰³ Cruz, *America’s Colonial Desk*, 100.

⁵⁰⁴ *New York Times*, January 12, 1900, 1.

prepare its own bills outside of this insular administration. Thus, governance of the Philippines was largely screened from the traditional forms of congressional oversight. Decisions were made and legislation drafted within the controlled circle of the secretary of war's office and the Philippine Commission with the BIA acting as the coordinating agency. Necessary legislation was then presented to Congress in a mostly pre-packaged form.

The Senate created separate committees for the new American colonies in the Philippines and Puerto Rico, while the House established the Committee on Insular Affairs to deal both of them. The importance of the Philippines to the Republican leadership was evident in the stature of the legislators appointed to the new committees. The Senate Committee on the Philippines was headed by Lodge and included William B. Allison of Iowa, the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations; Cushman Davis, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee; and Eugene Hale of Maine, the chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee. In the House Committee on Insular Affairs was led by Henry Allen Cooper of Wisconsin, who while young was highly respected, and included Joseph Cannon of Illinois, the chairman of Appropriations and of the all-powerful Rules Committees; Sereno Payne of New York, the chairman of Ways and Means, and Robert Hitt of Illinois, the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Despite this firepower from his own party, Root took a dim view of the ability of Congress to legislate for the islands, a view that was only reinforced by his experiences in dealing with its members. "If left alone Congress will probably do nothing about providing a form of government for the Islands," he wrote nearly a decade after establishing the colonial administration of the archipelago. This situation was actually "very desirable," in Root's opinion, as it was "quite improbable" that Congress could provide a form of government as good

as the one that he had already put into place. “They usually make a mess of it when they undertake anything of that kind,” he declared dismissively. He felt that the Filipinos appeared “to have a much more just conception of the kind of government to which they are adapted than ordinarily prevails in the Eastern portion of the United States” and suggested that “an exchange of professors of governmental science between Tutuila and Boston would be particularly advantageous to the people of the last mentioned city.”⁵⁰⁵ Roosevelt agreed with Root’s assessment, declaring, in mid-1899, “Let the Executive take the reins and establish any system of regulation about the tariff or anything else that is deemed wise, and Congress will simply have to stand by!”⁵⁰⁶

Although McKinley had given full executive and legislative power to the military in the opening phase of the American occupation of the islands, there was a strong push to transition to civilian rule. Root was a vocal advocate for shifting control of pacified areas to civil rule as rapidly as possible. He shared this opinion with Taft: “I wish to have the military forces in the islands under the control of someone who will administer them with the predominant purpose of getting the Government out of military hands and into civil hands at the earliest practicable moment, and who will consider that he has no duty regarding civil affairs himself except to render every possible aid to the Civil Government.”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Root to Roosevelt, April 2, 1908, series 1, reel 82, Roosevelt Papers.

⁵⁰⁶ Roosevelt to Hay, July 1, 1899, copy enclosed in Roosevelt to Lodge, July 1, 1899, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:406.

⁵⁰⁷ Root to Taft, January 21, 1901, series 3, reel 31, William Howard Taft Papers, Microfilm Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society Library, Madison, WI. (Cited hereafter as Taft Papers.)

The civilian commission sent by McKinley to take charge of the governance of the islands had a formidable task in front of it.⁵⁰⁸ As Taft wrote to a friend, “You can get some idea of what we have to do if you imagine a large state like Pennsylvania or New York without any laws at all, and think of yourself as attempting to provide all the necessary legislation for the establishment of a civil government.”⁵⁰⁹ Root forwarded the executive order expanding the powers of the commission to Taft for his review. As he explained to Taft:

The Executive order to be substituted for that of May 8, 1899, and the revised rules and regulations pursuant thereto, have been in fact approved by the President, but his signature to the order, and mine to the rules and regulations, are withheld until your Commission shall have an opportunity to examine them, for two reasons; first, that you may make by cable any criticism or suggestion which occurs to you; and, second, that when finally determined upon they may be incorporated by you in the form of a statute, which has already received the approval of the President and the Secretary, instead of being published as an order which might appear to overrule your action and might possibly interfere with the authority and prestige of the Commission, a thing which I am very desirous to avoid. When this has been done, inasmuch as these rules regulate the accountability of the entire Philippines Government to this Department, the Commission will not have authority to make any change without having first secured the consent of the Department.⁵¹⁰

The relationship between commission and War Department could not be made clearer. While information between the two was to be freely exchanged, the former was clearly subordinate to the latter.

The president had maintained the final authority in the Philippines through his powers as commander-in-chief, but as more and more provinces were pacified, reliance on this device became increasingly difficult to justify. Root, as the administration’s point man, was intimately

⁵⁰⁸ For more details on the formation of this commission and Taft’s selection to head it, see chapter 6.

⁵⁰⁹ Taft to Henry M. Hoyt, September 8, 1900, series 1, reel 18, Taft Papers.

⁵¹⁰ Root to Taft, January 7, 1901, series 3, reel 30, Taft Papers.

involved in the preparation of a bill to rectify this situation. Having discussed his draft bill with McKinley, Root asked Senator John C. Spooner, a Republican from New York, and Congressman Payne, to sponsor the measure. The Senate Committee on the Philippines reported out what became known as the Spooner Bill in early March, recommending its passage. The bill was designed to provide the statutory authority to form a new civil government. “When all insurrection . . . shall have been completely suppressed,” the bill authorized that “all military, civil, and judicial powers necessary to govern the said [Philippine] islands” should “be vested in such person and persons and shall be exercised in such manner as the President . . . shall direct for maintaining and protecting the inhabitants of said islands in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property, and religion.”⁵¹¹

Lodge, as chairman of the Senate committee, defended the administration’s Philippine policy and urged passage of the bill. In a three-hour speech on the Senate floor, he attempted to calm the fears of those opponents of the bill who were apprehensive over the powers vested in the president by the measure by emphasizing that the “operative and essential part” of the Spooner Bill was based on precedent in that its language was similar to “the very words of the act by which Congress authorized Jefferson to govern Louisiana” and to that “used by Congress and by President Monroe in 1819 in regard to Florida.”⁵¹² Confident that the Spooner Bill would not be controversial, Lodge and the rest of the Republican leadership misjudged the level of opposition to the administration’s Philippine policy. Opponents of the bill argued that, if the bill passed, the president, with the cooperation of the Republican majority in the Congress, could

⁵¹¹ *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 33, pt. 1, S. Bill 2355, 763; *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 33, pt. 2, H. Resolution 8064, 1529.

⁵¹² *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 33, pt. 3, 2617.

continue to rule the Philippines in any manner he chose. John Morgan, a Democrat from Alabama, reminded the Senate that the 1803 measure authorizing Jefferson to govern Louisiana had limited the duration of the authority to the session of Congress then sitting, a provision missing from the Spooner measure.⁵¹³ Members from both parties were anxious to take their differences to the American people in the upcoming elections of 1900, and Congress adjourned for the nomination conventions without acting on the measure.⁵¹⁴

Root and Taft had designed the new civil government in anticipation of the Spooner Bill passing through Congress. Taft recommended that a civil government should be organized with a civil governor general and a legislative body consisting of the commission and “possibly one or two reliable Filipinos to act as provisional legislature for eighteen months or two years.” Taft was worried that Congress would not pass the Spooner Bill, but generate and pass a bill of its own design, possibly the worst possible scenario in his view. “The report in the newspapers today is that a special session of Congress is to be called to legislate for a civil government for the Philippines,” he wrote Root. “I shall be very sorry if this results in an attempt to frame a government for the Philippines, because I do not think the conditions are ripe for the action of Congress yet, and I believe that you and the President can very much better frame a civil government than Congress, for the government by Congress would be rigid and yours could be changed as conditions require.”⁵¹⁵ Taft believed the passage of the bill was urgently needed, as until then “no purely central civil government” was possible. Of critical importance to the

⁵¹³ *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong, 1st sess., vol. 33, pt. 7, 6020.

⁵¹⁴ *Congressional Record*, 56th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 33, pt. 7, 5843-50, 5895-904, 5950-61.

⁵¹⁵ Taft to Root, January 29, 1901, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 296-312, series 8, reel 464, Taft Papers.

commission was the proposal to authorize the sale of public lands and the granting of corporate franchises, which the commission hoped would attract American capital and boost the economic development of the islands. Until the bill passed, the investment of private capital in internal improvements was blocked; and the commissioners felt this investment was the “most important step in complete pacification.”⁵¹⁶ Until Congress gave them the necessary statutory power, the commission had to keep their development projects on hold.

Root and Taft had initially been optimistic that Congress would pass the bill relatively quickly, but both became increasingly more cynical with each delay. “I have a letter from Senator Lodge,” Taft wrote to Root in November 1900, “in which he says he thinks the Spooner bill can be passed if the President requests it in his [annual] message.” Despite being in the Philippines only five months, Taft had already become frustrated by the slow pace of congressional legislation. He expressed his hope that Lodge would be able to do more in the future than merely state his opinion as “it would be like running on one wheel to develop this country without power to offer investment to capital.”⁵¹⁷

Notwithstanding his positive outlook on the bill’s future, Lodge, ever an ardent advocate of empire, proved to be more of a hindrance than help in getting the needed legislation through Congress. As the chairman of the Senate Committee on the Philippines, Lodge had no intention of taking orders from either the War Department or the commission. He cared deeply about the institutional prestige of the upper house and insisted that it play an active role in American

⁵¹⁶ Commission to Root, January 2, 1901, box 1, Correspondence of the Philippine (Taft) Commission, 1900-1906 (entry 34), Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Record Group 350 (RG 350), NACP.

⁵¹⁷ Taft to Root, November 30, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

foreign policy.⁵¹⁸ Although Lodge certainly thought his independent action was good for the development of better public policy, Taft, and even Root, grew tired of his dithering. In a surprisingly frank letter to Taft in January 1901, Root wrote:

I have been unable to get the Senate to take up the Spooner resolution, or either branch of Congress to take up any measure for our relief in regard to coinage in the Philippines, or any measure which would make it possible to build the railroad into Benguet; but the Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Philippines has, without any consultation with the President, or the War Department, and without asking for any information on the subject, introduced a resolution to prohibit the importation and sale of intoxicating liquors in the Philippine islands, and the Senate has delayed the progress of the army bill to discuss that subject seriously for several days. Of course the absurdity of attempting to legislate a subject of which they were ignorant was so great that it was overwhelmingly defeated.⁵¹⁹

A few months later, Taft was even more blunt. “It is perfectly evident . . .,” he wrote to Root, “that Senator Lodge is entirely useless as the head of the Committee for the Philippines. He does not seem to have much influence in the Senate and is constantly playing to the galleries.”⁵²⁰

The difficulties with getting the Spooner measure passed and Root’s and Taft’s low opinions of Lodge’s effectiveness shaped the future strategies of the insular authorities in their dealings with Congress. The control of information, hinted at in Root’s letter about Lodge, became even more important in colonial lawmaking. Dismayed by the efforts of senators to legislate “without asking for information,” Root decided to increase his lobbying efforts with Congress. He also decided to seek out other allies, notably the more receptive chairman of the House Committee on Insular Affairs, Henry Cooper, a Republican from Wisconsin, who Taft

⁵¹⁸ See William C. Widenor, *Henry Cabot Lodge and the Search for an American Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

⁵¹⁹ Root to Taft, January 21, 1901, series 21, reel 640, Taft Papers.

⁵²⁰ Taft to Root, March 17, 1901, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 376-99, series 8, reel 464, Taft Papers.

would later describe as “much more efficient than Lodge” in getting favorable legislation passed.⁵²¹

Taft also began to lobby Congress. In January 1901, he cabled the War Department with his and his fellow commissioners’ opinion on the urgency of getting the bill through Congress along with the recommendation that the message be passed to the “proper Senators and Representatives.” The commission warned Congress that the sale of public lands and the distribution of mining claims were impossible without the Spooner Bill. While Taft was personally dismissive of the “rag tag and bob tail of Americans,” as he described the American adventurers who had begun arriving in the Philippines, he was not above using them to advance his case with Congress. While they might be both “vicious” and “stupid,” thus “constantly siring up trouble” in the islands instead of “facilitating a condition of peace and good feeling,” Taft was ready to use the presence of “hundreds of American miners on [the] ground awaiting law to perfect claims” to “urgently recommend” the passage of the amended Spooner Bill so that its operation was not “postponed until complete suppression of all insurrection but only until in President’s judgment civil government may be safely established.”⁵²²

While Root understood the need to begin investment and, consequently, development in the islands, he was determined to establish the colonial government on a more solid foundation than an amendment to an appropriations bill. In the end, however, he was willing to compromise when it appeared that Congress would continue to be stuck in debates over a broader economic development scheme. He wrote into the Spooner Bill various restrictions on the commission’s

⁵²¹ Taft to Wright, April 11, 1902, series 3, reel 35, Taft Papers.

⁵²² Taft to Root, October 14, 1901, box 164, Root Papers; Philippine Commission to Department of War, January 2, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

power to sell or lease public lands. The language was changed to enable the sale or lease of public lands with the president's express approval when the delay in doing so would cause "great public mischief."⁵²³

Despite Root's efforts at reassurance, many of the bill's opponents remained unconvinced. Senator Augustus Bacon, a Democrat from Georgia, described the bill as one that had "no limitation upon the power of exploitation." He further disapproved of the efforts by Root and his pro-imperialist supporters in the Congress to obtain its passage "under whip and spur."⁵²⁴

When the large Republican majority in the new Congress finally passed the Spooner Bill as an amendment in March 1901, it was a partial victory for the Root and the commission. It created a formal separation between the civil and military spheres of authority and gave the commission broad powers to establish a civil government in the islands. While Taft's plans for aggressive development were curtailed by the inclusion of Root's limiting language, this did not appear to worry Root to any significant extent. He cabled Taft a few days after the adoption of the Spooner Amendment advising him that "in view of obstacles to industrial development" caused by the approved legislation, it was "desirable to lay before Congress at [the] opening of

⁵²³ Peter W. Stanley, *A Nation in the Making: The Philippines and the United States, 1899-1921*, Harvard Studies in American-East Asian Relations 4 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 88.

⁵²⁴ *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 35, pt. 6, 5670. He also objected to the fact that after the bill's passage, the provision put in place to limit the power of exploitation was "immediately dropped as a useless piece of furniture."

[the] next session . . . general railroad, land and mining laws.” Taft was instructed to being preparation on them “as soon as possible.”⁵²⁵

While the Spooner Amendment limited the commission’s ability to sell public lands and grant corporate franchises, it gave the commission near-complete autonomy to govern the Philippines. Congress had delegated the power of governance to a single agency within the executive branch. While the commissioners were happy with the broad authority they had been granted, they shared their president’s attitude toward the legislative branch, with Daniel Williams going so far as to declare how the “whole thing illustrates how foolish our representatives can be when dealing with something that does not affect their chances of reelection.”⁵²⁶ In his opinion, the entire evolution demonstrated that the challenges faced by the commission in the instituting of a proper system of governance for the islands was an area in which the country’s legislative leaders possessed neither sufficient “knowledge, nor the ambition to acquire it.”⁵²⁷

Now that Congress had acknowledged that the War Department was officially in charge, Root ensured that his department would remain in firm control. When Root received news through the newspapers that the Civil Service Commission was organizing examinations independent of War Department, he directed Clarence Edwards, the head of the BIA, to instruct Taft that “all official communications to Executive Departments, Bureaus, Commissions, etcetera, in addition to notifications of appointment to individuals should be sent through Division of Customs and Insular Affairs, War Department.” This routing of all correspondence

⁵²⁵ Root to Taft, March 5, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

⁵²⁶ Daniel Roderick Williams, *The Odyssey of the Philippine Commission* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1913), 164.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

through the division was considered “essential” to give the War Department the knowledge necessary for “information and intelligent action.”⁵²⁸

Root also began to correct what he perceived as errors in the department’s handling of the legislation that ultimately had become the Spooner Amendment. He began to organize a more vigorous campaign on behalf of the War Department and the commission to attain the necessary legislation on a multitude of issues. He sidelined the troublesome Lodge as much as possible and began to work through the more malleable Cooper, who could be counted upon to present unedited copies of insular legislation in the House.

The BIA began an active campaign of providing voluminous reports to Congress on the islands, including the so-called *Gazetteer of the Philippine Islands*, four thousand copies of which were printed and distributed to both houses of Congress and the War Department.⁵²⁹ Proclaimed as “the most comprehensive and recent information—geographical, statistical, and economical—published” from the “best authorities of the old and the latest official civil, military, and scientific sources under the new jurisdiction,” it was designed to be a “ready reference for the executive branch in the administration of the affairs of the islands from Washington” and a “repository of practical information” for legislators in their “discussion of the Philippine question in all its bearings.”⁵³⁰ Coming in at 1620 pages, the document was the single

⁵²⁸ Edwards to Taft, March 20, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

⁵²⁹ U.S. Congress, House, *Gazetteer of the Philippine Islands*, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Rep. 786 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 1.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

largest line item in the Senate's printing bill for 1902, with a final cost of \$14,328, twice the Printing Office's original estimate.⁵³¹

Root understood that the commission's authority under the Spooner Amendment depended, in large part, on the president's powers as commander-in-chief; and he remained anxious to gain independent authorization for civil governance. He expressed his concern to Taft in mid-1901 that "the form in which the present arrangements for civil government have been cast has as one of its causes a desire to continue the exercise of the President's power under the constitution, and if possible at the same time, give to what is done the sanction of Congressional authority under the Spooner Amendment." He informed Taft that he wanted "to do what is done in such a way that it will have behind it all the authority which the President has from any source, instead of casting loose from military power under the Constitution and standing simply on the Spooner Act."⁵³² Taft reflected this same desire in a report that fall, in which he urged Congress to "confirm the legislation of the commission already enacted, and vest Congressional enactment in the civil governor and commission and their successors to be appointed by the President the authority heretofore exercised by them under the instructions of the President."⁵³³

The commission also invited members of Congress to tour the Philippines and to see for themselves the advances the commission was achieving in the islands. The first of the fact-

⁵³¹ *Gazetteer of the Philippine Islands*, 57th Cong., 1st sess., S. Doc. 280 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1902); *Cost of Printing Certain Documents Ordered by the Senate*, 58th Cong., 1st sess., S. Rep. 1 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1903), 13-4; *Gazetteer of the Philippine Islands*, H. Rep. 786, 1.

⁵³² Root to Taft, June 20, 1901, quoted in Jessup, *Elihu Root*, 1938, 1:361.

⁵³³ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901: Report of the Philippine Commission, Part 1*, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Doc. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 22.

finding congressional delegations arrived in the fall of 1901. Touring pacified towns, in which the commission had carefully arranged the appropriate patriotic displays, including the prominent display of American flags, the members of Congress gave a number of speeches, which did nothing to change Taft's opinion of them. While he generally believed that the visit was a success and would moderate the opinions of the more radical anti-imperialists in Congress, he noted with some astonishment and consternation that it was the Republican members of the delegation who had embarrassed the commission far more than their Democratic counterparts. Taft expressed his anger at Edgar Weeks, a Republican congressman from Michigan, in particular, declaring him "an ass," but admitting, much to his regret, that "asses sometimes have great capacity for mischief."⁵³⁴ Despite feeling like men who were "sired by no one and damned by everybody," Taft promised that he and his commissioners were "in the fight to stay," an attitude which he attributed directly to Root being a "tower of strength."⁵³⁵

The control Root exhibited over legislative branch deliberations of issues relating to the Philippines and his general opinion that Congress was not to be trusted was once again evident during his efforts to get the Organic Act passed. Work on the Organic Act began almost immediately after the Spooner Bill was on the books. By the late spring of 1901, hundreds of cables had been exchanged between the War Department and the Philippine Commission on various aspects of the proposed legislation.⁵³⁶ Lodge, the proud imperialist, had become almost totally reliant on Root and had no idea that any of this work was in progress. His ignorance was all too clear when he wrote Root in June, asking for the secretary's "idea" with regard to new

⁵³⁴ Taft to Root, October 14, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ See numerous pieces of correspondence in box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

legislation for the islands, “because the Philippine legislation will necessarily be in the hands of my Committee.” “When any draft of a bill is made,” Lodge continued, “or of any legislation, for the Philippines, if you would kindly send me a copy I should be very much indebted, for I should like to have an opportunity to study it during the summer and familiarize myself with it.”⁵³⁷

Root placated Lodge, replying that it was best for Lodge to wait as he did not expect to have any firm proposals for “Congress to tear to pieces” before mid-October. Root did note, however, that there should be a series of acts governing the tariff, public lands, and other vital areas in order to give the Filipinos “the civil government which they have been led to expect, and which they desire, just as far as circumstances permit, and at the same time retaining all the powers which may be necessary to enable the President to govern the island properly under existing conditions.” He insisted that the commission should be left to “work out the form and machinery of government” as “no committee sitting in Washington could work the subject out so well as Taft and his associates can do in Manila.”⁵³⁸ Lodge agreed “entirely” with Root’s plans for the various sectors, but warned that there was bound to be “a certain amount of fight to be met” and thought it best to combine the acts into one bill as to “get it over at once.”⁵³⁹ Despite this piece of feedback to Root, it is evident that Lodge was in no position to act without the assistance of the secretary of war.

By early fall, Lodge was still waiting for word from Root on the progress of draft legislation and was growing increasingly impatient. In early November, he attempted he encouraged Root to “talk ‘Philippines’” during an upcoming visit. He pointed out to Root that

⁵³⁷ Lodge to Root, June 7, 1901, box 161, Root Papers.

⁵³⁸ Root to Lodge, July 1, 1901, box 161, Root Papers.

⁵³⁹ Lodge to Root, July 29, 1901, box 161, Root Papers.

under the new Roosevelt administration “horseback riding is the order of the afternoon, and it affords unlimited opportunities for really useful discussion.”⁵⁴⁰ To members of Root’s staff, Lodge was more direct. Charles Contant, who was handling currency issues in the archipelago, described to Root how Lodge made it clear to him during a briefing on the proposed coinage bill that Lodge was upset at efforts by Root to run legislation primarily through the House. “If I am to have charge of Philippines legislation I want to have charge of it,” Lodge had insisted. The powerful senator had gone so far as to convey “the very plain suggestion that House legislation would not fare well at his hand under these conditions, even if originating in the War Department.” Lodge had made it clear that he wanted the “credit of handling the legislation.”⁵⁴¹

While he wisely made a small concession and sent Lodge a copy of the proposed legislation in order to enable the senator to introduce it in the Senate simultaneously with its introduction in the House, Root continued to view Cooper as his most reliable ally in Congress. Like Lodge, Cooper was entirely reliant on the secretary of war. “I should be greatly pleased,” Cooper wrote Root a few weeks after Lodge’s berating of Contant, “to have you explain the provision of the measure to me, and trust that it may be convenient for you to do so before the reassembling of Congress.”⁵⁴²

It is significant that the chairmen of the relevant committees in both houses of Congress played almost no role in the initial formation of the legislation for the islands. They were both dependent on Root, with Lodge often being frozen out of the process until the last minute. Cooper for his part was disinclined to act unilaterally.

⁵⁴⁰ Lodge to Root, November 5, 1901, box 161, Root Papers.

⁵⁴¹ Charles A. Conant to Root, December 17, 1901, box 16, Root Papers.

⁵⁴² Cooper to Root, December 31, 1901, box 16, Root Papers.

While Root was successfully managing to fend off efforts by Lodge to formulate legislation for the Philippines, he found himself now answering to a new boss. Theodore Roosevelt, who won the Republican nomination for vice president in 1900, took over the presidency when McKinley died from an infection caused by an assassin's bullet in mid-September 1901. The forty-two-year-old Roosevelt, "that damned cowboy" in the eyes of Mark Hanna, McKinley's long-time, intimate associate, became the youngest man ever to hold the presidency.⁵⁴³

Roosevelt had become a prominent figure within the circle of leading American expansionist thinkers well before becoming president. The well-travelled Roosevelt came into the presidency with "a direct knowledge of the world and its peoples that no previous president save the Adamses, Jefferson, and Monroe had possessed."⁵⁴⁴ He had strong, well-defined views about American foreign policy and was less willing to share authority in this arena than he was in many areas of domestic policy. The Philippines, and all questions connected with the American role there, received the new president's attention. In his first annual message to Congress in 1901, he defined the American purpose: "We hope to do for them what has never been done for any people of the tropic—to make them fit for self-government after the fashion of the really free nations."⁵⁴⁵ He followed the War Department's work in ending the insurrection and monitored the establishment and operation of the new civil administration closely. In Roosevelt's opinion, "no more important work can be done at this time for our country than that

⁵⁴³ "Life Before the Presidency," <http://millercenter.org/president/roosevelt/essays/biography/2> (accessed June 25, 2103).

⁵⁴⁴ Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power*, 2.

⁵⁴⁵ Annual message of December 3, 1901, quoted in David H. Burton, *Theodore Roosevelt: Confident Imperialist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 84.

done by the men connected with the civil or military work in the Philippines.”⁵⁴⁶ As for the man at the head of the executive department tasked with carrying out this important work, Roosevelt had full confidence in him. During his long friendship, he had grown to trust in Root’s abilities. The new president preferred operating in an informal, personal style, with no set inner circle of advisors and he enjoyed collaborating with his secretary of war.

The Organic Act as drafted by the commission and the War Department, and approved by Roosevelt, was introduced to both houses of Congress in January 1902. Taft came to Washington to present the commission’s case before Congress directly. In early December, he had expressed to Root his desire to come to Washington “for the reason that it seems to me that the superficial view of the situation presented by visiting Congressmen will be most misleading, and the cable dispatches, short and unsatisfactory as they are, cannot correct such impressions.”⁵⁴⁷ Despite Taft’s spirited defense of the original language, Lodge’s committee significantly modified the bill. Taft was furious at the amendments, calling chairman’s explanations for the changes “one of Lodge’s subterfuges to avoid criticism.” As for Lodge himself, Taft described him as “one of the most cowardly men I know,” complaining to Luke Wright, “He does not hesitate to surrender something of real interest to the Islands in order to avoid criticism provided only he can carry his bill.”⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Roosevelt to James Francis Tracey, December 17, 1902, in Theodore Roosevelt, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Elting E. Morison, John M. Blum, and John J. Buckley, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 393.

⁵⁴⁷ Taft to Root, December 9, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁵⁴⁸ Taft to Wright, June 22, 1902, quoted in Glenn Anthony May, *Social Engineering in the Philippines: The Aims, Execution, and Impact of American Colonial Policy, 1900-1913*, Contributions in Comparative Colonial Studies no. 2 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 152.

Root remained frustrated by the slow pace of events within Congress. His aggravation was certainly heightened by the word he received from Wright in late February, in which the acting governor lamented that “the continued discussion . . . of what is to be the permanent policy of our government . . . has a tendency to confuse the Filipino mind and cause those who are naturally disposed to accept the situation to be uncertain and to hesitate in taking a decided stand.” Wright argued that “an authoritative declaration” of a permanent policy by Congress was “very desirable” and would have “more real effect in the way of pacification than anything else that could be done.”⁵⁴⁹

During the floor debate in April, the insular government’s supporters faced strong opposition from anti-imperialists and westerners with significant sugar-beet interests in their states.⁵⁵⁰ “These limitations upon the exercise of arbitrary power are in no degree restrictions upon the President, or upon the Secretary of War, or upon the oligarchy known as the United States Philippine Commission,” Senator Rawlings, a vocal anti-imperialist, argued. “Any one of those agencies of government in the Philippine Islands is left with a free hand to violate every one of those cardinal rules, which are declared as to their subordinates, to be inviolable.”⁵⁵¹

Lodge was also becoming increasingly pessimistic about the “experiment” being conducted in the Philippines. Referring to the “grave doubts” expressed to him in the feedback he had received from “observers there of long experience who are deeply interested in our management of the Philippines,” Lodge did not want to rush too quickly into establishing the

⁵⁴⁹ Wright to Edwards, February 20, 1901, enclosed in Lodge to Root, April 2, 1902, box 161, Root Papers.

⁵⁵⁰ Sugar beet farmers were worried that the development of Philippine sugar plantations would compete with domestic sugar production.

⁵⁵¹ *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong, 1st sess., 4523-5.

legal foundation for the colonial administration of the archipelago. He expressed the reluctance shared by many of his colleagues when he wrote to Roosevelt that while he recognized that the United States must “try the [legislative] experiment sooner or later . . . it is of the utmost importance to move very slowly.” After all, he argued, “In all history no Asiatic people have established a representative government until Japan tried it and their experiment has not been a very brilliant success.”⁵⁵²

After both houses had passed their different versions of bill, Cooper managed the difficult task of maneuvering the final bill through the conference committee stage, a task made more difficult by “the most adroit and cunning efforts” of conservative forces in the Senate to eliminate any provision for a Filipino assembly, a provision that Taft felt was vitally necessary. The senators finally agreed to accept the legislature after the insertion of a two-year clause, which mandated that the assembly would be established two years after the first census was taken.⁵⁵³ Taft was satisfied with the final outcome. While he thought the two-year delay was excessive, he reported in his annual report that the “Filipino people of the better class” received the news of the approval of the assembly with “great satisfaction.”⁵⁵⁴

In the end, while the Congress placed restrictions on franchise laws and tariffs, the Organic Act maintained the institutional structure established by the Spooner Amendment, a structure initially designed by the War Department. Congress formally delegated responsibilities for governing the Philippines to the War Department, which used the BIA as its communications

⁵⁵² Lodge to Roosevelt, July 11, 1902, box 161, Root Papers.

⁵⁵³ Cooper to Taft, series 3, reel 37, Taft Papers.

⁵⁵⁴ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1902*, vol. 10, part 1, 57th Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Doc. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 5.

conduit to the Philippine Commission whose authority was also confirmed. While Root was “very anxious to get the business [of administering the Philippines] out of the War Department” by early 1902, he was adamant that the responsibility and authority must be retained in one department in order to retain “harmonious action and single supervision.” His experience in dealing with the governance of the islands had only further convinced him that “the more you bring the different officers under one control . . . the better service you get.”⁵⁵⁵ When Root left his post in 1904, the War Department was still the executive branch department in charge.

Arriving on the scene in Washington after McKinley had taken the decision to annex the Philippines and the outbreak of hostilities in the archipelago, Root was able to leverage the skill set that he had developed as a Wall Street lawyer to devise a system of governance in the Philippines under the direction of a single executive-branch department while directing a war against Aguinaldo’s forces.⁵⁵⁶ He was a firm believer in the principle of unity of command and moved quickly to establish his authority over both the senior civilian and military leaders in the archipelago. Empowered by McKinley, and later by Roosevelt, Root directed the transition from a military government to a civilian government in the islands while simultaneously limiting congressional oversight, thereby maximizing executive and bureaucratic discretion in the management of the Philippines within his department. While his policies have earned him little

⁵⁵⁵ U.S. Congress, House, *Committee Reports, Hearings, and Acts of Congress Corresponding Thereto: Committee on Insular Affairs, 57th Cong., 1st and 2nd Sess.* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 58.

⁵⁵⁶ He also oversaw a series of fundamental reforms inside the army, but that topic is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

credit after the initial enthusiasm for empire passed, his efforts succeeded in limiting the bureaucratic infighting that marked the British experience in South Africa.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁷ It has been several decades since one could conclude, as one of Root's preeminent biographers did, that Root "fashioned machinery that insured for politically backward peoples a responsible, honest, and disinterested rule," Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition*, 191.

Chapter 4: Chamberlain and the Lack of Colonial Office Control

While the American response to the outbreak of hostilities resulted in the rapid centralization of bureaucratic control in a single executive-branch department, the British government never achieved this level of centralized control, nor in fact contemplated any significant move towards it. At no point in the British war in South Africa did Chamberlain gain sole responsibility in the cabinet for the direction of the war effort. He had to rely on the cooperation of the secretary of state for war and this cooperation was not always forthcoming. Lansdowne and, later, St. John Brodrick, who replaced Lansdowne in the fall of 1900, had to deal with their own bureaucratic struggles inside the War Office. This led them to often side with their generals against the wishes of the colonial secretary.

Upon the expiration of the Boer ultimatum, the Boers chose to initiate a pre-emptive strike in order to create a buffer zone between their republics and the British colonies. By mid-October 1899, the Boers surrounded Mafeking, Bechuanaland, and its British garrison of a thousand men with a force of eight to nine thousand men. A few days later, some three hundred miles to the east, the Boers invaded Natal and threatened Ladysmith, the headquarters of the main British force in South Africa. A third tactical investment by the Boers occurred at Kimberely, just across the border from the Orange Free State and roughly 200 miles south-southwest of Mafeking. Like the other two garrisons, this British detachment found itself besieged by well-coordinated and fast-moving Boer troops. Within the next few weeks, Boer commandoes invaded the northern fringes of the Cape Colony. Well-equipped and operating along interior lines of defense, the Boers possessed an unrivaled familiarity with the difficult and often barren terrain. Confident and resolute, the Boers initially swept all before them. In early

November, Milner summed up the early British setbacks by declaring that his “gloomy view of their power has been surpassed by the reality.”⁵⁵⁸ Chamberlain asked Devonshire, in exasperation, “Is it possible that 26,000 British on the defence are not a match for 28,000 Boers on the aggressive?”⁵⁵⁹

The British attempts to retake ground and relive the besieged garrisons were hampered by poor planning, sloppy intelligence, and inadequate reconnaissance. Bewildered officers and men were lost by the hundreds at the three pitched battles of Stormberg, Mageresfontein, and Colenso, all fought within a few days of each other in December 1899. Known collectively in Great Britain as “Black Week,” these military defeats, added to the ongoing sieges of British forces, were a shock to the British public. In a letter to Milner, Bertha Synge captured the general sense of anxiety in Britain:

Imagine the rush for papers as we all stood about the streets—regardless of all appearances, reading the telegrams with breathless anxiety. . . . Carriages stopped at the corners for papers to be brought—bus conductors rushed with handful [*sic*] of pennies as deputations for his passengers—There was a perfect sea of newspapers and anxious faces behind—intense gravity prevailed—People walked along speaking in whispers and mutterings, while ever echoed round the shrill and awful cry of “Terrible Reverse of British Troops.”⁵⁶⁰

With the losses of Black Week, “Public Opinion for a time lost all balance,” wrote another confidant of Milner. “The British army was ‘an Army of lions led by Donkeys’,” he continued, “The City collapsed. Confidence in the War Office and the General melted.”⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁸ Milner to Chamberlain, November 9, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/72.

⁵⁵⁹ Chamberlain to Devonshire, November 5, 1899, in Peter T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 481.

⁵⁶⁰ Bertha Synge to Milner, November 3, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, fo. 200.

⁵⁶¹ Philip Lyttelton Gell to Milner, December 15, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 222-5.

The government's ministers were in a similar state of shock. Stunned by the initial losses, Chamberlain confessed to be "broken in spirit" after Black Week.⁵⁶² While he was determined to do his part to see things through to a successful conclusion, he understood that the British had a hard road ahead. Writing to his mother-in-law in late December, he predicted:

We have a hard job before us—more difficult than we thought . . . we are fighting some 60,000 horsemen, of one of the dourest races in the world, in their own country, each man equal to two or three owing to their mobility, all good shots & able to live with very little transport in a climate which from the excessive heat & drought is most trying to British soldiers. . . . So it happens that although we have sent out the largest army that ever left these shores & must have at least 60,000 men with 50,000 more on the way, we are in a minority whenever we come to blows owing to the numbers left on the road as guards—or if not actually a minority we are at least too weak to attack successfully strongly entrenched positions. The next few weeks must be a very anxious time. They will show whether we can relieve the beleaguered garrisons & to what extent the rebellion will spread in Cape Colony.⁵⁶³

Milner agreed with his superior's assessment, declaring that the "rapid conquest of the Republics in the manner originally contemplated is now improbable. It is still possible, in the absence of any very extraordinary disaster, wh[ich] I will not assume, to wear them out, at great cost, by a protracted campaign."⁵⁶⁴

Both his supporters and his opponents inextricably linked the war in South Africa to Chamberlain. Salisbury attempted to disclaim responsibility by privately referring to the conflict as "Joe's war." The chief civil servant in the Colonial Office observed that Chamberlain was "consulted, encouraged, abused & applauded from every quarter of the Globe. There is a very prevalent notion that *he* is the Government."⁵⁶⁵ While he was often the focus of attention, he

⁵⁶² Quoted in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 481.

⁵⁶³ Chamberlain to Mrs. Endicott, December 24, 1899, in *ibid.*

⁵⁶⁴ Milner to Chamberlain, December 14, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/75.

⁵⁶⁵ Lord Ampthill to J. Parker Smith, January 15, 1900, in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 482.

could not manage the war alone. In fact, he lost control of its conduct as soon as the Boers crossed the frontier.

As the secretary of state for war, Lansdowne was responsible for the conduct of the war in the opening year. During his long and prestigious career in government, he had held some of the most important and coveted posts of the British Empire—governor-general of Canada (1883-8), Viceroy of India (1888-94)—before assuming his place in Salisbury’s cabinet as the secretary of state for war. His friend and Unionist colleague, Lord Newton, wrote in his official biography of Lansdowne that his subject’s abilities were “to a great extent unrecognized,” even among his contemporaries, while his name “has perhaps been almost forgotten by the unthinking mass of Englishmen.”⁵⁶⁶ Unlike Chamberlain and Salisbury, Lansdowne never had a chance to stand for election in the House of Commons. Due to the early death of his father, he spent his entire public career in the House of Lords.

His connection with the War Office began at the age of twenty-seven, when he accepted the office of parliamentary under-secretary of state for war. While he questioned his abilities for the post, he accepted the position after being reassured by Viscount Cardwell, the secretary of state for war and his prospective boss, that his “complete ignorance of War Office matters” would not interfere seriously with the workings of the department.⁵⁶⁷ Lansdowne spent two unremarkable years at the War Office before the Gladstone ministry fell in early 1874.

He had made one of his earliest official pronouncements on foreign policy on British policy in South Africa, specifically, on the policy that led to the British army’s defeat at the

⁵⁶⁶ Thomas Wodehouse Legh Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1929), 496.

⁵⁶⁷ Lansdowne to his mother, April 24, 1872, excerpted in *ibid.*, 16–7.

hands of the Zulu's at Isandhlwana in 1879. He submitted a resolution stating that the Lords regretted the ultimatum sent to the Zulu King Cetewayo, which was "calculated to produce immediate war," as well as the subsequent "offensive war . . . commenced without imperative and pressing necessity or adequate preparation." The resolution noted that while the government had censured Sir Bartle Frere, the British high commissioner in South Africa, it had failed to remove him from his post. His speech blamed the government for the entire episode, arguing that the annexation of the Transvaal had put Great Britain in the place of the Boers and threatened the Zulus with an unacceptable encirclement. He believed that the government's policy should have been to avoid conflict and asserted that the British demand for the Zulu army to disband had been an avoidable diplomatic mistake.⁵⁶⁸

Considering the future path of Lansdowne's career, it is of interest to note his description of the responsibilities of imperial representatives throughout the empire in the context of Frere's shortcomings. Lansdowne charged that as "the Representative of Imperial discipline and Constitutional authority in the South African colonies," Frere had "shown himself indifferent to discipline and superior to Constitutional authority." He continued:

It has been incidental to that [colonial] system that English administration has been found in all parts of the world in contact with independent races—races whose ideas of civilization and morality differ widely from ours. Hitherto our endeavour has been to extend our influence, not by fire and sword, but by the example of free institutions, by just administration, by good government, by the assimilating influences of culture and education. If these good practices are to be given up—if in our eyes independence is to be a crime, if all over the world the representatives of this country are to be allowed the arbitrament of peace and war—then I am afraid the day will come when, if it be said that the sun never sets on the Dominions of the Queen—it will be said also that it never

⁵⁶⁸ House of Lords debate, *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. 244, March 25, 1879, cols. 1606-17; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1879/mar/25/resolution> (accessed August 15, 2012).

ceases to look down on the strife and suffering for which our policy will have made itself responsible.⁵⁶⁹

After spending more than a decade outside of England focusing on his duties in Canada and India, Lansdowne was reconnected with events in South Africa after he was invited by Salisbury to join what was to be the first Unionist government. His long absence from the tumult of domestic politics was an asset, and as a leading Liberal Unionist, he was offered the War Office, which he accepted. While he had twice served as under-secretary, this was his first cabinet post.⁵⁷⁰ He inherited many difficulties at the War Office, which were only exacerbated by events in South Africa.

When he assumed the post, the Duke of Cambridge was scheduled to retire as the commander-in-chief of the British army after serving in the position for nearly forty years. His retirement presented an opportunity for the government to reorganize the command structure by reducing the power of commander-in-chief. The reorganization included the establishment of a five-member army board to give the secretary of state for war a greater variety of military advice.⁵⁷¹ In early 1898, Lansdowne battled with Hicks Beach over the level of funding for the army. Lansdowne complained to Salisbury that several members of the cabinet had intimidated that they would not defend his proposals in Parliament. Not only had Hicks Beach expressed his distrust in Lansdowne's scheme, Chamberlain was "hostile" to any increase in expenditure "to prop up a rickety and useless system." More importantly, Lansdowne believed that Salisbury

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., cols. 1619-20.

⁵⁷⁰ In addition to his time in the War Office, he briefly served as the parliamentary under-secretary of state for India in 1880.

⁵⁷¹ Keith Surridge, "Lansdowne at the War Office," in *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image*, ed. John Gooch (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 23.

himself was “frankly incredulous” at the proposed increase in funding for the army and felt that the prime minister had intimated that he would “not open [his] lips during the debates . . . in the House of Lords.” Lansdowne complained that if his fellow ministers were unconvinced of the necessity for increased funding, “or even at heart opponents of the proposals for which the Government as a whole will be responsible,” his efforts were hopeless as other M.P.s would surely find out that the government was “halfhearted.” Meeting stiff resistance in the cabinet, Lansdowne felt compelled to threaten resignation.⁵⁷² Salisbury refused to accept the offer—declaring it as “absurd”—considering that the cabinet had consented to most of what Lansdowne had wanted. He advised Lansdowne that in the future he should not expect his colleagues to “accompany” their “submission [to his schemes] with a hymn of praise.”⁵⁷³ Lansdowne agreed to remain in the cabinet, admitting that Salisbury’s logic was superior to his own, which was, he confessed, “perhaps somewhat distorted by sentiment.”⁵⁷⁴

Lansdowne’s role in South African affairs as a member of the cabinet began in earnest in the aftermath of the Jameson Raid. In late December 1895, roughly 500 men of the British South African Company under the command of Dr. Leander Starr Jameson invaded the South African Republic in support of a supposed uprising by the Uitlanders in Johannesburg. When the Uitlanders failed to rise up, the filibusters were quickly forced to surrender. After being handed over to the British authorities, Jameson and five senior officers involved in the raid were tried for

⁵⁷² Lansdowne to Salisbury, February 2, 1898, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 338-42.

⁵⁷³ Salisbury to Lansdowne, February 2, 1898, Foreign Office, Private Offices: Various Ministers’ and Officials’ Papers: Marquess of Lansdowne, Correspondence as Secretary of State, (FO 800/145), TNA.

⁵⁷⁴ Lansdowne to Salisbury, February 3, 1898, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 151.

their actions, convicted, and imprisoned in Britain. As these officers also held commissions in the British army or reserves, they were subject to additional punishment by the War Office.

After Lansdowne consented to allow the officers to resign their commissions instead of being formally dismissed, he was almost immediately pressed by interested parties to answer for the perceived harshness of the punishment and pressed to enact some measure of leniency.

The first inquiry came from the very top as Queen Victoria questioned Lansdowne as to whether more support should have been given to officers involved. Lansdowne assured the queen that she should never fear to assert her right “to say to any officer, ‘I don’t think you are quite the sort of man to suit me and I therefore, proposed to get rid of you: go quietly: if you don’t, I will turn you out.’” While admitting that such a course of action was “violent but indispensable,” he rejected the idea the proper “legal grounds” were required every time a “bad ticket” had to be purged from the ranks, predicting that “the army will come to grief” if was forced to operate under this stricter requirement. Addressing the claims by some of the officers that they had acted on orders of authorities in London, Lansdowne argued, “The five officers must make up their minds as to the line which they intend to take,” and that even “if they have a defence, (hitherto not put forward) which on patriotic grounds they do not desire to put forward they must take the consequences.” That was, he argued, if such “attenuating circumstances,” as the officers belatedly claimed, really “have any existence at all.”⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Sir Arthur John Biggie, August 25, 1896, Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne, (Bowood) Papers, Manuscripts Collections, British Library, London, England, Papers as Secretary of War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 vols.), vol. 1 Jameson Raid 1896, fo. 37. (Cited hereafter as Lansdowne Papers.)

Lansdowne's ignorance of the government's involvement is evident in his minute to a suggestion by the adjutant general that a final decision for the five officers should await a War Office investigation. He argued that he saw no reason for "altering a decision already arrived at," especially in light of the testimony given at the men's trial. He was "quite ready to suppose that [they] had been intentionally or unintentionally misled," but did "not for a moment suppose that the raid was 'directed by orders from home.'" Any further investigation between "conflicting statements" was unnecessary for, as long as long as the War Office followed the finding of the court, he believed he was "on solid ground."⁵⁷⁶

Salisbury responded to Lansdowne's minute by questioning whether it was justified for the department to turn out the officers in question "for the offence of having believed the word of their superior officers." He suggested that Lansdowne consider a hypothetical situation in which the government had ordered an attack and the officers had decided to disobey the order. In that case, Salisbury argued, they would have been "very severely and very justly punished." He suggested that Lansdowne consult with Chamberlain to "hear how the matter strikes him."⁵⁷⁷

Lansdowne remained steadfast in his refusal to modify his stance. He argued that if they had exercised "common prudence," they would have asked whether "an order to invade a friendly state received from an official of the Company was an order to be obeyed as unhesitatingly as if it had been given by his military superiors."⁵⁷⁸ He consulted with Chamberlain as directed and was happy to learn that the colonial secretary concurred with his

⁵⁷⁶ Lansdowne minute, September 5, 1896, Lansdowne Papers, Papers as Secretary of War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 vols.), vol. 1 Jameson Raid 1896, fo. 44.

⁵⁷⁷ Salisbury to Lansdowne, September 5, 1896, FO 800/145, TNA.

⁵⁷⁸ Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 6, 1896, Lansdowne Papers, Papers as Secretary of War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 vols.), vol. 1 Jameson Raid 1896, fo. 45.

determination that the officers' resignations should be immediately accepted. In a follow-up letter to Salisbury, he noted that while he was well aware that there was "something like a conspiracy to produce for these officers treatment more lenient than they deserve," he insisted that regardless of orders, "it is laid down on the highest military authority, that, even to his military superiors, an officer does not of necessity always owe unhesitating obedience (e.g. if he were ordered to do a shameful thing)."⁵⁷⁹

The earlier examination of the buildup of British forces in South Africa demonstrates that Lansdowne was a proponent of sending "small additions [of troops], complemented by strong words." He continuously advocated taking no provocative action, including a precipitate mobilization, which might increase the risk of attack during "the vulnerable period" before reinforcements arrived.⁵⁸⁰ Lansdowne was not blind to the fact that actual fighting might be the result of failed diplomacy, but Salisbury still felt it necessary to complain to Lansdowne in late August about the deficiencies in War Office planning, pointing out that "more departmental drilling is wanted."⁵⁸¹

Lansdowne's reputation in the war would, of course, rise or fall to a great extent on the performance of his generals in the field.⁵⁸² Unfortunately, Buller was not up to the difficult task

⁵⁷⁹ Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 18, 1896, Lansdowne Papers, Papers as Secretary of War, 1895-1900, South Africa (6 vols.), vol. 1 Jameson Raid 1896, fo. 39.

⁵⁸⁰ Surrige, "Lansdowne at the War Office," 30.; Memorandum on the Possibility of War in Lansdowne to Salisbury, September 21, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 435-9.

⁵⁸¹ Salisbury to Lansdowne, August 30, 1899, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 156-8.

⁵⁸² Salisbury described the position several decades earlier: "A War Minister must find his reward in his conscience or his salary. He must not look for fame. It is only a very pale and reflected glory that he will derive from a successful war. All the visible and palpable merit of a victory is the Commander's and few people bestow a thought on the humble drudge in a London

set to him. Lansdowne expressed his concern over the situation to Salisbury in early November. He had been keeping Buller's reports from South Africa within a relatively tight circle, basically limiting distribution to the members of the defense committee and the queen, but he felt it was increasingly necessary to expand this circle to include other members of the cabinet. While he believed he had had Salisbury's support in suppressing Buller's telegrams, he felt that there would be "great soreness" among his colleagues if they continued to receive none of Buller's increasingly pessimistic dispatches.⁵⁸³ By the end of November, less than two months into the war, Buller wrote to Lansdowne with the gloomy declaration that "up to date we are hanging on by our eyeballs."⁵⁸⁴ By now, it had become increasingly evident to Lansdowne and others that Buller lacked confidence in his own abilities.

Lord Roberts, "a lithe, grey terrier of a man," in words of Thomas Pakenham, had won the Victoria Cross during the Indian Mutiny and had cemented his military reputation with his campaign in the mountains and snows of Afghanistan when he emerged victorious at the Battle of Kandahar in September 1880 after a 300-mile forced march from Kabul with a column of 10,000 men.⁵⁸⁵ This campaign had, as *The Times* put it, "reminded the world what British

office, who schemed and toiled to furnish him with material for his splendid deeds. But on the other hand, if there be disaster, the importance of the War Office is immediately remembered. A commander must be strangely deficient in ingenuity if he cannot impute his mishap to some want of men or money or warlike materials, and for that want, a discerning nation will always hold a War Minister to blame!" Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne Cecil, Third Marquis of Salisbury, "Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart," *The Quarterly Review* 3, no. 221 (January 1862): 205.

⁵⁸³ Lansdowne to Salisbury, November 6, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 464-5.

⁵⁸⁴ Buller to Lansdowne, November 25, 1899, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 161.

⁵⁸⁵ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 253.

soldiers could do if properly led” and made his “a name to conjure with.”⁵⁸⁶ He had also previously, if very briefly, served as commander-in-chief of British forces in South Africa. In December 1880, the Boers in the Transvaal revolted against the British, who had annexed the Boer republic in 1877. Boer forces besieged the small British garrisons scattered throughout the Transvaal and Boer forces under the command of Piet Joubert defeated Major-General Sir George Colley’s small relief force at Laing’s Nek and Ingogo before routing it at Majuba Hill on February 27, 1881, where Colley was killed. Roberts, who was in England on leave, was appointed as the governor and commander-in-chief of Natal, the governor and commander-in-chief of the Transvaal Province and the high commissioner for South Eastern Africa and dispatched to South Africa to rectify the situation.⁵⁸⁷ While he was en route to Cape Town, the Liberal Government under William Gladstone decided to negotiate its way out of the situation, and by the time Roberts reached Cape Town at the end of March, a peace treaty had been signed.

Roberts reflected on this history when he wrote to Lansdowne in 1897. “I was selected by the Government of 1881 to command the force with which it was intended to retrieve the Majuba Hill disaster. Unfortunately a hasty peace was made, and I had my journey to South Africa for nothing.” Now sixteen years older, he assured Lansdowne that he was in the best of health and hoped that his rank would not be considered a bar to employment in South Africa should the need arise. He proclaimed to have a “great regard and high respect” for Milner and was confident that he could work “in harmony” with him.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ *The Times* (London), December 18, 1899, 9.

⁵⁸⁷ *London Gazette* 24947, March 8, 1881, 1071; available at <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/24947/pages/1071> (accessed March 12, 2012).

⁵⁸⁸ Roberts to Lansdowne, April 25, 1897, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 146.

Roberts had been disappointed not to get the nod for the top job in South Africa and resumed his campaign for it as soon as Buller's gloomy messages began arriving. "I am much concerned at the very gloomy view which Buller takes of the situation," he wrote to Lansdowne in early December, even before the disasters of Black Week. Acknowledging that the British were engaged in a "very serious war—one that may tax our resources to the utmost," he explained that the confidence of the commander was the most critical element to winning the war. Insisting that it was impossible to determine general's qualities until he had been "tried," Roberts regretted that not a single British commander in South Africa had ever held an independent command in the field. "It is the feeling of responsibility which weighs down most men," he argued, "and it seems clear . . . that this feeling is having its effect too much on Buller. He seems to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task imposed upon him." Declaring that "a serious reverse" in South Africa "would endanger the Empire," Roberts offered to take over command of the largest army the British had ever assembled under the command of one man, "more than double what Marlborough had at any time in Flanders or that Wellington had in the Peninsula or at Waterloo."⁵⁸⁹

Lansdowne agreed with Roberts "as to the gravity of the outlook" and the field marshal's assessment of Buller's pessimism, which was "to be regretted," but seeing as Buller had, "up to the present," not made any major mistakes, he did not see how he could supersede him "merely on account of the gloominess of his views." Lansdowne expressed optimism that Buller might still achieve "a brilliant success on the Tugela within the next two or three days," thus reversing

⁵⁸⁹ Roberts to Lansdowne, December 8, 1899, in *ibid.*, 161–2.

the situation, but he acknowledged that no one could predict with any certainty “what turn of events” might take place.⁵⁹⁰

After news of Black Week reached Lansdowne, he immediately met with Balfour and Salisbury and suggested that Roberts be appointed as the commander-in-chief in South Africa with Kitchener as his chief of staff. Lansdowne had mentioned this potential change to Salisbury in an earlier letter in which he suggested that “if anything happened to Buller,” he would send Roberts to take command. While Lansdowne pushed for the change and supported his new commanding general, Balfour was less impressed initially. He acknowledged to Salisbury that he had conducted a “decidedly satisfactory” interview with Roberts in mid-December, but remained a bit put off by Robert’s declarations of fitness for the job, in which the field marshal insisted that he had been leading a “most active and abstemious life” for years waiting for the opportunity to assume field commanding once again. Balfour felt that while “there is something rather fine in the simplicity of the utterance,” such sentiments coming from the mouth of a man who had just been informed that his only son had been mortally wounded, “it is pathetic as well.”⁵⁹¹ Balfour would nonetheless come to praise Robert’s skill in completing “a transformation so dramatic & so complete” it was “without parallel in our military history.”⁵⁹² Salisbury supported Lansdowne’s recommendation, although he was critical of the manner in which his war secretary had handled the announcement. Lansdowne made the change public before submitting the news to the queen despite Salisbury’s telegraphed instructions to the contrary. Salisbury was “very much annoyed” at the administrative and “inexcusable” blunder,

⁵⁹⁰ Lansdowne to Roberts, December 10, 1899, in *ibid.*, 163.

⁵⁹¹ Balfour to Salisbury, December 18, 1899, Balfour Papers, Add. MS 49691, ff. 75-6.

⁵⁹² “Notes on the S.A. Campaign,” Balfour Papers, Add. MS 49717, ff. 140-6.

but stood behind the measure. He found Buller “inconceivable” and recommended the establishment of a committee of inquiry so that “such excellent fooling may not be lost to the world.”⁵⁹³ He confirmed his generally negative regard for British military leadership within a fortnight when, after reading a comment by the Duke of Wellington that “every gallant officer is a fool,” he observed that “the type remains unchanged to this day.”⁵⁹⁴

Lansdowne recognized that if Roberts were appointed “over Buller’s head” the latter might resign at once, therefore, the change had to be carefully managed.⁵⁹⁵ The decision made, Lansdowne attempted to break the news gently and to bring Buller around to the necessity of making the move. Writing Buller a couple of days after the decision had been made, Lansdowne informed the general that while receiving word of Roberts’s appointment must have been “very distasteful,” it was an “inevitable” outcome of the increased commitment of British troops to the region. Lansdowne assured Buller “with pleasure” that the decision was “in no case” interpreted as a reflection on the general’s performance and was accepted “universally” as the “natural outcome” of events that had “altered the whole course of the campaign,” forcing the government to increase the size of British forces and compelling Buller to give his undivided attention to Natal.⁵⁹⁶

By the end of January, concerns over Buller’s feelings became much less important as Lansdowne lost all confidence in the general after the British defeat at Spion Kop, particularly

⁵⁹³ Salisbury to Balfour, December 19, 1899, Balfour Papers, Add. MS 49691, ff. 85-6.

⁵⁹⁴ Salisbury to Balfour, December 29, 1899, Balfour Papers, Add. MS 49691, ff. 88-9.

⁵⁹⁵ Lansdowne to Salisbury, December 10, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 478-9.

⁵⁹⁶ Salisbury quoted in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 184.

after the general attempted to lay the blame for this and his other defeats at the Lansdowne's feet. While Lansdowne complained to Roberts that Buller's "faults of tone and temper" had made many of his colleagues in the cabinet indignant, he argued that it would still be unwise to remove the general as he remained popular within a large section of the army and in the eyes of the public represented the "dogged soldier" who had persevered in the face of very great difficulties. While acknowledging that any action against Buller would be received with indignation in many quarters, "some of them very exalted," the cabinet was ready to take its share of the responsibility to any course of action Roberts might advocate.⁵⁹⁷

In April, Lansdowne authorized the public release of most of the military dispatches concerning the Spion Kop battle, which, taken as a whole, presented Buller in a very negative light. Their release escalated the feud between the war secretary and the superseded general. Whether Lansdowne had gotten the cabinet's approval to public the dispatches was unclear. Lansdowne expressed surprise that their release took Salisbury "aback" as he was under the impression that publication of the dispatches was "to some extent inevitable" and that the only question was how much to publish. He argued that was an "open secret" that the generals were in disagreement over the Spion Kop operation and that it had been "muddled." Consequently, withholding the dispatches would only have led to the supposition that they were worse than they really were. The War Department had, therefore, been forced to undertake a meticulous "editing" the dispatches and had released "the best [versions] we could."⁵⁹⁸ Salisbury was of the opinion that the cabinet had decided that nothing would be released and this incident led him to

⁵⁹⁷ Lansdowne to Roberts, March 31, 1900, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 181–2.

⁵⁹⁸ Lansdowne to Salisbury, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 527-30.

openly question whether the “traditional practice of not recording Cabinet decisions is a wise one.”⁵⁹⁹ Balfour agreed that “a brief record” of cabinet decisions would be a “convenience” as he sometimes found it difficult after the cabinet’s “confused discussions” to recollect instructions on matters that he had brought before the members let alone instructions to other ministers. As for the specific instructions regarding the Spion Kop dispatches, he thought the only decision had been to withhold from publication certain “subsidiary documents” that had indeed not been released.⁶⁰⁰ While it is unclear whether Lansdowne agreed with Salisbury and Balfour regarding the need to have a permanent record of cabinet proceedings, he most vociferously disagreed that there had been any “occasion which there was a ‘clear decision’ not to publish the despatches.” Declaring that such a decision would have, in fact, been “an immense relief” in that it would have “absolved” him of further responsibilities in managing the issue, Lansdowne was disturbed that Salisbury felt he might have regarded the cabinet’s views with “indifference” or acted “deliberately in opposition to them.”⁶⁰¹ To Balfour, Lansdowne reflected that “our decisions are very often impalpable, and perhaps I ought to have been able to construct one from materials afforded by Devonshire’s yawns and casual interjections round the table.”⁶⁰²

As Lansdowne pointed out to Salisbury a few days after making him Roberts’ chief of staff, Kitchener was in a difficult position within the new military command structure. As a major general, Kitchener was junior not only to Buller, but to six other generals in South Africa.

⁵⁹⁹ Salisbury to Lansdowne, quoted in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 184.

⁶⁰⁰ Balfour to Salisbury, April 22, 1900, Balfour Papers, Add. MS 49691, fo. 100.

⁶⁰¹ Lansdowne to Salisbury, April 22, 1900, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 531-4.

⁶⁰² Lansdowne to Balfour, April 22, 1900, Balfour Papers, Add. MS 49727, ff. 129-30.

While Lansdowne dismissed the need to spot promote Kitchener, an action that would be “rather a violent measure,” he remained concerned about Kitchener’s position in the military hierarchy. Ultimately, he argued that with Roberts “to the fore,” Kitchener owed “allegiance to no one else” and would simply become Buller’s chief of staff if the superseded general resumed command should Roberts become a casualty. Describing Kitchener’s position “up to this point” as “safe,” Lansdowne did not force any further evaluation of hypothetical changes in the command structure.⁶⁰³ Roberts forced Lansdowne’s hand on this issue in February when he argued that Buller had “lost confidence in himself, and, after his failures, cannot be expected to carry troops with him.” With White’s fate “uncertain” and the next most senior officers “more or less untried men,” Roberts strongly recommended that Kitchener be formally announced as his successor with a promotion to the rank of full general.⁶⁰⁴

Lansdowne not only had to manage his colleagues in the cabinet and his generals in the field, but also to resist the constant attempts of Queen Victoria to impose her will on the government’s conduct of the war. She regularly criticized the government, in general, and Lansdowne, in particular, for “questioning” British generals in the field. In the aftermath of the Spion Kop setback, Lansdowne wrote to Roberts asking if recent “successive disasters” had been the result of “carelessness of inefficiency” on the part of British generals and suggesting that, if so, the officers responsible should be superseded as the morale of the troops would most certainly be damaged if they made the determination that they were not being properly led.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ Lansdowne to Salisbury, December 22, 1899, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 486-7.

⁶⁰⁴ Roberts to Lansdowne, February 8, 1900, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 169.

⁶⁰⁵ Lansdowne to Roberts, April 6, 1900, in *ibid.*, 180.

When she learned of this communication, she quickly informed Lansdowne that she was “at a loss to understand” why he would make such an inquiry as Roberts was clearly the best judge of what was necessary in the field and ordered that the field marshal “must not really be interfered with by civilians at a distance, who cannot judge the exact state of the case.”⁶⁰⁶ After complaining to Salisbury that his position was “a little difficult” as he felt “very much as Her Majesty does upon the subject,” Lansdowne insisted to Victoria that the civilian government was in its rights in “endeavouring to strengthen the hands of the General and to make him feel that the responsibility for severe measures, if taken, will not be his alone.”⁶⁰⁷ Salisbury backed up his war secretary, informing the queen that it was not practical to follow a doctrine in which the civilian cabinet was permitted to exercise absolutely no control over a general in the field. “If they have no control,” he argued, “they have no responsibility.” He suggested that if “some great evil” were to result from a general’s action, the government following this policy would be under no obligation to accept responsibility for what had been done or to defend the general in Parliament, a scenario that would very likely result in “a condition of great embarrassment” to all concerned. As for the present situation, Salisbury insisted that the “successive losses of so many bodies of men” was a “scandal” that obliged the cabinet to make inquiries.⁶⁰⁸ Faced with the pushback by both Lansdowne and Salisbury, Victoria relented in her demand that she countersign all telegrams before they were sent.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁶ Victoria to Lansdowne, April 7, 1900, in *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁷ Lansdowne to Victoria, April 8, 1900, in *ibid.*, 180–1.

⁶⁰⁸ Salisbury to Victoria, April 9, 1900, in Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3:525–6.

⁶⁰⁹ Victoria to Salisbury, April 10, 1900, in *ibid.*, 3:526.

The queen criticized Lansdowne again that same month in regards to the previously discussed Spion Kop dispatches. When she learned that the dispatches had been released to the public, the queen immediately sent word to Lansdowne expressing her “utter astonishment” and “great concern” that communications from Roberts and Buller had been published despite Salisbury’s and Wolseley’s promise to her that they would not be made public on any account. She lamented that their publication was certain to cause “far more heart-burnings” among the public and would tend to lower the troops’ opinion of their leaders.⁶¹⁰ She demanded that Salisbury repudiate Lansdowne’s “unprecedented” action, which she felt had set a precedent that, if followed in the future, might ruin the discipline of the army.⁶¹¹ Salisbury once again backed his war secretary. He placated the queen while insisting that any public criticism would only lead Lansdowne to resign, an action that might very well also result in the other Liberal Unionists leaving the government. He insisted that risking this fallout, which would necessitate a change of government or, perhaps, the dissolution of Parliament, was unwarranted and “it would be a great responsibility to bring about these events in the very crisis of war.”⁶¹² While Salisbury might have worried that an official inquiry into the war would damage Lansdowne’s reputation, he had no misgivings about British generals being justly blamed for their own mistakes and held responsible for their military defeats.⁶¹³

There was a certain sense of lifelessness about Salisbury’s government in the opening months of the war, a fact that seems striking in the face of the increasing precarious conditions in

⁶¹⁰ Victoria to Lansdowne, April 19, 1900, in *ibid.*, 3:533–5.

⁶¹¹ Victoria to Salisbury, April 22, 1900, in *ibid.*, 3:538.

⁶¹² Salisbury to Victoria, April 23, 1900, in *ibid.*

⁶¹³ Roberts, *Salisbury*, 760, 823.

South Africa. Part of the reason was that Salisbury was dealing with a personal tragedy. His wife, the prop of his political life, had finally succumbed to cancer after a long illness and he spent an increasing amount of time away in Hatfield recovering from this loss. Closely managing a war was never his style to begin with as he considered armed conflicts to be nothing more than the results of failed diplomacy. Observing the conduct of the cabinet as a well-connected outsider, Selborne wrote to Balfour to complain about the lack of a proper cabinet committee to manage the war. With Salisbury spending a majority of his time at Hatfield and Chamberlain often away at Birmingham, there was no one besides Lansdowne to respond to urgent cables from Milner and Buller. Selborne continued:

I do think the time has come for the Cabinet to take this war in a less casual way. . . . It takes *days* to formulate our answer to the most urgent telegrams. There having been no proper consultation the answer is often vague & unsatisfactory, sometimes contradictory to a previous answer similarly concocted. There is only one remedy for this. There should be a committee of public safety of the Cabinet which should sit every day, which should have plenary powers from the Cabinet, and which should settle as it arises each question no matter what department is concerned. . . . This committee could polish off almost in as many minutes as it now takes days these questions.⁶¹⁴

With the outbreak of war, Chamberlain experienced a sudden eclipsing of his role in South African affairs. Early in December, he foresaw even before the news of Black Week reached London that “as long as [the Boers] can shoot down our men & run away to fight again another day, they may continue the war indefinitely.”⁶¹⁵ While he was not reluctant to offer strategic advice to Lansdowne, it was advice only, not direction. He was, in fact, initially impressed by the performance of the War Office. It was in the middle of dispatching more than a hundred thousand men to South Africa within four

⁶¹⁴ Selborne to Balfour, December 14, 1899, Balfour Papers, Add. MS 49707, ff. 49-51.

⁶¹⁵ Chamberlain to Milner, December 6, 1899, in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 481.

months in what has been described as “an almost flawless mobilization.”⁶¹⁶

Nevertheless, he pounded Lansdowne with suggestions to cut the Boer’s telegraph and railway connections with Delagoa Bay, and thus the rest of the outside world, and for Methuen to send part of his force into the Orange Free State, where they could live off the land on “a sort of Sherman ‘march through Georgia.’”⁶¹⁷

While Lansdowne was busy reorganizing the military side of things, Chamberlain was left to deal with maintaining support for the government in the House of Commons. He admitted that he “did not look forward” to the opening of Parliament in 1900 “with very much pleasure.”⁶¹⁸ He rose to the challenge, however. When the Liberal opposition presented a motion censuring the government for its lack of judgment in connection with the outbreak of war, Chamberlain countered that the issue was less about how the British had gotten involved in the war and more about how to recover from the current situation and manage things to a successful conclusion. “We have suffered checks, we have made mistakes,” he admitted, “I am not anxious to dispute the blame. Let the Government bear the brunt of it . . . blame us by all means. What is urgent is to retrieve those checks, and to repair those mistakes.” At the same time, he was proud that the British had responded to their patriotic duty and rallied to the flag. “Whatever we may feel—humiliation if you please—at the defects which have been disclosed, that humiliation must be accompanied by the deepest pride,” he declared, as “reverses try the

⁶¹⁶ Howard Bailes, “Technology and Imperialism: A Case Study of the Victorian Army in Africa,” *Victorian Studies* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 86.

⁶¹⁷ Chamberlain to Lansdowne, December 21, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/98.

⁶¹⁸ Chamberlain to Mary Chamberlain, January 16, 1900, Chamberlain Papers, JC 28/A/2/13/1.

temper of a nation, and our people have borne the test. . . . Never before in the history of our Empire has it so realised its strength and its unity.”⁶¹⁹

Besides rallying support at home with speeches in the Commons and across various constituencies, Chamberlain was also responsible for the wartime government in the Cape Colony and Natal and the planning for the post-war settlement in South Africa. Chamberlain, and the rest of the cabinet for that matter, had believed that the British would be able to reassert its paramountcy over the Boer republics without formally terminating their independence. Even after the initial setbacks, Chamberlain remained uneasy about the outright annexation of the republics. It was only after the disasters of Black Week that he informed his colleagues that to restore even the appearance of independence would encourage the republics “constantly . . . to endeavour to secure the substance” of “the Africander ambitions which have produced the present state of things.”⁶²⁰ He insisted that the republics would need to be ruled by a civil or military governor until the British could safely grant them the same self-governing powers enjoyed by the rest of the white settler colonies in the empire. The early setbacks had stiffened his terms for the post-war order in South Africa.

While Chamberlain and Milner were generally in agreement as to the prospective post-war order during the initial stages of the war, Chamberlain differed from his man on the spot with regard to the continuation of the existing Dutch-British ministry in the Cape Colony. Milner wanted to get rid of it, either by suspending the Cape constitution or by disenfranchising

⁶¹⁹ House of Commons debate, February 5, 1900, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 78, cols. 618-23; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1900/feb/05/fifth-days-debate> (accessed May 16, 2012).

⁶²⁰ “Memorandum on the Future Settlement of British South Africa,” January 12, 1900, Chamberlain Papers, JC 14/4/11.

the districts that had been overrun by the Boers. "It is," Milner pleaded, "out of the question that . . . the people of districts wh[ich] have revolted almost *en masse* . . . should be allowed, as soon as they have done shooting at the Imperial forces, to turn quietly round and resume the game of disloyalty by the old constitutional means." Chamberlain was not convinced that Milner's plan of regional disenfranchisement would return a "British and loyal majority" and suspension of the Cape's constitution would be attacked vigorously by Liberals, including those who were otherwise "at one with the Government in the prosecution of the war to a satisfactory settlement."⁶²¹ "After all," he wrote in the early fall of 1900, "nothing can alter the permanent facts of the situation which dominate the politics of the Colony, namely the existence of a Dutch majority largely consisting of persons disloyal to our rule. We have to lie on the bed which our predecessors made for us." Without the "absolute proof of a widespread & dangerous conspiracy" against the British, Chamberlain warned Milner that the government would never gain support for any radical move in the House of Commons and any such attempt would cost the government the support of every other self-governing colony.⁶²²

As for the initial terms for a peace settlement, Chamberlain announced the British terms for peace in mid-May. With the army on its way to Johannesburg, the British demanded the incorporation of the Boer republics within the British Empire under crown colonial government until "it is safe . . . to introduce these States into the great circle of self-governing colonies."⁶²³ In this regard, he was completely in accord with Milner, who argued to Roberts later that same

⁶²¹ Chamberlain memorandum, "The Political Situation in the Cape Colony," March 7, 1900, CAB 37/52/32, TNA.

⁶²² Chamberlain to Milner, September 10, 1900, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/68.

⁶²³ *The Times*, May 12, 1900, 12.

month that it would be “madness” for the British to attempt to establish self-government in the new colonies “for some time.” Until the “immense mess” in South Africa was cleaned up and an “overwhelming loyal majority” established, an “autocratic civil government” would have to rule the incorporated republics.⁶²⁴

Despite the obvious shift in British military fortunes that had occurred in the first few months after Roberts’s arrival, periodic reverses made Chamberlain question the generally optimistic tone of the War Office. “As long as whole detachments of the British Army continue to allow themselves to be mopped up by bands of Boers in different parts of the country,” he grumbled to Milner in July, “it is impossible to say that we are really out of the wood.” He wanted to establish civil governments to supplant military administration in both of the Boer republics as soon as possible and worried that “the men on the spot . . . are very likely to have ideas of their own & hence friction or difficulty might arise.”⁶²⁵

When it appeared that major combat operations were winding down and that the war was close to completion, Lansdowne offered his resignation to Salisbury. He continued to argue against a “complete alternation” of the War Office, but suggested that as future reform would be more successful coming from within the organization, it would be better for the government to have a new secretary of state for war. He questioned whether it would be possible to convince the public that any significant changes would be produced if the ministry continued to be headed by a man who had supported the 1895 reorganization of the War Office and thus was responsible

⁶²⁴ Milner to Roberts, May 25, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 15, ff. 82-93.

⁶²⁵ Chamberlain to Milner, July 23, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 32-5.

for the “order of things” now under criticism.⁶²⁶ After mulling over the decision for a few days, Salisbury demurred, indicating that with an election likely in the very near future, the members of the current government “must all face it *together*.” More importantly, he argued that Lansdowne’s resignation at this stage, or even public discussions of future resignation, would have the “worst effect” and would give the impression that the government was “falling to pieces.” “At present,” Salisbury concluded, “any such discussion resembles an attempt to solve an equation with the principal factor left out.”⁶²⁷ Lansdowne consented to remain until after the election.

The annexation of the South African Republic by Roberts at the beginning of September brought the conventional war in South Africa to an end. Chamberlain wanted to capitalize on this outcome as he did not dismiss the early signs that the Boers might chose a transition to guerilla warfare in lieu of accepting defeat. He outlined in a prospective strategy against Boer guerillas in early September. The plan contained not only military, but also political objectives. He wanted to restore peacetime administration and economic profitability as quickly as possible while keeping the Boer guerillas penned down on the periphery. He suggested that it ought to be possible “to establish . . . a military police, something like the Royal Irish Constabulary, and to echelon these along the lines of communication with instructions to make each post an impregnable position by earth works etc., in which anything from 200 to 500 men might hold their own against all comers for a sufficient time to make certain of reinforcements if necessary.”

⁶²⁶ Lansdowne to Salisbury, August 27, 1900, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Lansdowne, ff. 575-80.

⁶²⁷ Salisbury to Lansdowne, September 1, 1900, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 186–7 (emphasis in the original).

This new force, deployed in this manner, would leave only the open country to the Boers and “what they did there would not matter much.” He was not only dismayed to see that the prospects of a financial contribution from the former republics, especially from the former South Africa Republic, towards the cost of the war were “receding into the distance with every week the war lasts,” he was “very anxious to see the return of a considerable part of the regular army” in light of the “troubled state of international politics while we have 200,000 men abroad.”⁶²⁸

The idea of establishing a South African police force had first been considered as early as July. The initial guerilla tactics employed by the Boers seemed more like banditry than regular military operations. Milner asked Roberts for the services of Colonel Robert Baden-Powell, who had gained fame while commanding the British troops during the long siege of Mafeking. Milner wanted Baden-Powell to create and command a special mounted police force from “good men” in the yeomanry and irregular corps. Milner suggested that he needed about 5,000 men to be organized as soon as possible so that they could take over the settled districts and, thus, relieve the army for more active work against the remaining Boer forces in the field. Roberts agreed to the general idea of a mounted police force, but suggested that 10,000 should be recruited instead.⁶²⁹

The idea of a constabulary force immediately hit a snag. After Milner informed Chamberlain of his idea, and of Roberts’s endorsement, and Roberts did the same with Lansdowne, the ministers at home began to deal with the problem of financing this new

⁶²⁸ Chamberlain to Milner, September 10, 1900, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/68.

⁶²⁹ Milner to Roberts, September 10, 1900, and Roberts to Milner, September 11, 1900, Colonial Office: High Commission for South Africa, Original Correspondence (CO 417), CO 417/294/ff. 605-7, TNA.

organization. Chamberlain was concerned that the Treasury would object to the raising of such a force as the new colonies, especially the newly renamed Transvaal, were supposed to support their own financial obligations, something that was out of the question while the war continued.⁶³⁰ The War Office was also concerned about the costs of a police force, insisting that the cost of the police should not come from the Army Estimates. The Colonial Office rejected this suggestion, contending that while the two new colonies were under military administration, the War Office had no choice but to pay for the new force.⁶³¹

The issue of finances was not the only point of disagreement as the two departments also disagreed as to which one should control this new force. Milner informed Chamberlain of Baden-Powell's formal proposal for a constabulary force in late September and endorsed it whole-heartedly. The new constabulary force, Milner believed, would enable large numbers of British and colonial troops to be sent home. It would also enable a certain number of men to remain in South Africa, acting as the vanguard of what Milner hoped would become a wave of new British settlers. Fearing that the army might take control of the new force and use it to chase Boer commandoes instead of securing already occupied districts, Milner insisted that he, as high commissioner, should command the force. Otherwise, he would be unable to manage its organization and keep a close eye on the associated costs. He insisted that he would have "no difficulty whatsoever about it with the military provided that they understand my position."⁶³²

⁶³⁰ Milner to Chamberlain, September 12, 1900, and CO Minutes, September 14, 1900, CO 417/293/ff. 893-4.

⁶³¹ Fleetwood-Wilson to Graham, September 19, 1900; Colonial Office Minutes, September 21-3, 1900; and Chamberlain to Milner, September 25, 1900, CO 417/307/ff. 103-6, TNA.

⁶³² Milner to Chamberlain, September 24, 1900, CO 417/294/ff. 210 and 221, TNA.

Roberts may have understood Milner's position, but he was not in full agreement with it. He maintained that 10,000 men should be the initial recruitment goal as it would be easier to reduce the force if that number of men proved to be too high rather than trying to augment it if Baden-Powell's suggested force size of 6,000 men and 200 officers turned out to be too low. Roberts believed that a smaller force would have to rely on help of the army, whose forces might be withdrawn if Britain became engaged in a war elsewhere. Roberts also argued that the proposed daily salary of 5s. was too low, as it did not take into account the high cost of living in South Africa.⁶³³

Milner objected to any changes to Baden-Powell's plan, especially those coming from within army circles. Milner wrote to Chamberlain arguing that the extra police officers were not required because a large garrison would certainly be left in South Africa in the immediate aftermath of the war. He also played on concerns about the costs of the new force by emphasizing that the extra 2s. per day suggested by Roberts to offset the high cost of living would cost more than £200,000 per year. Moreover, if this higher rate were paid at the outset, it would be difficult to adjust pay downward in the future.⁶³⁴

Chamberlain tried to find a compromise between the two positions. He suggested to the War Office that as Milner considered a force of 6,000 men a sufficient baseline and Roberts felt

⁶³³ Roberts to Milner, October 5, 1900, War Office: Lord Frederick Roberts, Commander in Chief (South Africa and England) and President of National Service League: Papers (WO 105), WO 105/34/C5299, TNA.

⁶³⁴ Milner to Chamberlain, October 6, 1900, CO 417/294/ff. 495-7, TNA.

that an extra 4,000 men were required “to cope with the existing state of affairs” then the addition men ought to be met by the Army Vote for the garrison in South Africa.⁶³⁵

The cabinet was already showing signs of strain regarded the need to wrap up the war. Hicks Beach warned Salisbury that Britain’s financial position was becoming “very grave.” He had analyzed the military situation and was bold enough to suggest that the large garrison maintained in the Cape Colony was unnecessary and, furthermore, that the large number of troops deployed along the lines of communication into the new colonies were more than sufficient “now that there is no army in the field against us.” “For all I know,” he continued, “there may be a similar useless force in Natal.”⁶³⁶ Lansdowne conferred with Roberts about the size of the garrison in South Africa. Roberts insisted that until the police force was operational, it was not possible for him to release troops from duty. He pointed out that both he and Milner agreed that the 20,000-man garrison in the Cape Colony was needed to secure that colony.⁶³⁷

Milner grew frustrated with his inability to make headway in the face of the competing interests of the army. He explained to Chamberlain that the British would look stupid if they recruited too many men into the force and would look doubly so if they paid them too much for their services. He wanted to use the constabulary to patrol between strong points, thus substituting within those areas “the policy of protection for that of reprisal.”⁶³⁸ St. John Brodrick, the new secretary of state for war, who had replaced Lansdowne following the general

⁶³⁵ Colonial Office to War Office, October 16, 1900, CO 417/294/ff. 490-3, TNA.

⁶³⁶ Hicks Beach to Salisbury, October 1, 1900, Salisbury papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Hicks Beach, ff. 222-3.

⁶³⁷ Lansdowne to Roberts, October 9, 1900, and Roberts to Lansdowne, October 10, 1900, CAB 37/53/70, TNA.

⁶³⁸ Milner to Chamberlain, October 28, 1900, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/78.

election in October, continued to press the cabinet, especially Hicks Beach, into assenting to Roberts' demands for the larger force and had even appealed to Salisbury for his unqualified backing.⁶³⁹

The cabinet's financial parsimony proved to be the decisive factor in the final solution to the constabulary problem. Because it was felt that police were better able to oppose the Boers than the regular army, Brodrick and Hicks Beach agreed that if 10,000 constabulary officers were recruited and employed they could relieve 25,000 infantry. The savings gained by the return of the regular troops would more than offset the cost of additional police. The cabinet agreed, therefore, to fund the extra 4,000 men if the new colonies could not afford the additional cost. Roberts endorsed this analysis and informed Milner that he agreed to the larger force because "the [settlement] of the Transvaal and the O[range]R[iver]C[olony] depends much more on police than military arrangements. This was my experience in Burmah [*sic*] & I hope you will agree with me."⁶⁴⁰ Milner did not have much choice in the matter now that the home government had agreed with Roberts' idea of a larger force. Since the cabinet had agreed to pay for the extra force, Milner's main principal line of argument was no longer valid. He still believed that it would be difficult to recruit the extra men, but more importantly, he was concerned that by equating the police as replacements for troops, the government had endorsed the use of the police in a military capacity, something he had sought to avoid.

⁶³⁹ Brodrick to Salisbury, October 28, 1900, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Brodrick, ff. 140-3.

⁶⁴⁰ Roberts to Brodrick, November 24, 1900, WO 105/32/1600; Roberts to Milner, November 24, 1900, CO 417/296/fo. 89, TNA.

Following the Unionist victory in the “Khaki Election” in October 1900, Salisbury reshuffled his cabinet. While Lansdowne had “fully expected to be relegated to an uneventful existence at Bowood,” he was instead promoted to the Foreign Office to replace Salisbury, who, at seventy years of age, had reluctantly relinquished the position.⁶⁴¹ St. John Brodrick, who had served as Salisbury’s parliamentary undersecretary in the Foreign Office, was promoted to fill the increasingly unenviable position at the head of the War Office. His selection came as no great surprise. He had not only performed admirably in the Foreign Office, but he had also twice served in the War Office, as the financial secretary from 1886 to 1892 and as the parliamentary undersecretary from 1895 to 1898. When approach to take the latter position, he had initially expressed some misgivings at representing the ministry in the House of Commons from the subordinate position, but had ultimately agreed to serve under Lansdowne.⁶⁴² Critically, he enjoyed substantial support in Unionist circles even if vocal public support was more subdued.⁶⁴³

While acknowledging that his defective hearing hurt his performance during supplemental questions in Parliament, he was, nonetheless, a firm believer in his own abilities, declaring that “no one could have entered the War Office more *con spirito*.”⁶⁴⁴ While anticipating some problems, he was astonished at the disorder he encountered upon his return to

⁶⁴¹ Lansdowne to Victoria, October 29, 1900, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 190.

⁶⁴² Brodrick to Salisbury, July 1, 1895, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Brodrick, ff. 75-6.

⁶⁴³ Chamberlain to Balfour, October 21, 1900, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Balfour, ff. 133-5; Milner to Lady Edward Cecil, November 13, 1900, in Cecil Headlam, ed., *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1899-1905*, vol. 2 (London: Cassell & Company, 1933), 130.

⁶⁴⁴ William St. John Fremantle Brodrick, Earl of Midleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1939), 75.

the War Office, informing Curzon, “I never in my life could have realized what a slough of despond I was tumbling into. The army is hopelessly disorganized and used up, everyone is stale.”⁶⁴⁵ His position was complicated by the fact that Wolseley, whose health had deteriorated and who was increasingly irritated by his loss of influence on governmental policy, deeply resented that Roberts, his long-time rival, had been announced as his replacement. Although Roberts had not yet arrived from South Africa, Wolseley, nevertheless, considered himself *functus officio* and refused to give Brodrick advice.⁶⁴⁶

Confronted with the full-time demands of running the ministry in a time of war, Brodrick entered the War Office at a difficult time as the ministry had been under continuous attack for more than a year. He also had to grapple with the *damnosa hereditas* of all the sacrifices that had been made for a war that had not yet been won.⁶⁴⁷ While Brodrick understood that changes would have to be made in the organization of the army, he had declared less than two months before taking office, “Nobody would ever be so unwise as to expect a War Minister in the middle of a great war to grapple with these difficulties or to attempt important changes.” Only when the military operations were over and “the most prominent of the officers who had conducted them would be available for work at the War Office” would significant changes be made.⁶⁴⁸ On taking office, however, he decided to undertake both tasks at once.

⁶⁴⁵ Brodrick to Balfour, September 26, 1898, Balfour Papers, 49720, ff. 41-4; Brodrick to Curzon, January 3, 1900, Curzon Papers, Eur. MSS, F. 111/10; Brodrick to Salisbury, October 28, 1900, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Brodrick, ff. 140-3; Brodrick to Curzon, November 9, 1900, Curzon Papers, Eur. MSS, F. 111/10.

⁶⁴⁶ Middleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939*, 122.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁶⁴⁸ *The Times* (London), August 30, 1900, 9.

Brodrick offered Salisbury two primary reasons for pushing extensive reforms immediately instead of waiting until the war was won. He argued that piecemeal changes would involve too much hostility from vested military interests while accomplishing little significant change and immediate change was necessary to avoid greater military weakness after the war. “The present war,” he explained, “has shown great defects & deficiencies in the Army, due in some measure to its having been over-strained for many years. . . . The fact that we have no conscription . . . make changes take a long time to bring to effect even when started, and to delay them till we are feeling the full exhaustion of the war . . . would leave us weaker than we have been for many years.”⁶⁴⁹ Brodrick also realized that his proposed reforms were going to require an increase in the army estimates, thus the chances of passage would be greater while the war continued than afterward when the public and government would be eager to cut military spending.

While the opposition not surprisingly criticized Brodrick’s reform proposals, the most shocking critique came from within Unionist Party itself. Winston Churchill, a new backbencher eager to make a name for himself after his recent return from South Africa, argued that, while “no price is too great to pay for an early and victorious peace,” the cost of the proposed reforms was excessive and that the reforms should, in any case, be postponed until the end of the war when a full-scale examination of the system could be made. He also accused Brodrick of simply

⁶⁴⁹ Brodrick to Salisbury, January 20, 1900, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Brodrick, ff. 169-72.

expanding the army rather than reforming it.⁶⁵⁰ Churchill's criticism hit a nerve as the government was becoming increasingly worried about the rising cost of the war. Lord George Hamilton, the secretary of state for India, wrote to Curzon that Churchill had "after having done everything he could by his graphic pen to excite a spirit of militarism and an increase of military expenditure . . . is going to move a resolution on army estimates decrying and denouncing the growth of the spirit of militarism."⁶⁵¹

While Churchill did not actually propose an amendment as predicted by Hamilton, Brodrick felt stung by the criticism of his own side and responded a few days later during the third reading of the bill by referring to Lord Randolph Churchill, who had resigned from the Treasury in protest over excessive military spending, as a "sign-post and a warning to those men who profess economy" and stating that he would not let the Treasury dictate terms.⁶⁵² Openly challenging the younger Churchill, Brodrick declared:

Those of us who disagree with him can only hope that the time will come when his judgment will grow up to his ability, when he will look back with regret to the day when he came down to the House to preach Imperialism, without being willing to bear the burdens of Imperialism, and when the hereditary qualities he possesses of eloquence and courage may be tempered also by discarding the hereditary desire to run Imperialism on the cheap.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵⁰ House of Commons debate, May 13, 1901, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 93, cc. 1564-79; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1901/may/13/army-organization> (accessed August 13, 2012).

⁶⁵¹ Hamilton to Curzon, April 25, 1901, Curzon Papers, Eur. MSS, F. 111/148.

⁶⁵² House of Commons debate, May 16, 1901, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 94, col. 309; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1901/may/16/army-organization> (accessed August 13, 2012). Brodrick had been the financial secretary to the War Office at the time Randolph Churchill's resignation.

⁶⁵³ House of Commons debate, May 16, 1901, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 94, col. 310; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1901/may/16/army-organization> (accessed August 13, 2012).

While Churchill was supported by a number of other young Tories, Brodrick managed to carry the debate with little aid from the rest of the front bench, with only Balfour rising to call for party unity at the closing of the debate.⁶⁵⁴

To complete his reform scheme, however, Brodrick needed the active cooperation of other officials within the War Office. The organization of the War Office, especially the relationship between its civilian and military members, had been a subject of great concern throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. While Lansdowne had made a series of substantial reforms in upon assuming office in 1895, the function of the War Office came under severe criticism during the South African War. In late 1900, a committee of inquiry under the chairmanship of Clinton Dawkins had been set up to study the office. In the committee's report, its members recommended that the system be decentralized by grating more responsibilities to officers in the field and by reducing the routine paperwork that delayed timely decisions.⁶⁵⁵ Brodrick's efforts at implementing some of the recommended changes, for example by establishing a War Office Council to improve early communication between civilian and military senior leadership on the formation of new policy, did little to reduce resentment within the uniformed leadership that Brodrick was undermining the traditional role of the army.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁴ House of Commons debate, May 16, 1901, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 94, col. 384-6; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1901/may/16/army-organization> (accessed August 13, 2012).

⁶⁵⁵ Committee on War Office Organisation, *Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into War Office Organisation*, vol. XL.179, Cd. 580 (London: HMSO, 1901).

⁶⁵⁶ Nicholas d' Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain, 1902-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 2-3, 26-7.

While Brodrick was unable to gain the support of the military members of his department, it was not entirely his fault. The senior military officers generally did not cooperate even with each other. As Dawkins himself pointed out, “The system is, in places, susceptible of amendment, but the real vice is not systems but persons; the greater part of the energies of the leading soldiers is devoted to ‘putting each other in the cast.’ It is a story which would be tiresome, if not serious of Wolseley, Buller, White, Wood, all trying to knife each other.”⁶⁵⁷ Whether Brodrick might have overcome this inherent hostility through a more skillful management of his subordinates is an open question. What is certain is that he failed to engender confidence and cooperation.

Brodrick’s relationship with the new commander-in-chief was the most important and, therefore, the most troubled. In 1895, the power of the commander-in-chief had been reduced. While still responsible for the army as a whole, the commander-in-chief was tasked predominantly with supervising the principal military officers on the staff.⁶⁵⁸ Wolseley, who held the position when the change was made, felt that the reduced powers had prevented him from successfully executing his duties. He brought the matter up in the House of Lords with Lansdowne after both of them had been replaced in the War Office. Wolseley lamented that the “novel and experimental” system had “virtually handed over the command and entire management” of the army and that the army was no longer “commanded” by a professional

⁶⁵⁷ Charles Dawkins to Curzon, February 28, 1901, Curzon Papers, Eur. MSS, F. 111/10.

⁶⁵⁸ War Office, *Order in Council, Dated 21st November 1895, Defining the Duties of the Commander in Chief, the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General, the Inspector General of Fortifications, the Inspector General of Ordnance, and the Financial Secretary of the War Office; and Revoking the Order in Council, Dated 21st of February 1888, Defining the Duties of the Commander in Chief and the Financial Secretary of the War Office*, vol. LI.483, C. 59 (London: HMSO, 1896).

solider, but instead “administered” by civilians.⁶⁵⁹ Roberts agreed with Wolseley and demanded that the various military officers within the War Office be placed under his immediate command. Brodrick, however, feared that this increased centralization would overburden the commander-in-chief, a situation that the 1895 modification had attempted to alleviate.⁶⁶⁰ Brodrick was also adamant that the structure of the British system necessitated that the commander-in-chief not be the sole source of military advice. He expressed his concern to Balfour in January:

It is universally granted that, so far as general military policy is concerned, on the Secretary of State and the Cabinet lies [*sic*] the supreme responsibility both to the King and to the country. I do not see how that responsibility can property be exercised if the War Office organization is such that the Secretary of State, who has to advise the Cabinet, can himself obtain advise from one source, namely, the Commander-in-Chief. However good a Commander-in-Chief may be, it cannot surely be right to turn the responsible Cabinet into a mouthpiece. It is perfectly true . . . that the Secretary of State and his colleagues are civilians, who have no title to speak as experts on military matters. But this makes it all the more important that the Secretary of State should . . . have access . . . to other experts . . . and that these experts, however inferior in status to the Commander-in-Chief, should not be precluded by that status from giving an independent opinion. . . . As regards all question of policy, while his opinion must necessarily have incomparably more weight with the Government than that of any other person, I do not think it would be consistent with the true spirit of parliamentary government & ministerial responsibility to turn the Minister into his echo.⁶⁶¹

Brodrick ultimately agreed to minor changes, such as placing the adjutant-general under the direct authority of the commander-chief, but he refused Roberts’s demands for sweeping changes.⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁹ House of Lords debate, March 4, 1901, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 90, cols. 328-57; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1901/march/4/war-office-administration-duties-of> (accessed August 18, 2012).

⁶⁶⁰ “Notes on the Proposals Contained in Lord Roberts’ Letter of December 27, 1900,” January 19, 1901, CAB 37/56/10, TNA.

⁶⁶¹ Balfour to Brodrick, January 26, 1901, Balfour Papers, Add. MS 49720, ff. 97-108.

⁶⁶² War Office, *Order in Council Defining the Duties of the Principal Officers of the War Department, Issued November 4, 1901*, vol. LVIII.717, Cd. 794 (London: HMSO, 1901).

The disagreement between Brodrick and Roberts over their respective lines of authority was only exacerbated by their mutually critical evaluation of each other—both believed the other to be incompetent. Brodrick felt that Roberts, who had spent most of his career in India, was not familiar enough with the military system at home. He also complained that the field marshal was unreasonably indifferent to the financial ramifications of his various proposals, going so far as to inform Kitchener that Roberts “has no idea of money.”⁶⁶³ Brodrick also felt that Roberts spent too much time on trivial administrative duties, like personally answering up to forty letters a day in his own hand, and not enough time on policy formation.⁶⁶⁴ Roberts reciprocated the feeling of dissatisfaction. He felt that his civilian boss neglected his duties by overly immersing himself in unnecessary details. While Brodrick had to be prepared for the give-and-take of parliamentary questions, Roberts complained that he spent too much time doing so and not enough time paying attention to basic military problems—Brodrick could not see the forest through the trees.⁶⁶⁵ In September 1901, the tension reached a point that Roberts offered his resignation over what he argued was Brodrick’s unwarranted interference in the distribution of honors and the handling of some disciplinary cases.⁶⁶⁶

One issue on which the two men agreed, however, was their shared opposition to any public inquiry into the performance of the War Office. Salisbury recognized the pressure for a

⁶⁶³ Brodrick to Kitchener, May 11, 1901, Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener of Khartoum: Papers, PRO 30/57/22.

⁶⁶⁴ Midleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939*, 151–2.

⁶⁶⁵ Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa*, vol. XL.325, Cd. 1790 (London: HMSO, 1903), 456.

⁶⁶⁶ Roberts to Brodrick, September 2, 1901, and Roberts to Ian Hamilton, September 2, 1901, in David James, *Lord Roberts* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1954), 379–82.

public inquiry into the government's preparation for and subsequent conduct of the war. In January 1901, he suggested that the formation of a commission of inquiry was essential if the government hoped to "get out of a rather awkward corner."⁶⁶⁷ In one of his last letters to the queen, Salisbury argued that pledges for a full inquiry had made the decision a point of personal honor, but that he hoped that "some understanding with the other side" might be devised to allow a "properly selected" commission to avoid any "really scandalous investigation."⁶⁶⁸ Balfour agreed that while there was a risk that a commission might provoke "very unedifying recriminations between the soldiers, and possibly, between the soldiers and the Civil Governments," an inquiry was inevitable. He was less certain, however, that it would be possible to limit the scope of any inquiry, which would likely include a review the conduct of the military commanders, especially in the disastrous opening phase of the war. "A majority is not an inanimate machine," he argued, "and those who use it must be prepared to humour it."⁶⁶⁹ As any commission was likely to focus primarily on the War Office, Brodrick opposed any such action. Roberts supported him and was, in Brodrick's opinion, "as vehement as the Queen about it." Roberts was willing "in the interest of the discipline of the Army" to make a personal appeal to the leaders of the opposition to drop their demands.⁶⁷⁰

Brodrick also had difficulties with fellow members of the cabinet, particularly with Hicks Beach, who had, at the last minute, offered to continue as the chancellor of the Exchequer in

⁶⁶⁷ Salisbury to Balfour, January 4, 1901, Balfour papers, 49691, ff. 112-3.

⁶⁶⁸ Salisbury to Victoria, January 4, 1900, in Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3:639.

⁶⁶⁹ Balfour to Salisbury, January 5, 1901, Balfour Papers, 49691, ff. 114-21.

⁶⁷⁰ Brodrick to Salisbury, January 5, 1901, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Brodrick, ff. 159-62.

Salisbury's reshuffled cabinet, much to the distress of Balfour, who complained to Salisbury that "he will certainly go on dropping little grains of sand into the wheels of every department in turn. If, as I fear, we have to spend large sums of money on Army reorganisation and Naval constructions I suppose he will describe our policy as 'Jingo' and resign."⁶⁷¹ Hicks Beach had long been of the opinion that the War Office was an inefficient organization. Although he desired reform, he was not explicit as to the shape it should take.⁶⁷² During one of the first meetings of the reshuffled cabinet, Brodrick and Hicks Beach clashed over war funding. The chancellor pushed for the immediate withdrawal of the militia and reservists from South Africa, the release of troops temporarily embodied in England, and the initiation of a demobilization plan to return the size of the British army to its normal levels by spring. While Brodrick gained the support of the majority of the cabinet in opposing these proposals, it was only the beginning of Brodrick's difficulties with Hicks Beach. In December, Brodrick approached Hicks Beach with a telegram from Kitchener requesting additional mounted troops to counter Boer commando raids. Hicks Beach refused to consider the raising and deployment of any additional force, declaring to Brodrick, "unless you withdraw your proposal you or I will leave the Cabinet before Christmas."⁶⁷³ Brodrick was again able to gain support of the majority of the cabinet to push through his proposal, but until the end of the war, Brodrick and Hicks Beach continued to be at loggerheads over cost of the war and the cost of Brodrick's proposed reforms.

⁶⁷¹ Balfour to Salisbury, October 20, 1900, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Balfour, fo. 131.

⁶⁷² Victoria Hicks Beach, *Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach (Earl St. Aldwyn)*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan and Co., 1932), 63–4.

⁶⁷³ Midleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939*, 125.

Brodrick grew increasingly unhappy with what he perceived as a lack of leadership within the government. He informed Curzon in October, that “we have had a semi-panic here—the result of long tension as to the war and of the apparent apathy of Lord Salisbury & A. J. B. [Balfour]. The truth is the nation want leading & hermitage does not do.”⁶⁷⁴ Selborne had written Curzon only a few months earlier, voicing his concern about the absence of leadership lead and the lack of “a controlling spirit and directing mind.”⁶⁷⁵ Salisbury was increasingly distant, often sick, and without the stamina to give firm direction. Balfour appeared unwilling, as the heir apparent to party leadership, to take control.

One member of the cabinet with which Brodrick did not come into open conflict was Chamberlain. With the Boers disregarding the outcome of the British election and expanding their guerilla activities, the revival of the war prolonged that awkward interval in Chamberlain’s career between the declaration of hostilities and the conclusion of peace. He remained responsible for the conduct of affairs in South Africa, but not the conduct of the campaign, now under the direction of Lord Kitchener. While Brodrick responded appreciatively to Chamberlain’s advice, the colonial secretary remained hesitant to do more than make suggestions on the conduct of the war, focusing, instead, on accelerating the establishment of the postwar order with whatever assets he had available.

Problems of postwar pacification were aggravated by the prolongation of the fighting and the severe methods that seemed necessary to crush the Boer resistance. When Kitchener opened communications with the Boer commandant-general Louis Botha, Chamberlain welcomed it. In

⁶⁷⁴ Brodrick to Curzon, October 25, 1901, Curzon Papers, Eur. MSS, F. 111/10.

⁶⁷⁵ Selborne to Curzon, July 13, 1901, Curzon Papers, Eur. MSS, F. 111/229.

an attempt to overcome Boer insistence on some form of independence for the former republics, Kitchener suggested generous treatment on subordinate matters, including grants to rebuild damaged farms, the extension of amnesty to include rebels in the Cape Colony and Natal, and a British contribution to reduce the Transvaal debt. Chamberlain was willing to discuss some contribution to the debt, but was unwilling to compromise on other items so “not . . . to allow the Boers to think that they could escape all loss in consequence of the War.” The failure of this initial round of negotiations did not upset Chamberlain. He was, in fact, grateful that the Boers had “thrown away” their opportunity to gain what he considered as generous terms from the British and hoped that from now on the British would be able “to keep a free hand.”⁶⁷⁶ He informed Brodrick that he had feared the results of a long negotiation and hoped that Kitchener was “ready for a vigorous attack” on the Boers.⁶⁷⁷

With the failure of the negotiations, Kitchener did indeed go back on the offensive with an increased intensity. He recommended that senior Boer commanders be threatened with banishment “if hostilities do not cease within a month, . . . that all prisoners of war will not be allowed to return, that their wives and families will be sent to them, [and] that no more volunteer surrenders will be accepted.”⁶⁷⁸ Chamberlain agreed with Kitchener on the idea of banishment for the Boer commanders, but criticized him for attaching “too much importance to ‘bluff,’” which he considered a “very dangerous game when you do not hold the cards.”⁶⁷⁹ Chamberlain

⁶⁷⁶ Chamberlain to Milner, April 1, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 75-80.

⁶⁷⁷ Chamberlain to Brodrick, March 18, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/5.

⁶⁷⁸ Kitchener to Chamberlain, June 19, 1901, Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener of Kartoum, Papers, Domestic Records of the Public Records Office (PRO 30/57), PRO 30/57/17, TNA.

⁶⁷⁹ Chamberlain to Brodrick, August 20, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/40.

recommended the creation of a lightly armed corps of soldiers, “able to move without guns, wagons, or baggage . . . as fast and as long as the Boers themselves . . . to bring back Botha, alive or dead.”⁶⁸⁰

The resurgence of guerrilla warfare subjected the government to a great deal of criticism from friends and foes alike. While the latter was to be expected, the former was more difficult to manage. Churchill, who had given Brodrick a piece of his mind over army reform, openly advised Chamberlain to challenge the army’s conduct of the war, declaring that it was not enough for the government “to say ‘we have handed the war over to the military: they must settle it: all we can do is to supply them as they require’.” “Nothing can relieve the Govt. of their responsibility,” Churchill argued, and if “Kitchener cannot settle the question, you will have to interfere.” He attacked Kitchener’s plan as nothing but “hammer, hammer, at random.” He criticized the general’s distribution of troops, which he felt had led to British forces being “numerous everywhere,” but “overwhelming no where [*sic*].” He insisted that the government “make some sort of plan” to end the war by “the next bitter weather . . . whatever happens.”⁶⁸¹

Chamberlain, however, remained locked out of the military decision-making loop. He might have agreed with Milner that the war no longer had any unity and was, instead, a “mass of scattered and petty operations, which no single mind can grasp, and the character of which varies considerably in the different locations,” but he remained reluctant to press too much into War

⁶⁸⁰ Chamberlain to Brodrick, August 24, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/44.

⁶⁸¹ Churchill to Chamberlain, October 14, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/9/5.

Office affairs.⁶⁸² Publically, he argued that it was even beyond Brodrick’s authority “to take the details of military operations out of the hands of military authorities.”⁶⁸³

One area in which Chamberlain did see an opportunity to make a contribution was over the administration of the concentration camps, perhaps the most notorious of the “methods of barbarism” employed by the British.⁶⁸⁴ Beginning early in 1900, Roberts began using a common Northwest Frontier tactic by ordering Boer farms burned and livestock destroyed if British troops had been fired upon from the premises or if acts of sabotage had occurred nearby.⁶⁸⁵ The army had initially set up the camps to accommodate Boer women and children made homeless as a result of Roberts’s farm-burning policy.⁶⁸⁶ Although the term was new—John Ellis, a Liberal M.P., first employed term early 1901—the concept was not.⁶⁸⁷ The Spanish general Valeriano Weyler had set up a system of camps in Cuba in 1896-7, in which a half a million Cubans were incarcerated, and had earned him the nickname “the Butcher” for his actions. By September 1901, there were 34 concentration camps for whites in South Africa, with approximately 110,000 inhabitants, a majority of them children. The military administrators of the camps had paid little attention to the public health dangers and the camps were generally ill placed and

⁶⁸² Milner to Roberts, July 29, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 16, ff. 86-9.

⁶⁸³ “Mr. Chamberlain in Edinburgh,” *The Times* (London), October 26, 1901, 9.

⁶⁸⁴ Opposition leader Henry Campbell-Bannerman first used this phrase used by during a speech on June 14, 1901. For an excerpt of this speech, see John Wilson, *CB: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London: Constable, 1973), 349.

⁶⁸⁵ Boot, Max, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Liveright Publishing Co., 2013), 191.

⁶⁸⁶ See chapter 6 for more on this policy.

⁶⁸⁷ House of Commons debate, March 1, 1901, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 90, col. 180; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1901/mar/01/treatment-of-boer-women-and-children> (accessed March 18, 2013).

overcrowded.⁶⁸⁸ All the basic necessities—food, clean water, latrines, and medicines—were lacking. “When the 8, 10, or 12 persons who occupied a bell tent were all packed into it . . . there was no room to move, and the atmosphere was indescribable, even with the duly lifted flaps,” wrote Emily Hobhouse, the strong-willed pacifist who toured the camps in early 1901 on behalf of the South African Women and Children’s Distress Fund.⁶⁸⁹ While the shortages were a result of neglect rather than a deliberate policy, epidemics raced through the camps, killing the inhabitants at an alarming rate. Kitchener, who, according to a subordinate, lacked “any personal feel for his troops,” simply did not care about the enemy’s women and children.⁶⁹⁰

An important point that contributed to the poor organization was the uncertainty about who precisely was responsible for the administration of the camps. When Roberts was in command, military officers controlled the few existing camps. Although the camps were put under civil administration in February 1901, they still fell under the command of Kitchener as commander-in-chief of the army, and camp policy was still referred to him. The situation was exacerbated during the summer of 1901 when Kitchener assumed the duties as acting high commissioner during Milner’s visit to London. During Milner’s absence the number of inhabitants in the concentration camps rose quickly, but there was no corresponding increase in the number of camps. In March 1901, there were 27 camps with a total of 35,000 inmates. Six

⁶⁸⁸ S. B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?: Roberts and Kitchener and Civilians in the Boer Republics, January 1900-May 1902* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1977), 215.

⁶⁸⁹ Emily Hobhouse, *The Brunt of the War and Where It Fell* (London: Methuen, 1902), 116.

⁶⁹⁰ Ian Hamilton, *The Commander* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1957), 67.

months later, 110,000 Boers were housed in 34 camps. As the inhabitants increased so did the number of deaths in the camps.⁶⁹¹

Milner had appointed civil administrators because he had agreed with Kitchener's opinion that the civil administration had more time to look after the camps. He, nevertheless, remained concerned about which entity would have to bear the financial costs of running the camps. He thought that the army should continue to pay for the camps, as the existence of the camps was undoubtedly an incident of the war.⁶⁹² Kitchener had earlier made the spurious argument to Hamilton Goold-Adams, the lieutenant governor of the Orange River Colony, that the expenditure on the maintenance of the civil population, while a result of the war, had nothing to do with the active prosecution of the war and, thus, should be charged to the civil authorities.⁶⁹³ Brodrick was willing to continue to fund the camps until the termination of the war, when the Colonial Office would assume the financial responsibility for them.⁶⁹⁴ It was Chamberlain who ultimately passed to Kitchener in mid-August.⁶⁹⁵

Coordination between the military and civil authorities was not fully settled, however. When the cabinet demanded a full report of the conditions of the camps, the reports went through different chains of command. The reports relating to the camps in the Orange River Colony went through the deputy administrator in Bloemfontein to the Colonial Office, but the reports relating to the camps in the Transvaal went through the military governor in Pretoria to the War

⁶⁹¹ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?*, 195–6.

⁶⁹² Milner to Chamberlain, March 14, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

⁶⁹³ Kitchener to Goold-Adams, February 22, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

⁶⁹⁴ War Office to Treasury, May 17, 1901, enclosure 1 in Treasury to Colonial Office, June 14, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

⁶⁹⁵ Chamberlain to Kitchener, August 13, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

Office, which failed to send copies to the Colonial Office.⁶⁹⁶ When the situation in the concentration camps reached an all-time low in the fall of 1901, particularly with regard to child mortality, which reached unprecedented levels in October, and when the overall mortality rates rose again in November, the cabinet grew apprehensive. The conditions in the camps gave government's most vocal opponents an opportunity to strike, with Lloyd George declaring, "A war of annexation . . . against a proud people must be a war of extermination, and that is unfortunately what it seems we are now committing ourselves to—burning homesteads and turning women and children out of their homes . . . the savagery which must necessarily follow will stain the name of this country."⁶⁹⁷ More critical, in Chamberlain's view, was that the mortality in the concentration camps had unquestionably roused deep feelings "among people who cannot be classed with the pro-Boers." "Our soldiers," he lamented in a letter to Milner, "seem to be terribly afraid of public opinion & of individual responsibility. At the same time they fail to perceive that in a democratic Government the Ministers cannot keep silence & must take the people into their confidence." As a result of "this strange with-holding of necessary information," the pro-Boers were "to talk of the 'methods of barbarism' practiced by British generals with the approval of the British Government."⁶⁹⁸ Chamberlain pushed for the consolidation of the camps under his ministry with Milner exercising "exclusive control" of the camps and reporting to the colonial secretary on all matters relating to his administration of them.⁶⁹⁹ With Milner now in a position to exercise "full control" of the arrangements for all the

⁶⁹⁶ Colonial Office to War Office, November 16, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

⁶⁹⁷ Ferguson, *Empire*, 235.

⁶⁹⁸ Chamberlain to Milner, November 4, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 81-8.

⁶⁹⁹ Colonial Office to War Office, November 16, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

camps, Chamberlain demanded that the high commissioner submit “full and early reports” on the state of the camps. These reports were to include statistics on the camp populations, sickness and mortality, and the nature and availability of rations among many other details.⁷⁰⁰ He directed Milner to ensure “adequate steps” were taken to have infectious cases “immediately detected, isolated, and specifically treated.” The present condition in the camps would no longer be tolerated now that he was on the case if “forethought and science can suggest any expedients for preventing or curing it.” He authorized the camps to be moved or broken up into smaller units, directing Milner to evacuate camps as necessary. As for army resistance, Chamberlain informed Milner that if he felt “hampered in the efficient administrations of the Camps by military exigencies,” Milner must inform him immediately.⁷⁰¹ Brodrick endorsed the unification of responsibility and was willing to turn over to Chamberlain the responsibility for the camps, especially if it including the responsibility to handling all questions in Parliament and elsewhere about their administration.⁷⁰²

Milner understood the pressure the cabinet was under. He informed Goold-Adams, who was overseeing the camps in the Orange River Colony, that the cabinet ministers were “in a devil of a tight place, and, with the ill success and continuance of the war, every body [*sic*] is screeching at them on the most opposite and inconsistent grounds.” “The figures of the C. camps

⁷⁰⁰ Chamberlain read the reports and questioned any gaps in the data. For example, he called Milner’s attention to a discrepancy in the ages used to categorize internees as children. In the Transvaal, the British classified internees as children if they were under the age of 12, while in the Orange River Colony, the British used the age of 15 as the cut-off point. He instructed that the age of 15 be used in both colonies. Chamberlain to Milner, December 3, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

⁷⁰¹ Chamberlain to Milner, November 16, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

⁷⁰² War Office to Colonial Office, November 27, 1901, CO 879/75/3, TNA.

look awful, and, unexplained, will be one of the principal points of attack,” Milner grumbled.⁷⁰³

While he sought to establish the pre-war baseline death rate among Boer children in order to give the camp figures some meaning, he had no doubt at whose feet the blame should lie. Yet, he felt impotent to make any changes. “As regards to obtaining the material necessary for the camps,” he lamented to Goold-Adams, “I think we are not in a position to force the hands of the military about this.”⁷⁰⁴ Arguing that “H.M’s Govt. have evidently made up their minds, that *coute que coute* the Concentration Camps must have their requirements satisfied,” Milner advised Goold-Adams “not to lose patience because of the unreasonableness and excitement of the present fuss at home, wh[ich] is harder on me than anyone, but to put your whole force, for the moment, into getting these camps into the best condition. Never mind the expense and see that you get what you want.”⁷⁰⁵

While Kitchener, as the officer who oversaw the expansion of the concentration camp system without considering the implications, was clearly responsible for the atrocious conditions in the camps, Chamberlain refused to blame the military in public despite Milner’s plea to explain that the awful conditions in the camps were not the fault of the civil authorities. Milner was indignant that the civilians had “suddenly confronted with a problem not of our making with which it was beyond our power to properly grapple.” While the whole thing had been a “mistake,” Milner insisted that a sudden reversal of policy would only make matters worse. “At

⁷⁰³ Milner to Goold-Adams, November 6, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.687, fo. 260.

⁷⁰⁴ Milner to Goold-Adams, November 11, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.687, ff. 265-6. Milner complained that while the South African Republic had no statistics of births and deaths he was trying to discover whether the “better-governed” Orange Free State did, although he warned that “statistics of mortality in the Towns, with their largely English and therefore more or less decent-living population, might be very misleading.” Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Milner to Goold-Adams, November 19, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.687, ff. 269-70.

the present moment certainly everything we know of is being done, both to improve the camps and reduce the numbers in them,” he informed Chamberlain, insisting that while “we shall mitigate the evil . . . we shall never get rid of it.”⁷⁰⁶ Chamberlain accepted Milner’s evaluation of the situation and responded that he would not be “happy” until Milner had informed him that “some of them had been broken up and considerable numbers of their inmates sent to other camps or dispersed.” He, nevertheless, did not want to override Kitchener publically if he could avoid it. After all, the general had “a most difficult task,” and had “shown very great ability in dealing with it.” “If the military objection is the only difficulty in your way,” he informed Milner, “I could see if something could be done on this side to remove it. . . . without appearing to ignore military considerations.”⁷⁰⁷

Under Chamberlain’s general direction and Milner’s on-scene administration, the mortality rate in the camps dropped dramatically. From the middle of November 1901, when the civil authorities took over definitive control of the camps, the drastic improvement in the living conditions in the camps, the provision of food, and the availability of medical services had a corresponding effect on the health of the inmates. The overall mortality rate dropped from 3,205 in October 1901 to 402 in March 1902, 298 in April 1902 and 196 in May 1902.⁷⁰⁸ These latter numbers were below the normal mortality rate in the South African countryside.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁶ Milner to Chamberlain, December 7, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/204.

⁷⁰⁷ Chamberlain to Milner, December 30, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 89-91.

⁷⁰⁸ Arthur Clive Martin, *The Concentration Camps, 1900-1902: Facts, Figures, and Fables* (Cape Town: H. Timmins, 1957), 31.

⁷⁰⁹ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 514.

When Parliament reconvened in January 1902, Chamberlain felt the government to be “stronger than ever.” While he was not “in the least afraid of anything that our opponents can do,” he cautioned Milner that he still had to “play the game according to the rules.” Thus while his recent report on the concentration camps had “cut the ground from under the feet of most of our critics, he might “be obliged from time to time to trouble you for explanations . . . which are necessary to satisfy Parliamentary exigencies.”⁷¹⁰

Chamberlain returned his focus in the spring to potential terms for peace and outlined the views of the cabinet regarding the terms of a future settlement in a speech to the House of Commons in late January. While unconditional surrender remained the cornerstone of British policy, Chamberlain was at pains to explain that this was not necessarily a bad thing. The British would consent to putting specific terms in any surrender document, but the Boers could be assured that the terms imposed would not be overly harsh. Making explicit comparisons to the terms imposed by the Union on the Confederacy at the end of the American Civil War, Chamberlain pointed out that the British proposals were far more lenient. There would be no confiscation of property, the largest grant of amnesty possible would be granted, after taking into account the interests of the loyalists and British security interests, and other than the withholding of full political rights, the Boers would have “equal justice and equal privileges to the other white races.” The British did not want to humiliate the Boers, Chamberlain insisted, but it was necessary “as the first ground for a solid peace” that the Boers should recognize their defeat.⁷¹¹

⁷¹⁰ Chamberlain to Milner, January 20, 1902, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 268-70.

⁷¹¹ House of Commons debate, January 20, 1902, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 101, cols. 361-83; available at <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1902/jan/20/south-africa-conduct-of-the-war> (accessed October 20, 2011).

He meanwhile pressed Milner to settle before the war ended the extent and conditions by which the Boers would contribute towards the cost of the war. “We cannot safely leave it to the future,” he instructed Milner, because “if we do, all the local interests, both British and Dutch, may combine against us, and try to repudiate liability.”⁷¹²

Although the cabinet was less united than Chamberlain might have hoped regarding the conditionality of peace terms, he refused to bypass Salisbury and his fellow ministers. When Hicks Beach suggested to Salisbury that Chamberlain be allowed to oversee the negotiations without the need to consult the cabinet, Chamberlain rejected Hicks Beach’s “intervention” as “wholly unnecessary,” explaining that it was “inconceivable” that he would not consult the prime minister and the cabinet regarding any proposals for peace.⁷¹³ He did not hesitate, however, to inform Salisbury that Hicks Beach, with his incessant budget concerns, and the king, with his upcoming coronation, were both “too eager for ‘Peace of a sort’.” Chamberlain had spoken several times to the king and thought each time that he had satisfied him that “while we were all most anxious to finish the War, nothing would be more dangerous for the country and for his own popularity than that any responsible person should appear ready to sacrifice essential points and show weakness at this stage.” He was also increasingly worried that the opposition had begun to influence the king by “assuring him that an honourable peace was possible if only we were rid of Milner—and perhaps—although he did not say so—of the Colonial Secretary.”⁷¹⁴

⁷¹² Chamberlain to Milner, February 19, 1902, in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 515.

⁷¹³ Hicks Beach to Salisbury, March 26, 1902, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Hicks Beach, ff. 284-5; Chamberlain to Salisbury, April 1, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/226.

⁷¹⁴ Chamberlain to Salisbury, April 1, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/226.

Ultimately, Chamberlain and Milner remained in place, but both found themselves disappointed in the final peace terms. Although he presented the “terms of surrender” as a vindication of the British efforts during the war, Chamberlain did not celebrate them, nitpicking even minor issues such as Kitchener’s decision to allow the Boers to retain their rifles.⁷¹⁵ Chamberlain reflected on his wartime experience in a response to Salisbury after the former prime minister sent him his congratulations on the Boer surrender. “I have had to fight very hard sometimes,” Chamberlain wrote, “and I am glad that the victory—for I think it is a victory—has been won.” While he predicted that “a new chapter” was beginning in South Africa, he recognized that it would not be “a very easy one to write.”⁷¹⁶

Adhering to his belief that “the principle which should govern our relations is that . . . there should be absolute frankness in our private relations and full discussion of all matter of common interest,” but when decisions were finally reached that they “should be loyally supported & considered as the decision of the whole of the Government or of the parties concerned in the discussion,” Chamberlain accepted the limitations of his authority during the South African War.⁷¹⁷ He freely shared his concerns about the conduct of the war with his superiors and subordinates, but was unwilling to overstep what he believed were the proper bounds. He tried to influence his peers, but did not challenge the existing lines of authority. As a result, “Joe’s War” was never solely Joe’s war. He had responsibility and authority over civil affairs in South Africa, but never over military affairs. Thus, unlike Root, he was never in a position to manage all aspects of the war effort from within his department. He had to rely on

⁷¹⁵ Chamberlain to Brodrick, June 1, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/100.

⁷¹⁶ Chamberlain to Salisbury, June 1, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/229.

⁷¹⁷ Chamberlain to Milner, July 24, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/273.

the cooperation of his fellow ministers in the cabinet; and because Lansdowne and Brodrick faced organizational and personality-driven difficulties within the War Office, this cooperation was not always forthcoming.

Chapter 5: Generals to Governors: The American Transition of Authority

Having looked at the management of the war at home, inside what has become to be known as the “beltway,” it is necessary to examine the management of the war on the ground in the Philippines, which went through several distinct phases as it shifted from being the sole purview of military authorities through a system of divided administration to the installation of civil government in most of the provinces by the time the war was declared over unilaterally by the Americans in July 1902. An examination of each of these phases provides insight into the complex struggle for predominance between military and civilian leaders in the islands as they attempted to gain (or retain) control of American policy in the archipelago. Fortunately for the McKinley and, later, Roosevelt administrations, the senior civilian leaders in Washington were usually able to mitigate the tension. Critical to this successful mitigation was organization of the colonial administration in the islands that placed the senior military and civilian leaders under the direction of a single department within the executive branch from the summer of 1900 until the end of the war. While this consolidated hierarchy did not prevent tension in the civil-military relationship entirely, the shared “boss” in Washington was normally able to step in and definitively settle matters when things got too heated.

Two weeks after the fall of Manila, on August 29, 1898, Major General Wesley Merritt was relieved of command of the Department of the Pacific at his own request by his deputy Major General Elwell Otis. Otis had served as Merritt’s deputy and as the commander of the VIII Corps, and upon his promotion, he retained his command of VIII Corps. While the occupation of Manila by American troops had effectively ended the Spanish-American War in the Philippines, the relationship of the American military to the Filipino population and Filipino

forces under Aguinaldo remained unresolved. Merritt may have believed as he departed the Philippines for the Paris peace talks that the fighting was over and that all that remained was the inglorious task of setting up the American administration of the islands, but if he did, he was very mistaken.

Otis was a sixty-year-old veteran of the Civil War who possessed strong scholarly inclination and a law degree from Harvard Law School. Beginning his military career in the Civil War as a captain of a New York regiment, he eventually rose in rank to brevet brigadier general of volunteers while being decorated twice and wounded near the end of the war. Spending the bulk of his post-war service on the frontier, he specialized in army Indian policy, and in 1878, he outlined his views in a book, *The Indian Question*.⁷¹⁸ He also served as the first commandant of the army's new School of Application for Infantry and Cavalry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In 1893, the army promoted him to brigadier general, and he was in command of the Department of Colorado when he received word to join the expedition forming for the Philippines.⁷¹⁹

After assuming command of forces in the Philippines, he directed military operations on the islands and constructed the initial framework of military government. Described by a leading historian of the war as a "fastidious, pompous, and fussy man who inspired few of his subordinates," Otis was a cautious, but competent, commander who rarely delegated authority.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ Elwell S. Otis, *The Indian Question* (New York: Sheldon and Co., 1878).

⁷¹⁹ For more on Otis, see Thomas F. Burdett, "A New Evaluation of General Otis' Leadership in the Philippines," *Military Review* 55, no. 1 (January 1975): 79–87; Stuart Creighton Miller, "Elwell S. Otis (1838-1909)," in *The War of 1898 and U.S. Interventions: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Benjamin R. Beede (New York: Garland, 1994), 390–3.

⁷²⁰ Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 46.

He often frustrated his more aggressive field commanders, but usually gave his subordinate commanders enough freedom of action in the field to enable them to conduct military operations that were generally very successful. He remained, by and large, ensconced in Manila and devoted the greater portion of his energies to the management tasks required by his role as military governor, a role for which his legal training and study of Native American issues uniquely qualified him.

When Merritt left, Otis faced a large and potentially dangerous enemy and a precarious military position with only vague guidance from the president regarding American policy for the archipelago. Otis walked a diplomatic and legal tightrope throughout the fall of 1898, attempting to remain on cordial relations with Aguinaldo's revolutionary government, while at the same time making no commitments or rendering any opinion on future American policy. Otis described this period before the ratification of the Treaty of Paris as a "period of quiet, in so far as strictly military affairs were concerned, [but] the labors of civil administration were very exacting."⁷²¹ During this period, the United States established administration over the city of Manila and implemented many of the policies that would later characterize American government operations throughout the islands.

McKinley's guidance to Otis as ratification of the treaty approached was very clear: avoid war. Hoping to wait out the Filipinos, McKinley sent Otis and Dewey a joint dispatch through Alger and Long, suggesting arguing, "Time given the insurgents can not [*sic*] injure us,

⁷²¹ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1899: Report of the Major-General Commanding the Army, Part 2*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Doc. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 44.

and must weaken and discourage them. They will see our benevolent purpose.”⁷²² While Otis understood McKinley’s intentions, avoiding war proved to be impossible and reconciling the Filipinos to American rule problematic. Though McKinley was giving clear guidance—prepare for annexation while avoiding war—the guidance was not attuned to the reality of conditions in the Philippines.

The military shared part of the blame for the state of political affairs in the Philippines in early February 1899. Otis had done little to engage diplomatically the Filipino leadership on the progress or likely outcome of the peace negotiations and ratification process. Appearing to have been completely in denial of the fact that war was probable after the ratification of the peace treaty, his communications to Washington throughout this period were vague and overly optimistic. He gave the general impression that while there was a radical group of insurgents that would actively resist the United States, the vast majority of the Filipino population would not oppose American sovereignty. He also failed to make his superiors aware of the shortage of troops needed to relieve the Spanish garrisons and occupy the islands. Instead, he merely assured Washington that his troops could “meet any emergency.”⁷²³

For five months, Otis’s word was law in the Philippines. While he was in daily contact with his superiors in Washington, he was responsible for the civil administration of Manila, the deployment of military forces, and all contact with Aguinaldo and his forces in the surrounding countryside. When Otis received McKinley’s proclamation in late December, in which the president promised that the Americans would prove to the Filipinos “that the mission of the

⁷²² Corbin to Otis, January 8, 1899, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:871–2.

⁷²³ Otis to Adjutant General, January 14, 1899, in *ibid.*, 2:878.

United States is one of benevolent assimilation substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule,” Otis understood that Aguinaldo was likely to view it as nothing less than an ultimatum.⁷²⁴ Consequently, Otis did not release the proclamation immediately, or in its original form, but, instead, released a revised version of it in early January that redacted all reference to the extension of military rule. In the modified version, he emphasized that the Americans had come to destroy Spanish power in the islands and to give “the blessings of peace and individual freedom” to the Filipino people.⁷²⁵

This ruse, however, was soon exposed. When Otis sent a detachment of soldiers to Iloilo, the major sugar port in the islands, to occupy the city after the Spanish garrison had surrendered to Filipino revolutionary forces, the American commander on the spot attempted to talk the Filipinos into handing over the city to his troops. In an attempt to bolster his argument, he sent the Filipino garrison a copy of McKinley’s original proclamation, which was promptly forwarded to Aguinaldo. Upon learning of Otis’ deception, Aguinaldo issued a counter-proclamation, in which he accused the Americans of betraying their promises and rejected the American claim of sovereignty, announcing that the Filipinos would defend the freedom that they had won from Spain.⁷²⁶

This deterioration in the state of affairs alarmed Dewey so much that he cabled Washington to urge that a small “civilian commission of men skilled in diplomacy and

⁷²⁴ McKinley to Secretary of War, December 21, 1898, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *Communications Between the Executive Departments of the Government and Aguinaldo*, 82–3.

⁷²⁵ “Proclamation to the People of the Philippine Islands from the Office of the Military Governor of the Philippine Islands, Manila, P.I.,” January 4, 1899, in *ibid.*, 83–4.

⁷²⁶ “Second Proclamation of Same Date Posted,” January 5, 1899, in *ibid.*, 101–3.

statesmanship” should be sent to the Philippines to help ease the tension.⁷²⁷ Upon learning that Otis was in agreement with Dewey’s proposal, McKinley immediately set about appointing just such a commission. While Americans from all segments of society had been debating what course the United States should take if it decided to establish a colony in the Philippines, it was McKinley’s responsibility to decide how to move forward with the formation and implementation of colonial policies in the islands. The most important early step taken to accomplish these goals was the president’s appointment of this commission, headed by Jacob Gould Schurman, the president of Cornell University, to visit the islands in order to investigate the conditions there and put together concrete policy recommendations for the president’s consideration.

While Schurman was McKinley’s friend, he was also an outspoken opponent of annexing the Philippines. Insisting that their possession would not benefit the United States, but would, instead, impose a detrimental burden, he had warned that the act of ruling “uncivilized” people would damage American traditions and institutions.⁷²⁸ When McKinley invited him to Washington in January 1899, to offer him the job as president of the commission, Schurman reminded the McKinley of his opposition to annexation. McKinley responded with a declaration that he too had been against taking the islands, but that he had ultimately decided there was no alternative given the severe international implications that he believed would have resulted from an abandonment of the archipelago.⁷²⁹ While McKinley was being somewhat disingenuous, he

⁷²⁷ Dewey, *Autobiography of George Dewey*, 285.

⁷²⁸ Kenneth E. Hendrickson Jr., “Reluctant Expansionist: Jacob Gould Schurman and the Philippine Question,” *Pacific Historical Review* 36, no. 4 (November 1967): 405–7.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, 407.

still managed to convince Schurman of the importance of the commission he now wanted to send. Schurman, a Canadian-born former professor of Christian ethics and moral philosophy, who possessed neither a background in colonial issues nor expertise on the Philippines, consequently, signed on to lead the body that would recommend how the United States should manage its new colony. McKinley appointed two other civilians to the commission: Dean Worcester, a young zoologist from the University of Michigan, who had visited the Philippines twice on research trips, and Charles Denby, a Democrat from Indiana and a former U.S. Minister to China for fourteen years under the Cleveland and Harrison administrations, who was an advocate of the acquisition of the Philippines as an alternative to the seizure of territory in China.⁷³⁰ Otis and Dewey, as the senior ranking army and navy officers in the Philippines, rounded out the five-member commission.

Collectively known as the First Philippine Commission or the Schurman Commission, the commissioners had limited power. They had no authority in the islands and even their proposals were purely advisory. When they received their instructions from Hay at the end of January, the Senate had yet to ratify the Treaty of Paris. McKinley was, nevertheless, confident enough in its expected passage before the commissioners were due to arrive in the islands to direct them to “study attentively the existing social and political state of the various populations” in order to recommend those “measures which should be instituted for the maintenance of order, peace, and public welfare, either as temporary steps to be taken immediately for the perfection of present administration, or as suggestions for future legislation.” While ordering the

⁷³⁰ Denby served in China during both of Cleveland’s non-consecutive terms. For his position on the Philippines, see Charles Denby, “Shall We Keep the Philippines?,” *Forum* 26 (November 1898): 279–81.

commissioners “to facilitate the most humane, pacific and effective extension of authority” throughout the islands, McKinley hoped that they could convince Filipinos of his administration’s “just and benevolent intent” and, thus, forestall violent resistance to the imposition of American authority.⁷³¹

The verbose instructions from McKinley made it clear that the commission was to be subordinate to the military authorities in the islands. The commissioners were advised to perform their mission “without interference with the military authorities . . . now in control of the Philippines.”⁷³² While the formation of a commission did not signal a change in American policy, it did offer the prospect of facilitating discussions with Filipino leaders. When McKinley and Hay drafted the commission’s instructions, the military was still the only game in town and a fragile peace remained in place. By mid-March neither of these conditions existed. By the time the civilian members of the Schurman Commission reached the islands on March 4, fighting had already underway for a month between American troops and the Filipino forces led by Aguinaldo.

The outbreak of the war divided the commission as soon as it began its work. While he had initially thought that commissioners of “tact and discretion” might do “excellent work” in the Philippines, Otis believed that the commission could serve no purpose during active hostilities.⁷³³ With a state of war obviously existing in the islands, he considered questions about

⁷³¹ “Instructions of the President to the Commission,” January 20, 1899, in U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of the Philippine (Schurman) Commission to the President*, vol. 1, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Doc. 138 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 185–6.

⁷³² *Ibid.*

⁷³³ Otis to Adjutant General, January 10, 1899, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:876.

future governance to be of secondary importance to the military exigencies of the present. Focused on energetically extending American control through the use of military force, Otis became increasingly hostile to the commission, viewing its civilian members as intruders into his military world. A Harvard-educated lawyer with decades of administrative and war-fighting experience, he considered himself, with some reason, to be far more qualified to evaluate and manage the situation. He seldom attended the commission's meetings and rarely sought the advice of his fellow commissioners despite his nearly permanent presence in Manila.⁷³⁴

Schurman, however, was anxious to adjust the mission of the commission to meet the new challenges associated with ending the war and advocated making the commission a "Peace Commission" even if that was not its original mission.⁷³⁵ In early April, the commission issued its initial proclamation to the people of the Philippines. The proclamation began by reminding the Filipinos that the islands were now the property of the United States, but that the American people and their president entertained "cordial good will and fraternal feeling" for the Filipinos. The "pure aims and purposes" of the Americans had been unfortunately "misinterpreted" to "some" of the inhabitants. The resulting attack on "friendly American forces" had been a tragic error on the part of the Filipinos. The United States, however, remained "not only willing, but anxious, to establish . . . an enlightened system of government under which the Philippine people may enjoy the largest measure of home rule and the amplest liberty consonant with the supreme ends of government and compatible with those obligations which the United States has assumed

⁷³⁴ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1899: Report of the Major-General Commanding the Army, Part 2*, 149.

⁷³⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of the Philippine (Schurman) Commission to the President*, 1:3.

toward the civilized nations of the world.”⁷³⁶

The commission was convinced that the publication of some 25,000 copies of this proclamation created rifts among the Filipinos despite the best efforts of the insurgents to “keep their people in ignorance of America’s real purposes.”⁷³⁷ American military forces had captured the republican capital of Malolos a week earlier and the commission noted that some insurgents were anxious to accept some sort of compromise. The more conservative elements of the people, those who were more open to accepting the sovereignty of the United States over the Philippines, were more willing to approach the Schurman Commission to discuss the state of affairs in and possible future governance of the islands.⁷³⁸

During the early stages of their work, the commissioners met with some of Aguinaldo’s emissaries to discuss whether the sides could reach some sort of accommodation. Aguinaldo sent Manuel Arguelles to Manila in late April to ask the commission for a suspension of hostilities and a general armistice for a short period. The commissioners, however, insisted that only Otis, as the military commander, had the power to authorize an armistice. Otis bluntly refused the request, seeing it as an obvious ploy to give the Filipino army a “breathing spell.”⁷³⁹ When he learned of Otis’ refusal, Aguinaldo sent Arguelles back to Manila with a request for a three-month armistice, but Otis refused this request as well.

In the wake of Otis’ refusal, the commissioners held a series of interviews with Arguelles

⁷³⁶ Ibid., 1:3–5.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., 1:6.

⁷³⁸ Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags*, 81–2.

⁷³⁹ Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic*, Philippine Studies Series 5 (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1960), 515–6.

on the future of the islands. The commissioners indicated that “after a careful consideration and study” that they were of the opinion that the Filipino people were “not capable of independent self-government” and that they should recognize the reality of circumstances. According to the commissioners, Arguelles apparently agreed with the commissioners, but asked for a “clearer statement of the form of government designed for the islands.”⁷⁴⁰ That “clearer statement” arrived at the beginning of May in the form of a cable from Hay. The “Hay Plan” authorized the commission to propose a government consisting of a governor-general appointed by the president, a cabinet appointed by the governor-general, and a general advisory council elected by a “carefully considered and determined” body of Filipino electors with the governor-general having an absolute veto on any legislation. The plan also sanctioned the formation of a “strong and independent” judiciary, whose principal judges would be appointed by the president. Members of the cabinet and judiciary would be a mix of Filipinos and Americans.⁷⁴¹

While it was obvious that the Hay Plan did not grant any significant form of self-government to the Filipinos in the immediate future, Otis was, nevertheless, adamantly opposed to it. The commission’s telegram on May 4, which had requested the clearer statement of American plans for colonial government, had been sent without his knowledge. When Hay’s reply was read to the commission, the general “cut loose, attacking the President for sending such an order, the commission for having recommended it, and Admiral Dewey for having

⁷⁴⁰ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of the Philippine (Schurman) Commission to the President*, 1:7–8.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1:9.

recommended that the commission be appointed in the first place.”⁷⁴² Dewey, who had previously contended that Otis should come to the meetings if he wanted to know what was going on, argued bitterly with Otis regarding the general’s assessment of the plan and his expressed opinion of those involved in its formation. This “massive bloodletting” poisoned the relationship between the two men and only Dewey’s almost immediate departure from the islands prevented a repeat of this quarrel.⁷⁴³

Schurman was forced to downplay the disagreement between civilian and military commissioners after rumors of dissent within the commission reached McKinley and Hay through the press. Prompted by an inquiry, Schurman informed Hay that Otis had stressed that the commission had “no status” as it had been appointed before the fighting began, and, consequently, the general had declared that would not be “bound” by its actions. Schurman insisted, however, that while differences of opinion existed, the work of the commission was “proceeding without frictions.”⁷⁴⁴ Otis, on the other hand, made it clear that he and Schurman were in sharp disagreement on Philippine policy. While the commission served as a distinct reminder to the army command in Manila that Washington maintained the right to impose its own solution on the islands, Otis insisted to Alger that he had “declined to be compromised or advised by commission in war measures” and was not aware that any “disposition to interfere”

⁷⁴² Worcester diary entry May 26, 1899, quoted in Virginia Frances Mulrooney, “No Victor, No Vanquished: United States Military Government in the Philippine Islands, 1898-1901” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1975), 137.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, 136–7.

⁷⁴⁴ Schurman to Hay, May 29, 1899, Records of the U.S. Commission to the Philippine Island: Instructions from the Secretary of State, January 20, 1899 – March 16, 1900 (entry 1031), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 (RG59), National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter NACP).

existed. He dismissed the civilian commissioners by criticizing their lack of understanding of the local conditions and the “mental adroitness” of the Filipinos. While he acknowledged that the commission had been beneficial in gaining the confidence of “leading, well-disposed” Filipinos in the “beneficent intentions” of the United States, he doubted whether it had accomplished anything else. He did promise, however, to avoid creating friction with his fellow commissioners if possible.⁷⁴⁵

In addition to the civil-military split in the commission, the civilian commissioners also began to quarrel among themselves. Schurman became convinced that if the American people knew what the military was doing in the islands that they would demand that the war be “terminated immediately at any cost and by whatever means.”⁷⁴⁶ Worcester and Denby disagreed, with Worcester arguing that the suspension of hostilities was “most emphatically none of our business” and that the civilian commissioners would be “fools to meddle with it” as to do so under the existing circumstances would do absolutely no good and give Otis “the very point he needs on which to base an argument that we were interfering in things which did not concern us.”⁷⁴⁷ In light of the differences of opinion within the commission, Schurman suggested that the commissioners communicate individually with McKinley. Worcester and Denby, who obviously constituted a majority among the civilian commissioners, preferred to restrict communications to only the official view of the majority of the commissioners.

⁷⁴⁵ Otis to Alger, May 29, 1899, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:998.

⁷⁴⁶ Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippines Past and Present*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 317.

⁷⁴⁷ Worcester diary entry May 26, 1899, quoted in Mulrooney, “No Victor, No Vanquished,” 138.

Convinced that the American policy of “force and conciliation” should place as much weight on conciliation as on force, Schurman decided to disregard the preferences of his fellow civilian commissioners and made his case to McKinley by cabling his personal views of the situation to Hay in early June. Schurman pointed out that the military had done well in the field against the insurgents, but warned that the rainy season was rapidly approaching and that the insurgent leaders were planning a launch a guerilla campaign, “hoping with active and passive resistance to tire U.S. and win by dividing American opinion, of which they keep well informed.” Schurman argued that there were two possible courses of action. The Americans could either demand “unconditional submission,” which would require “either [a] considerable increase of the army to do it speedily or [a] protracted war with [the] present force,” or by negotiations with Aguinaldo to “adjust United States sovereignty and responsibility with [the] reasonable aspirations of the Filipinos” by developing some scheme of government similar to that of Canada. He believed the Americans were in a “false position” and sought McKinley’s approval to have the commission meet with Aguinaldo “with a view to terminating the war.”⁷⁴⁸

Schurman’s cable did not have the effect the author had hoped it would. Hay called the president’s attention to the proposal with the discourteous comment: “Here is a long disquisition from Dr. Schurman. If he had given the money this cable cost to Aguinaldo, he might have ended the war.”⁷⁴⁹ McKinley instructed Hay to respond by letting Schurman know that, while he was anxious to “stop any further effusion of blood” and open to “any honorable means to that

⁷⁴⁸ Schurman to Hay, June 3, 1899, Records of the U.S. Commission to the Philippine Islands: Copies of Despatches to the Secretary of State, March 15 – September 23, 1899 (entry 1029), RG 59, NACP.

⁷⁴⁹ Hay to McKinley, June 3, 1899, quoted in Kenton J. Clymer, *John Hay: The Gentleman as Diplomat* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 137.

end,” he wanted peace, “preferably by kindness and conciliation, but through force if need be.” While warning that relying on “those of the leaders who have skillfully and for their own purposes placed us in a false position before their deluded followers” to “set us right” was highly problematic, Hay did not openly rebut Schurman. He did, however, let him know that his recommendations would not alter American policy and that the president was ready to send “all force necessary to suppress the insurrection if Filipino resistance continued.”⁷⁵⁰ McKinley also asked that the full commission consider Schurman’s views and cable back their opinion. Worcester and Denby, along with Otis, cabled Hay with their opinion, which contrasted sharply with Schurman’s. They argued that only after the fighting was successfully concluded could American authorities establish civil government as outlined in the Hay Plan. They warned the president that indecision at this critical juncture would be “fatal” and urged the “prosecution of the war until the insurgents submit.”⁷⁵¹

Schurman knew he was in the minority, and if he held out any hope that McKinley might alter course, this was disabused in Hay’s next telegram, which informed him, “There would seem nothing else to do but to continue the work on the lines you are pursuing.”⁷⁵² Realizing that his recommendations had now been firmly rejected, Schurman did not insist upon them. Instead, he cabled back, indicating that his earlier telegram had reflected his only his personal opinion, but that he had sent the dispatch from a “feeling that it was [his] duty to give [the] President at

⁷⁵⁰ Hay to Schurman, June 5, 1899, entry 1029, RG 59, NACP.

⁷⁵¹ Telegram to Hay, June 7, 1899, box 1, Records of the U.S. Commission to the Philippine Islands: Telegrams Sent to the Department of State, March 20 - October 3, 1899 (entry 1033), RG 59, NACP.

⁷⁵² Hay to Schurman, June 8, 1899, entry 1031, RG 59, NACP.

present time [a] careful resume [*sic*] of [the] situation and [his] judgment thereon.”⁷⁵³

With his attempt at reconciliation opposed by his fellow commissioners and the president, Schurman “loyally” accepted the president’s directive and informed Hay that he anticipated no division in the commission.⁷⁵⁴ His interest in the commission flagged, however, in the aftermath of his failed attempt to shift American policy. He withdrew from Manila on an inspection tour of the southern portions of the archipelago and began making plans for his return to the United States in time for the beginning of the fall semester. He took advantage of an earlier pledge by McKinley that he might leave in July, and, thus, was able to escape from a somewhat embarrassing position by departing the islands after a brief return to Manila.⁷⁵⁵

With Dewey and now Schurman gone, Worcester and Denby were unsure if they should remain in the Philippines. When they cabled Washington for instructions, Hay informed them that McKinley “would be obliged” if they would remain in the archipelago to continue their mission.⁷⁵⁶ While they agreed to stay it was now clear that Otis and the military were in the ascendancy, a situation that would not be reversed until the arrival of another commission to the Philippines the following year.

While the commission had been unable to forge an agreement with Aguinaldo’s emissaries to end the fighting, it worked, both before and after Schurman’s departure, to gather the necessary information to fulfill its original assignment. Working in Manila and visiting outlying provinces to interview native Filipinos, as well as foreigners living or doing business in

⁷⁵³ Schurman to Hay, June 8, 1899, series 1, reel 7, McKinley Papers.

⁷⁵⁴ Schurman to Hay, June 10, 1899, entry 1033, RG 59, NACP.

⁷⁵⁵ Schurman to Hay, July 4, 1899, entry 1029, RG 59, NACP.

⁷⁵⁶ Hay to Denby, July 20, 1899, entry 1031, RG 59, NACP.

the islands, the commissioners collected an wide array of Philippine documents and consulted the local press to learn about “government; political, social, and racial questions; law; currency; the Chinese question; education; public lands; church property;” and other matters of concern in the archipelago.⁷⁵⁷

While they were making their rounds gathering data, Worcester and Denby continued to urge Otis to approve the establishment of civil government in those areas that fell under firm American control. They, unlike Schurman, did not want to interfere in military operations, but felt that there was no reason not to begin phasing in local government in pacified areas. Otis, however, was wary of any move that might weaken military authority. While Worcester and Denby were able to convince Otis to cooperate in the establishment of a few civil municipal governments in Manila and the Cavite provinces, progress along these lines was slow. Denby was encouraged by even these limited results, however, reporting to Hay that the establishment of local governments was “working admirably and leading considerable numbers of insurgents” to surrender.⁷⁵⁸

The civilian commissioners also tried to convince Otis that it was imperative to establish a central government in Manila, starting with a civil governing board, but Otis refused to relinquish military control of the city. Denby complained to Hay in a long letter that he and Worcester were not attempting to usurp Otis’ authority, but only trying to help reduce the burden on the general. “His ability is not disputed,” Denby insisted, “but it is at least questionable whether one man is able physically, and mentally, to bear the burden which the double

⁷⁵⁷ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Report of the Philippine (Schurman) Commission to the President*, 1:2.

⁷⁵⁸ Denby to Hay, July 17, 1899, entry 1029, RG 59, NACP.

administration creates.” The formation of a civil board in Manila would relieve Otis of “innumerable matters” and enable him to focus on the “supervision of pressing military matters.” “Hours are now taken up by him in the determination of matters which scarcely deserve his personal attention,” Denby lamented, concluding, “The system pleases nobody.”⁷⁵⁹ Otis, however, remained adamant in his refusal to surrender his authority, even over mundane tasks. The only measure to which Otis agreed, beyond the establishment of a few local government bodies, was the authorization to draft a constitution for the island of Negros. A draft constitution was prepared and sent to Washington by the commission near the end of July, along with a commission’s recommendation for its approval and a suggestion that it might serve as a model for the future government in the Philippines.⁷⁶⁰

By September, the remaining civilian commissioners felt that their useful service had come to an end. Otis continued to view the commission with distaste and to show the civilian commissioners all the respect due to their “no status” status (i.e. little to none). “We do not complain of the treatment meted to us,” Denby wrote, “but we suggest that we have been powerless to do any governmental act.”⁷⁶¹ The commission, of course, had been designed as a fact-finding body and not as a governmental body. The commissioners never had the authority to make anything other than recommendations. Denby’s comments, nevertheless, indicate his growing frustration with the Otis and his military administration. Toward the end of September, Worcester and Denby returned to the United States.

Otis and the military remained in uncontested control of the Philippines—uncontested

⁷⁵⁹ Denby to Schurman, September 13, 1899, entry 1029, RG 59, NACP.

⁷⁶⁰ Denby to Hay, July 25, 1899, entry 1029, RG59, NACP.

⁷⁶¹ Denby to Hay, September 13, 1899, entry 1029, RG 59, NACP.

from the American side of the equation—for another eight months, until another civilian commission arrived in the islands. In accordance with the recommendations of the Schurman Commission, McKinley informed Congress in December 1899, via his annual message, that while he agreed that “as long as the insurrection continues the military arm must necessarily be supreme,” he saw “no reason why steps should not be taken from time to time to inaugurate governments essentially popular in their form as fast as territory is held and controlled by our troops.” Consequently, he was “considering the advisability of the return of the commission, or such of the members thereof as can be secured, to aid the existing authorities and facilitate this work throughout the islands.”⁷⁶² When McKinley offered reappointment to the members of the Schurman Commission, all but one refused. Consequently, he was forced to constitute a new commission. To head this latest commission, McKinley wanted a young man with “unusual qualifications, not only administrative and judicial, but moral as well.” The president wanted someone as “sincere and disinterested” as Schurman, yet possessing the “tact and patience” that would be essential to bridge an interim period of joint control with the existing military government.⁷⁶³

William Howard Taft, the man McKinley picked to head this new commission, became, perhaps more than any other American, the dominant figure in U.S. colonial government in the Philippines. Like Schurman, he initially did not want the top job.⁷⁶⁴ Allen Ragan, one of Taft’s

⁷⁶² James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 14 (New York: Bureau of National Literature, Inc., 1917), 6398.

⁷⁶³ Leech, *In the Days of McKinley*, 483.

⁷⁶⁴ Roosevelt, however, was very interested in the job. He expressed this interest to Lodge, “As you know, the thing I should really like to do would be to be the first civil Governor General of the Philippines. I believe I could do that job, and it is a job emphatically worth doing. I feel that

biographers, declared, “Fate and fortune play strange tricks in the determination of the roles men are to play in life. This was especially true in Taft’s history.”⁷⁶⁵ Taft, the Yale-educated son of a prominent Cincinnati judge, wanted nothing so much as to follow in his father’s footsteps and secure a seat on a federal bench. He was, in fact, happily serving as a federal judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Cincinnati and serving as a professor of law and dean of the University of Cincinnati Law School when a telegram arrived in January 1900 summing him to Washington. The telegram said simply: “I would like to see you in Washington on important business within the next few days. On Thursday if possible.”⁷⁶⁶ Taft had the fleeting hope that it might mean an appointment to the Supreme Court, but as there was no vacancy, he quickly dismissed that possibility. He proceeded to Washington without knowing McKinley’s intentions.⁷⁶⁷

When McKinley informed him about the new civilian commission being sent to the Philippines to set up a civilian government in the archipelago and that he wanted Taft as a member of it, the judge was caught off guard. “He might as well have told me,” Taft said later in recounting his surprise, “that he wanted me to take a flying machine.”⁷⁶⁸ He was reluctant to

being Vice President would cut me off definitely from all chance of doing it; whereas in my second term as Governor, were I offered the Philippines, I could resign and accept it.” Roosevelt to Lodge, January 22, 1900, in Roosevelt and Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence*, 1:437.

⁷⁶⁵ Allen E. Ragan, *Chief Justice Taft*, Ohio Historical Collections Vol. VIII (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State Archæological and Historical Society, 1938), 3.

⁷⁶⁶ Quoted in Helen Herron Taft, *Recollections of Full Years* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1914), 32.

⁷⁶⁷ Henry F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, vol. 1 (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1964), 154–7.

⁷⁶⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 1:160.

join the new commission for reasons other than the surprising nature of the request. He explained to the president, as well as Root and Long, who were also at the meeting, that he did not want to disrupt his judicial career, in which he was making a name for himself, and that, like Schurman, he had not supported retaining the islands after the Spanish-American War. He “deprecated” the “taking” of the islands not because he felt the Filipinos were capable of self-government or that the administration was violating some principle of American government, but because it was an unnecessary “assumption of a burden . . . contrary to our traditions at a time when we had quite enough to do at home.” Now that the decision had been made, however, Taft believed that Americans, in general, and the administration, in particular, must exert themselves “to construct a government which would be adapted to the needs of the people so that they might be developed into a self-governing people.”⁷⁶⁹

Although Taft insisted that he was not qualified for the position, McKinley and Root assured him that his service on the state and federal bench and as solicitor general was ideal preparation for the job. While McKinley promised Taft that his acceptance would in no way derail his chances to gain a seat on the Supreme Court someday, Root took a different approach to recruitment. He challenged Taft: “You have had an easy time of it. . . . Now your country needs you. . . . This is the parting of the ways. You may go on holding the job you have in a humdrum, mediocre way. But here is something that will test you, something in the way of effort and struggle, and the question is, will you take the harder or easier task?”⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁹ Taft recollection of the meeting quoted in Herbert S. Duffy, *William Howard Taft* (New York: Minton, Balch & Co., 1930), 74–5.

⁷⁷⁰ Quoted in Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft*, 1:160.

Taft was not to be rushed, however, and asked for time to think things over. After returning from Washington with an expression “so grave” that his wife thought he was facing impeachment, Taft sounded out his family.⁷⁷¹ McKinley, meanwhile, recruited others to encourage Taft’s acceptance of the position. McKinley wrote to Day, his former secretary of state and now Taft’s colleague on the circuit court, informing him that Taft’s acceptance of the mission to the Philippines on the new commission was “a very important matter.” The president explicitly asked Day to use his influence to convince Taft that it was “a great field for him, a great opportunity” and that he would “never have so good a one again to serve his country.” McKinley insisted that the commission would have “large powers and a wide jurisdiction” so that they could accomplish “great good” in finding “the solution of the important problems of the East.” This commission, if comprised of men of the character of Taft, would give “repose and confidence to the country,” McKinley suggested, and would be “an earnest” of his “high purpose to bring to those peoples the blessings of peace and liberty.” Such a commission would be, he proposed, “an assurance that my instructions to the Peace Commission were sincere and my purpose to abide by them.”⁷⁷²

After receiving the approval of his wife and the encouragement of his brothers, Taft rose to Root’s challenge and accepted the president’s offer to join the commission, but only on the condition that he would be named as the president of it.⁷⁷³ If he was to go to the Philippines, he wanted to be in a position in which he would be “really responsible for [its] success or

⁷⁷¹ Taft, *Recollections of Full Years*, 33.

⁷⁷² McKinley to William R. Day, January 30, 1900, series 1, reel 9, McKinley Papers.

⁷⁷³ Henry W. Taft to Taft, January 30, 1900; Horace D. Taft to Taft, January 31, 1900; both in series 1, reel 18, Taft Papers.

failure.”⁷⁷⁴ Assured that this was indeed the case, he accepted the position. He wrote to Senator Joseph B. Foraker, a fellow Republican from Ohio, a week later, reflecting on his decision: “The work now to be undertaken is of the most perplexing and original character and I gravely fear that I am not qualified. But the die is cast—I must accept it.”⁷⁷⁵ Taft expressed the same sense of doubt and duty to Roosevelt: “I do not know whether I am right in going to the Philippines because I doubt whether I have the capacity for the peculiar work which there is to be done, but I am in for it now and must do the best I can.”⁷⁷⁶

Having accepted the presidency of the commission, Taft began a series of conferences with McKinley and Root to work out the composition of the remainder of the commission and its instructions. By the beginning of March, McKinley had appointed the other members of the commission. They were Dean Worcester, who was the only member from the Schurman Commission to accept a follow-on assignment; Luke Wright, a prominent lawyer from Memphis whose two terms as the attorney general for Tennessee had earned him the honorific title “general”; Henry Ide, who had served as Samoa’s Chief Justice from 1893 to 1897; and Bernard Moses, a political scientist from the University of California, whose special interest was Spanish colonial institutions.

The instructions that Root and Taft put together were a blueprint for American policy in the Philippines. The Schurman Commission had recommended the organization of civil governments at all levels once the insurrection was put down and peace restored. The Second

⁷⁷⁴ Taft to Root, February 2, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

⁷⁷⁵ Taft to Foraker, February 11, 1900, in Joseph Benson Foraker, *Notes of a Busy Life*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati: Stewart & Kidd Co., 1916), 87.

⁷⁷⁶ Taft to Roosevelt, February 15, 1900, series 1, reel 4, Roosevelt Papers.

Philippine (or Taft) Commission was, therefore, directed to “perfect the work of organizing and establishing civil government already commenced by the military authorities.” The commission was instructed to advance the establishment of civil government by first establishing municipal governments “in which the natives of the Islands . . . shall be afforded the opportunity to manage their own local affairs to the fullest extent of which they are capable, and subject to the least degree of supervision and control which a careful study of their capacities and observations of the workings of native control show to be consistent with the maintenance of law, order, and loyalty.” The commission was also to establish provincial governments, and finally, when the commission believed that central governmental control could be safely transferred from the military to the civil authorities, to transmit their recommendations to Washington as to what form of central government should be established when taking over control from the military.⁷⁷⁷

The commission was charged with assuming almost immediate control of the legislative arm of the central government, which was still in the hands of the military. The legislative authority, which was to be assumed on September 1, 1900, gave the commission the right to establish taxes, custom duties, and imports for the raising of revenue, to expend all monies so collected, to establish an educational system, a civil service, a court system, and to establish local and provincial governments per their instructions. The executive power in the islands, on the other hand, was to remain with the military governor, who would continue to “exercise the executive authority now possessed by him and not herein expressly assigned to the commission.”⁷⁷⁸ Root’s instructions, drafted in collaboration with Taft and approved by

⁷⁷⁷ Root to Taft, April 7, 1900, box 173, part 3, Root Papers.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

McKinley, provided for a system of divided authority, which reflected the desire to shift gradually governmental power from the military to the civil authorities. Otis was instructed to receive the commission with “all the honors shown the most favored of similar bodies” and to give his “cordial support to the Commission in the work with which it has been charged.”⁷⁷⁹

While Root understood that “the most perfect cooperation between the civil and military authorities” would be required to make the transition a smooth one, he quickly learned that this level of cooperation was not easily achieved.⁷⁸⁰

Root and Taft were both aware of that it was essential to the success of American policy to cultivate the goodwill of the Filipinos. Root stipulated in his instructions, “Upon all officers and employees of the United States, both civil and military, should be impressed a sense of duty to observe not merely the material but the personal and social rights of the people of the Islands, and to treat them with the same courtesy and respect for their personal dignity which the people of the United States are accustomed to require from each other.”⁷⁸¹ Just before departing for the Philippines, Taft expressed the same points in a letter to Harrison Gray Davis, the editor of the *Los Angeles Times*:

The task of pacifying the country and making possible a well ordered government under the existing conditions is not an easy one, but I think that when we have once convinced the people of our desire to give them and secure to them permanently the liberty of the individual, and a large measure of political self-control, they will become tractable and will cease to maintain the sullen attitude which now seems to characterize them. . . . We should give them the benefit of all the constitutional guarantees of individual liberty which are contained either in the state or the federal constitutions.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁹ Corbin to Commanding General, Division of the Philippines, April 9, 1900, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1158.

⁷⁸⁰ Root to Taft, April 7, 1900, box 173, part 3, Root Papers.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸² Taft to Harrison Gray Davis, April 14, 1900, series 3, reel 30, Taft Papers.

Upon hearing of the appointment of the Taft Commission, Otis, who remained pessimistic of civilian intrusion into what he believed should remain the military's business, asked to be relieved of duty and requested to return to the United States in order to tend to "private interests." Although he felt that a "large repressive military force" would have to remain in the islands for the foreseeable future, he believed that he would have things in a "quite satisfactory condition" shortly, thus allowing him to leave with no lingering concerns about the American position in the islands.⁷⁸³ His request was approved, and Major General Arthur MacArthur was promoted to the top military spot.⁷⁸⁴

Taft and MacArthur could not have presented a more striking contrast. Arthur MacArthur's military career encompassed the life of the United States Army from Fort Sumter through the Spanish-American War. Born in New England and raised in Wisconsin, he had enlisted in the Union army in 1862, when he had been only seventeen years old. He fought with distinction in some of the key battles of the Civil War and achieved the rank of colonel of volunteers at the age of twenty, earning the Medal of Honor for his heroic conduct as a first lieutenant during the Battle of Missionary Ridge.⁷⁸⁵ He remained in regular army service after the war even as of his colleagues sought more lucrative outlets in industry and finance. When the Spanish-American War broke out, Lieutenant Colonel MacArthur was made a brigadier

⁷⁸³ Otis to Adjutant-General, April 3, 1900, in U.S. Adjutant-General's Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1156.

⁷⁸⁴ Corbin to Otis, April 6, 1900, in *ibid.*, 2:1157.

⁷⁸⁵ He did not receive the award for nearly twenty-six years. It was finally presented on June 30, 1890. Brief details are available from Medal of Honor Recipients Civil War (M-Z), www.history.army.mil/html/moh/civwarmz.html (accessed August 12, 2012)

general of volunteers and, shortly thereafter, promoted to the rank of major general.⁷⁸⁶

Before assuming overall command from Otis, MacArthur had served as provost-general in Manila after its capture by American forces, an assignment that, while often unpleasant, had provided MacArthur with an opportunity to face, on a smaller scale, some of the problems that he would confront twenty months later as military governor. He had much more exposure to Filipinos than did his predecessors, Merritt and Otis, and this contact convinced him of their desire for independence. While he never supported their goals, he never underestimated them. Unlike most Americans in the Philippines, he accepted the fact that most Filipinos preferred to assume the responsibilities of self-government rather than “follow the dictates of another white colonial master, no matter how benevolent.”⁷⁸⁷

As the new commanding general, MacArthur did not appreciate the arrival of yet another civilian element into the military’s domain. While he had not been the senior military commander during visit of the Schurman Commission, he had plenty of exposure to the civilian commissioners and certainly would have been aware of Otis’ opinion of the commission. MacArthur dismissed the commissioners as interlopers and judged their arrival as a troublesome “interjection into an otherwise normal situation.”⁷⁸⁸ He, nonetheless, signaled the prospect of friendly cooperation between the existing military officials and the soon to be arriving civilian

⁷⁸⁶ For a recent and favorable biography of MacArthur, see Kenneth Ray Young, *The General’s General: The Life and Times of Arthur MacArthur*, History and Warfare (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994).

⁷⁸⁷ Carol Morris Petillo, *Douglas MacArthur: The Philippine Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 50.

⁷⁸⁸ Quoted in Stanley, *A Nation in the Making*, 77.

officials by cabling Taft: “Cordial greeting and warm welcome await the Commission.”⁷⁸⁹ Taft and the other members of the new commission were very relieved to receive this cable because, as Taft reasoned, it seemed to indicate “strongly” that MacArthur intended “to cooperate as fully as he can with the commission” and that the new commanding general did not intend “to pursue the policy which Otis pursued of ignoring the old commission, and making light of its efforts.”⁷⁹⁰ When the commissioners arrived in Manila on June 3, MacArthur did not meet them in person—to do so would have been “comparable to the president leaving the White House to greet his own cabinet”—but he did send his personal launch, accompanied by his secretary. The commissioners came ashore the following day and were escorted to MacArthur’s military headquarters “with great pomp and circumstance.”⁷⁹¹

MacArthur made a very positive initial impression on Taft, who described the general as “a pleasant looking man” who was “very self contained [*sic*].”⁷⁹² A week later, Taft confided to his brother that he found MacArthur “a very satisfactory man to do business with.”⁷⁹³ In an early letter to McKinley, written within his first fortnight in the islands, Taft noted that MacArthur had been “most courteous and anxious in every way to cooperate with us to bring about the end we both have in view.”⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁸⁹ Taft to Helen H. Taft, May 31, 1900, series 2, reel 24, Taft Papers.

⁷⁹⁰ Taft to C. P. Taft, June 12, 1900, series 1, reel 18, Taft Papers.

⁷⁹¹ Young, *The General’s General*, 259.

⁷⁹² Taft to Helen H. Taft, June 3, 1900, series 2, reel 24, Taft Papers.

⁷⁹³ Taft to C. P. Taft, June 12, 1900, series 1, reel 18, Taft Papers.

⁷⁹⁴ Taft to McKinley, June 15, 1900, series 1, reel 10, McKinley Papers.

This positive impression and seeming willingness of the military authorities to work in close coordination with the new commission did not last long, however. Taft's initial estimate of the overall situation in the islands and the military's role in future governance was staid, yet still optimistic. He found the situation "perplexing," with opinions on the current conditions ranging from "completely discouraged" to "roseate." His own impression was that the "back of the rebellion" was broken, and that "the state of robbery and anarchy" that existed in the islands where the American military was not in control had induced a number of "leading generals," quite a number of whom had been captured by the Americans, to express their belief that surrender was the best course of action. Taft admitted that his was "perhaps an optimistic view," but he believed there was "more reason to believe in it this time than any time before." He was anxious, however, to establish civil government as soon as possible. "The Army is a necessary evil," he opined, "but it is not an agent to encourage the establishment of a well-ordered civil government, and the Filipinos are anxious to be rid of policing by shoulder straps."⁷⁹⁵

Taft's opinion of his military counterpart also changed. Within a month of his arrival, Taft began to express private doubt, in letters to his wife, whether MacArthur was entirely "clear headed" in his negotiations with various Filipino factions.⁷⁹⁶ When Taft learned that MacArthur had censored a reporter's dispatch that was critical of the general's political dealings with the Filipinos, Taft complained, again privately to his wife, that MacArthur's actions were not only "revolting," but also "utterly unAmerican."⁷⁹⁷ When MacArthur began to display an open resentment toward the commissioners for their attempts to investigate issues that he believed fell

⁷⁹⁵ Taft to C. P. Taft, June 12, 1900, series 1, reel 18, Taft Papers.

⁷⁹⁶ Taft to Helen H. Taft, June 27, 1900, series 2, reel 24, Taft Papers.

⁷⁹⁷ Taft to Helen H. Taft, July 5, 1900, series 2, reel 24, Taft Papers.

under his authority, Taft predicted that civil-military relations on the islands might be heading for rough waters.⁷⁹⁸ After learning that the military governor was asking the War Department to reduce the commission's authority, Taft was even more certain of his prediction.⁷⁹⁹ Daniel Williams, the commission's secretary, reflected afterwards: "It was natural that the native should not receive us with open arms, but there was every reason to believe our army brethren would welcome the cooperation of the Commission in restoring orderly government, and would work in harmony with it. Instead, we have found the atmosphere at the military end of the corridor decidedly chilly."⁸⁰⁰

Taft increasingly questioned MacArthur's ability to manage his numerous tasks outside those that were purely military. "The more I have to do with M. the smaller man of affairs I think he is," Taft confided a couple of weeks later. "His experience and his ability as a statesman or politician are nothing. He has all the angularity of military etiquette and discipline, and he takes himself with the greatest seriousness."⁸⁰¹ After numerous private laments about the increasingly difficult relationship with MacArthur, Taft believed the situation was bad enough by the mid-July, only a little more than one month into his tour on the islands, to justify a complaint to Root. After first pointing out that the commissioners had been "very careful not to give the impression that we were here as a 'smelling committee,' and thus to interfere with the harmony that ought to exist between us and the military authorities," he indicated that divided authority

⁷⁹⁸ Taft to Helen H. Taft, July 8, 1900, series 2, reel 24, Taft Papers.

⁷⁹⁹ Taft to Helen H. Taft, July 18, 1900, series 2, reel 24, Taft Papers.

⁸⁰⁰ Williams, *The Odyssey of the Philippine Commission*, 62–3.

⁸⁰¹ Taft to Helen H. Taft, July 29, 1900, series 2, reel 24, Taft Papers.

was not working as smoothly as he had hoped it would.⁸⁰² Two weeks later, he complained to Root that a recent spike in tension between the Americans and the Filipinos might have been avoided had MacArthur only considered the benefits of a “little fuller discussion” with the commission before taking action.⁸⁰³

While the commission hoped that many towns and provinces might soon be given civil governments, MacArthur and his soldiers, who were still fighting a grim guerilla war in many provinces, were more skeptical. He had made plans for continuing the occupation with a smaller garrison and had proposed the organization of a small native constabulary to take over responsibility for law and order.⁸⁰⁴ In June 1900, MacArthur even suggested that he should, in his role as the military governor, offer an amnesty to the Filipino insurgents. Writing to Corbin, he proposed an “immediate issue of amnesty offering complete immunity for past and liberty for future to all who have not violated laws of war and who renounce insurrection.” This amnesty, which would include Aguinaldo, would be offered to all who accepted the “sovereignty and authority” of the United States.⁸⁰⁵ This was not MacArthur’s first attempt to gain support for an

⁸⁰² Taft to Root, July 14, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 31-45, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸⁰³ Taft to Root, July 26, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 9-30, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸⁰⁴ MacArthur to Adjutant-General, May 28, 1900, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1172–3.

⁸⁰⁵ MacArthur to Adjutant-General, June 5, 1900, in *ibid.*, 2:1175.

amnesty proposal. He had suggested the same thing to Otis in late November, but had been rebuffed.⁸⁰⁶

The commissioners agreed with MacArthur's idea. Taft went so far as to inform Root that if the general secured the secretary of war's authority to issue the proclamation of amnesty, it would "be the beginning of the end."⁸⁰⁷ After working the exact wording and gaining approval from Washington for a three-month amnesty, MacArthur issued the proclamation on June 21 with the hope that it would help bring a speedy end to the fighting.⁸⁰⁸

The amnesty was a failure, however. Two months into the amnesty, MacArthur informed the War Department that the results had been "meager" and advised that it should be allowed to expire on schedule.⁸⁰⁹ In the end, it only enticed some 5,000 Filipinos to surrender during the three months in which it was in effect.⁸¹⁰ Most of those who did take the opportunity to

⁸⁰⁶ MacArthur to Schwan, November 23, 1899, in U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900*, vol. 1, Part 4, 56th Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Doc. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 276.

⁸⁰⁷ Taft to Root, June 18, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 7-8, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸⁰⁸ Corbin to MacArthur, June 6, 1900, and June 15, 1900, in U.S. Adjutant-General's Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1175 and 1179; MacArthur to Adjutant-General, June 20, 1900, in *ibid.*, 2:1181; for the notice of amnesty's final wording see, U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900: Report of the Lieutenant-General Commanding the Army, Part 3*, vol. 1, Part 5, 56th Cong., 2nd Sess., H. Doc. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 65.

⁸⁰⁹ MacArthur to Adjutant-General, August 31, 1900 in U.S. Adjutant-General's Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1203-4.

⁸¹⁰ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900: Report of the Lieutenant-General Commanding the Army, Part 3*, 1, Part 5:66.

surrender were merely foot soldiers. Disappointed by the lack of results, MacArthur prepared to treat the Filipinos remaining in the field as “murderers” and “outlaws.”⁸¹¹

Taft used MacArthur’s waning optimism, and that of other senior military leaders, to press Root to hasten the transfer of power to the commission. In mid-August, Taft felt it was necessary to commit his objections to MacArthur on this issue in another lengthy letter to Root. In his typical manner, he began his letter in a conciliatory fashion before attacking MacArthur. “In looking back over some of my recent letters,” Taft noted, “there are some statements from which the inference might be drawn that General MacArthur and the Commission are not on friendly relations.” “This is not true,” he insisted. Despite this reassurance that there was no “breach” in the relationship between the two men, Taft went on to condemn MacArthur in several ways. MacArthur, Taft complained, “regards all the people as opposed to the American forces and looks at his task as one of conquering eight millions of recalcitrant, treacherous and sullen people.” Taft believed that while MacArthur expressed support for the theory of civil government in the islands, his support for putting the theory into practice was superficial, at best, and that he seemed to trust only “the strong hand of the military.” MacArthur was avoiding direct relations with Taft and his fellow commissioners and was discouraging military officers acting in a civil capacity from responding to inquires from commissioners without first obtaining formal authorization from his headquarters. MacArthur’s stance forced the commissioners “to consult always the rules of that military etiquette which permits no subordinate to have an

⁸¹¹ MacArthur’s descriptions of those who refused to surrender after an amnesty proclamation from MacArthur to Schwan, November 23, 1899, in U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900*, 1, Part 4:276; MacArthur to Adjutant-General, June 5, 1900, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1175.

opinion except as he expresses it in a report to his superior,” which, Taft complained, made getting answers to even the simplest questions a problem. Consequently, “I have conducted what business I have had with the General through the medium of formal correspondence,” Taft explained, “and have observed with great strictness the line of military propriety.”⁸¹²

Taft recognized the difficulties MacArthur faced and thought him a “very courtly, kindly man.” He was, however, also someone who was “rather fond of profound generalizations on the psychological conditions of the people.” MacArthur had no “great consideration” for the views of civilians as to the “real situation” in the islands. He simply dismissed their opinions. As civilians, they did not have the requisite knowledge to understand the military situation, and as relative newcomers, they did not have the necessary experience to understand the complexity of the political situation. Additionally, the general’s firm belief in the need to preserve “military etiquette in civil matters and civil government” was pointless, in Taft’s opinion, and only served to increase friction between American officials. Taft concluded with the observation that “none of these things are said by way of complaint, but only to give you, so to speak, the atmosphere in which we find ourselves as we approach the time when we, by assuming power, shall necessarily diminish those of the military governor and of the army as a civil instrument.”⁸¹³

Taft addressed his concerns to MacArthur, but the military governor seldom answered them. When he did respond, he often took a very dismissive tone. In a response to a letter commenting on the strained relationship between the commission and the army sent by Taft a few days after his letter to Root, MacArthur insisted that he was “in full accord with the

⁸¹² Taft to Root, August 18, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 65-86, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

Commission as to the importance of preserving, as far as possible, the harmony of administration in the Islands.” While he took “great pleasure” in signifying his willingness to “comply with the suggestion of the commission, and will be glad to aid by advice at any time, or by personal presence as such conferences as the Commission may regard as necessary,” he warned Taft that the “various functions of administration” concentrated on his desk were “so exacting” that he could “spare but little time” from his office during the day. He suggested, therefore, as the “most expedient” way of conveying its desires for his advice on a piece of proposed legislation was for the commission to submit said legislation in writing to his office. He would respond with his views in the same manner.⁸¹⁴ MacArthur was evidently willing to work with the civilians of the commission, but only when he had the time.

The increasingly confrontational relationship between the two men was based less on personality than on their perspectives of the situation in the Philippines. Otis’ analysis of the military situation had been that the insurrection was collapsing. If this was indeed the case then civil government could rapidly, easily, and safely be established throughout the islands. If, on the other hand, the insurrection was growing in strength then the installation of civil government might well be postponed until conditions improved. While Taft and his fellow commissioners adopted Otis’ analysis, MacArthur embraced the alternative view. Despite the extension and consolidation of American control and the surrender and capture of increasing numbers of Filipino fighters (and despite Otis’ hopes to the contrary), the war was not going away. The number of engagements between American and Filipino forces, which had averaged 44 per month during the period of conventional warfare through November 1899, had increased to 92

⁸¹⁴ MacArthur to Taft, August 24, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

per month over the next four months and had then risen to a peak of 120 per month during the late spring and early summer.⁸¹⁵ While the overall number of American casualties had declined after Aguinaldo's shift to a guerilla campaign in November 1899, the proportion of those killed to those wounded had increased from 1 killed for every 3.5 men wounded to 1 killed for every 1.4 men wounded.⁸¹⁶

MacArthur's position did not represent a change of opinion upon his promotion to overall command. He had never supported Otis' analysis. As a subordinate commander, he had, however, not thought it proper to oppose it, publically at least. In his first official report as military governor, he reversed the official military line that argued the insurrection was nearing an end. He argued that the insurrection was far from over and that it was supported by a majority of the Filipino people. "The success of this unique system of war depended upon almost complete unity of action of the entire native population," MacArthur declared. "That such unity is a fact is too obvious to admit of discussion." He referred to the shadow governments throughout the islands, explaining how the towns were secretly organizing "complete insurgent municipal governments, to proceed simultaneously and in the same sphere as the American governments, and in many instances through the same personnel." MacArthur was convinced that wherever there was a unit of the insurgent army, the adjacent towns contributed to its maintenance. This was, in his opinion, "a fact, beyond dispute."⁸¹⁷

⁸¹⁵ LeRoy, *The Americans in the Philippines*, 2:218.

⁸¹⁶ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Number of Deaths of Soldiers in the Philippines, Etc.*, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., S. Doc 426 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 4.

⁸¹⁷ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1900: Report of the Lieutenant-General Commanding the Army, Part 3*, 1, Part 5:61–2.

Taft, nevertheless, challenged MacArthur's report. In his constant stream of letters, both official and private, Taft expressed his belief that the insurrection was coming to an end. "The military resistance to the United States forces is at an end throughout the Islands," he wrote only two weeks after his arrival, "I think the country is ripe to receive us as representatives of a civil government."⁸¹⁸ To another friend, he wrote much the same thing on the following day, suggesting, "the military situation is distinctly better than it was six months ago, and if McKinley is reelected President, all of the Islands will become pacified in a remarkably short time thereafter."⁸¹⁹ At the end of June, he wrote to the Roosevelt, "The situation here is much more favorable than I had been led to suppose. The back of the insurrection is broken and the leaders are much discouraged and anxious, most of them for peace."⁸²⁰

When asked by Root to reply to MacArthur's analysis, Taft noted that MacArthur's views as to the "temper" of the Filipinos "did not accord" with the views of the commissioners. While agreeing with MacArthur that any further withdrawal of troops would be "unwise," Taft insisted that the military view that "all the people are at heart *insurrectos*" was due "to the fact that they carry water on both shoulders and profess loyalty to both sides." The dual loyalty was, in Taft's opinion, a result of the "fear and depredation" that average Filipinos suffered because of the "cruel bands" of *insurrectos* and *landrones* that roamed the inadequately-secured provinces and prevented the majority of Filipinos from embracing the Americans wholeheartedly.⁸²¹ In spite of their dramatically different attitudes toward the situation on the ground in the Philippines, Taft

⁸¹⁸ Taft to H. C. Hollister, June 15, 1900, series 3, reel 30, Taft Papers.

⁸¹⁹ Taft to C. Eliot, June 16, 1900, series 3, reel 30, Taft Papers.

⁸²⁰ Taft to Roosevelt, June 27, 1900, series 1, reel 6, Roosevelt Papers.

⁸²¹ Taft to Root, July 1, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

and MacArthur remained in control of different segments of the government in the islands and each used the governmental powers at their disposal to go their own way.

As September approached, and with it the formal establishment of the commission as the legislative branch of colonial government in the Philippines, the commissioners formally expressed their desire for harmony with MacArthur, who, as the military governor, would continue to hold executive power. MacArthur met with the commission at a conference on August 30 in an effort to work out a mutually agreeable division of authority between the two branches of the colonial government. At the meeting, MacArthur informed the commissioners that, by his interpretation of the division of power, no law could be implemented without his approval and that all civilian and military personnel came under his direct authority. Taft disagreed, protesting that the commission had the power to enact any and all legislation pertaining to civil affairs for which it saw fit and that MacArthur was required to execute any law passed by the commission. After the meeting, Taft reported to Root:

The General expressed himself as disliking much the cutting down of the power of the Military Governor and transferring it to the Commission, but he said that he was very anxious to assist in every way the Administration and to carry out its purposes, but that the Commission was an anomalous body and that the plan was likely to result in discord unless there was hearty co-operation, which he proposed to give, and that he was willing to abide any construction put upon the [President's] instructions.⁸²²

Privately, Taft mocked MacArthur for being “weak enough to express great personal humiliation in having his power as Military Governor cut down.” MacArthur’s complaints did nothing to lessen Taft’s desire to assume more responsibility for the commission and, thus, only served to

⁸²² Taft to Root, August 31, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 92-102, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

give the commissioners “the opportunity to know how anxious he had been to avoid the transfer.”⁸²³

After the commission formally assumed legislative power, the relationship between the military executive and civil legislature was relatively agreeable, if not particularly efficient. “We are doing everything that we can to maintain . . . harmony,” Taft assured Root. Yet Taft felt “obliged to say that the authorities conferred upon the Commission are not agreeable to [MacArthur] in that he regards the office of Military Governor as ‘mediatized,’ to use an expression in his letter, and that he looks at it in the light of personal humiliation.” As a result, Taft explained, MacArthur was “especially sensitive” and while Taft assured the secretary of war that the commissioners were “very anxious to regard his feelings we do not feel that we can yield authority . . . merely to avoid hurting his feelings.”⁸²⁴

A key point of contention was the placement of and authority over military officers serving in civil positions. There simply were not enough American civilians in the islands to fill all the positions in the civil government. Consequently, military officers were detailed to perform purely civil jobs. In early October, the commission appointed an infantry lieutenant to a post in the forest bureau and sent a request to MacArthur to detail him officially to the position.⁸²⁵ MacArthur insisted, via a military-style endorsement, that it was “not acceptable” for the commission to name particular officers for specific positions. MacArthur advised the commission that not only was the lieutenant in question unavailable, but also that the

⁸²³ Taft to C. P. Taft, August 31, 1900, series 1, reel 18, Taft Papers.

⁸²⁴ Taft to Root, September 18, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 119-35, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸²⁵ Taft to MacArthur, October 4, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

commission should restrict itself to merely requesting that he assign whomever he saw fit to the position.⁸²⁶ To the commissioners, this seemed a perfect example of “military etiquette gone mad.”⁸²⁷ Taft responded to MacArthur’s reply by informing him that the captain who headed the forest bureau had specifically recommended the lieutenant as the best qualified man in the islands for the job. On the broader point of the commissioners’ authority to pick specific men to fill positions, Taft insisted that the instructions to the commission did not limit their ability to do so.⁸²⁸ MacArthur continued to insist that only he could detail an officer to special duty. While the original lieutenant was still unavailable, he offered to find another qualified officer.⁸²⁹ Ultimately, in this case, an experienced civilian forester was found to fill the position, and an uneasy calm was restored, with Taft defending his right to ask for particular officers and MacArthur promising to consider requests for the detail of those officers.⁸³⁰

The dispute over the appointment of officers was not limited to the commission’s ability to appoint specific officers. The commission also decided to delegate to MacArthur’s civil department heads the authority to appoint their own subordinates, conditional upon the endorsement of the commission. MacArthur, not surprisingly, squashed this move, arguing that the delegation of this authority to his subordinates had the “appearance of an official expression of lack of confidence in the Chief Executive of the Islands.” He was responsible for civil

⁸²⁶ MacArthur to Taft, October 7, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸²⁷ Taft to Root, October 7, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸²⁸ Taft to MacArthur, October 9, box 164, 1900, Root Papers.

⁸²⁹ MacArthur to Taft, October 11, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸³⁰ Taft to MacArthur, October 12, 1900, and MacArthur to Taft, October 13, 1900; both in box 164, Root Papers.

administration, and he would not permit his subordinates to act independently from him.⁸³¹

While the commission admitted the validity of MacArthur's line of reasoning and passed an amendment specifying that all appointments by department heads would be subject to the approval of the military governor, Taft defended the commission's right to appoint civil officers and the final section of the approved act declared that the commission had the power to revoke any appointments and make appointments of its own.⁸³²

In the midst of his back and forth with MacArthur over the issue of appointments, Taft wrote Root in mid-October to vent his frustration with the military governor. "It is not at all too strong an expression to say that he is sore at our coming," Taft observed. "He is sore at the diminution of his authority . . . and his nerves are so tense on the subject that the slightest inadvertence on the part of anyone of the Commission leads him to correspondence which shows it only too clearly." In his correspondence, MacArthur assumed the position of lecturing the commission "on the military necessities" every time he had the chance and the "obligation" the commission felt to respond to his communications involved a "great waste of time and energy." "It would seem as if he were as sensitive about maintaining the exact line of jurisdiction between the Commission and himself," Taft concluded, "as about winning a battle or suppressing the insurrection."⁸³³

⁸³¹ MacArthur to Taft, October 9, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸³² Taft to MacArthur, October 13, 1900, box 164, Root Papers; U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901: Public Laws and Resolutions Passed by the Philippine Commission*, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Doc. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 48.

⁸³³ Taft to Root, October 10, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 151-65, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

The following month, Taft and MacArthur quarreled over the suggestion to establish a native constabulary. To circumvent the military, Taft suggested that the commission be allowed to form a native militia and police force—a Filipino “constabulary”—completely separate from the army and placed under the direct control of the commission. He wanted to train and equip several thousand Filipinos to serve in a national Philippine army. This Filipino force, he believed, would be more effective at suppressing the insurgents than the American army. “If judiciously selected and officered,” Taft insisted, this native constabulary would be an “efficient force for maintenance of order and will permit early, material reduction of United States troops.” He recommended that recruitment of Macabebes, a minority group used by the Spanish in their colonial army, for the constabulary begin immediately.⁸³⁴

During a conference arranged to discuss the merits of such a move, MacArthur pressed Wright, the commissioner assigned to deal with the issue, unsuccessfully, to disclose the names of any army officers who had spoken to the commission in favor of such a plan. MacArthur asserted that these officers had likely spoken in favor of the project solely out of their selfish ambition to command the new force. While Taft had been an early and insistent proponent of creating Filipino-manned constabulary forces as a way to reduce the need for American soldiers, MacArthur was adamantly opposed to the idea of forming an armed constabulary, especially one placed under the commission’s control, and demonstrated his lack of enthusiasm for the project when he refused to assign an officer to study British experience with colonial troops as requested by the commission. He maintained that the army was engaged in a guerilla war with an

⁸³⁴ Taft to Root, August 21, 1900, series 3, reel 31, Taft Papers; Taft to Root, July 26, August 11, 23, 31, December 14, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, pp. 9-30, 52-64, 87-90, 92-102, 220-7, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

insurgent force supported by the majority of the Filipino people. To give thousands of rifles to the Filipinos would only ensure that they ended up in the hands of the guerillas. He had already formed a small Filipino force, mostly Macabebes, under military control, which he used primarily as scouts, but he argued that they had to be closely supervised because they were notoriously cruel to prisoners and often robbed and otherwise harassed the general population. He insisted that the level of Filipino resistance required the postponement of any plans for an independent constabulary by a year or more. Fearing that any recommendations on the topic at this stage might give Congress an excuse to reduce troop numbers below what he considered to be a safe level, he wanted to drop the matter.⁸³⁵ Root deferred to MacArthur's judgment, but Taft continued to press the issue from time to time, advising Root that the moment was increasingly "near at hand . . . when disturbances existing can better be suppressed by native police of a civil government with [the] army as auxiliary force than by [the] continuance of complete military control."⁸³⁶ MacArthur finally abandoned "his stubborn opposition" to recruiting additional Filipino military forces in January 1901, authorizing his departmental commanders to recruit Native Scouts "to any extent you deem expedient in any manner you regard best"; and by June, there were 5,000 Native Scouts operating in the islands.⁸³⁷

Taft firmly believed that the election in November was of critical importance. He was convinced that the prospects of a victory by the Democratic nominee, William Jennings Bryan,

⁸³⁵ Taft to Root, November 14, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 202-15, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸³⁶ Commission to Root, January 2, 1901, box 1, Correspondence of the Philippine (Taft) Commission, 1900-1906 (entry 34), Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, Record Group 350 (RG 350), NACP.

⁸³⁷ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 215-6.

an avowed anti-imperialist, were keeping the Filipino insurgents in the field. “The leaders are talking peace and are restrained from surrender by nothing now but the possibility of Bryan’s election,” he wrote Roosevelt in June. The election of McKinley and the passage of the Spooner Bill would, in his opinion, “produce a pacification in these islands that will make the military problem one of secondary importance.”⁸³⁸ He was firmly convinced that upon the reelection of McKinley, the complete pacification of the islands would only be “a matter of two or three months.” The only thing keeping the Filipinos in the field, he informed Root, was the hope that by a Bryan victory they might “secure that independence of which they say so much and know so little.” Taft warned that if Bryan somehow managed to defeat McKinley and put into effect his policy for the Philippines, “two years would demonstrate the necessity for the United States’ taking the country again with a firm hold, and the work of the last two years would then have to be done all over again.”⁸³⁹ A week before the election, Taft remarked, “Everything halts until we receive news of the election.” The “intense interest” felt by the “humblest and most ignorant” Filipino was unmistakable.⁸⁴⁰

In the wake of McKinley’s victory, Taft was less encouraged about the future of the American project in the islands than he had been during his first few months in the islands. While reelection of McKinley had “cleared up a great many difficulties,” he warned a friend, “it may be some time before the insurrection is stamped out.”⁸⁴¹ He had warned Root in early

⁸³⁸ Taft to Roosevelt, June 27, 1900, series 1, reel 6, Roosevelt Papers.

⁸³⁹ Taft to Root, August 11, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 52-64, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸⁴⁰ Taft to Root, October 31, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 186-92, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸⁴¹ Taft to H. Hitchcock, November 30, 1900, series 3, reel 31, Taft Papers.

October that at some point the administration would have to “change our lenient policy and treat them as outlaws.”⁸⁴² Privately, he was more forceful, indicating that it was already time to “depart from the policy of leniency” and give the Filipino insurgents one last opportunity to surrender. If they chose to remain in opposition to the United States, the Americans should declare them “outlaws and either hang or transport them as they are captured.” After the clear public endorsement of the president’s policies, the continued resistance to American authority by the Filipinos was, in Taft’s opinion, “nothing but a conspiracy of murder and assassination.”⁸⁴³

Taft insisted that there had been a “marked decrease” in the activity of the insurgents immediately after the November election; and he was confident that it was “the beginning of the end” and that the collapse of the insurgency was “not far distant.” Consequently, he believed MacArthur was failing to “seize the opportunity . . . of giving these people to feel that they are to be permitted to defend themselves.” As a result of his “overcaution and timidity,” MacArthur was unable to stop the “drifting course” of policy and the post-election window of opportunity was closing. Taft felt that MacArthur was simply afraid—not of combat, but of being the subject of a possible congressional investigation; and, therefore, the general was reluctant to take any action “except after long consideration of the question as to how it will look under the prying question of a committee.”⁸⁴⁴ Taft thought MacArthur's pessimism about the conditions in the Philippines was unwarranted. While willing to concede “his honesty, his candor, his genial manner and kindly disposition,” Taft was not ready to let up on his criticisms to Root that

⁸⁴² Taft to Root, October 10, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 151-65, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸⁴³ Taft to Howard C. Hollister, October 15, 1900, series 3, reel 31, Taft Papers.

⁸⁴⁴ Taft to Root, November 30, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

MacArthur “lacked any vigorous initiative; that with him almost everything new was premature; that he was naturally timid and that he had greater fear of consequences than dash and energy in achieving results on original lines; that he is unwilling because of timidity to delegate matters to Lieutenants; that he is very set in his opinion; that he is exceedingly sensitive at his subordinates having any different view from himself.”⁸⁴⁵

Taft wanted to follow a harder line with the insurgents and was frustrated by MacArthur’s unwillingness to impose harsh punishments, such as capital punishment, which “ought to have been put through promptly in order to have a good effect.” MacArthur’s hesitancy annoyed his subordinate commanders, who “being on the ground knew of the important moral effect which such executions justified by numerous crimes would have.” Taft specifically called Root’s attention to a proclamation on the subject of the laws of war, which had been prepared by one of the members of MacArthur’s staff and which called attention to the campaign of assassination “without which the insurrection could not have been maintained.” He grumbled that while the proclamation was “not nearly so severe” as it might have been, MacArthur had “pigeon-holed the report for modification.”⁸⁴⁶ A few weeks later, Taft again protested to Root that MacArthur’s officers were all “very impatient” at the slowness with which the sentences of military commissions in the provinces were approved in Manila and with the overturning of many of the sentences on what the officers professed were mere technicalities.⁸⁴⁷ At the same time, he complained that MacArthur’s blunders in arresting suspect insurgents had

⁸⁴⁵ Taft to Root, November 14, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 202-15, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

⁸⁴⁶ Taft to Root, November 30, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁴⁷ Taft to Root, December 14, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

set back the formation of a pro-American party. For Taft, the methods of a soldier—even those of one who had risen to such prominence—were too brusque. “He does not seek to give . . . that appearance of fairness,” Taft lamented to Day, his former circuit court colleague, “which is as important as actual fairness, itself, in dealing with a suspicious people used to all sorts of official arbitrariness and injustice.”⁸⁴⁸ MacArthur simply lacked “political sagacity and experience” in Taft’s opinion.⁸⁴⁹

As Taft prepared to spend a snowless holiday season in the Philippines, he continued to press Root to stick to an aggressive timeline on the transfer of authority away from MacArthur and to the commission. “The time is rapidly approaching and in my judgment will come before the President begins his new term,” he advised Root, “when the military government should be succeeded by a civil government.” Taft did not believe the military government was “adapted” to meet the conditions increasingly presenting themselves among the Filipinos and he argued that the military ought to be made “only an auxiliary to the civil power.” He acknowledged, that while there were “doubtless many,” among whom the general could clearly be counted, who believed that “a military government in these island for ten years would be the best thing for it.” He insisted, nonetheless, that such a policy would be a “fatal mistake.” The Filipinos were only waiting for an “excuse to lose all insurgent sympathy or offishness.” He remained confident of the army as a fight force, believing that the military campaign was increasingly discouraging for

⁸⁴⁸ Taft to William R. Day, December 10, 1900, series 3, reel 31, Taft Papers.

⁸⁴⁹ Taft to Root, December 27, 1900, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 228-44, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

the outgunned Filipino fighters and would soon lead to the surrender of nearly all the insurgents remaining in the field.⁸⁵⁰

The commission repeatedly clashed with MacArthur over the establishment of local civil governments. The process of reconstructing municipal and provincial governments began almost immediately after the Taft Commission arrived. Although the commission would not pass a “general act” for municipal and provincial governments until early 1901, the commission tried out some of its ideas on governance when it established governments in the largely peaceful, non-Tagalog province of Benguet, and in its townships, through the passage of Acts Number 48 and 49 in November 1900.⁸⁵¹ This initial experiment exacerbated the growing hostility between the civil and military authorities in the islands.

Under Act Number 48, which the commission passed on November 22, 1900, to establish municipal governments in Benguet, local governmental power was vested in a town president and council consisting of one representative from each barrio in a town. The act allowed for the appointment of a secretary, a constable, a messenger, and other officers and employees “as the council shall seem necessary.”⁸⁵² The terms of the elected and appointed officials were for one year, although the initial class of officers was authorized to serve until January 1902.⁸⁵³ Suffrage

⁸⁵⁰ Taft to Root, December 14, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁵¹ *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901: Public Laws and Resolutions Passed by the Philippine Commission*, 68–83. General acts for municipal government (Act No. 82) and provincial government (Act No. 83) were passed in January and February of 1901, respectively.

⁸⁵² *Ibid.*, 69.

⁸⁵³ Interestingly, the act prohibited anyone who was elected from declining the position for which they had been elected unless they had already served two terms or were physically disabled, under the penalty of imprisonment for three months.

was liberally extended in Benguet. All males, eighteen years of age or older, who had resided in the township for at least six months, and who were not the subjects of a foreign power were eligible to vote. There were no property or literacy qualifications for voting, but all prospective voters had to subscribe to an oath of loyalty, acknowledging the supreme authority of the United States.

Of course, all actions of the municipal governments were to be closely supervised by American officials. Until the councils had gained “sufficient knowledge and experience” to govern themselves adequately, all ordinances and rules were subject to the approval of the provincial government, which was headed by someone appointed by the commission. Likewise, the strength of local policing was to be determined by the military governor. He would also determine what types of arms, if any, the constables and other officials were permitted to carry. The provisional governor and the military governor could also suspend any municipal official suspected of misconduct in office or disloyalty to the United States. Finally, the commission reserved for itself the right to have the final say on permanently removing or reinstating suspended officials.⁸⁵⁴

The provincial government, established the following day, by Act Number 49, was to be located in Baguio, the new capital of the province and future summer capital of the Philippines. It was to be headed by a governor, a secretary, and an inspector, all to be appointed by the commission. The governor was to serve as its chief executive and was to report directly to the chief executive of the insular government. While the governor had authority over the municipal

⁸⁵⁴ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1901: Public Laws and Resolutions Passed by the Philippine Commission*, 74–7.

governments within the province, and, as mentioned earlier, could veto any ordinances of which he disapproved, he was “to aid the people of the several townships of the province to acquire the knowledge and experience necessary for successful local popular government.”⁸⁵⁵

The experiment of civil government, however, was troubled from the start. The commission appointed H. Phelps Whitmarsh to be the inaugural provincial governor under the new regime with Otto Scheerer acting as the provincial secretary. Colonel Robert Duvall, the military commander of Benguet, had been in charge of the area for several months before the introduction of the civil governments, and he clashed repeatedly with both Whitmarsh and Scheerer over the state of the insurrection and the readiness of the population for civil government. Whitmarsh, for his part, did not think very highly of Duvall. He informed Taft that he could not help feeling that the continued presence of Duvall was “not calculated to inspire the confidence, contentment, and harmonious relations with the Filipinos.”⁸⁵⁶ Duvall blocked the formation of municipal governments in many of the villages because of continued guerilla activities, while Whitmarsh claimed the same areas were pacified. When Duvall denied him the military escort he felt was needed to make an inspection of all the towns in the province, the new provincial governor complained to Taft: “In spite of much forbearance and a diplomatic correspondence on our part, [the military authorities] are openly obstructing us in every possible way. They are evidently ‘agin us.’” While appealing to the commission to “call off these dogs of war,” the Whitmarsh pledged to go ahead with his mission “with or without escorts; with or without information; with or without co-operation.” “Except that such military obstruction is

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 77–8.

⁸⁵⁶ Whitmarsh to Taft, September 14, 1900, series 3, reel 31, Taft Papers.

delaying our advancement and creating a most unfortunate uncertainty in the native mind,” he insisted, “we do not worry about it very much; although it is said that the kicks of a dying animal are dangerous.”⁸⁵⁷

The military authorities were extremely critical of the appointment of Scheerer, who they considered to be overly friendly to the insurgents. MacArthur complained to Taft that secretary designate had actively cooperated with the Aguinaldo government during recent operations by American forces in the field.⁸⁵⁸ Taft recognized that the situation in Benguet was a “peculiar one,” but insisted to MacArthur that in seeking a suitable official, the commission had been obligated to make an appointment, which “possibly under ordinary circumstances,” it would not have been “disposed to favor.” Taft reminded MacArthur that Scheerer was one of the few non-natives in the islands who spoke multiple local languages, in addition to Spanish and English, and this ability made him extremely valuable despite his recent history. Taft argued that while the fact that someone had been in sympathy with the insurgents “ought to be fully considered” before a person was appointed to a position of responsibility in the civil government of the islands, he and his fellow commissioners felt that such a background ought not to disqualify the person if they were convinced that the person had become “sincerely loyal.”⁸⁵⁹

Never one to miss an opportunity to push his agenda, Taft used the disagreement over Scheerer to attack MacArthur on the broader topics of civil-military cooperation and the division of responsibility between the commission and the military governor. If MacArthur’s comments were “intended to intimate” that the military officers in Benguet would not cooperate with

⁸⁵⁷ Whitmarsh to Taft, January 9, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁵⁸ MacArthur to Taft, January 4, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁵⁹ Taft to MacArthur, January 9, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

Scheerer while the provincial secretary was carrying out the legislative duties assigned to him by the commission, he would be disappointed. He stressed, however, that the commissioners were solely responsible for making all such appointments, and while they “sincerely” welcomed “all the advise [*sic*] and information” they could get from the military officers stationed in the same territory in which appointments of civil officers were required and would give such information the “most serious consideration,” the commissioners would not “abdicate our functions in this regard” to the military authorities. Taft refused to concede to MacArthur the right to “nullify the deliberate action” of the commission.⁸⁶⁰

To defuse tensions, both Taft and MacArthur directed their subordinates to make every effort to make every effort to work out their differences.⁸⁶¹ Little harmony was achieved, however, as the two sides continued to talk past each other. Whitmarsh responded to Taft’s admonishment, by insisting that he had made every effort to cooperate. “If I am asked why I have not been successful,” he declared, “I shall reply that one man, alone, cannot cooperate.”⁸⁶²

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁶¹ MacArthur’s directions to Wheaton were very perfunctory. “The Instructions of the President above referred to are as follows: ‘It is probable that the transfer of authority from military commanders to civil officers will be gradual, and will occupy a considerable period. Its successful accomplishment, and the maintenance of peace and order in the meantime, will require the most perfect co-operation between the civil and military authorities in the island and both should be directed, during the transition period, by the same executive department.’ The Military Governor is desirous that in orders issued by you in pursuance of the requirements of this letter [calling MacArthur’s attention to the resolution providing for the appointment of a civilian provincial governor and secretary for the province of Benguet] the direction of the President above quoted in the matter of co-operation between provincial officer and military authorities be given full force and effect.” E. H. Crowder, on behalf of the Military Governor, to the Commanding General, Department of Northern Luzon, December 20, 1900, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁶² Whitmarsh to U.S. Philippine Commission, through the Military Governor, January 16, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

Major General Lloyd Wheaton, the commander of the Department of Northern Luzon, likewise complained to MacArthur, “For cooperation at least two parties are required and Mr. Whitmarsh has not given any intimation of a desire to cooperate.”⁸⁶³

The situation was only smoothed over when Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell took command of the First District of the Department of Northern Luzon, in which the province of Benguet was located. Taft was certain the move would increase cooperation in the region. Not only were Bell and Whitmarsh “good friends,” but Bell was, in Taft’s opinion, a “progressive military man and one who understands the advantage and necessity of conciliatory methods.” Taft anticipated no further trouble.⁸⁶⁴

While his prediction proved correct, the entire episode convinced Taft that Washington could no longer afford to equivocate on civil-military relations. “My impression,” he wrote Root, “is that the Commission may deem it proper to take a stand in this first instance of civil government and have it decided what real power a civil government has.” He informed Root that the military authorities were “entrenched” in the islands and that MacArthur and his subordinates did not intend to “retreat before the advance of the civil government except under distinct orders which [they] cannot evade.”⁸⁶⁵

On the eve of McKinley’s second inauguration, Taft conveyed his assurance that “great progress” had been made towards peace in the islands despite the growing tension in civil-military relations. The Federal Party, which he had helped get off the ground, had spread “with

⁸⁶³ Wheaton to MacArthur, January 19, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁶⁴ Taft to Root, February 24, 1901, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 345-72, series 8, reel 464, Taft Papers.

⁸⁶⁵ Taft to Root, January 13, 1901, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 260-74, series 8, reel 463, Taft Papers.

wonderful rapidity” to all parts of the archipelago and was “active and urgent in advocacy of peace” by presenting the many advantages of civil liberty under American sovereignty. While increased army activity after the end of the annual wet season and the efficient policing of the countryside, due, in part, to the active cooperation of many Filipinos, had created the “wrong impression” on mind of public as to the probable continuance of the war and as to general conditions in the islands, the actual conditions had “never been so favorable to [the] restoration of complete peace and accomplishment of declared purposes of [the] President.”⁸⁶⁶

Despite his general optimism, Taft continued to chaff against MacArthur’s insistence on retaining control. The general firmly believed that McKinley’s instructions of April 1900 had been “an unconstitutional interference with his prerogative” as the military governor of the islands. Taft informed Root that MacArthur insisted that McKinley had neither the power to divide the military authority in the Philippines into separate legislative and executive branches nor to bestow the legislative powers on civilian commissioners. “He thinks that the instructions were *ultra vires* under the constitutional limitations upon the powers of the President as a Commander in Chief,” Taft wrote dismissively. An expert on constitutional law, Taft poked fun at MacArthur’s interpretation of the Constitution: “It has always been a curious phase of political human nature to me to observe that men who have not had the slightest knowledge of legal principles . . . feel entirely at home in the construction of the constitution and in using its limitations to support their views and to nullify action, the wisdom of which they dispute.” Taft believed that the military authority of the president could be exercised through military officers or through civil agents. Since McKinley had delegated all civil authority in the Philippines to the

⁸⁶⁶ Taft to Root, March 3, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

commission, MacArthur had no choice but to accept its authority. Taft mocked MacArthur's attempt to use the constitutional arguments to "maintain undiminished the absolute legislative, executive and judicial power of a subordinate military commander as against the expressed orders of his constitutional Commander in Chief."⁸⁶⁷

The capture of Aguinaldo in March 1901, presented the Americans with a unique opportunity, but also a potential trap. While the Americans could use the insurgent leader to convince his fellow Filipinos to lay down their arms, the situation had to be managed carefully. When informed by MacArthur that Aguinaldo was preparing to release a proclamation, Taft warned Root about the possible stumbling blocks, warning the secretary of war that he had "no great confidence in General MacArthur's political sense." While MacArthur's private expressed opinion that the Americans were in the islands "only to prepare these people for independence" was not objectionable, Taft feared it might be dangerous to put it so bluntly in a public proclamation.⁸⁶⁸ He felt the text of the proclamation was critical and cautioned that if it was not "properly guarded" that it "may be full of embarrassment" for the future civil government. He wanted the proclamation to be submitted to the commission and Root before publication.⁸⁶⁹ Root agreed that the proclamation should be reviewed, but after doing so himself, he gently overrode Taft in this case, declaring the proclamation "admirable" and directing its publication unless Taft saw "some reason to the contrary," which Taft declined to express.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁷ Taft to Root, March 17, 1901, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 376-99, series 8, reel 464, Taft Papers.

⁸⁶⁸ Taft to Root, April 3, 1901, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 400-30, series 8, reel 464, Taft Papers.

⁸⁶⁹ Taft to Root, April 9, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

⁸⁷⁰ Root to Taft, April 11, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

As the fighting continued into its second year, Taft insisted that the only acceptable course of action was to turn over the pacified areas of the islands to civil authorities as quickly as possible in order to convince the Filipinos of America's peaceful intentions. Taft's pleas for a rapid transition to civil government did not immediately induce military leaders, who were still fighting the insurrection, to willingly cede authority to their civilian counterparts. When MacArthur continued to refuse to acknowledge the power of the commission to force this turnover process, Taft felt that it was necessary to write a furious letter to MacArthur in which he explained that the president's executive order gave clear precedence to civil authorities. "It would be difficult," he wrote, "to use language containing a stronger implication that the municipal and provincial governments thus established should have real power."⁸⁷¹ Taft went so far as to cable Root to ensure that civil authorities should be allowed the use of the Malacanán palace, the traditional seat of state power in the Philippines upon the commission's assumption of executive power. The use of the palace "would mean to them [a] real increase [in] civil power," he informed Root, arguing that it was "important to strengthen this impression."⁸⁷² While Root consented to allow Taft the use of the palace, he also informed both Taft and MacArthur that "in case of serious disagreement" regarding the division of authority between the civil governor and the military governor, which he declared, optimistically, that he did not anticipate, that he, as the secretary of war, and, consequently, the departmental superior of both men, "should be consulted before action."⁸⁷³

⁸⁷¹ Taft to MacArthur, March 16, 1901, box 167, Root Papers.

⁸⁷² Taft to Root, June 17, 1901, box, 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁷³ Root to Taft, June 15, 1901, box 174, part 3, Root Papers.

By the time the Philippines officially became a civilian-governed possession of the United States on July 4, 1901, it was clear that MacArthur had become a political liability.⁸⁷⁴ Because there was little support within the army for retaining him, Root had already decided to hand over military command to Major General Adna Chaffee, a “shrewd and capable officer,” who was “much more adroit politically” than his predecessor.⁸⁷⁵ Root made it clear to the new commander that his primary task was to “get the Army out of the business of government and restore it to its proper and natural place and an adjunct of civil government.” By delaying the change of command until Taft became governor, Root hoped to avoid “the inevitable tendency of human nature to look with disfavor on a reduction in power.”⁸⁷⁶

Taft was initially pleased by the change. Not only was he now firmly in command as the governor, but his relationship with the military commander was much improved. He expressed his happiness over the reduction in tensions in the civil-military relationship. He believed Chaffee, who he described as “exceedingly genial,” also desired that “cordial relations should continue.” Taft explained that Chaffee had arranged “the connection of his office with mine by a private telephone, and when there is any friction of any sort we have personal interviews.” This was a marked change as a “personal interview with General MacArthur never helped, so that I always preferred to write what I had to say, as he indeed also seemed to prefer it.” Taft reflected, “It would have been a work of a great deal of difficulty for me to find the tactful words, which would have satisfied him [MacArthur], and in uttering which I should not have stultified myself

⁸⁷⁴ For McKinley’s formal instructions directing the change, see U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1286.

⁸⁷⁵ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 217–8.

⁸⁷⁶ Root to Taft, February 28, 1901, box 174, part 2, Root Papers; Taft to C. P. Taft, May 17, 1901, series 1, reel 32, Taft Papers.

in view of the actual relations that existed between him and the Commission.” Even though MacArthur was no longer an impediment to his plans in the islands, he still felt it necessary to warn Root: “The truth is that General MacArthur’s head has been swelled to such an extent that he may make a fool of himself when he reaches the United States.”⁸⁷⁷

While Taft was relieved to be free of MacArthur, expressing to a friend that he had been worn out by the “long, hard year with General MacArthur,” he soon found Chaffee to be as sensitive as his predecessor about the commanding general's right to detail army officers who were needed for civil positions.⁸⁷⁸ After a contentious disagreement in September, Taft concluded:

It is perhaps unreasonable for us in the Commission to feel impatient, for . . . in transition periods there is always friction, . . . and it is altogether too much for us to expect that with the head of an Army, any army I suppose, we could expect that loving cooperation with civil government which would make us feel that we had not two forces to oppose or deal with, those of disorder and those of our own lawful allies. Still I do not know why I should complain of this phase of the situation, which was in it when we came out here and which will remain until civil government is completely established.⁸⁷⁹

Chafee, who had commanded the American contingent of the allied expeditionary forces in China during the Boxer crisis, had little use for civilians and was reported to have “pronounced that despised word with an exaggerated initial sibilant.”⁸⁸⁰ He found, however, that his civilian superiors in Washington insisted on his cooperation with Taft and the other civilian commissioners. Roosevelt, who had ascended into the presidency after McKinley’s

⁸⁷⁷ Taft to Root, August 2, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁷⁸ Taft to John Warrington, July 19, 1901, series 3, reel 33, Taft Papers.

⁸⁷⁹ Taft to Root, September 26, 1901, Philippine Commission, vol. 1, p. 521-9, series 8, reel 464, Taft Papers.

⁸⁸⁰ Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 196.

assassination in September 1901, was close to Taft and became upset over the continuing rift between his top two men in the Philippines. He wrote to Chafee at the beginning of October, informing the general that he was “deeply chagrined, to use the mildest possible term, over the trouble” between the two men. He instructed Chafee, as he had Taft, “to secure prompt and friendly agreement” on those issues on which their opinions differed. A failure to bridge the gap, the new president feared, might have a “serious effect both in the Philippines and here at home.”⁸⁸¹

Although much of the archipelago was pacified, Chafee was convinced that the war was far from over. Parts of southern Luzon and, more ominously, the Moros in the southern islands remained outside of American control. While the shocking defeat at Balangiga forced MacArthur to go on the public relations defensive home, it provided Chafee with the ammunition he needed to call for firmer measures in the islands. “The whole Philippine people are now engaged in making war in a manner not in accordance with the recognized laws of war,” he declared in a rare press conference. The fifty-nine “murdered men” of the Company C of the Ninth Infantry, who had lost their lives in the worst defeat for the U.S. Army since Custer’s infamous last stand at Little Big Horn, were victims of “false humanitarianism” and the “soft mollicoddling of treacherous natives” by Taft and his civilian commission.⁸⁸²

Observing Chaffee as he began planning to implement harsher measures for rebellious areas of the archipelago, Taft felt it was necessary to inform Root that the Army had been “completely stampeded by the Samar affair.” While Chaffee felt that the Americans “were

⁸⁸¹ Roosevelt to Chaffee, October 8, 1901, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1297.

⁸⁸² Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 205.

standing on a volcano,” George Curry, his chief of police, informed Taft that the only trouble he observed was with “the Americans who are so loud in their denunciation of Filipinos that this in itself may cause trouble.” Taft even suggested that if Chaffee decided to leave the islands, that he would be happy to have Brigadier General George Davis promoted to the senior command in the islands. “He is the only man whom I have met in Military circles,” Taft declared, “that has a real sympathy with civil work and who has a real knowledge how to work out a situation like this.” As for the civil government itself, it felt, according to Taft, “like that man who said that he was sired by no one and damned by everybody.” The commissioners, nonetheless, were “in the fight to stay” and believed that “patient hard work will bring about the conditions which we seek.”⁸⁸³

Chaffee attempted to define the dimensions of the war in broad terms. He insisted that a state of war existed throughout the entire archipelago. In some regions, hostilities were “open and active,” while other parts of the archipelago were “inactive” with the countryside in “a state of pacification with the Army . . . in observation.” As “sentiments” for opposition to the American governing authority could be to be found to some extent throughout the islands, and as such sentiments were “always found conducive to hostile action,” Chaffee confidently declared that “a state of war” existed “in a technical sense everywhere in the islands.”⁸⁸⁴ In such a state of war, the administrative powers of the civil governor could not override those of the commanding general.

⁸⁸³ Taft to Root, October 14, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁸⁴ “Memorandum,” October 11, 1901, in Scott Kirsch, “Object Lessons: War and American Democracy in the Philippines,” in *Reconstructing Conflict: Integrating War and Post-War Geographies*, ed. Scott Kirsch and Colin Flint (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 204.

As Chaffee executed a campaign of brutality in Samar and southern Luzon in the fall and winter of 1901-2, a scorched earth campaign that made Samar virtually synonymous with war atrocities in the minds of most of the American public and led to controversial Senate hearings and a series of courts martial in 1902, Taft remained focused on extending the reach of the civil government and defending its position vis-à-vis the military.⁸⁸⁵ “In no part of the Archipelago, except in Batangas and Samar, is there the slightest desire on the part of the people for anything but peace,” he informed Root optimistically, “What they dread however is military government and that they wish to avoid at all hazards.” The commission passed a libel law and sedition law both to help “clear the atmosphere some” and to “show that a civil government is not any more helpless against attacks on its own life than is a military government.” As for its civil government’s relations with military, Taft complained that generals in the province of Leyte were issuing orders that ignored the commission’s authority and the fact that the province was under civil control. The “violation of the powers” of the commission was more marked in Taft’s opinion because he had already made it clear to Chaffee that the commission was “ready to take any action that the military exigencies seem to require, but that the Commission desired that its power and duty in the premises should be recognized and that no action should be taken violating

⁸⁸⁵ The brutality of the war, including the American use of torture, has been well documented. See, for example, Richard E. Welch, “American Atrocities in the Philippines: The Indictment and the Response,” *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 2 (1974): 233–53; Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*; D. H. Smith, “American Atrocities in the Philippines: Some New Evidence,” *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 2 (1986): 281–3; Paul A. Kramer, “The Water Cure: Debating Torture and Counterinsurgency,” *The New Yorker*, February 25, 2008.

its powers.” Taft hoped “the time may come when we shall not only have the authority but may be able, without being charged with making political blunders, to assert it and enforce it.”⁸⁸⁶

A major illness removed Taft from civil leadership when his restraining influence was sorely needed. Military doctors had incorrectly diagnosed Taft as having dengue fever in early October, but by the end of the month it became clear that he was instead suffering from a massive abscess in his large intestine. Surgery was necessary and Taft took measures to have “General” Wright formally appointed as his number two on the commission so that he could replace him during his illness. Root approved the recommendation and Roosevelt appointed Wright to be the vice governor, a step Taft declared was met with “great satisfaction” as Wright had demonstrated an ability “to do things without making enemies.”⁸⁸⁷

By December, his fellow commissioners concluded that Taft needed a stint of convalescent leave in a healthier climate to recover from his surgery. A return to the United States would also allow him to appear in person at the hearings in Washington that were sure to be held when the Congress began its work on drafting an organic act for the Philippines.⁸⁸⁸ The commission persuaded Root to call Taft home for a rest.⁸⁸⁹ After undergoing further surgery, Taft departed for home on Christmas Eve.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁶ Taft to Root, November 17, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁸⁷ Edwards to Taft, November 2, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP; Taft to Root, November 17, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁸⁸ A discussion of Taft’s role drafting and supporting this legislation is addressed in chapter 6.

⁸⁸⁹ Commission to the Secretary of War, November 27, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

⁸⁹⁰ Wright to Secretary of War, December 7, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP; Chaffee to Adjutant General, December 24, 1901, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1306.

Even before the invalided Taft had departed, Wright was clashing with Chaffee. Wright thought the widespread panic caused by the Balangiga ambush was lessening and lamented the efforts of some military officers, like Brigadier General Jacob Smith, the new commander of the Sixth Separate Brigade, responsible for the islands of Leyte and Samar, to return areas to military control without regard to the civil authorities. Wright grew increasingly upset because the acting civil governors were not consulted before new military policies were implemented.⁸⁹¹ When Smith dramatically restricted the vital hemp trade in Leyte, the provincial governor, J. H. Grant initially acquiesced, but when it became clear that Smith wanted to establish martial law over the entire island, Grant appealed to the commission for help. After a personal meeting between Wright and Chaffee failed to induce any change in policy, Wright sent Chaffee a letter protesting the latter's foot dragging and demanding a conference to determine the proper policy for the island.⁸⁹² Although Chaffee was annoyed that he should be compelled to grant "a substantial victory for the insurgent element," he promised Wright that he would direct Smith to modify his policy.⁸⁹³

By late February, Wright was able to boast that ninety-five percent of the archipelago was more peaceful than it had been at any time under Spanish rule. He believed that Chaffee no longer felt that they were sitting on a volcano and felt that he and Chaffee were getting along "swimmingly." Not everything was improving, however. He continued to fret over the

⁸⁹¹ Taft to Root, November 17, 1901, box 164, Root Papers.

⁸⁹² Wright to Chaffee, November 23, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

⁸⁹³ Chaffee to Wright, November 23, 1901, box 1, entry 34, RG 350, NACP.

pacification of Samar and believed that conduct of the American military campaign on the island was counterproductive.⁸⁹⁴

In early March, Root stepped directly into the dispute over civil-military control and the nature of the American campaign. He pointedly reminded Chaffee that officers under his command had no right to interfere in provinces under civil control. Declaring his frustration that that “disciplinary measures . . . seem necessary to produce obedience” to what he thought was a clear directive, he ordered the removal of two officers for allegedly interfering with the civil government in Samar.⁸⁹⁵ Under the pressure of increasingly negative publicity, the secretary of war followed up this directive by ordering Chaffee to initiate a more lenient policy towards Filipino violations of the laws of war. By ordering that past transgressions be ignored, he effectively granted amnesty to the insurgents.⁸⁹⁶

Roosevelt finally saw fit to proclaim the “Philippine Insurrection” over on July 4, 1902, declaring a general amnesty and a pardon for the insurgents. It was, in hindsight, an obvious “mission accomplished” moment, for his declaration that “peace has been established in all parts of the archipelago except in the country inhabited by the Moro tribes,” was premature, even when one considers the very significant caveat.⁸⁹⁷ Coinciding with the president’s declaration, the commission reorganized itself under the general provisional government plan. As Taft

⁸⁹⁴ Wright to Taft, February 28, 1902, series 3, reel 35, Taft Papers.

⁸⁹⁵ Root to Chaffee, March 4, 1902, in U.S. Adjutant-General’s Office, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1319.

⁸⁹⁶ Thomas Ward (Acting Adjutant General) to Chaffee, March 12, 1902, in David Lawrence Fritz, “The Philippine Question: American Civil/Military Policy in the Philippines, 1898-1905” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas-Austin, 1977), 367.

⁸⁹⁷ Text of Roosevelt’s declaration in *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, 2:1350.

described it, “all the territory occupied by the Christian Filipinos, except a small district of Dapitan, the town of Zambanga, the town of Cottabato, and the town of Davao, all in the island of Mindanao, was brought under civil control.” As for the question as to what was to be done with respect to Mindanao, Taft thought it was wiser to postpone the consideration of “the Moro question” until the more pressing needs of the northern provinces were settled.⁸⁹⁸ The American colonial state that emerged, thus, remained a bifurcated one with a civil regime in the pacified provinces, governing the lowland populations (categorized as “Christian” or “civilized”), and with a military regime in the “unpacified” regions.

From Otis to MacArthur to Chaffee, from Shurman to Taft (to Wright), the senior military and civil leaders continuously struggled to exert control over events in the Philippines. They bumped heads repeatedly over issues large and small, from the appointment of officeholders to the use of native troops, from the constitutional validity of the civilian administration to the jurisdictional divides between civil and military authority. Underlying all of these disputes was a fundamental disagreement on the role of civil government in wartime conditions. Otis and MacArthur guarded their domains jealously because they believed that they alone would be held accountable if things went south. Coming into the senior role further along, Chaffee was only somewhat less demonstrative in retaining his authority in the limited areas under military control. The senior civilian authorities were equally determined to expand their influence, especially after Taft and his fellow commissioners arrived armed with McKinley’s instructions of April 1900. The simplified hierarchy of the American colonial administration,

⁸⁹⁸ U.S. Congress, House, *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1902*, 10, part 1:14.

with both the senior civil and military leaders reporting to the same cabinet-level officer, enabled the secretary of war to act as a referee between the civilians and the military without allowing their differences to deteriorate into a war of personalities, which might have derailed American imperial efforts in the islands.

Chapter 6: Milner and his Generals

While the Americans succeeded in establishing a unified command structure in the Philippines, a confusing division between military and civilian authority hampered the establishment of a similar command system in South Africa. In 1867, Gathorne Hardy, the home secretary in Lord Derby's third ministry, had proclaimed that in internal security matters, "the military are entirely subordinate to the civil power, but the Military Officer in charge of a Party is in sole command over his forces and disposes of it according to his military orders or to the best of this judgment."⁸⁹⁹ This ruling became the foundation of the Queen's Regulation No. 22, which stated:

The governor of a colony, although bearing the title of captain-general or commander-in-chief, . . . is not, except on special appointment from Her Majesty, invested with the command of Her Majesty's Forces in the colony. He is not therefore entitled to take the immediate direction of any military operation, or, except in case of urgent necessity, to communicate with subordinate military officers, without the concurrence of officer in command of the forces.⁹⁰⁰

According to Regulation No. 29, the officer commanding, "in the event of the colony being invaded or assailed by a foreign enemy," was "alone responsible" for the "distribution and direction" of British troops. This officer, however, should, "as far as practicable," consult with the colony's governor "with a view to avoiding dispositions unfavorable to the preservation of the internal tranquility, safety, and welfare of the colony."⁹⁰¹

⁸⁹⁹ Gathorne Hardy to the Mayor of Salford, November 6, 1867, quoted in Charles Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), 20.

⁹⁰⁰ War Office, *The Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Army* (London: HMSO, 1899), 19.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

The regulations instituted a demarcation of powers that prevented unity of command. The civil governor was responsible for restoring order, but did not have the authority to give the military commander anything beyond recommendations. The officer commanding British troops was under no obligation to follow the governor's suggestions if they were, in his professional military opinion, not practicable. Thus, the army commander was in a position to orchestrate the British response over the objections of his notional superior. This situation was compounded by the fact that the senior civil and military leaders did not report to the same "boss" in London. Consequently, unlike the American case, disagreements were not easily settled as the antagonism between the two groups on the ground in South Africa was often exacerbated by contradictory instructions coming from the respective secretaries of state.

As Salisbury and his fellow ministers debated the proper course of action in South Africa, they also had to find a new military officer on whom they could trust to carry out their policies. By the fall of 1898, it was evident that Lieutenant-General Sir William Howley Goodenough, the commanding officer of the British forces in the region, would need to be replaced due to his failing health. Milner recognized the "vital importance" of the position and explained to Chamberlain that "a man of energy & resource & some political sense" was needed to fill Goodenough's shoes. It would be "really disastrous," he declared, if the War Office sent "some worn-out Lt. General, for whom they were anxious to find a billet."⁹⁰² Lansdowne informed Chamberlain that Lieutenant-General Sir William Butler would be sent to replace Goodenough; and the war secretary expressed a high degree of confidence in the choice: "I don't suppose you

⁹⁰² Milner to Chamberlain, October 19, 1898, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/29.

could have a general fitter for the post or more likely to be equal to an emergency.”⁹⁰³ Butler, after all, had served with distinction under Lord Wolseley in the Red River expedition and during the Third Anglo-Ashanti War as a junior officer and again as a field-grade officer in the Zulu War, the campaign of Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt, and in the Sudan. Lansdowne’s assessment of Butler, however, would prove quite inaccurate over the next few months.

Despite the deteriorating political situation in the region, Butler departed for South Africa after only cursory preparation. The War Office gave him a letter outlining the current analysis of Boer military power, which concluded with the assertion that large-scale Boer incursions were not anticipated even if Orange Free State burghers joined their Boer comrades against the British, a prospect that was accepted as likely to occur. The War Office advised him that he should expect to encounter raids of a few thousand men, but that “careful preparation on your part” against such raids would limit the threat. Plans for offensive operations by the British would “depend upon the political and military situation of the moment,” and, therefore, the probability of a campaign into Boer territory could not be “definitely fixed.”⁹⁰⁴ He had a brief, courtesy visit with Chamberlain, but received no specific directions as to the future of British policy in his assigned area of responsibility.

After settling into his new headquarters, Butler took a long tour of the frontiers of both the Cape Colony and Natal in order to assess the situation on the ground and become better acquainted with the territory for which he was now responsible. Following this tour, however, he failed to inform the War Office of his plans to defend the British colonies against potential

⁹⁰³ Lansdowne to Chamberlain, October 29, 1898, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/44.

⁹⁰⁴ Stopford to Butler, December 21, 1898, War Office and Successors: Registered Files (General Series), Overseas: South Africa (WO 32/6369), WO 32/6369/266/Cape/30, TNA.

Boer commando raids, leading the War Office to inquire with increasing urgency about his plans for the defense of the frontiers. The most recent plan the War Office had on the shelf was already two years old. In it, Goodenough had proposed to defend the frontiers with the existing British garrisons. The main thrust of any British offensive would be through the Orange Free State after the main British army had arrived in the Cape Colony.⁹⁰⁵ In early June, three days after the breakdown of the Bloemfontein Conference, the War Office finally ordered Butler, quite explicitly, to provide the ministry with the required information.⁹⁰⁶

Butler sent his plans within the week and, in doing so, made quite an impression in London. He warned the War Office that moving troops to the frontier would likely provoke a crisis, the very thing that diplomacy was trying to avoid, or at least delay. He believed that the movement of British troops anywhere was liable to “create false impressions.”⁹⁰⁷ Not content to limit his analysis to military matters alone, Butler warned the War Office that Rhodes and other capitalists were poisoning the waters and reducing the likelihood of a peaceful resolution to the current situation. When Lansdowne requested clarifying information, including the anticipated need for transport animals, he asked more broadly for any further observations on the steps necessary to increase the efficiency of the existing force. Butler responded by expressing his opinion on a wide-variety of matters, ignoring for the most part, however, those military matters for which he was actually responsible.⁹⁰⁸ Describing how the “persistent effort of a party to produce war forms in my estimation graver elements in situation here,” he predicted that such a

⁹⁰⁵ Goodenough to WO, September 30, 1896, WO 32/6369/266/Cape/1, TNA.

⁹⁰⁶ Surrige, *Managing the South African War*, 37.

⁹⁰⁷ Butler to WO, June 14, 1899, WO 32/6369/266/Cape/36, TNA.

⁹⁰⁸ War Office to Butler, June 21, 1899, CO 417/306, TNA.

war between the “white races” would be catastrophic for British interests in South Africa.⁹⁰⁹ In order to avoid the accusation of directing his command in “possible opposition” to the civilian governor, or, more specifically, to avoid the charge of doing so behind Milner’s back, Butler showed Milner a copy of the original War Office telegram and his response to it.⁹¹⁰

Butler’s transgression into politics infuriated Milner, who was, of course, the man responsible for overseeing imperial political decisions in the region. He had already complained to Chamberlain that Butler was “too awful.” While his military preparations seemed “all right,” Milner was frustrated by Butler’s disinclination to take more forceful action. “I cannot get him to make the least move or to take the slightest interest,” Milner grumbled. “He is absolutely of no use, unless indeed we mean to knuckle our own,” Milner concluded, “in which case he had better be made High Commissioner.”⁹¹¹ Approached by Chamberlain about the issue, Lansdowne explained that Butler’s supersession “just now would be difficult to explain” as the government would have “to justify it to the public as well as to him.” Lansdowne agreed that Butler’s actions had “no doubt been indiscreet,” but the war secretary did not believe that the general had “misconducted himself” to the point that a dismissal was warranted.⁹¹²

While Butler was admonished by Lansdowne for having “evidently misunderstood” the nature of Lansdowne’s request for information and was firmly reminded that, whatever his

⁹⁰⁹ Butler to Lansdowne, June 23, 1899, War Office and Successors: Registered Files (General Series). Overseas: South Africa, Boer War: Measures to Mobilise Forces for S Africa. Proceedings of Confidential Mobilisation Committee (WO 32/7849), TNA.

⁹¹⁰ William Francis Butler, *Sir William Butler: An Autobiography*, 2nd ed (London: Constable, 1913), 449.

⁹¹¹ Milner to Chamberlain, June 14, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/33.

⁹¹² Lansdowne to Chamberlain, June 14, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/55.

private opinions, his duty was “to be guided in all questions of policy by [the] High Commissioner, who is fully aware of our views, and whom you will, of course, loyally support,” this latest challenge to Milner’s interpretation of events in South Africa was the last straw as far as Milner was concerned.⁹¹³ “It is my opinion,” he declared to Chamberlain, “that the strength of General Butler’s political opinions impairs his efficiency whatever his military capacity may be.” “In view of intimate connection between military and political problems here at [the] present time” and “in spite of all the scandal it might cause,” Milner was adamant that “an open rupture would be less dangerous than going on as we are at present.” Milner insisted that if he still enjoyed the confidence of Her Majesty’s Government, then he should have “a General Officer Commanding who is a support and not a weakness to me.” Milner, nevertheless, saw no reason to publically rebuke Butler. He asked if it would be possible to find “some pretext” for summoning Butler home immediately, perhaps “for consultations,” and then to find him another post.⁹¹⁴ Milner obviously hoped that easing Butler aside might avoid significant public scrutiny and, thus, enable the government to avoid the need for the public explanation that Lansdowne feared.

Milner, ever aggressive and well connected, was not content to make his case only to Chamberlain. An “imperial knight defending the empire on its most vital and vulnerable frontier,” he felt it was his duty to enlighten decision-makers at home about the requisites for an

⁹¹³ Lansdowne to Butler, June 27, 1899, WO 32/7849, TNA.

⁹¹⁴ Milner to Chamberlain, June 25, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/37.

appropriate imperial policy.⁹¹⁵ He, consequently, complained to Selborne about the depths of Butler's "unconscious" disloyalty. Butler was "penetrated with the great 'Rhodes and capitalistic intrigues' myth" to an extent Milner ridiculed as "quite childish at times." Despite the dismissive tone of Milner's comments, he was still "thoroughly afraid of the consequences" of Butler's attitude and lack of forceful action and "would do anything to get rid of him."⁹¹⁶ A month later, Milner, further aggravated by Butler's lack of support, pleaded to Selborne that he must convince the War Office "to carry out the plan . . . and transfer him." Insisting that the issue was not a personal matter, Milner argued that whatever happened to him, indeed he argued that the issue was even more important if he was recalled, Butler was "*altogether the wrong man here.*" Milner was more critical of Butler's military capabilities to Selborne than he had been earlier to Chamberlain, predicting that Butler would be "hopeless" in the event of war. More importantly, however, Milner viewed Butler as a political liability. If war were avoided, a "very anxious and embarrassed peace" would result, in which Butler would be to the members of the "irritable and disappointed" British party in South Africa like a "red flag to a bull."⁹¹⁷

Chamberlain supported Milner in his criticism of Butler, but recognized the difficulties of replacing the general without apparent cause. He explained to Milner as gently as he could that Butler's sudden recall would cause a "great commotion" back home. Those who opposed Milner and his actions in South Africa would categorize the move as a flagrant one designed to silence

⁹¹⁵ Mordechai Tamarkin, "Milner, the Cape Afrikaners, and the Outbreak of the South African War: From a Point of Return to a Dead End," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25, no. 3 (September 1997): 393.

⁹¹⁶ Milner to Selborne, June 28, 1899, Milner Papers, MSS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 159-164.

⁹¹⁷ Milner to Selborne, July 26, 1899, Milner Papers, MSS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 178-179 (emphasis in the original).

critics inside the government. It would embarrass Chamberlain in his efforts to support Milner. The colonial secretary urged his subordinate to remember that there would be a change of command in the event of hostiles as any substantial level of reinforcements would be led by a general of superior rank to Butler.⁹¹⁸

Butler was not ignorant of Milner's, and consequently Chamberlain's, opinion of him. In early July, he received a private letter from someone inside the War Office, telling him how unpopular he was inside the Colonial Office, and, to a certain extent, inside the War Office as well. The author of the letter urged Butler to resign his command if the reports about him were correct.⁹¹⁹ Butler confronted Milner and asked him directly if he had ever been a "source of embarrassment" to the high commissioner or a "hindrance to the prosecution of his views" for the region. When Milner left "little doubt" that Butler's continued presence in command was undesirable, the general offered his resignation to Lansdowne.⁹²⁰

Lansdowne accepted Butler's resignation, but in order to ensure that Butler would not be "a free lance [*sic*] just now," Lansdowne arranged for him to take command of the Western District upon his return to England. Lansdowne still believed that Butler's transfer to another appointment would be easier to defend than an outright recall. "No one can deny that there was 'incompatibility of temperament' between him & Milner," Lansdowne advised Chamberlain, "but if it came to a question of dismissal his adherents might ask to be heard on the merits into

⁹¹⁸ Chamberlain to Milner, June 26, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/36.

⁹¹⁹ Unfortunately, Butler did not reveal the author of this letter in his autobiography. See Butler, *Sir William Butler*, 450.

⁹²⁰ Butler to Undersecretary of State for War (George Wyndam), July 4, 1899, CO 417/306, TNA.

which we need not now enter.”⁹²¹ After initially declining the new command, Butler accepted the offer.⁹²²

Milner, meanwhile, was only concerned about what lay ahead. He implored Chamberlain to send out Butler’s successor “without a day’s avoidable delay.” Stressing again the importance of having the right type of general on hand, Milner argued that “the state of tension” was “extreme” and that, “in case of any forward movement” by the Boers or of any “rupture” between him and the ministers of the Cape Colony on questions of colonial defense, it was “absolutely necessary” to have a general on the spot who would give the him “cordial support.”⁹²³

The man appointed to replace Bulter was Buller, who had been given the command of the army corps by Lansdowne in early June.⁹²⁴ As the commanding general of the British First Corps, a former adjutant-general, and a member of Wolseley’s ring, Buller had been a logical choice for command. While he had never held an independent command in the field, he had proved himself to be a brave commander and a trusted subordinate.⁹²⁵ He had spent most of the last decade, however, sitting behind the adjutant-general's desk in the War Office. After his promotion to the Aldershot command in October 1898, he had continued to focus on administrative duties rather than those concerning the conduct of operations in the field. These

⁹²¹ Lansdowne to Chamberlain, August 15, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/61.

⁹²² Butler to Lansdowne, August 10 and 14, 1901, CO 417/306, TNA.

⁹²³ Milner to Chamberlain, August 14, 1899, Milner Papers, MSS. Milner dep. 229, fo. 79.

⁹²⁴ Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa*, 1903, XLI.1:185.

⁹²⁵ Buller had earned the Victoria Cross in 1879 during the Anglo-Zulu War.

defects, however, were not fully appreciated, and Buller was assigned the responsibility for winning any war in South Africa in which British might find themselves.

When the Boer ultimatum expired in October, however, Buller was still in England. Until he arrived in advance of the army corps, it was up to the local garrison commanders to hold the fort, often literally. Unfortunately, neither Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Forestier-Walker, who took command of the garrison in the Cape Colony on September 6, nor Lieutenant-General Sir George White, the commander of the augmented garrison in Natal as of October 7, had been given any definitive instructions from home or from Butler, whose relief Forestier-Walker later described as taking place “in a time of peace, practically.”⁹²⁶ Their commands were separate and they generally acted independently of each other.⁹²⁷

In his updated South African defense plan, Butler did not modify the overall British campaign plans, which were still based on the landing of the main army corps in the Cape Colony and the subsequent advance through the Orange Free State into the South African Republic. Consequently, all the senior officers, from Wolseley and Buller down to Forestier-Walker and White, felt that the occupation of Laing’s Nek in the triangle region of Natal was neither required nor desired. As the main force would not be advancing through that region, there was no reason to risk having the garrison cut off by a Boer offensive. Lansdowne supported his generals in their opinions, informing Chamberlain, “Whatever our private opinions . . . we must upon a point of this sort be guided by our military advisers.”⁹²⁸

⁹²⁶ Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa*, 1903, XLI.1:93–4, 144.

⁹²⁷ *Ibid.*, XLI.1:144.

⁹²⁸ Lansdowne to Chamberlain, September 15, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/51/82.

Hely-Hutchinson, however, was not so sanguine about the British position in Natal. Before White arrived to take command in Natal, Major-General Sir William Penn Symons had, with Hely-Hutchinson's approval, advanced north to Glencoe at the end of September. White initially intended to withdraw Penn Symon's force, but Hely-Hutchinson persuaded him that such a withdrawal would have adverse political consequences. While he agreed with the general consensus that the British position in Cape Colony was more serious, Hely-Hutchinson pleaded with Chamberlain upon the expiration of the Boer ultimatum that the British should focus on defending his colony as the Boers "have a fad about getting Natal & have directed nearly all their energies on this side."⁹²⁹ The governor pestered White incessantly about the need to defend all of Natal. "I think if a successful raid were to take place," he wrote to the general, "Her Majesty's Government would be open to the charge of neglecting to perform a solemn engagement made with Her Majesty's loyal subjects in Natal."⁹³⁰ White responded angrily to the constant badgering, "earnestly" requesting that "pressure" should not be up on him to modify his disposition of the British garrison.⁹³¹

Hely-Hutchinson's interference upset his superiors in the Colonial Office. Chamberlain agreed with Lansdowne that White was responsible for the military situation in Natal and should be left alone to see to the colony's defense.⁹³² Obviously frustrated by Hely-Hutchinson's

⁹²⁹ Hely-Hutchinson to Chamberlain, October 13, 1899, JC 10/7/114.

⁹³⁰ Hely-Hutchinson to White, October 17, 1899, War Office and Successors: Registered Files (General Series). Overseas: South Africa, Boer War: Reports on Situation and Defence of Natal (WO 32/7863), TNA.

⁹³¹ White to Hely-Hutchinson, October 25, 1899, WO 32/7863, TNA.

⁹³² CO Minutes, October 27, 1899, Colonial Office: Natal Original Correspondence, Correspondence, Original - Secretary of State, Despatches (CO 179/207), CO 179/207/fo. 114; Chamberlain to Hely-Hutchinson, October 27, 1899, CO 179/207/fo. 118, TNA.

unwillingness to stop inserting himself into military command decisions, Chamberlain noted, “I wish Sir W. Hutchinson would leave Gen. White alone. I have given him a hint & if this continues I shall have to give him distinct instructions.”⁹³³ A few days later, Chamberlain returned to the topic, lamenting the “meddling” of civil governors in military affairs, but also placing “the fault . . . entirely with the military authorities if they listen to civilians *against* their own military judgment. They ought to know that this responsibility is wholly with them.”⁹³⁴

While Chamberlain made his notations back at the Colonial Office, the British military position in Natal collapsed during the final two weeks of October. At the battle of Talana on October 20, Penn Symons was mortally wounded and his successor, Brigadier-General James Yule, was forced to retire from Glencoe to the relative safety of Ladysmith. White’s attempted breakout from Ladysmith failed on October 30, with an isolated portion of his force surrendering at Nicholson’s Nek, leaving 15,000 British troops trapped in the town.

When Buller arrived in Cape Town the day after White’s failed breakout attempt, he found a dramatically different military situation than he had been anticipating. He felt it was necessary to scrap his original plan to invade the Boer republics via the Orange Free State, a plan which had only been accepted by the cabinet on September 29, less than two weeks before the war started.⁹³⁵ He divided his forces, taking the bulk of the army corps with him to Natal. Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen, commanding the First Division, was tasked with relieving and resupplying Kimberley and returning to the Cape Colony with the non-combatants, while

⁹³³ CO Minutes, October 29, 1899, CO 179/207/fo. 264, TNA (emphasis in the original).

⁹³⁴ CO Minutes, October 31, 1899, CO 179/207/fo. 289, TNA.

⁹³⁵ Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa*, 1903, XLI.1:170.

Major-General Sir William Gatacre, commanding the Third Division, was ordered to prevent the Boers from advancing from the strategic rail junction at Stormberg further into the Cape and to draw off Boers from the vicinity of Ladysmith.⁹³⁶

All three British offensives ended in defeat. The Boers defeated Gatacre at Stormberg on December 9, Lord Methuen the following day at Magersfontein, and repulsed Buller's attempt to cross the Tugela River en route to Ladysmith at Colenso on December 15. These three defeats in five days, forever remembered as "Black Week," stunned the British public and its government.

It was the government, not the army, which received the bulk of the blame for the defeats. Philip Lyttelton Gell complained to Milner that public opinion at home had "for a time lost all balance." People grumbled that the British army was "an Army of lions led by Donkeys" and their confidence in the War Office and in Buller "melted." If Parliament had been sitting, it would not have taken much to compel Lansdowne's and Hicks Beach's resignations.⁹³⁷ Gell continued sharing his gloomy opinion in another letter the following week: "So far we are a stronger people for this week's experience. But the loss of confidence in all the 'Powers that be' is terrible." While the public still believed in the "excellence of our soldiers," it now appreciated the "incompetence of the 'Haute Armée'," whose "one principle seems to be to lead their men under fire as soon as possible and to remain under fire as long as possible."⁹³⁸ Selborne, meanwhile, tried to find the silver lining in the black clouds swirling around the government, informing Milner of his belief that because the British had been "getting a bit too selfexalted

⁹³⁶ Stephen Mark Miller, "Lord Methuen and the South African War: The British Army in Transition" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1996), 124.

⁹³⁷ Gell to Milner, December 15, 1899, Milner Papers. MS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 222-5.

⁹³⁸ Gell to Milner, December 22, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 229-32.

[sic] and selfreliant [sic] . . . this temporary anxiety and humiliation is a merciful discipline which will do us a great deal of good in the long run.”⁹³⁹

When government ministers attempted to defend themselves after the customary, end-of-the-year holiday had passed, things only got worse. Balfour made a series of off-key speeches and even Salisbury, quite uncharacteristically, failed to achieve the proper rhetorical tone. His attempt to defend the government in the House of Lords left one generally sympathetic commentator lamenting that he had “never made so inept a speech on a great occasion.”⁹⁴⁰ Lord Rosebery felt so exasperated by what he heard from the prime minister that he felt obligated to declare that the country would have to be “inspired by a loftier tone and by a truer patriotism” than Salisbury had provided.⁹⁴¹

Back in South Africa, Milner had grown frustrated by the conduct of military operations. While he agreed with Chamberlain that “nothing is more dangerous than a civilian mixing himself up in matters military” and insisted that he had not interfered with the conduct of any matters that were purely military, he asked, rhetorically: “What is purely military in this country?” “Every military movement is so dependent upon political conditions and forecasts, that there can be no sound strategy without taking these into account,” he insisted while answering his own question. While he felt “compelled to warn, suggest, remind—to worry, in

⁹³⁹ Selborne to Milner, December 26, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, fo. 234.

⁹⁴⁰ Harry Richard Whates, *The Third Salisbury Administration, 1895-1900* (Westminster: Vacher, 1900), 343.

⁹⁴¹ House of Lords debate, January 30, 1900, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 74, col. 39; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1900/jan/30/address-in-answer-to-her-majestys-most> (accessed February 15, 2012).

fact, the soldiers 100 ways, much to their annoyance doubtless," his admonishments had so far been "without as much result as might be hoped."⁹⁴²

After he learned of Robert's appointment to replace Buller in overall command, Milner became anxious to convey his thoughts regarding the conduct of the war and could not wait for the arrival of the newly appointed general officer commanding. He wanted a large force deployed in Cape Colony in order to defend the colony from Boer raids and to deter rebellious Afrikaners. From the very beginning, Milner remained continually apprehensive that the slightest spark might set off a general uprising of pro-Boer sympathizers, which would rapidly engulf the colony. He had complained to Selborne in the opening week of the war: "I am playing the most extraordinary game, on the one hand urging the military and naval people to use every available man and gun, and raise men wherever they can, on the other hand seeking to screen their movements as much as possible from observation, and to keep them away from points, where the population is especially dangerous."⁹⁴³ Writing to Bertha Syngé just as the initial British offensives had been checked, Milner had declared, "The state of the colony is awful. It simply *reeks with treason*. . . . I was so abused at one time by the ignorant and always befooled British sentimentalist for saying that there was a serious amount of disaffection in the Colony, that I at times began to wonder whether I had not been unjust to these 'simple peasants'!! And now!"⁹⁴⁴ A few weeks after the disastrous events of Black Week, Milner once

⁹⁴² Milner to Chamberlain, December 27, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/76.

⁹⁴³ Milner to Selborne, October 18, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 189-90.

⁹⁴⁴ Milner to Bertha Syngé, December 11, 1899, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.686, ff. 211-2 (emphasis in the original).

again had warned Chamberlain, “The opportunity [for revolt] is golden, the incitement incessant.”⁹⁴⁵

Milner was initially pleased when Roberts and Kitchener arrived, informing Chamberlain in a long letter that there was “for the first time since trouble began a vigorous control of matters military—some sort of idea what we are driving at and a will behind it.” Until the new pair had arrived, there had been “no *head* here in matters military. None of experts had even thought out the problem as a whole, or, if there was such a man, he had no influence on the direction of military affairs.” He believed that Roberts and Kitchener would introduce order into “what is at present most at sixes and sevens in our military organization.” While Milner was glad to be relieved of the “futile and perhaps dangerous effort to do other people’s work” and was pleased to not be “perpetually shouting at the soldiers (to their natural annoyance) to look out for this, that or the other thing, which one would have imagined they could see for themselves,” he, nonetheless, believed he had a duty to speak up concerning issues upon which he felt deeply.⁹⁴⁶ He stressed to Selborne, that when “political considerations” had a “direct military value” he would “continue to bother, every General, to prevent at almost any cost, the further spread of invasion in the Colony.” He believed that the Boers had their last man and boy in the field and, consequently, eyed the colony as a potential reserve of new soldiers. “Let them at once get *into the heart* of the Colony, even with a mere handful of men and a flag, and they tap that Reserve, and get certainly 10,000, and perhaps, even 15-20,000 *excellent recruits*,” he warned. Milner was convinced that stationing sufficient garrisons of troops along the “points of entry” into the

⁹⁴⁵ Milner to Chamberlain, December 27, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/9/76.

⁹⁴⁶ Milner to Chamberlain, January 17, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 53-61 (emphasis in the original).

colony would keep the Boers from this reserve of manpower. As far as Milner was concerned, such a move was not “politics,” although he admitted it looked like it, but was simply “military arithmetic.”⁹⁴⁷

Milner was afraid that when Roberts moved the main army north there would be uprisings along the line of communications in the Cape Colony. He pointed out to the field marshal that the danger in the Cape Colony was “absolutely ubiquitous.” Milner believed that the “Dutch population” were “rebels at heart” and would rise up against the British if they saw the slightest opportunity to do so.⁹⁴⁸ Roberts, however, refused to tolerate any interference from Milner. He responded immediately to Milner’s concerns by insisting that his priority was to defeat Boer forces in the field. While he agreed that “a serious rising in the Cape Colony is a problematical danger,” Roberts stressed that the fall of Kimberly and Ladysmith, which he believed would be inevitable if they were not relieved at an early date, “would produce a far reaching effect not only on the inhabitants of South Africa, but on the prestige of the British Army and on the prospects of the war.”⁹⁴⁹ Roberts was not unaware of the risk he was taking and informed Lansdowne of Milner’s concerns; but while he insisted he was doing all he could to help Milner, he believed that taking the war into the Boer republics was the only chance of bring the war to a successful conclusion and everything else “must be sacrificed to that end.”⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴⁷ Milner to Selborne, January 31, 1900, quoted in Boyce, *Crisis of British Power*, 100 (emphasis in the original).

⁹⁴⁸ Milner to Roberts, February 4, 1900, War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Cape of Good Hope Colony (Cape Colony), Original Correspondence (CO 48), CO 48/545/ff. 480-6, TNA.

⁹⁴⁹ Roberts to Milner, February 5, 1900, CO 48/545/ff. 487-91, TNA.

⁹⁵⁰ Roberts to Lansdowne, February 22, 1900, in Newton, *Lansdowne*, 171–4.

Chamberlain felt it necessary to rebuke Milner for his apparent interference. He informed Milner that he was “anxious” about Milner’s relations with the military authorities. Remarking on the “disposition on the part of some of the critics here to throw the responsibility for the division of our forces on what they call the ‘political advisers’,” Chamberlain warned Milner that he did not want to give the generals any cause to argue that “they were pressed to take a particular course which their own judgment rejected.”⁹⁵¹ Chamberlain stressed that while “it is the duty of the Governors of the Cape and Natal to inform the military authorities of the political situation, . . . the entire responsibility for military operations rests with the latter, and they must disregard the political question if the exigencies of the military situation require it.” More than anything else, Chamberlain did not want the generals to be able to argue, should things go poorly, that they were “pressed to take a particular course which their own judgment rejected.”⁹⁵²

Milner remained unbowed by Chamberlain’s criticism. He responded to Chamberlain angrily, referring to the way in which Hely-Hutchinson had been dealt with “for doing no more than his duty in *pointing out* the political effect of certain military movements or projected movements.” It was evident, Milner declared, “how ready the ‘haute armée’ is to throw the blame of its own colossal ineptitude on other people,” but he insisted the he had “advised” the military by merely giving “information & suggestion, & not attempting otherwise to influence a decision.” In any case, he complained, “My advice has *in variably* [*sic*] *been overruled*.” “I have never grumbled at that,” he asserted, and as long as he was “heard” on the critical issues, he

⁹⁵¹ Chamberlain to Milner, January 20, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 2-5.

⁹⁵² Ibid.

was “quite prepared to be over-ruled.”⁹⁵³ Chamberlain, however, remained unsympathetic to Milner’s relentless anxiety and was more concerned than ever least Milner’s attitude and actions become public knowledge at home. “I have warned Sir A. Milner,” he noted, “& he must take sole responsibility of intervention when it does not seem to be called for from the Civil Power.”⁹⁵⁴

By the spring of 1900, Milner thus found his influence significantly reduced. Roberts had been appointed under difficult circumstances; and the new commander understood that he had to act quickly to reverse the military situation in South Africa and, by doing so, get Salisbury’s government out of a difficult political situation at home. Despite his fervent letter writing campaign, Milner had failed to convince the cabinet that the problems in the Cape Colony were of a political as well as a military nature. Roberts’ early victories bolstered his popularity at home and reinforced his authority on the ground in South Africa. Consequently, as the field marshal advanced into the Orange Free State, the high commissioner found himself marginalized.

Roberts treated the Boers as a conventional enemy. Thus, his principle objective as the British offensive move into the Orange Free State was the capture of the main population centers of the republic. In his view, the occupation of the cities, especially the capital of Bloemfontein, would be the most visible sign of British military success. He sought to defeat the Boer armies in the field while protecting his long line of communication back into the Cape Colony. After

⁹⁵³ Milner to Chamberlain, February 21, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 72-8 (emphasis in the original) (Note: His advice was described as having been invariably “disregarded” in JC 13/1/8).

⁹⁵⁴ CO Minutes, March 29, 1900, CO 48/545/fo. 790, TNA.

consulting with Milner, Roberts issued a proclamation when he crossed the border, which declared that the British had no quarrel with the Boer people, only with their government as currently constituted. Milner had insisted when drafting the document that the British “make a distinction between the Govt. and the people, and to throw all the blame on the former, wh[ich] indeed deserves it.”⁹⁵⁵ When Roberts captured Bloemfontein in mid-March, he reinforced this attitude by issuing a proclamation that offered lenient terms to the Boers of the Orange Free State who laid down their arms and signed an oath promising to return to their farms for the duration of the war.⁹⁵⁶

Roberts’s efforts at leniency did not have the effect he desired. While some Boers chose to surrender, most stayed in the field. Milner was anxious that nothing was being done to ensure that those who had taken the oath did not break their word and return to a commando. Roberts agreed with Milner, admitting, “I am delighted to find . . . that your views and mine are in accord.” He began to inflict harsher penalties on oath breakers. He also acted on Milner’s suggestion to divide the Orange Free State into military districts with a district governor at the headquarters of each district. These district governors were instructed “to carry out a thorough disarmament and to requisition all riding animals,” because, as Roberts had commented to Lansdowne, “the most Anti-English farmer would be of little use as a fighting unit if he had no rifle to fire and no horse to ride.” Operating from “fortified posts,” which were to be “sufficiently garrisoned” and provided with adequate food and ammunition to survive any short-term break in the line of communications, the district governors were tasked with making

⁹⁵⁵ Milner to Roberts, January 21, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 15, ff. 47-8.

⁹⁵⁶ Army, *Proclamations Issued by Field Marshal Lord Roberts in South Africa*, vol. LVI.755, Cd. 426 (London: HMSO, 1900), 3.

themselves “acquainted with the people” in order to better ascertain those who were “for and against” the British. Roberts hoped that by these measures, the newly occupied territory would gradually settle down.⁹⁵⁷

Believing that many of the Boers who had remained in the field would return to their homes once it was made clear to them that Steyn and his government would not be allowed to return to power, Roberts pushed for the early formal annexation of the Orange Free State.⁹⁵⁸ He insisted that the Boers longed for peace and would accept defeat if they were assured that the British were in the Orange Free State to stay.⁹⁵⁹ Milner was also eager to establish a permanent settlement in the Orange Free State, but he was concerned that Roberts’s actions appeared rash and ill considered. Milner argued to Chamberlain that “a process of vigorous political sanitation” must be carried out “before responsible government can grow in that soil.” The personnel placed in charge of administering the newly occupied territory “*must not be hurried, and they must not be under the military.*”⁹⁶⁰ He continued:

I don’t wish now to say too much about our soldiers. . . . But in confidence and to those, who, like you, hold the future in their hands, I must speak the truth plainly. And the truth is that in the upper ranks of the army there is nothing like sufficient ability to manage their own business properly, much less to do other people’s. Lord Roberts, who is head and shoulders above all the others, in his tact in dealing with non soldiers [*sic*] as well as in his professional ability, has not got the men under him, or, owing to the rotten system of selection or no selection which has so long prevailed, would not be able to find the men, to administer properly. With few exceptions wherever soldiers are now doing

⁹⁵⁷ Roberts to Milner, April 30, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 175, ff. 20-2.

⁹⁵⁸ Roberts to Milner, May 4, 1900, War Office: Lord Frederick Roberts, Commander in Chief (South Africa and England) and President of National Service League: Papers (WO 105), WO 105/34/C1470, TNA.

⁹⁵⁹ Roberts to Milner, May 9, 1900, WO 105/34/C1532, TNA.

⁹⁶⁰ Milner to Chamberlain, May 9, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 99-105 (emphasis in the original).

civilian work, things go badly. . . . The prejudice against the military among loyal South Africans is becoming very strong. It is not against the soldiers themselves (they have behaved on the whole admirably) it is against the military, hard-and-fast, follow-your-instructions-and-never-take-local-advice, spirit, in the management of civil affairs.⁹⁶¹

Despite Milner's pleas, the British government officially annexed the Orange Free State in late May and renamed it the Orange River Colony.⁹⁶²

Although the first of the Boer capitals had fallen, Milner continued to grow extremely pessimistic about the prognosis for a prompt end to the war. He recognized that "the present trend of events seem rather to point to a prolonged guerilla warfare in the outlying districts."⁹⁶³ Consequently, he was troubled that Roberts had accepted Boer professions of war-weariness at face value. He dismissed these claims because "in most cases all it means is that they want a rest and look at their families & property."⁹⁶⁴ Even after Roberts captured Johannesburg on May 31 and Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, on June 5, Milner still felt compelled to argue for a change in military operations to defeat the remaining Boer commandos and for a shift in the level of civil-military cooperation to enable a more effective administration of the occupied areas. To Chamberlain, he complained about the "uncomfortable interregnum" that continued to exist "thanks to Ch[ristian] de Wet & his merry men all." As for the prospects of victory, he reflected glumly: "I see the way better, as the weeks pass, but it is like cutting a road through a jungle."⁹⁶⁵

⁹⁶¹ Ibid.

⁹⁶² Army, *Proclamations Issued by Field Marshal Lord Roberts in South Africa*, vol. LVI.755, Cd. 426 (London: HMSO, 1900), 6.

⁹⁶³ Milner's diary entry, May 10, 1900, Colonial Office: High Commission for South Africa, Original Correspondence (CO 417), CO 417/290/ff. 83-4, TNA.

⁹⁶⁴ Milner to Roberts, May 17, 1900, CO 417/290/fo. 213, TNA.

⁹⁶⁵ Milner to Chamberlain, July 4, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 131-4.

While Lansdowne had initially acquiesced in Roberts's attempt to treat the Boers leniently, he and many of his fellow cabinet ministers began to feel the pressure from the lack of more tangible results after nearly three months of occupation. As it became increasingly evident that the field marshal's policy had not succeeded in lessening the intensity of the guerilla war, Lansdowne felt compelled to inform Roberts that "experience has shown that your confidence has been grossly abused," while reassuring the field marshal that he would be supported if he insisted "on thorough going measures for disarming the suspect part of the population" and inflicting "stern retribution where unfair advantage has been taken of your clemency."⁹⁶⁶

Roberts subsequently authorized increasingly draconian measures against both Boer commandos still in the field and those civilians, who in his opinion, aided and abetted them. In mid-June, he acknowledged the failure of his policy of leniency by issuing several proclamations aimed at reducing the ferocity of guerilla attacks. The main clauses of these proclamations stated that because Boers raids could not be executed "without the knowledge and connivance of the neighboring inhabitants and the principal civil residents in the districts concerned," farms in the immediate vicinity of a Boer raid would be destroyed, the livestock and supplies confiscated, and the principal civil residents taken in to custody as prisoner of war. Additionally, Boers civilians would "from time to time" be used as hostages on trains in order to deter the Boers from attacking the railway system.⁹⁶⁷ The latter measure regarding the trains was soon dropped, however, after it provoked discord within his staff. His political secretary, George Fiddes, who

⁹⁶⁶ Lansdowne to Roberts, May 19, 1900, Frederick Sleigh Roberts, 1st Earl Roberts of Kandahar, Papers, National Army Museum Temple Study Centre, Chelsea, London, England, RP 7101/23/34/fo. 373. (Cited hereafter as Roberts Papers.)

⁹⁶⁷ Army, *Proclamations Issued by Field Marshal Lord Roberts in South Africa*, vol. LVI.755, Cd. 426 (London: HMSO, 1900), 10-2.

was serving in this position while on loan from Milner's staff, argued that the policy would act as an inducement to the Boers to blow up those who had surrendered while upsetting those Boers who had surrendered in good faith, and that it would, above all else, shame the army.⁹⁶⁸

In early September, Roberts informed Lansdowne and Milner that even sterner measures were required in view of the continued attacks on the British lines of communication and a recent public declaration by Christian de Wet, in which the Boer commander proclaimed his intention to attack British outposts at every opportunity. In June, Roberts had ordered the families of Boer combatants out of Johannesburg and Pretoria. Not only did he believe that these families should no longer be supplied at British expense, but that by forcing them to join Boer forces in the field, he could reduce the maneuverability those forces. Now he declared that all remaining families who had not been removed earlier would be sent to Botha's headquarters.⁹⁶⁹ Writing to Milner a few days after the British officially annexed the South African Republic and renamed it the Transvaal, Roberts assured the high commissioner that he did not in any way include him "among the 'unreasonable' people who seem to be disappointed because the war did not come to an end when Pretoria was occupied." Roberts acknowledged that "as a war" perhaps the fighting was coming to an end, but that a guerilla campaign, something "much more troublesome to deal with," could no longer be denied. Roberts had come around to Milner's view that leniency was "not appreciated by the Boers," and that the attempt to bind them to neutrality with an oath had "apparently no binding effect upon them."⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁸ Fiddes to Roberts, July 23, 1900, WO 105/25/66/ff. 18-27, TNA.

⁹⁶⁹ Roberts to Lansdowne and Milner, September 2, 1900, WO 105/27/670/3/fo. 4, TNA.

⁹⁷⁰ Roberts to Milner, September 3, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 175, ff. 58-61.

Lansdowne supported Roberts in this move to implement a more stringent policy. He informed Roberts that the government would back him and that he should do everything in his power to bring the war to an end as soon as possible. Lansdowne relayed the cabinet's growing concern about events outside of South Africa, explaining to Roberts, "At the moment we are [spread] all over the face of the Earth, & the knowledge that we have so much on our hands weakens us diplomatically."⁹⁷¹ He informed Roberts a few days later that his actions had the support of the "man in the street" and that it was time to abandon "kids gloves" and take up harsher measures. "This is what you have done," he reflected, "& the new departure has been welcomed."⁹⁷² In fact, British units had been conducting a policy of destruction throughout the months of August and September. While his soldiers carried out his farm burning policy with "a casual ruthlessness," Roberts held firm to his new belief that the war would never end unless the Boer population was "made to suffer for the misdeeds of those in arms against us."⁹⁷³

Roberts had initially believed that Boer opposition would crumble in the wake of his victories. The conventional campaign had broken up the armies of the former republics into small groups that operated independently. While he had readily admitted that the commando groups were a nuisance, principally by threatening his lines of communication, the field marshal maintained that he had been right to advance on Pretoria and would be "greatly disappointed if our being here does not result in the war being brought to a conclusion."⁹⁷⁴ After his victory

⁹⁷¹ Lansdowne to Roberts, September 7, 1900, Roberts Papers, 7101/23/34/fo. 405.

⁹⁷² Lansdowne to Roberts, September 13, 1900, Roberts Papers 7101/23/34/fo. 406.

⁹⁷³ Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?*, 124; Roberts to Lieutenant-General C. Sir Francis Clery, September 17, 1900, RP 7101/23/11/8/fo. 2371.

⁹⁷⁴ Roberts to Lansdowne, June 7, 1900, Roberts Papers 7101/23/110/3/fo. 538.

near Komatipoort, which effectively ended the conventional phase of the war, Roberts declared that from this point forward, “the settlement of the country will be more a civil than a military duty.” With a police force being organized by Baden-Powell, Roberts wanted to begin sending troops home immediately. He informed Lansdowne that while he could not spare many of his regular troops, some of the various British and colonial volunteer regiments could be disbanded.⁹⁷⁵ Lansdowne approved this plan for partial demobilization, as the volunteers were the most expensive troops in the army.⁹⁷⁶

With almost all of the population centers under British control, Milner began to spend a considerable amount of time reflecting on the conduct of the military campaign. He suggested to Chamberlain that British forces must find a better way to pacify the occupied areas. He was growing increasingly annoyed at the strategy the army was using, particularly the practice of occupying towns one moment and abandoning them the next to go chasing after Boer commandos in the area. Instead of pursuing the Boers to all corners of the former republics, a practice that he felt was too time consuming and a poor use of manpower and horsepower, he suggested that the army should adapt a strategy based on “the occupation, with a fixed resolve not to be turned out or to withdraw, of some commanding position in every district, which will form a base of supplies, and a rallying point for our friends or the neutrals who may require protection, and our firm retention of which will convince the people that we have come to stay.” He insisted that this need for a shift in strategy was “a point of supreme importance.”⁹⁷⁷

⁹⁷⁵ Roberts to Lansdowne, September 25, 1900, CAB 37/53/70, TNA.

⁹⁷⁶ Lansdowne to Roberts, October 12, 1900, Roberts Papers 7101/23/34/fo. 416.

⁹⁷⁷ Milner to Chamberlain, September 21, 1900, CO 417/294/ff. 146-50, TNA.

Milner shared his concerns with Roberts. With the “breaking up” of the Boer armies, the high commissioner felt that the British must accept that the “political aspect” was “once more to be very important one.” He suggested that the “holding of certain districts, and the establishing of settled government in them” was much more likely to bring the Boers to heel than the “scouring of a possibly much larger area without leaving anything behind us except the destruction we may have caused.” Milner argued that “slowly occupying the country bit by bit” would make a better impression than the current practice of “rapidly and repeatedly scouring it” and would “give more confidence to those who want to join us.” It was vital for the surrendered Boers to feel as though the British had “come to stay.” The abandonment of places once occupied, “however good the strategical [*sic*] reason,” was to be avoided at all costs, he insisted, as it tended to “shake [the] confidence” of those who had come over to the British side.⁹⁷⁸

By late October, Milner was becoming increasingly worried about how the pace of the war might affect the government’s ability to gain support from colonial governments in any future conflict. He complained to Chamberlain that British progress had recently been “truly crab like” and that he was “fairly taken aback by the vitality & ubiquity of the enemy, the staleness & dissatisfaction of our own men & the aimlessness & inconsequence of our present operations.” The chief importance of the spreading discontent among colonial troops was, in his opinion, its impact on the future. “If I have heard it said once,” he warned Chamberlain, “I have heard it said a score of times in the last fortnight that Australians & Canadians will be less

⁹⁷⁸ Milner to Roberts, September 21, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 175, ff. 111-5.

willing to come forward another time because of the weary drag of the latest phase of this war.”⁹⁷⁹

Milner also began to reflect on the increasingly harsh policies of devastation being employed by British forces. “In my opinion,” he wrote to Chamberlain, “there has been a great deal too much burning of farms as a punishment.” While the discriminate destruction of a farmhouse was fully justified, “for instance where it has been used, under cover of the white flag, to draw our men into an ambush,” the indiscriminate burning of all the homesteads in a particular neighborhood, “simply to make it untenable by the enemy,” was quite a different thing. Milner objected to the latter because it was “(1) barbarous & (2) ineffectual.”⁹⁸⁰

Milner felt that a new British South Africa could only be created from a transformed South African Republic, an endeavor in which he wanted to play a key role. Clearing out the “Augean stable” that was the South African Republic, was the key.⁹⁸¹ He felt that the Cape Colony was irredeemable, but insisted to Chamberlain, “if we make the T.V. [Transvaal] what it ought to be, the [Cape] Colony will matter less, & in the long run, with the heart sound, the whole body will be saved.” In Milner’s opinion this necessitated that he go to the region himself as the new governor of the Transvaal while maintaining his position as high commissioner. “Not only do I think it the right plan from the public point of view,” he argued to Chamberlain, “but I should not care to stay in S. Africa on any other condition—except, of course, in order to wind up, if desired to do so, the consequences of the war in this colony.” While insisting that he was not interested in remaining in public service, he was, of course, “deeply interested in the work of

⁹⁷⁹ Milner to Chamberlain, October 28, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 147-61.

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸¹ Milner to Chamberlain, June 14, 1899, Chamberlain Papers, JC 10/6/33.

starting the new—& at last, if we are not hopeless bunglers, really British S. Africa on the right lines.”⁹⁸²

Milner had begun discussions with Roberts about the fate of the South African Republic in early May and had been pushing for the establishment of civil administration and the formation of a police force as soon as possible. It was important for Milner to pacify the region as quickly as possible to facilitate his plans for a new South Africa. Until the region was pacified, the mining industry could not be restarted. Until the mining industry was up and running, he would not have the financial resources to begin reconstruction. Milner complained to Chamberlain in June that the prolongation of the war was “even more mischievous from a civil than from a military point of view.” It prolonged period of military government, which was “a great drawback, as not only are the Military bad administrators, but the public are unreasonable in not making allowance for them.” While Milner acknowledged that there were several “excellent & most suitable men on the spot,” he predicted that they were not likely to be the men chosen for important administrative positions, “if I know my War Office.” “After our bitter experience in the past,” Milner hoped openly that “the political side will be considered, & that not the W.O. but the Govt. will make these appointments.”⁹⁸³

Milner also had to deal with a significant refugee problem. Refugees from Johannesburg had fled to the Cape Colony and Natal at the beginning of the war. Until the former Boer republics were pacified, these refugees could not return to their homes. Roberts, however, was reluctant to allow any refugees to return. He replied to a request from Milner to allow some

⁹⁸² Milner to Chamberlain, May 30, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 108-11.

⁹⁸³ Milner to Chamberlain, June 27, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 112-7.

mining representatives to return in order to restart the industry by informing Milner, quite testily: “There is not the least use in the exiles worrying themselves about Johannesburg, no one will be allowed to return until peace is made.”⁹⁸⁴

The issue of refugees increasingly strained civil-military relations. Even as Roberts began to admit that the guerilla phase of the war was far more dangerous than he had initially thought, Milner began to lose faith in Roberts.⁹⁸⁵ Milner admitted that there was “no doubt” that the military problem was “a very difficult one.” He did not find this surprising. The British had been “bewildered by circumstances so extraordinary,” and had responded by adopting policies “alternately too lenient and too harsh,” that they had “succeeded neither in winning over the Boers nor in adequately frightening them.” This difficulty only increased the importance of establishing a proper civil administration. Because he was busy chasing Boers across the country, Roberts simply could not devote the enough time to establishing a proper regime in the territory his forces had conquered. Milner complained that Roberts had no “control of his subordinates in regard to civil administration.” The result was “necessarily unsatisfactory,” chiefly because there was “no regular system.” In Milner’s opinion, the “abler men” were “paralysed for want of a clear lead,” while the less able did “absurd things,” exciting unnecessary resentment among the Boers and making the British “look bad.”⁹⁸⁶

Milner grew more frustrated with Roberts and during a face-to-face meeting with him, the high commissioner suggested, politely, of course, that the field marshal should leave South

⁹⁸⁴ Roberts to Milner, August 10, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 175, ff. 52-7.

⁹⁸⁵ Roberts to Milner, August 18, 1900, WO 105/34/C3685, TNA.

⁹⁸⁶ Milner to Chamberlain, August 22, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 170, ff. 142-6.

Africa and turn things over to Kitchener.⁹⁸⁷ Milner felt Kitchener would be less obstinate in tackling those issues important to Milner, like the refugee problem. Milner sent the chief of staff a long letter at the end of October criticizing British policy, explicitly, and, therefore, Roberts, implicitly. “It is quite evident,” Milner opined to Kitchener, “that what is the matter now is not so much anything the Boers do as our own choppings & changings & want of system.” “If by concentrating our efforts we could absolutely subjugate definite areas and screen the people in them, in *their usual occupations*, from molestation from without,” he continued, “we should dishearten the enemy & encourage the waverers to come to us. Every step in that direction will make the next step easier.”⁹⁸⁸

By mid-November, Milner was totally disillusioned by Roberts. The field marshal’s inability to pacify the country was obvious in Milner’s opinion; and he informed Chamberlain that while military policy was “gradually settling down on sounder lines,” the British were currently “making but little progress” and the process of pacification would be better “facilitated by Lord Roberts’s return home.”⁹⁸⁹ Roberts had, in fact, already informed Milner that he wanted to leave South Africa. Back in June, while writing Milner to thank him for his “views on the many important points which have to be considered with reference to the administration of the Transvaal,” Roberts had expressed his wish to see a civilian governor installed in Pretoria as

⁹⁸⁷ Roberts to Lansdowne, October 22, 1900, WO 105/33/fo. 296, TNA.

⁹⁸⁸ Milner to Kitchener, October 31, 1900, Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener of Khartoum: Papers (PRO 30/57), PRO 30/57/17/S7, TNA.

⁹⁸⁹ Milner to Chamberlain, November 14, 1900, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/91.

soon as possible and that he hoped to be allowed to depart South Africa “as soon as necessity no longer exists for active military operations.”⁹⁹⁰

In his initial communication with Brodrick, the new, post-election secretary of state for war, Milner criticized both Roberts and Kitchener. Milner declared that while Roberts had done all he could and was tired out, Kitchener was stale. He reiterated his belief that the “fatal error” in military policy was the tendency “not to hold District A & make sure of it before you go on to District B.” Consequently, the British had “a big army campaigning away in the front & the enemy swarming in the country behind it.”⁹⁹¹ Cabinet ministers were also becoming anxious with the pace of the war and uneasy with the methods employed by Roberts. Salisbury told Queen Victoria that the law officers doubted whether Roberts’s policy of destroying farms with a ten-mile radius of a Boer attack was within the laws of war.⁹⁹²

Writing to Milner as he prepared to depart South Africa, Roberts reflected on the existing and future relationship between the civil and military leaders in ongoing war. In order to settle the question of “who must possess the superior authority,” the key principle that “ought to be settled on definite lines,” Roberts argued there could be “no doubt that, for the present, the military must be that authority.” Consequently, the officer in command must have full authority to block “any civil action being taken which may, in his opinion, prove dangerous from a military point of view.” Only when Milner and Kitchener agreed that the conditions were sufficiently secure should this relationship be reversed. Until then, Roberts informed Milner,

⁹⁹⁰ Roberts to Milner, June 2, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 175, ff. 36-41.

⁹⁹¹ Milner to Brodrick, November 5, 1900, William St John Fremantle Brodrick, 1st Earl Midleton: Papers. (PRO 30/67), PRO 30/67/6, TNA.

⁹⁹² Salisbury to Victoria, November 23, 1900, CAB 41/25/50, TNA.

“Your subordinates should remain in a chrysalis state—so to speak—until the moment . . . arises, when they can emerge and take up their full duties and responsibilities.”⁹⁹³ Milner seemingly agreed, “My commonsense tells me, the military commander must . . . be yielded to, when difference of opinion arises. . . . *Military orders must be obeyed, if they are wrong, they can be put right only by a superior military order.*”⁹⁹⁴

When Kitchener succeeded Roberts at the end of November 1900, there was a general sense that the war was entering a new stage. The government and the British public expected Kitchener to bring the war to a rapid conclusion. An engineer by training, Kitchener had a reputation for machine-like, even brutal, efficiency, which he acquired during his conquest of the Sudan. Described by a peer as “a molten mass of devouring energy and burning ambition,” Kitchener was determined to achieve his objectives no matter the cost.⁹⁹⁵ Intending to pursue an all-out war to defeat the Boers, the new commander believed that support for military operations was of primary importance, an attitude that was antithetical to Milner’s goal of shifting from a military regime to a civilian one as quickly as possible.

Kitchener knew the government was under pressure to wrap up the war. Brodrick had informed Kitchener a few days before he assumed command that the cabinet was deeply concerned about the conduct of military operations in South Africa. Wondering why a British force of 230,000 men could not wrap up the campaign, the secretary of state for war questioned whether the British strategy of pacifying the whole country was needlessly wasting resources.

⁹⁹³ Roberts to Milner, November 13, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 226, ff. 19-22.

⁹⁹⁴ Milner to Roberts, November 21, 1900, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 226, ff. 23-5 (emphasis in the original).

⁹⁹⁵ Leonard Mosely, *The Glorious Fault: The Life of Lord Curzon* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960), 119.

He lamented that the war had already cost £80 million, and informed Kitchener that at the current expenditure rate of £2.5 million per month, a further £15 million would be required to prosecute the war through the summer months. As for the tensions in the civil-military relationship in South Africa, Brodrick merely expressed his hope that Kitchener and Milner could work amiably together to end the war quickly.⁹⁹⁶

Kitchener appeared to appreciate the government's concerns about the cost of the war, but he was unwilling to consider a further reduction of troops to save money. Within weeks of his taking command, the Boers opened a new offensive by invading the Cape Colony, where they hoped to find substantial support. In light of this invasion and the defeat of a British force under the command of Major-General R. A. P. Clements at Nooitgedacht, northwest of Johannesburg, in mid-December, Kitchener decided that not only were further troop reductions impossible, but that he needed to be reinforced with fresh troops. He argued that his forces were overextended. They were unable to hold the occupied territory in the new colonies and while simultaneously protecting the railway lines back to the Cape Colony and Natal.⁹⁹⁷ He protested against any idea to withdraw troops from British occupied areas as this would simply give the Boers an opportunity to "put up their flag and start a sort of government again."⁹⁹⁸

In response to Kitchener's plea, Brodrick questioned the nature of Kitchener's force dispositions, but he, nevertheless, promised to do everything he could to get the general the troops he needed. "We cannot help it if the Boers overrun some places which we cannot defend," he wrote warningly to Kitchener, "but the outlook will be serious if these attacks

⁹⁹⁶ Brodrick to Kitchener, November 24, 1900, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y4, TNA.

⁹⁹⁷ Kitchener to Brodrick, December 14, 1900, Roberts Papers 7101/23/33/fo. 6.

⁹⁹⁸ Kitchener to Brodrick, December 20, 1900, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y9, TNA.

continue to be successful.”⁹⁹⁹ As it turned out, Brodrick did not have much difficulty with his cabinet colleagues. Hicks Beach, of course, was reluctant to authorize an increase in troop size because of the additional expenditure such an increase would entail. He downplayed the seriousness of the Boer invasion and laid the fault for British difficulties in responding to it at the feet of the Cape government. He thought the slow response by the local administration, not a shortage of troops, was to blame.¹⁰⁰⁰ Chamberlain, however, was already uneasy about the invasion of the Cape Colony. “If you want money or troops from the Cabinet you ought to have both at once,” he told Brodrick, as “a shilling saved now means pounds lost hereafter.” Chamberlain could not resist, however, making suggestions as to the future conduct of the campaign, arguing “that it would be much better to take all the horses in the country where any Boers are operating than to burn farms. . . . To shoot a horse is better in the present state than to shoot a man.” He also wanted to ensure that the excitement about the invasion of the Cape did not detract the British from the vital work of getting a proper civil administration established in the new colonies. “We might get to work and create a nucleus of civil government from which we could work outwards,” he suggested.¹⁰⁰¹ Salisbury promised Brodrick that Kitchener would get the troops he needed despite Black Michael’s parsimony. He envisioned a tough road ahead, however. “You will not conquer these people,” he informed Brodrick, “until you have starved

⁹⁹⁹ Brodrick to Kitchener, December 15, 1900, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y8, TNA.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Hicks Beach to Chamberlain, December 23, 1900, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/18/1.

¹⁰⁰¹ Chamberlain to Brodrick, December 21, 1900, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/5.

them out.”¹⁰⁰² Brodrick informed Kitchener of the cabinet’s support, but also informed him of the need to reorganize the new colonies once he had “dealt with the present raid.”¹⁰⁰³

For his part, Milner was also concerned about the state of British troops in South Africa. He disagreed with Hicks Beach’s assertion regarding the response of the Cape government to the invasion, which he felt had taken the invasion seriously and was responding energetically to the threat despite “Innes’s constitutional pedantry & Sprigg’s fussy self-importance, & the restrictions placed on one by a system of government for wh[ich] the Colony is totally unfit.”¹⁰⁰⁴ “What delays progress more than anything else,” he argued to Chamberlain, “& is responsible for some of these ceaseless reverses is the *extreme staleness* of the troops, whether British or Colonial, who have been uninterruptedly at this business for more than a year.” What was needed to overcome the “annoying & humiliating” failure by the British to deal with the Boer guerillas was “a constant inflow of new blood, & any number more horses.”¹⁰⁰⁵

While Milner was in agreement with Kitchener on the issue of more troops, his relationship with the new commander was already showing signs of strain. Kitchener’s inability to blunt the Boer offensive damaged his reputation in Milner’s eyes. Declaring himself “now sufficiently profane to doubt the existence of some occult military science,” Milner argued to Chamberlain that his experience had proven that “the civilians in S. Africa have generally been

¹⁰⁰² Salisbury to Brodrick, December 19, 1900, William St. John Fremantle Brodrick, 1st Earl Middleton, Papers, Domestic Records of the Public Records Office (PRO 30/67), PRO 30/67/6, TNA.

¹⁰⁰³ Brodrick to Kitchener, December 28, 1900, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y10, TNA.

¹⁰⁰⁴ John Gordon Sprigg was the prime minister and James Rose Innes the attorney general in the Cape Colony government.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Milner to Chamberlain, January 3, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/108.

more in the right that the soldiers” when dealing with questions of “military policy” of a non-technical or non-tactical nature.¹⁰⁰⁶ Kitchener’s practice of evacuating towns as an expedient to provide more troops for field operations also raised Milner’s ire. Major-General George Pretzman, the military governor in the Orange River Colony, informed Milner that Kitchener’s policy meant that British efforts “to build up a fabric of civil government in the districts has come to a stand still [*sic*].”¹⁰⁰⁷ Milner responded angrily to this news, writing to Pretzman that his appointment was more or less “a farce.” Appearing to accept that “military considerations are still absolutely supreme,” Milner explained that he was, consequently, “not attempting to do anything but allowing things to go on for the present on their old lines.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Milner’s apparent willingness to accept things as they were was short-lived however. He was soon arguing to Chamberlain, “The bulk of the population want [*sic*] to stop, but they must *have something to lean on*. Our wandering columns do not give them that.”¹⁰⁰⁹

Milner had expressed his opinion on this last point before. In December, Milner had responded to a letter from Chamberlain about possible peace feelers by arguing that the Boers should not be approached until the British were in a position of strength. He contended that the successful establishment of protected areas in the new colonies would be one sign of that strength. He argued that “from the political point of view” there was only one thing which would “hasten the submission of the Boers generally” and that was the “spectacle of one or more

¹⁰⁰⁶ Milner to Chamberlain, January 17, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 4-13.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Pretzman to Milner, January 2, 1901, Milner papers, MS. Milner dep. 173, ff. 138-9.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Milner to Pretzman, January 7, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 173, fo. 142.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Milner to Chamberlain, January 29, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 173, ff. 123-7 (emphasis in the original).

fairly extensive districts so strongly held against raiders that we can promise any people willing to settle down in them efficient protection.” The British should make a every effort to encourage surrendered Boers to take an active role in securing these protected areas. Miner was certain that former Boer combatants, disgusted at the “continuance of the present aimless and ruinous resistance,” would stand by the British if the British could offer them some protection against their former comrades-in-arms.¹⁰¹⁰

Chamberlain responded somewhat lamely to Milner’s rant, declaring that with an injection of 30,000 new troops, which the cabinet had agreed to recruit and send to South Africa as rapidly as possible, he hoped Kitchener would be able turn the tide in the guerilla war. Otherwise, he suggested, “public dissatisfaction may become serious and threaten the existence of the Government in spite of its enormous majority.”¹⁰¹¹ While the threat to Salisbury’s ministry was certainly exaggerated for dramatic effect, Chamberlain’s response captured the cabinet’s general sense that it had little choice but to support Kitchener in the short term.

The process of preliminary peace negotiations, which took place between January and March, further strained the relationship between Milner and Kitchener. When Botha agreed to meet with him, Kitchener wrote to Brodrick, “I think a personal meeting may end the war if we are prepared not to be too hard on the Boers. . . . It will be good policy for the future of this country to treat them fairly well. I hope I may be allowed to do away with anything humiliating to them in the surrender if it comes off.”¹⁰¹² Kitchener hoped to exploit divisions within the Boer

¹⁰¹⁰ Milner to Chamberlain, December 11, 1900, CO 417/296/ff. 429-30, TNA.

¹⁰¹¹ Chamberlain to Milner, February 7, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/121.

¹⁰¹² Kitchener to Brodrick, February 22, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y26, YNA.

senior leadership by offering lenient terms and by including moderate Boers such as Botha in a peace and reconciliation process.

The cabinet discussed the potential of making peace overtures and instructed Kitchener and Milner not to “commit themselves in respect to specific proposals in detail until the precise terms in which those conditions were to be couched were submitted” to and were considered by the cabinet.¹⁰¹³ After meeting with Botha in late February, Kitchener was generally optimistic. He felt the terms suggested by Botha were relatively reasonable and suggested to Roberts that if the cabinet genuinely wished to end the war, he did not “see any great difficulty in doing so.” He warned, however, that the war would “go on for some time if the points raised by Botha cannot be answered.”¹⁰¹⁴

Much to Kitchener’s chagrin, the cabinet challenged nearly every proposal that had been put forward. Brodrick informed Kitchener that while financial assistance for reconstruction was possible, it could only be offered in the form loans; the proposed amnesty for rebels in the Cape Colony and Natal was impossible; and the plan to exclude capitalists from future governments was a non-starter.¹⁰¹⁵ While Milner was a bit more flexible than the cabinet on many of the proposals, he insisted that the point of amnesty was not one on which the British could afford to concede as it would have “a deplorable effect” in the Cape Colony and Natal.¹⁰¹⁶

Chamberlain informed Milner that the cabinet agreed with his views regarding need to hold firm on the point of amnesty for the rebels. While Milner had been open to financial

¹⁰¹³ Salisbury to Edward VII, February 27, 1901, CAB 41/26/3, TNA.

¹⁰¹⁴ Kitchener to Roberts, February 28, 1901, Roberts Papers 7101/23/33/fo. 17.

¹⁰¹⁵ Brodrick to Kitchener, March 1, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y28, TNA.

¹⁰¹⁶ Milner to Chamberlain, March 3, 1901, CAB 37/57/34, TNA.

assistance at least partly in the form of grants, Chamberlain informed him that he and his fellow ministers were not willing to be spendthrifts. The cabinet ministers also insisted that the native question must be part of the peace agreement; specifically, they declared that blacks and colored persons must have the same civil rights in the new colonies as they had in the Cape Colony.¹⁰¹⁷ Botha rejected the British terms without explanation in mid-March, simply declaring that he did not “feel disposed” to recommend that the terms proposed by the cabinet should have the “earnest consideration” of the Boer government.¹⁰¹⁸

While Chamberlain and Milner were relieved by the breakdown in talks, with Chamberlain hoping that Kitchener was now ready for a “vigorous attack” upon Boer forces, Kitchener was irate.¹⁰¹⁹ He believed that if the British really wanted “to live in peace and security” with the Boers and to “be able to give them self-government later,” the cabinet would have to offer more lenient terms. Otherwise, “the stain on the Empire will be very great if we are to have our Alsace 6,000 miles away instead of next door as Germany has.”¹⁰²⁰ The general was unable to understand the political reasoning behind the decision not to grant an amnesty to the rebels. Instead of reevaluating his position, he simply blamed others for this lost opportunity, calling Milner vindictive and dismissing Botha as a “pettifogging attorney.”¹⁰²¹ Roberts felt it necessary to inform Kitchener that he had agreed with Chamberlain on the proposed terms, while

¹⁰¹⁷ Chamberlain to Milner, March 6, 1901, CAB 37/57/34, TNA.

¹⁰¹⁸ Kitchener to Brodrick, March 16, 1901, CAB 37/54/34, TNA.

¹⁰¹⁹ Chamberlain to Brodrick, March 18, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/17.

¹⁰²⁰ Kitchener to Brodrick, April 26, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y48, TNA.

¹⁰²¹ Kitchener to Roberts, March 22, 1901, Roberts Papers 7101/23/33/fo. 20; Kitchener to Brodrick, March 22, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y33-6, TNA; and Kitchener to Brodrick, April 19, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y44-5, TNA.

Brodrick assured Kitchener that although his views had been thoroughly considered by the cabinet, “the extreme limit of concession” had been reached.¹⁰²² Chamberlain used roughly the same language with Milner, describing the terms as having “gone to the utmost limits of concession.” “In fact,” he continued, “there has been a good deal of private dissatisfaction expressed by our friends who think that we have gone too far.”¹⁰²³ Chamberlain pointed out how the opposition at home was using the disagreement over peace terms to suggest “serious differences between you & Kitchener, & between you & me, Kitchener being represented as the Angel of Mercy, you as somewhat less accommodating, and the Colonial Secretary as the Evil Genius, who by his ill-conditioned interference, destroyed all hopes of peaceful settlement.” With the Boers having “thrown away their opportunity” by rejecting the terms as offered, Chamberlain hoped that “we shall now be able to keep a free hand.”¹⁰²⁴

Milner remained very concerned about Kitchener’s military strategy. Disappointed that his written and telegraphic correspondence had failed to convince the cabinet that a change of course was necessary, he requested a leave of absence from his post to come to London for both rest and direct consultations on the situation. “If I could get four or five fundamental points settled, it would immensely facilitate my, and I venture to think, *your* task,” he informed Chamberlain.¹⁰²⁵ While Chamberlain reassured Milner that it was perfectly “clear beyond all possible doubt” that the return home was solely the result of Milner’s “wish . . . of temporary

¹⁰²² Roberts to Kitchener, April 19, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/20/O18, TNA; Brodrick to Kitchener, April 20, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y47, TNA.

¹⁰²³ Chamberlain to Milner, April 1, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/137.

¹⁰²⁴ Chamberlain to Milner, April 1, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 75-80.

¹⁰²⁵ Milner to Chamberlain, March 29, 1901, in Headlam, *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1899-1905*, 2:245 (emphasis in the original).

leave for [the] sake of [his] health” and not of “any suggestion from here,” other cabinet ministers were concerned with the optics of Milner’s return home.¹⁰²⁶ Hicks Beach, specifically, suggested to Chamberlain that Milner’s return to London looked bad. “It looks as if he and Kitchener are not agreeing,” Hick Beach observed, “unless his nerve is gone.”¹⁰²⁷

Milner, nonetheless, pressed to be allowed to come home; and after he arrived in London, after a short period of leave, he presented his arguments in a series of meetings with Chamberlain. During these meetings, Milner not only reiterated all that he had been arguing for in his previous correspondence, but also suggested that a new, more-comprehensive plan was necessary. He argued for a reformulated civil-military strategy centered on the establishment of secure bases of operation, from which unencumbered “flying” columns of troops could pursue Boer commando units into the countryside, keeping pressure on the commandos until they surrendered or wasted away. This plan would allow the British to “get a firm hold of the principal revenue producing districts,” while leaving the “outlying and less populous portions” to “take care of themselves.” The memorandum of these meetings, during which Milne also proposed to establish the permanent presence in South Africa of 30,000 or 40,000 imperial troops by arranging the transportation of relief forces for India through South Africa, was circulated to the other members of the cabinet.¹⁰²⁸

While Milner was in London, Kitchener informed the cabinet he was still unable to spare any troops despite the arrival of a large portion of the extra 30,000 men recruited following his

¹⁰²⁶ Chamberlain to Milner, April 1, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 111-2.

¹⁰²⁷ Hicks Beach to Chamberlain, April 10, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/18/5.

¹⁰²⁸ Memorandum by Chamberlain, “Conversations with Lord Milner,” May 31 - June 2, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/144.

earlier request for reinforcements.¹⁰²⁹ While the cabinet was concerned by Kitchener's lack of progress, its ministers remained reluctant to interfere. Milner was by now thoroughly frustrated by this reluctant attitude and circulated a second memorandum to the cabinet, in which he argued, in even more forceful language, that Kitchener's winter operations would not end the war. Milner believed that Kitchener's "aggressive and destructive policy" had been shown to be wanting; it was not the solution. Milner offered his plan as an alternative policy, one that accounted for the "change in circumstances" in South Africa. "It would surely be of great compensation for our protracted efforts to have something to show on the other side," Milner proposed, "especially if that something was indirectly and in the long run, itself conducive to the termination of hostilities." Milner was, of course, pressing for the development of protected areas and the return of refugees to restart the mining industry, all things for which had had been pleading over the past few months.¹⁰³⁰ "The essence of the policy," he explained to Chamberlain, "is not merely to curtail military operations, but within a restricted area to re-start civil life. The positive side of it is just as essential as the negative. Indeed without the positive side the whole will end in failure."¹⁰³¹ As suggested by a letter written to Kitchener the day after he drafted this memorandum, Milner was less concerned with the nature of Kitchener's actions than with the lack of results. "Any Ministry is much more likely to fall for not conducting the war with sufficient vigour than for persisting in it with the greatest energy at any cost," he insisted. "On the other hand," he continued, "there is a very natural impatience not at the war

¹⁰²⁹ Kitchener to Brodrick, June 7, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y60, TNA.

¹⁰³⁰ Memorandum by Milner, June 26, 1901, CAB 37/57/62, TNA.

¹⁰³¹ Milner to Chamberlain, June 26, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/155.

not being over—people are prepared to see it drag—but at the want of *clearly visible* progress.”¹⁰³²

Faced with Kitchener’s generally negative assessment of the likelihood of success in the near future and armed with Milner’s suggestion of an alternative policy, the cabinet decided to press Roberts and Kitchener for “an explanation of the plans by which it is hoped to bring the war to a conclusion, and their relation to the resources which are at our command.”¹⁰³³ More significantly, Brodrick informed Kitchener that the cabinet had agreed to pursue Milner’s alternative policy. Brodrick instructed him to cooperate in the efforts to restart the mining industry on a much larger scale than had been done heretofore and to plan on a reduction of troops following the winter operations currently in progress. The withdrawal of troops, would, consequently, force the general to scale back future military operations.¹⁰³⁴ Writing to Kitchener a few days later, Roberts argued that as operations about to be undertaken were certain to be “more of a police than military nature . . . their success will depend on the through pacification of the more important and populous districts which it is now proposed to hold, and the gradual extension of these protected areas until they embrace the whole country.”¹⁰³⁵

Kitchener remained unconvinced of this change in operations. He had already begun to implement the construction of blockhouses, linked by barbed wire, along the main lines of communication. He hoped to use the troops freed up from defending these areas to pursue Boer

¹⁰³² Milner to Kitchener, June 27, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep.175, ff. 345-8 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁰³³ Salisbury to Edward VII, June 28, 1901, CAB 41/26/15, TNA.

¹⁰³⁴ Brodrick to Kitchener, June 29, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y68, TNA.

¹⁰³⁵ Roberts to Kitchener, July 2, 1901, Roberts Papers 7101/23/124/1/fo. 50.

commandos into the countryside more thoroughly and to man additional blockhouses, which he planned to build as the British expanded their control across Boer territory.¹⁰³⁶ He insisted that he could not reduce troop numbers without surrendering some of the territory already occupied. He was also adamant that his best troops must remain in the country. He was willing to let some of the yeomanry and militia depart, but only if the cabinet was willing to accept the loss of territorial control.¹⁰³⁷ Writing to Brodrick just before he left London on his return voyage to South Africa, Milner agreed with Kitchener that some British troops were “useless” and only served “as a means of transferring a certain number of arms, ammunition &c to the enemy.” “With 1/4 less men, perhaps 1/3, we should be stronger & not weaker,” he agreed, if the right troops were retained. He disagreed vehemently, however, with any suggestion of surrendering territory. “To give up any country now held is the very devil,” he argued. What was needed was “to hold on like grim death to what we have definitely occupied . . . and to do everything to render it perfectly secure and get people to settle down in it.”¹⁰³⁸

Fearing that “opinions at home are far too optimistic about matters out here,” Kitchener urged for the implementation of even harsher measures on those Boers still remaining in the field. “If nothing is done,” he warned, “we may still have grave trouble.”¹⁰³⁹ Kitchener’s pessimism further undermined his relationship with Milner. Milner summarized his opinion of

¹⁰³⁶ Kitchener to Brodrick, July 5, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y69, TNA.

¹⁰³⁷ Kitchener to Roberts, July 6, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 175, fo. 396; Kitchener to Roberts, July 10, 1901, Roberts Papers 7101/23/33/fo. 36.

¹⁰³⁸ Milner to Brodrick, July 12, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 175, ff. 368-74.

¹⁰³⁹ Kitchener to Brodrick, July 14, 1901, CAB 37/58/107, TNA.

Kitchener when he remarked to Chamberlain that Kitchener's "tendency to discouragement is to my mind, one of the most serious features of the situation."¹⁰⁴⁰

Feeling himself now in a position of strength, Milner made an ill-advised attempt to persuade Roberts that now was a good time to modify the command structure in South Africa. Arguing that the war, "if it can be called war now," no longer had any unity, Milner suggested that a division of Kitchener's unified command into three smaller ones, with one officer to sort out any jurisdictional disputes, would allow the British to conduct more efficiently the "mass of scattered and petty operations," which increasingly characterized the war. Milner insisted, disingenuously, that he was not blaming Kitchener for the state of affairs. With operations varying "considerably in the different locations," the war was simply too multifaceted for any "single mind" to grasp.¹⁰⁴¹ Of equal importance, in Milner's opinion, was the need to incorporate civil considerations more thoroughly into British operations. "Throughout the whole country civil and military questions are clearly intertwined & constant . . . communication between the High Commissioner & the several Generals Commanding will be essential to a satisfactory result."¹⁰⁴² If implemented, this modification would have strengthened Milner's position at the expense of Kitchener's, but Roberts was not convinced by Milner's argument. While Milner's scheme might be a perfectly good one for peace time, Roberts insisted that "so long as columns have to take the field," it would be mistake for the army to make any change to the command structure.¹⁰⁴³ Speaking with Milner in mid-September about his suggestion for

¹⁰⁴⁰ Milner to Chamberlain, July 26, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/166.

¹⁰⁴¹ Milner to Roberts, July 29, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 16, ff. 86-9.

¹⁰⁴² Milner to Roberts, July 29, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 16, ff. 86-9.

¹⁰⁴³ Roberts to Milner, August 4, 1901, Roberts Papers 7101/23/122/1/ff. 304-5.

dividing up his command, Kitchener also argued, not surprisingly, that it was bad idea. He elatedly informed Roberts afterwards that Milner had apparently had second thoughts and had agreed that “it was quite a bad plan, and that you will hear nothing more about it from him.”¹⁰⁴⁴ In reply, Roberts assured Kitchener that Milner’s idea was “out of the question.” “It would inevitably result in his becoming the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa,” Roberts surmised accurately, and “you may depend upon such a proposal never being accepted here.”¹⁰⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Kitchener’s protests that conditions on the ground were preventing him from releasing significant numbers of troops as directed by the cabinet led several ministers, including, most vociferously, Chamberlain, to increasingly question his judgment. Ridiculing Kitchener’s complaints about “political interference,” Chamberlain suggested to Brodrick that “a soldier always seems to make a bogey of this and he cannot understand that the civilians are just as anxious as he is for military success and as little inclined to let political questions interfere with it.” Regarding the implementation of harsher measures proposed by Kitchener, including the mass deportation of captured Boers, Chamberlain maintained that while these “most drastic measures . . . might be right or wrong,” they were, nonetheless, “absolutely impractical.” While Chamberlain did not blame Kitchener for these “absurd proposals,” they indicated to him that Kitchener was “too much occupied with military matters to be able to give his mind to other things and we poor civilians have therefore to think for him.”¹⁰⁴⁶

Under increasing pressure from Hicks Beach to reduce expenditures on the war, Brodrick reached out to Kitchener in early September. He indicated that if more troops could not be

¹⁰⁴⁴ Kitchener to Roberts, September 13, 1901, Roberts Papers 7101/23/33/fo. 46.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Roberts to Kitchener, September 27, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/20/O40, TNA.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Chamberlain to Brodrick, August 20, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/40.

released from duty then the government would have to go to Parliament in December to request more money, a situation he wanted to try and avoid as he felt the resulting debate would only encourage the Boers. He proposed to announce the beginning of a withdrawal while simultaneously releasing a proclamation about the changed nature of the war.¹⁰⁴⁷ Brodrick learned from Milner that while Kitchener was still averse to significant troops reductions, the general had been able to make some cuts in army outlays by discharging some of the more expensive troops. "Taking things altogether," Milner wrote, "expenditure in South Africa on pay and rations should now begin to show substantial & progressive diminution." He warned Brodrick, however, that it would be "dangerous to press K. to reduce at this moment beyond what he is already doing." Only once military conditions had improved, especially conditions in the Cape Colony over which Milner constantly fretted, would larger reductions be possible.¹⁰⁴⁸

Chamberlain sympathized with Brodrick and feared that his younger colleague, who was caught between Kitchener's obstinacy and increasing pressure from the Treasury, might resign. "As regards Beach I am alarmed at the line of his letters to me," Chamberlain wrote to Brodrick in a show of support. "I have written him a few 'wise words' which probably will have no effect," he continued, "but I have tried to show him that however much we may sympathise with his desire to return the peace expedition it is perfectly clear that the war will leave consequences behind it, both here and in India, which must preclude a normal state of things for a year or

¹⁰⁴⁷ Brodrick to Kitchener, September 6, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y84, TNA; Brodrick to Kitchener, September 13, 1901, CAB 37/58/86, TNA.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Milner to Brodrick, September 11, 1901, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 119-24.

two.”¹⁰⁴⁹ Brodrick protested that he was “straining every nerve to decrease expenditure,” but with 315,000 men and 241,000 horses and mules in South Africa, there was only so much he could do. “I am doing all that a man here day after day can do,” he insisted,” short of ordering troops home whom K. cannot spare.”¹⁰⁵⁰

By the end of September Brodrick was sufficiently convinced by Kitchener’s and Milner’s assessment of the situation to present a memorandum to the cabinet, in which he declared that it was the firm opinion of those in charge on the ground that it was “impossible as well as impolitic to withdraw any body of troops.” Brodrick believed Kitchener was doing all he could to cut expenditures and any additional pressure on him would rebound on the cabinet upon any military reverse in the field.¹⁰⁵¹

A little more than two weeks later, Kitchener upped the ante by declaring that recent Boer operations in Natal had convinced him that the Boers were “as fanatically disposed to continue the war as ever.” Kitchener feared that the war “can only end by our catching all or almost all of them.” To do so would place a considerable strain on the horses and men and take a “considerable time.” “I think you should be prepared for this,” Kitchener warned Brodrick. “You must remember that as we go on catching Boers,” he continued, “we weed them out, and

¹⁰⁴⁹ Chamberlain to Brodrick, September 12, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/52. Chamberlain had written to Hicks Beach that day warning, “We cannot fairly say to all the experts ‘cut down the army by so many millions’ unless we have some broad idea of how the necessities of our defensive position can be met with the smaller sum,” and insisting that government would lose support if it insisted on “any serious reduction of military expenditure against the advise of all the experts . . . merely to save taxation and pay off debt.” Chamberlain to Hicks Beach, September 12, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/18/10.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Brodrick to Chamberlain, September 18, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/8/55.

¹⁰⁵¹ Memorandum by Brodrick, September 30, 1901, CAB 37/58/91, TNA.

the residue left in the field are generally their best men and therefore more difficult to deal with.”¹⁰⁵²

Milner may have agreed with Kitchener regarding the necessity to retain troops in the field, but he grew increasingly frustrated with him. It was becoming increasingly evident to Milner that his idea of setting up protected areas, an idea endorsed by the cabinet only a few months ago, was being set aside. At the end of October, Chamberlain wrote to him to ask on behalf of the cabinet for a review of the events since his return to South Africa, indicating that “it is a delicate matter interfering with military discretion but you might discuss this question with Kitchener & in any case I desire fullest report & explanation from you.”¹⁰⁵³ Chamberlain might have saved this line of ink for Milner was ready with his reply.

Milner made it clear that the civil-military relationship in South Africa was fraying rapidly. Insisting that he had not in any way altered his views about the conduct of the war since his return, he remained convinced that “to my lay mind, the present methods are not those calculated to bring it most easily to a conclusion, or, assuming that no definite conclusion is possible, to enable us to make the most of the conquered territories while the war is burning itself out.” Just as importantly, he did not think that his opinions, “frequently expressed,” had any weight with Kitchener, nor did he think any other man’s would. “He has probably more than the ordinary soldier’s contempt for the opinion of a civilian, &, though he is always perfectly friendly & ready to listen, I find discussion of these matters with him quite unprofitable & am indisposed to continue it,” he declared. Milner continued:

¹⁰⁵² Kitchener to Brodrick, October 18, 1901, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y95, TNA.

¹⁰⁵³ Chamberlain to Milner, October 31, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13.1.190.

It is impossible to *guide* a military dictator of very strong views & strong character. He can only conduct the war in his own way. The most that any man in my position could do, & that could only be done with very great difficulty, and possibly undesirable friction, would be very slightly to modify his operations. They would probably not be better for such modification, but rather worse. . . . My ideas about the proper way of dealing with our yet remaining enemies differ *in toto* from Kitchener's. . . . They may change the C. in Chief, but I think they will find it idle to try & direct him in his military action, whoever he is, & most assuredly they will never succeed in directing Kitchener. . . . In matters military, he will, I am convinced, never take any but his own line.¹⁰⁵⁴

In Milner's opinion, Kitchener had not "done badly," in fact in some ways he had performed "exceedingly well." The "great drawback" with Kitchener, Milner argued, was that he looked at all problems as purely military in nature.¹⁰⁵⁵

The question, of course, was what could be done about the situation, and for this question Milner, not surprisingly, had an answer. While there was no guarantee that a successor would possess Kitchener's "vigor & genius without being devoid of his professional narrow-mindedness," Milner, nevertheless, suggested that Kitchener had to go. Milner acknowledged that such a move might, and in all likelihood would, be difficult, but he asked whether it might not be possible to inform the general that "he is wanted in India, that, *as a military business*, his command of the Army there is at present, in the opinion of H.M.'s Govt., a bigger thing than the chasing of Boer guerillas." Milner believed that the British war effort "should get on better without him, not because any one else will conduct the war better, but because some one [*sic*] else *may*, if put in on that distinct understanding, obstruct the work of reconstruction less." "We let the enemy weigh too much on our minds," Milner insisted in conclusion; and the only way to

¹⁰⁵⁴ Milner to Chamberlain, November 1, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/191 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

make reverse the trend was to “let us make up our minds that the Boers will fight on; let us hunt them a hard as we can; but let us *simultaneously* go on with our own business.”¹⁰⁵⁶

The cabinet was split on whether Milner or Kitchener should be supported. While Selborne, and a few others, supported Milner; the majority, including Brodrick, Lansdowne, and Lord George Hamilton, the secretary of state for India, supported Kitchener. The former group agreed that Kitchener was exhausted and that conditions on the ground should allow them to make a change without difficulty. The latter group insisted that any change would be a sign of defeatism and would bring discredit upon the government.¹⁰⁵⁷ In the end, Salisbury’s opinion was decisive; and he sided with Kitchener. He criticized Milner for not indicating specifically what “evil” Kitchener had done. Not only were the “counts of the indictment” against Kitchener “very vague,” there was no explanation as to how another general would do a better job. “It is scarcely possible—not possible—that the change should be effected without conveying to the outside minds the belief that we are blaming K. severely,” Salisbury argued. “Our decision will be earnestly . . . passionately challenged,” he warned, “No one will take our bare estimate (even if we can all agree) as a ground for casting what must be a slight on a servant who has done and is doing valuable service, and reversing or changing the course of a military policy, which has had a measure of success, in favour of an indefinite experiment for whose issue we have no sort of guarantee: and which will always have this objection to it, that it is the judgment of laymen against the judgment of soldiers.”¹⁰⁵⁸ Chamberlain was forced to acknowledge the strength of

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid. (emphasis in the original).

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ministerial comments, c. November 15-16, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/192-7.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Salisbury to Chamberlain, November 26, 1901, Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/216.

Salisbury's argument, agreeing, "Nothing can be done to give the impression that we have lost confidence in Kitchener."¹⁰⁵⁹

Milner refused to accept his diminished position, especially after he had returned from home seemingly victorious in his power struggle with Kitchener over future British policy. Yet as Kitchener continued to pursue his policies, Milner increasingly found that his only outlet was to vent to Chamberlain. "Nothing wh[ich] has happened since has in the least altered the view I expressed . . . in November . . . about the desirability of terminating at the earliest moments the military dictatorship here," he explained to Chamberlain in early February. "It does great harm. I know it is a necessary evil, or at least public opinion—bar the pro-Boer—is unanimous that it is necessary, wh[ich] comes to the same thing. But let us at least make sure that it ceases as soon as it no longer is, or appears to be, necessary." Despite their fundamental disagreement on the conduct of the war, Milner insisted that the two men continued to remain on friendly terms:

You may say if you differ from him on a matter wh[ich] concerns you, why not have out, & if you can't carry your point refer to the Government for a decision? The answer is two fold [*sic*]. Firstly, such a decision, if contrary to the C[ommander]-in-C[hief]'s views, would only be formally obeyed. In the 101 small & devious ways, in wh[ich] it is possible for a man in possession of all the sources of power & channels of information, to avoid carrying out orders he does not agree with, things would go on as before. And secondly, and this is my strongest reason, I am personally quite determined to be no party to a domestic quarrel. I am too painfully impressed by the odiousness of the exhibition of differences amongst ourselves. I mean amongst leading Englishmen out here—& by the handle they afford to the enemy. . . . If I can't get on with my fellow Britons in the face of the enemy, I would much prefer quietly to ship off the stage, instead of affording our foes the unholy pleasure of witnessing a fight between us.¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁹ Chamberlain to Salisbury, November 26, 1901, Salisbury Papers, Class E Special Correspondence, Chamberlain, fo. 203.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Milner to Chamberlain, February 8, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/209.

He and Kitchener were so far apart in their views that “nobody is exactly to blame,” Milner conceded. An “honest complete fundamental difference of view” existed between the two men “on the whole S.A. question,” and as a result, they took opposite views on “almost every important practical issue.” While he admitted that “golden opportunities” were being thrown away, Milner did not see a way to break out of the “vicious circle” in which the British found themselves except by a “compact,” about which he exclaimed “Heaven forbid,” or by catching the very last Boer, which would take years. He was left with nothing but a hope for a change in the circumstances abroad, which might force Kitchener and a significant portion of the army to be withdrawn. If he had a “practicable” general in Kitchener’s stead, Milner continued to insist, “The bulk of the country would soon be quite quiet & we could scare off a few desperate districts till the fire gradually burned itself out.”¹⁰⁶¹

Chamberlain attempted to calm and bolster Milner. He was “at least as anxious” as Milner to “see the civil administration substituted for the military dictatorship,” but did not think it was possible to “put a limit on it.” “On the whole I see nothing for it but patience and a stiff upper lip,” he wrote, “but I would beg you not to be discouraged and in spite of difficulties to press forward on every possible occasion your scheme of resettlement and recultivation [*sic*] as well as developing the mining industries.” “If you find at any time that I can usefully intervene by bringing pressure to bear through the War Office,” he proposed in closing despite his earlier declaration of powerlessness, “pray let me know. I might be able to do so without mentioning your name if it seemed desirable to keep you out of it.”¹⁰⁶²

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶² Chamberlain to Milner, March 12, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/212.

Milner refused to be mollified, declaring his “disgust rather than discouragement” at the conduct of the military authorities. He insisted that the next military commander should be directed by “his own official chief” that he must “take his lead” from the civil administration. “I must be in a better position than that of a politely tolerated nuisance,” Milner asserted, otherwise repatriation and other post-conflict issues would be “muddled in a way which will gravely compromise the future.”¹⁰⁶³

By 1902, many British army officers felt sympathy with their Boer opponents, even admiring their ability to continue their resistance despite the overwhelming odds against them.¹⁰⁶⁴ Kitchener picked up on some of Chamberlain’s comments in the House of Commons, in which colonial secretary outlined the views of the government regarding a potential settlement with the Boers. While unconditional surrender was still the official British policy, Chamberlain’s comments indicated that the government was not determined to be draconian in its dealings with the Boers. While the cabinet ministers insisted that the Boers acknowledge their defeat, they also pledged that there would be no confiscation of property and held out the possibility of a large amnesty for rebels.¹⁰⁶⁵ Kitchener thought this last point was the “crux of the situation” as he believed the Boers were holding out on a “point of honor” not to desert the rebels who had joined their cause.¹⁰⁶⁶ Beyond the need for a generous amnesty policy and

¹⁰⁶³ Milner to Chamberlain, April 6, 1902, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 194-7.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Keith Surridge, “All You Soldiers Are What We Call Pro-Boer: The Military Critique of the South African War, 1899-1902,” *History* 82 (1997): 582–600.

¹⁰⁶⁵ House of Commons debate, January 20, 1902, *Hansard*, 4th series, vol. 101, cols. 360-8; available from <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1902/jan/20/south-africa-conduct-of-the-war> (accessed March 15, 2012).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Kitchener to Brodrick, January 24, 1902, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y121, TNA.

money to help rebuild farms, preferably in the form of grants, Kitchener felt the most important issue was the length of time before the British granted the Boers the right of self-government. Because “none of them like the idea of being handed down to posterity as traitors who gave their country away,” Kitchener recommended fixing a period of two or three years.¹⁰⁶⁷ Brodrick advised Kitchener that the government was unlikely to agree to a firm timetable as it was “the one quid pro quo” the British got for all their “trouble & expenditure.”¹⁰⁶⁸

Milner, not surprisingly, still held polar opposite views as to the desirability of negotiating with the Boer leaders. He insisted that there should not be another “post-Majuba settlement” and that the only responsible way forward was to keep applying steady military pressure on the Boers. “It is no use to wheedle,” he declared to representatives of the Johannesburg Town Council in early January, “the only thing is imperturbably to squeeze, and to keep our clemency and our conciliation—both excellent qualities in their place—for the Boers who surrendered, instead of lavishing our blandishments on those who still continue to fight.”¹⁰⁶⁹ He believed that the time to talk about amnesty was when the war was over, when he would be “probably be among its strongest advocates.” To suggest an amnesty “in the midst of war and rebellion, and above all to suggest *buying peace by amnesty*,” was “extraordinarily unwise.” He felt the Boer cause was dying; and, thus, his main fear was that the British themselves might make a rash decision, and, thereby, “apply violent tonics to revive it.”¹⁰⁷⁰

¹⁰⁶⁷ Kitchener to Brodrick, March 30, 1902, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y136, TNA.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Brodrick to Kitchener, April 12, 1902, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y139, TNA.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Headlam, *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1899-1905*, 2:319–23.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Milner to Clinton E. Dawkins, January 16, 1902, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 221, ff. 172-6 (emphasis in the original).

Initially, Chamberlain gave his support to Milner. He informed his subordinate that he did not think there was “any influential opinion” in favor of anything short of unconditional surrender, even though he admitted that there seemed to be “a flavour of medieval cruelty about unconditional surrender from which we shrink.” He hoped that there would be no negotiations except for the arrangement of “a general laying down of arms,” but insisted that Milner could rely upon him “to refuse any terms which seem . . . likely to embarrass us hereafter.”¹⁰⁷¹

While Milner continued to hope that the war would be settled by “continuance of captures and surrenders” rather than negotiations, he acknowledged the necessity of the latter as public feeling in Great Britain seemed to demand some effort at reaching an agreement.¹⁰⁷² His “greatest difficulty” was Kitchener, who Milner admitted was “extremely adroit” in his management of the negotiations. The problem was that the two men did not seem to be following the same script because the general did not seem to care what he gave away as concessions.¹⁰⁷³ Milner was concerned that Kitchener would enter into political discussions and he was simply “not a good judge of the effect” various proposals would have on post-war South Africa. Worried that Kitchener was “extremely anxious to end the war and get away,” Milner felt that the general was “very likely to make dangerous concessions without quite realizing the extent of them.”¹⁰⁷⁴ He suggested that the British cause would be much better served if the government would send identical telegrams both Kitchener and him, from the War Office and Colonial Office, respectively, with definitive instructions on the issues and initial terms to be

¹⁰⁷¹ Chamberlain to Milner, January 20, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/207.

¹⁰⁷² Milner to Chamberlain, April 14, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/225.

¹⁰⁷³ Milner to Chamberlain, April 16, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/228.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Milner to Chamberlain, April 10, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/220.

explored in the negotiations “in order to avoid any appearance of distinguishing between us.” To remove any ambiguity, Milner recommend the telegrams include the explicit notification that the other man was being similarly instructed.¹⁰⁷⁵

Chamberlain’s support was crucial to Milner, but by April, Chamberlain was backing off of his support to stand firm. He still affirmed his desire for unconditional surrender, but he cautioned Milner that his opinion was not shared by everyone in the cabinet, let alone in Parliament, and “unless the issue was clear and supported by strong argument we should be seriously attacked if we allow the negotiations to go off on what could with any show of reason be alleged to be an insufficient cause.” He lamented that “no civilian can understand why 200,000 men and a million & a half a week are required to put an end to the resistance of 8000 farmers who probably do not possess £10 apiece.”¹⁰⁷⁶

Milner reacted by softening some of his recommendations, although he insisted that the Boers should not be offered peace in the form of a treaty, but must instead “be content to trust H.M.G. to do what they declared that they intend do.”¹⁰⁷⁷ He was willing to concede that ordinary rebels who had not committed crimes under the “cloak of war” might be disfranchised for life instead of being tried for treason. His leniency had limits, however, and he was willing to “once more be represented as the evil genius, who always prevents peace & conciliation.” He argued that he simply could not do otherwise because he knew he was right. The Boers were, he

¹⁰⁷⁵ Milner to Chamberlain, April 21, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/234.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Chamberlain to Milner, April 9, 1902, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 171, ff. 252-8.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Milner to Chamberlain, April 14, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/225.

declared, “past masters of the ‘Kaffir bargain’,” and thus could not be trusted. If they really wanted peace, Milner was confident they would “accept what we are prepared to give them.”¹⁰⁷⁸

Brodrick, meanwhile, advised Kitchener that the government was prepared to agree some form of a monetary settlement and to grant a liberal amnesty policy for rebels. The ministers were not, however, willing to make any promises regarding a timeline for Boer self-government. While Brodrick cautioned Kitchener that it would be a “misfortune” to be overly lenient to the rebels, he also assured the general that the ministers trusted that he was in a position “to judge better than we are whether our feeling is correct.”¹⁰⁷⁹

While Milner remained anxious about his ability to control the negotiations with the Boers, he also remained adamant that if the government made a “bad peace,” it would do so over his “political corpse.”¹⁰⁸⁰ He complained again to Chamberlain about being “yoked to a person, who not only acts behind your back but is capable of saying to another *gentlemen* that he should try and deceive people by ‘throwing doubts’ on the action of his own Govt.” Milner was convinced that this sort of “crookedness & trickery” simply did not pay. If Kitchener was going to be allowed to “control the settlement” or interfere with his attempts to do so, the high commissioner made it clear that he “had much rather be somewhere else.”¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁷⁸ Milner to Chamberlain, April 21, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/235.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Brodrick to Kitchener, April 19, 1902, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y141, TNA; Brodrick to Kitchener, April 26, 1902, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y144, TNA.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Milner to Hanbury Williams, April 30, 1902, in Headlam, *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1899-1905*, 2:341–2.

¹⁰⁸¹ Milner to Chamberlain, May 9, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/247 (emphasis in the original).

As things turned out, Milner was unable to direct events to his satisfaction. Milner thought Kitchener's policy was "very wrong" and his methods "very crooked" and full of "awkward promises and half-promises," which he hoped the "great Downing Street Jelly-Fish" would not sanction.¹⁰⁸² When Milner rejected a Boer request for a monetary settlement outright, labeling it as "detestable" and "in the nature of an audacious try-on" because it would result in the British "virtually paying" for the war the Boers had waged against them, Kitchener supported the request because he felt the issue was "vital to peace."¹⁰⁸³ Brodrick backed Kitchener on this issue, although admitting to the general that "we must find a way . . . to put it which will be less crude & offensive to loyalist sentiment both here & in S. Africa than that originally sketched out."¹⁰⁸⁴ Milner was once again reduced to complaining of his "weak position" in the negotiations, with Kitchener failing to support him "even in the presence of Boers."¹⁰⁸⁵

The final peace treaty signed at Vereeniging was a political defeat for Milner. Before the Vereeniging meetings began, he had complained:

Indeed it is that shakiness at home, which is at the bottom of all the mischief. If we had that mark of the nations which prevail, the overwhelming public opinion at once *condemns and renders impossible* any man, whether statesman, or soldier, or other, who works to the right or left in a national struggle, or goes otherwise than straight and single heartedly for the goal. . . . Not only pro-Boerism, but Rosebery's attitude, St. John's attitude, Kitchener's attitude would have been unthinkable in the Germany of 1870.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸² Milner to (illegible), May 11, 1902, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.688, ff. 68-9.

¹⁰⁸³ Milner to Chamberlain, May 21, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/254.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Brodrick to Kitchener, May 24, 1902, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/22/Y151, TNA.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Milner to Chamberlain, May 21, 1902, Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/255.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Milner to (illegible), May 11, 1902, Milner Papers, MS. Eng. hist. c.688, ff. 68-9 (emphasis in the original).

While claiming to a confidant afterward that he “only just saved” the final terms of the peace deal from being even more disastrous, he still was forced to admit that he had been unable to prevent a “tremendous blunder” from being made. He insisted that he could not be blamed for this defeat, however. It was simply “more than any man can do to avert the consequences of the ignorance, self-sufficiency, proneness to optimistic self-delusion and fetish-worship of shibboleths, which at once resume their sway over John Bull, when you cease kicking him.”¹⁰⁸⁷ Looking back at the end of the month at the “awful ten days” around the final push for a peace deal, Milner lamented that “with our sentimentality, our party system, our Government by Committee, our ‘Mandarins’, our ‘Society’ and our Generals . . . the game is just hopeless.”¹⁰⁸⁸

The formal demarcation of powers between the civil government and the military commander prevented the British from achieving any semblance of unity of command in South Africa. Milner and the British generals were not accountable to the same superior in London. Milner could complain to and cajole Chamberlain all he wanted, but sitting in the Colonial Office, Chamberlain was not in a position to order Butler, Buller, Roberts, or Kitchener to do anything. The colonial secretary could only rely on use his powers of persuasion to convince Lansdowne and Brodrick, individually, or the cabinet, collectively, to promote more cooperation between the men on the spot.

During the buildup to the war, Milner had been able to bend opinion in the cabinet to support his political agenda over the military advice of the senior military officers in South Africa. The disastrous initial two months of the campaign, however, shifted this dynamic. After

¹⁰⁸⁷ Milner to James Rendel, August 2, 1902, Milner Papers, Ms. Eng. hist. c.688, ff. 111-2.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Headlam, *The Milner Papers: South Africa, 1899-1905*, 2:364.

Roberts arrived to correct the military situation, Milner never regained the upper hand in his relationship with his generals. Roberts had saved the British war effort and was, therefore, generally immune to public criticism from his civilian superiors. When Milner expressed his concern over the state of the Cape Colony's defenses in 1900, he was censored. When he expressed his frustration over Robert's reluctance to return refugees to the former Boer republics in order to get the economy restarted, he was ignored. Roberts's short-term needs always outweighed Milner's long-term ones.

Milner was unable to reassert his dominance even after Roberts returned home a hero. The prolonged guerrilla campaign enabled Kitchener to stiff-arm any interference in military matters, which he defined in the broadest terms. Roberts, who had been promoted to commander-in-chief, assisted him in this effort to retain the direction of military policy. Twice Milner attempted to have Kitchener eased out of the picture and twice he failed. The cabinet decided that Kitchener was indispensable. Subsequently, his policy of attrition warfare and negotiation with more lenient peace terms gained the support of the majority cabinet, including Chamberlain.

Conclusion

Between 1899 and 1902, Great Britain and the United States fought two difficult wars of empire. The former struggled to overcome the “only tribe in southern Africa that still defied the might of the British Empire,” overcoming stiff Boers resistance only through an enormous investment in blood and treasure.¹⁰⁸⁹ The latter, meanwhile, fought a less organized and less well-armed foe, but, nonetheless, struggled to bring the disparate elements of the Filipino insurgency under American control and to establish the structures of government in the archipelago. The imperial ‘baselines’ of the two states had been certainly very different. In 1899, Great Britain was “the imperial nation *par excellence*” with an “imperial movement” that was more “self-conscious and widespread” than in any imperial rival.¹⁰⁹⁰ While the popularity of imperialism with the lower classes remains a topic of debate, what is clear is that the very vastness of the British Empire meant that the British government was confronted with perceived threats on many fronts and was forced to prioritize between many competing vital interests.¹⁰⁹¹ The Americans, in contrast, were new to the imperial game, at least outside the western hemisphere, and the combination of their growing economic strength—the United States “seemed to have *all* the economic advantages which *some* other [imperial] powers possessed *in part*, but *none* of their disadvantages”—and their limited existing commitments gave the American leadership more freedom of action.¹⁰⁹² In a sense, British and American leaders were

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ferguson, *Empire*, 226.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 69 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁰⁹¹ For two views on opposite ends of the debate on the popularity of imperialism, see Porter, *Britannia’s Burden*, 125; Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 80.

¹⁰⁹² Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, 243 (emphasis in the original).

faced with two different questions. For the British it was a question of “why”—why they should commit forces to South Africa instead of the Indian frontier or the Far East—while for the Americans it was a question of “why not”—why should they not keep the entire Philippine archipelago instead of acquiring basing rights or withdrawing altogether.

The constitutional and administrative structures of British and American political systems and the processes through which demands were transmitted to and instructions were transmitted from those national political authorities, who ultimately formulated and implemented policies of expansion, provides a critical window of examination into the comparative dynamics of British and American intervention in South Africa and the Philippines, respectively. This brief examination of these two contemporary conflicts has revealed the contrasts between the British and American dynamics of decision-making and policy execution. War, especially guerilla war, blurs the boundaries between civil and military responsibilities, particularly when extraneous political factors oblige a government to take a more ardent interest in the management of the conflict. In South Africa and the Philippines, the fundamental constitutional question arose: How was the ultimate responsibility of the civilian government reconciled with the need to give military experts the freedom to make military decisions? This brief examination highlighted the fault lines that existed between the senior civilian ministers and military leaders both at home and in the periphery. While they generally agreed on the ultimate strategic objectives, they disagreed, often vehemently, on how to achieve them.

One of the key functions of a prime minister under the British system, beyond dispensing “certain amount of ecclesiastical patronage and acting as a sort of intermediary between the sovereign and the people,” is to play the role of an active managing director of the cabinet,

serving as the “foreman of his gang.”¹⁰⁹³ While Salisbury, as prime minister, occupied the most prominent position within the British cabinet system, he was a firm believer in principle of collective responsibility and was reluctant to enforce his own view on the cabinet despite not always seeing eye-to-eye with the rest of his colleagues. Granting his colleagues a wide margin of autonomy within their respective ministries, his general approach to cabinet management, exacerbated by bouts of ill health and the illness and ultimate death of his wife, prevented him from closely monitoring the situation. With Salisbury’s hand increasingly off the tiller, control over foreign and colonial policy regarding the South African situation passed to other members of his cabinet, who were often divided as to whether the situation could be resolved by negotiation or only by war. As a result, the British failed to send the necessary costly signals to the Boers through the sending of enough reinforcements to deter them from military action.

While Salisbury struggled to control the intra-cabinet dynamics within the Unionist government and, as a consequence, to devise a coordinated policy response to the increasing Anglo-Boer tensions in the months leading up to the South African War, McKinley was able to dominate the decisions regarding whether to send military forces to the Philippine Islands and, after the defeat of the Spanish, to annex the archipelago. The structure and dynamics of the presidential system in the United States helped the president to maintain control over the pace of events. A skilled practitioner of the dark arts of politics and man management, he often appears as a passive figure in many histories of the war because he succeeded in dominating through others. Keeping himself in the background, he fostered the illusion that others were fully vested to work out American policy vis-à-vis the Philippine Islands. Despite his public declaration that

¹⁰⁹³ Sydney Brooks, “Lord Salisbury,” *North American Review* 174, no. 549 (August 1902): 153.

the “final determination” of American policy in the islands was in the hands of the “eminent men” of the Paris Peace Commission, he did not let them act as independent agents in the negotiations with Spain.¹⁰⁹⁴ He controlled the pace of events and was resolute in keeping open the option of American control of the islands until he had decided on the best course of action. The “Philippine Question” was a sudden development, an event with no prior advocates, no press clamor, and no “popular” agitation. With Manila “in hand,” McKinley faced an unavoidable question, what to do with the new acquisition? His principal advisors, his cabinet and the Paris peace commissioners, were divided on the issue. For both groups, moreover, it was not a yes-or-no, all-or-nothing choice, since partition, with a range of options, was possible. Over the course of several months, McKinley shifted his position from “nothing” to “everything.” Once he decided that keeping the entire archipelago was critical to American interests, he gradually modified the range of acceptable peace terms and began his famous fall speaking tour. He did respond to the “the voice of the people” during this tour, but shaped the narrative of his decision by invoking themes of national self-congratulation. Far from modifying his views in such a way that he “took little account of his own wishes,” McKinley simply asked his audiences to signify their approval of the decision he had already made and the actions he had already set in motion.¹⁰⁹⁵

The British already possessed a sophisticated administrative system staffed by experienced personnel with regional expertise, but this proved more of a hindrance to policy implementation than a sufficient condition for conducting a successful counterinsurgency

¹⁰⁹⁴ McKinley, *Speeches and Addresses of William McKinley, from March 1, 1897 to May 30, 1900*, 135.

¹⁰⁹⁵ May, *Imperial Democracy*, 259–60.

campaign. Throughout the British war in South Africa, no single individual ever had sole responsibility in the cabinet for the direction of the war effort. While Chamberlain is inextricably linked to the war and is often the focus of attention on the histories written about the conflict, he did not have the authority to manage the war alone. He had to rely, instead, on the cooperation of the secretary of state for war and this cooperation was not always forthcoming. While Chamberlain was responsible for the wartime government in the Cape Colony and Natal and the planning for the post-war settlement in South Africa, Lansdowne and Brodrick ran the military side of things.

In comparing the linkage process in America imperialism with that found in British imperialism, one is struck initially by the greater simplicity and straightforwardness of the American example. If Great Britain “conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind,” as Sir John Seeley famously wrote in his 1883 history of the British Empire, then the United States certainly had an even less comprehensive plan.¹⁰⁹⁶ The United States approached colonial management in a variety of ways. The establishment of a formal American empire, which saw its most complete manifestation in the Philippines, was something new in American history. For the first time, the United States occupied colonies that would never become states and controlled peoples that would never become citizens. Lacking, for the most part, local imperial interests, the United States also lacked a complicating substructure of channels for the transmission of imperial demands and orders between the metropole and the periphery. Nor did

¹⁰⁹⁶ John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1920), 10.

the United States ever develop any kind of independent colonial affairs office with its own representative at the highest executive level. As British historian James Bryce observed in 1897, “Britain has had painful experience of these difficulties in her own colonies; yet in her monarchical system and her colonial service she possesses machinery much more flexible and more adaptable to these conditions than the far more consistently democratic system of the United States has ever possesses or seems capable of constructing. In other words, the problems which the United States would have to solve . . . would be, for the United States, perfectly new and extremely perplexing problems.”¹⁰⁹⁷

The Americans, however, managed to successfully make things up as they went along. Brought into the administration to replace the thoroughly discredited Alger, Root was McKinley’s point man for the war and the president gave him broad authority to manage the war effort. Root oversaw the establishment of a civilian government in the islands and the subsequent transition from military control to civil control. While the American generals resented the arrival of the civilian commissioners and the ultimate the loss of their executive authority in the islands, the establishment of a unified structure under a single executive branch department was critical to the success of the American campaign in the Philippines. While the Americans struggled with many of the same friction points as the British, Root was ultimately the boss of both Taft and the military generals with whom the governor had to deal. When push came to shove, Root was able to enforce his authority over both sides of the civil-military divide.

Salisbury’s government maintained British paramountcy in the South Africa, but failed to cover itself in glory. What Vietnam was to the United States, the Boer War very nearly was to

¹⁰⁹⁷ James Bryce, “The Policy of Annexation for America,” *Forum* 24 (December 1897): 392.

the British Empire, in two respects: its huge cost in both lives and money and the divisions it opened up back home. The British had suffered reverses in Africa before, against the Zulu *impis* at Isandhlwana in 1879 and the Boers at Majuba Hill in 1881, but this was on a much larger scale. As Amery reflected in *The Times History of the War in South Africa*, the losses inflicted by the Boers were “a shock to a generation accustomed to the cheap glories of savage warfare.”¹⁰⁹⁸ Rudyard Kipling’s “Tommy Atkins” and the heroes of the “thin red line” might have been enough to secure the British Empire in the past, but they appeared no longer sufficient. In early 1900, one trenchant commentator warned that unless root-and-branch military reforms took place, “the historian of the future will have to summarise the causes of the decline and fall of the British Empire in three pregnant words—suicide from imbecility.”¹⁰⁹⁹

When McKinley decided the acquisition of colonies was necessary both for reasons of practical advantage and morality, his administration eschewed the traditional isolationism that had guided much of American foreign policy in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and established the United States as an imperial power. The war in the Philippines, which has been described as “a series of regional struggles, bewildering in their complexity,” remains among the most important early counterinsurgency campaigns in American military history.¹¹⁰⁰ The Americans emerged victorious through the implementation of a policy that balanced the carrot of persuasion with the stick of coercion, military conquest with political and economic development. Though MacArthur, like Otis, resented civilian intrusion by the commission on his

¹⁰⁹⁸ L. S. Amery, ed., *The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902*, vol. 3 (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1900), 3.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Review of Review, XXI, January 1900, 8.

¹¹⁰⁰ In nearly half of the provinces (34 of 77) there was no fighting between the Americans and the Filipinos. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 185.

prerogatives of command, the commission, especially once it began to exercise its legislative function in September 1900, ensured that there was a constant and serious focus on the problems of governance, regardless of the military situation. The commission, by purposely identifying itself as a civil institution not controlled by the military, was able to disassociate itself with military operations and establish legitimacy as a governing organization separate from the military. The desire for a quick transition to civil rule strongly influenced the occupation. While army governance continued in the islands in some form for fifteen years, the army relinquished executive control of the occupation to Taft in 1901, a full year before President Roosevelt declared military operations against Filipino insurgents complete.

Although the insurgents were defeated in both the South African War and the Philippine War, the conflicts undermined the general enthusiasm for imperialism in both metropolises. Casualty rates for both the British and the Americans were higher than in previous “small wars”; and because both powers had been obligated to call on a mass of new volunteers to fill out the ranks, the casualties were felt beyond the insular world of the professional arms. In South Africa, the British won the war, but lost the peace. When the Liberals won a large majority in Parliament in 1906, they immediately began devolving power to the South African whites. Despite Milner’s best-laid plans, British immigration never took off in the numbers needed to establish a British majority in any of the South African colonies. The Boers, consequently, found themselves, the rulers not only of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, but also of Cape Colony and Natal, which together formed the Union of South African in 1910. While Woodrow Wilson was correct that the war with Spain “transformed” America, enabling it to step forth “into the arena of the world,” Americans quickly lost interest in their empire and

eventually found it a problematic part of their history.¹¹⁰¹ The lack of significant domestic support for an American colony in the Philippines led to steady transition of governance from American to Filipino control. In 1907, the Filipinos convened their first elected assembly; and in 1916, the Jones Act promised eventual independence. The archipelago became an autonomous commonwealth beginning in 1936, and the United States granted the Filipinos their independence on July 4, 1946, forty-two years to the day after Roosevelt's declaration of peace.

¹¹⁰¹ Woodrow Wilson, "The Ideals of America," *Atlantic Monthly* 90, no. 6 (December 1902): 726.

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