
**A historical analysis of the controversial relationship between the
United States and Puerto Rico in the twentieth century:
It takes two to tango**

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Abstract

The United States is in a curious relationship with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, a U.S. unincorporated territory. Historiography concerning the political status of Puerto Rico indicates a clearly distinguishable debate between critics (mostly non-U.S. scholars) on the one hand who argue that the relationship between the continental States and Puerto Rico resembles that of a colonial relation and U.S. scholars on the other hand that avoid addressing the subject matter or put forth official, but ambiguous terms to defend the relationship. The first group desires that the ambiguous relationship that has existed since the U.S. acquisition of the island in 1898 should undergo a change so that Puerto Rico's status becomes internationally accepted. However, U.S. Congress, which has the final jurisdiction over Puerto Rico's status, seems to ignore the many requests regarding a change in Puerto Rico's status. The situation seems in sharp contrast with the way the United States desires to globally present itself as a supporter of self-determination.

I assume that, despite the fact that U.S. Congress did not prioritize a status change for Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans have had beneficial interests in their unique relationship with the United States and that this has had a role in why the territorial commonwealth situation as it was constructed in 1952 is still intact. This thesis explores the underlying interests that both the United States and Puerto Rico have in their relationship and thereby focuses on three periods in history: 1898, the acquisition period; 1950s, the post-war era; and the 2000s, for recent developments.

Keywords: Puerto Rico, United States, status, twentieth century, debate

‘A typical vice of American politics is the avoidance of saying anything real on real issues.’

President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919),
26th President of the United States (1901-1909),
A speech in New York, 07-09-1903

Acknowledgments

The subject of the present study drew my attention some years ago when I travelled to Puerto Rico. When I was on the plane and had to fill out a customs declaration form, I noticed that it required passengers to write down the name of the federal state in which they were going to reside. This confused me: I knew that Puerto Rico was part of the United States, but was it a state? When I asked my co-travellers, they briefly doubted before they said ‘yes, Puerto Rico is a state of the United States.’ I knew that this was not correct, but it seemed the most logical option to fill out on the form. From that moment, I have been interested in the relationship that Puerto Rico has with the U.S. mainland – because, if U.S. residents are unsure about the political status of Puerto Rico, what would outsiders know about the matter? And, more importantly, what would Puerto Ricans have answered to my question?

I would first and foremost like to thank my supervisor Ferry de Goey, who supported me throughout the structuring and writing process. Thank you for your feedback and motivating meetings. Each time I left your office, my thoughts were either a) structured (mostly in the beginning of the process) or b) accompanied by many more new, but inspiring thoughts. Thank you for your patience and support!

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‘My personal mission’ is hereby formally articulated: I hope that the friends I made in Puerto Rico, for whom I desired to create awareness on the topic amongst European scholars, will some day soon benefit from international attention on their situation.

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List of abbreviations

CEE	Puerto Rico's State Commission on Elections
DDRS	Declassified Documents Reference System
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GNP	Gross National Product
PIP	Puerto Rican Independence Party
PNP	New Progressive Party
PNPR	Puerto Rican Nationalist Party
PPD	Popular Democratic Party
PU	Union Party
RSC	Roosevelt Study Center
WWII	Second World War

Historical timeline of events

1898	Spanish-American War; Treaty of Paris establishes peace and settles for Spain to cede her colony Puerto Rico to the United States; United States installs a military government in Puerto Rico; political status in hands of U.S. Congress.
1900	Foraker Act makes Puerto Rico a U.S. territory with a civil government and a leader appointed by the President.
Early 20 th century	Series of trials called 'Insular Cases' determines that Puerto Rico is an unincorporated, organized territory of the United States.
1917	Jones Act grants Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship, a bill of rights, and representation in U.S. Congress.
1950	Public Law 600 grants Puerto Ricans the right to create their own constitutional government.
1952	Passing of the commonwealth constitution and status.
1953	Puerto Rico is removed from the U.N. list of non-self-governing territories after the U.S. delegate reports that the commonwealth relationship is based upon a mutual compact.
1967	First Puerto Rican political status plebiscite; commonwealth proposal receives majority.
1993	Second political status plebiscite; commonwealth proposal wins with slight majority over statehood proposal.
1998	Third political status plebiscite; results were inconclusive due to a majority of votes for 'none of the above'.
2012	Fourth political status plebiscite; the results caused for a debate in Puerto Rico regarding whether the statehood proposal won or whether the amount of blank ballots should be calculated, which would leave the results inconclusive.

Map of Puerto Rico



Figure A *Map of Puerto Rico*

“Source: Central Intelligence Agency, ‘Puerto Rico: territory of the US with commonwealth status’, *The world factbook*: www.cia.gov (07-06-2016)”

1 Introduction

1.1 Puerto Rico and the United States: A contentious relationship

Puerto Rico, one of the several thousand islands in the Caribbean Sea, is situated southeast of North America and northeast of Latin America (cf. Figure 1-1). The island therefore is one of the nearest landmasses to the continental United States. The United States and Puerto Rico have developed a relationship that is worth studying. It appears that their relationship is not only extant because of the obvious geographical link, but also because of political, economic, and military reasons. These reasons are explored in this thesis.



Figure 1-1 *Geographic location of Puerto Rico*

“Source: Central Intelligence Agency, ‘Puerto Rico: territory of the US with commonwealth status’, *The world factbook*: www.cia.gov (07-06-2016)”

Due to the U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War of 1898, several Caribbean and Pacific islands that were ruled by the Kingdom of Spain were ceded to the United States by means of war tribute. Puerto Rico was one of these islands. From the moment that the United States acquired Puerto Rico onwards, many news articles and other documents can be found that wonder what role the new acquisition has received and will receive within the U.S. super power.¹ When the enduring issue of Puerto Rico’s status

¹ E.G. Bourne, ‘A trained colonial civil service’, *The North American review*, 10-1899. (‘Porto Rico is [unlikely] ever to be populated by English-speaking Americans. Our ideas (...) will pervade these islands to some extent, but (...) their civilization will [remain] Spanish.’); Unknown author, ‘No title’, *Life*, 01-09-1898, 164. (‘What does the capture commit us to, how are we to govern Porto Rico – if we must govern it at all? (...) We are all agreed that it is a great thing for Spain to get rid of all her colonies, but we are not nearly so appreciative of their unprofitableness to us’).

was brought to the United Nations in the 1950s, the domestic debate on the status of Puerto Rico received international attention.² Since the Sixties, many critical works expose the story of an island with a dubious status. The United States has recurrently presented itself as a supporter of self-determination and a criticizer of colonialism since its own independence of the British Empire in 1776.³ It has claimed to be a destined land with a mission interwoven in its foreign policy to extend its civilized borders and thereby liberate dependent peoples. Nevertheless, most authors find a discrepancy between the way in which the nation desires to position itself on the one hand and its actual practice with regard to its island dependencies, amongst which Puerto Rico, on the other hand (cf. Appendix I for a list of U.S. territories).⁴ Both international and domestic authors have argued that there appear to be colonial ties between the United States and the island. The debate on the political status of Puerto Rico continues until today and seems to be ‘unending.’⁵

Considering the fact that the issue on the status of Puerto Rico has crossed local borders and became of international concern, it is interesting to study its relationship with the continental States. The scope of this thesis embraces the mutual interests of the United States and Puerto Rico in their relationship since the island’s acquisition in 1898 until today to understand why it is still extant. The frequent-debated and –at least to lay people- unclear status of Puerto Rico will be examined at various moments in time, leading up to a discussion of factors that caused the debate on the enduring relationship between the island and the United States.

Accordingly, this thesis attempts to come closer to the truth concerning the issue of the political status of Puerto Rico, investigating not merely the statuses the island has officially been granted, but also the underlying mutual interests between the island and the mainland. Its aim is to deduce a connection between the U.S. mainland as well as Puerto Rican perspective and developments that had a role in the island’s contentious status.

² R. Carr, *Puerto Rico: A colonial experiment* (New York 1984) 339.

³ E.g. *President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points* (1918): avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp (08-07-2016).

⁴ G.C. Herring, *From colony to superpower: U.S. foreign relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press 2008) 1-10; List in Appendix I is based on *The world factbook*: www.cia.gov (06-07-2016).

⁵ S. Bhana, *The United States and the development of the Puerto Rican status question, 1936-1968* (Kansas 1975) 2.

1.2 Research questions and hypothesis

This thesis examines the debated relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States by delving into their mutual history. It wonders what has been the interest of the United States in Puerto Rico since its colonization in 1898 and how this relates to the interest of the Puerto Ricans in the United States until today. The following sub-questions are constructed to facilitate a historical study that can elaborate on the core issue:

- What is the interest of the United States in a relationship with Puerto Rico?
- What is the interest of Puerto Rico in a relationship with the United States?
- What is the official political status of Puerto Rico?

To establish a sensible conclusion regarding Puerto Rico's status with respect to the United States, the sub-questions are repeated for three significant eras in history: 1898, in which the United States acquired Puerto Rico; the 1950s, during which a process of decolonization started for many dependencies; and the 2000s, for recent developments in the Puerto Rican status dilemma. Accordingly, the overarching questions for each period of time will be:

- Why did the United States acquire Puerto Rico in 1898?
- Why did the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico continue in the post-war era?
- Why does the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States remain unaltered in current times?

I wonder why, after the infamous Puerto Rican revolts during the first half of the twentieth century, Puerto Rico is still in a relationship with the United States. When I first thought about it, I reckoned that the United States probably did not allow the rebelling Puerto Rican people to adopt a more definitive, internationally recognized status. However, it is unlikely that if Puerto Ricans really desired to see a change, they have not been able to arrange so in what is more than one hundred years. Therefore, I hypothesize that the answer to the main research question will illustrate that not only the United States, but also the island of Puerto Rico benefit from their relationship and that this is why it continues to last.

I expect that Puerto Rico, in its capacity as U.S. territory, has had several functions that were vital to U.S. dominion on the Western Hemisphere. I thereby assume that this will undermine the times in which the United States claimed that it was expanding because of a providential mission. For instance, Puerto Rico will have

functioned as beacon of the rising supremacy of the United States in 1898. In the 1950s, Puerto Rico probably functioned as a stepping-stone towards Latin America, from which the United States could control the Caribbean and Central America. I expect the relationship to be slightly awkward in recent times. This has to do with international engagement: in 1898, the United States probably received more national than international criticism on the possession of territories, as Americans once were oppressed themselves, whereas Europeans fervently engaged in colonialism; in the 1950s, during which European powers started a process of decolonization for their former colonies, the United States was probably criticized for having territories, but will have been able to argue their necessity at times of the Cold War; in the 2000s, it seems unlikely that the United States can possess a territory with a dubious status.

From the other side, I expect that the special relationship between the two entities is beneficial for Puerto Ricans, too. I think that the small island of Puerto Rico prefers to be associated with the global super power rather than trying to manage its own defence and international relations, especially after more than a century of close, interdependent relations with the United States.

1.3 Theoretical concepts

This section discusses the main theoretical concepts that occur throughout this thesis. Comments on colonial ties between Puerto Rico and the United States are reserved for chapter two, which will touch upon the historiographical debate that I enter with this study. Chapter three discusses late nineteenth and early twentieth century U.S. expansionism. Therefore, I will make some comments on the concept of imperialism that will serve as background information for that chapter. As Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, I will also discuss some essentials to understand the concept of territories. For several decades, U.S. Congress has proposed recommendations to resolve the status issue of Puerto Rico. The status suggestions that were made in recent U.S. governmental reports are introduced below, in order to familiarize the reader with the status options for Puerto Rico.

For **imperialism**, a combination of Münkler's and Malavet's definitions is used. Münkler provides the idea that imperialism holds the unilateral will to expand for political or economic motives.⁶ This means that one party imposes its will on another. Malavet's definition of imperialism adds the superiority of one nation over another. The

⁶ H. Münkler, *Empires* (2007) 8.

dominant group believes to have excessive control over the others, including their economy and politics.⁷

Currently, Puerto Rico falls under the territorial clause of the U.S. Constitution as an unincorporated, organized **territory**.⁸ The list in Appendix I illustrates U.S. (former) territories, which indicates that there currently are four such territories: Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Territories are parts of the United States that have not been admitted as states. Therefore, they do not necessarily have the same taxation requirements, voting rights, or privileges as do citizens of states. The final authoritative power over territories and their potential future acceptance as a state lies with U.S. Congress.⁹ **Unincorporated** territories, as opposed to incorporated territories, have not received congressional approval to become a state.¹⁰ They are portions of the United States to which only certain rights of the U.S. Constitution, dependent on the territory, apply and the population of which is allowed to have an own constitution for local affairs. Today, the United States has several unincorporated territories, of which the inhabited ones are included in Appendix I.¹¹ **Organized** territories, in contrast to unorganized territories, are subject to an Organic Act that has been passed by Congress in order to install a local government in the territory.¹²

Regarding the status proposals for Puerto Rico: U.S. Congress has proposed several options due to which Puerto Rico will remain part of the United States, and two options due to which the island will become independent. Puerto Rico's official status is that of a **commonwealth**. Although there is some ambiguity regarding the exact meaning of the commonwealth status, it grants Puerto Rico local autonomy, while final

⁷ P.A. Malavet, *America's colony: The political and cultural conflict between the United States and Puerto Rico* (New York 2004) 4.

⁸ *Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's status* (2011) 26: www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/Puerto_Rico_Task_Force_Report.pdf (04-06-2016).

⁹ As is settled in Constitution of the United States, article IV, section 3: www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm (12-05-2016). U.S. Congress has delegated some of its administrative power to the Office of Insular Affairs within the Department of the Interior; therefore, some territories are administered by the Department of the Interior. 'Organized territory', *West's encyclopedia of American law* (2008, second ed.): legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Organized+territory (06-07-2016).

¹⁰ *A bill to provide certain opportunities for democratic reorganization to the people of the five permanently populated, unincorporated territories of the United States in order to guarantee the fundamental right to proper self-governance*, 2nd Congress, 1st session on S.13 (2013).

¹¹ 'U.S. insular areas: Application of the U.S. Constitution', *Report to the Chairman, Committee on Resources, House of Representatives* (1997).

¹² *A bill to provide certain opportunities for democratic reorganization to the people of the five permanently populated, unincorporated territories of the United States in order to guarantee the fundamental right to proper self-governance*, 2nd Congress, 1st session on S.13 (2013).

jurisdiction lies with U.S. Congress.¹³ Commonwealths have more local political power than territories, as they are allowed to cooperate with Congress in order to establish a political system that is mutually accepted.¹⁴ Because Puerto Rico is a territory with commonwealth status, it falls both under the legislation of U.S. Congress and has its own insular constitution. The creation of an **enhanced commonwealth** status has been proposed, granting the government of Puerto Rico more local authority. Exact definitions of the (enhanced) commonwealth status are difficult to establish, mostly because if the status were to be chosen, it has to be specified with the cooperation and agreement of the United States. Over the last decade, U.S. Congress did consider, but rejected, some proposals for the enhanced commonwealth from Puerto Rico. For instance, Puerto Ricans proposed to extend their autonomy so that they would have the right to separate economic relationships with foreign nations and to modify the ties between them and the mainland so that the relationship could not be ended unilaterally.¹⁵

Another recommended option for the status of Puerto Rico is that the U.S. citizenship that was granted to Puerto Rico in 1917 should be extended so that Puerto Ricans enjoy the full rights and responsibilities thereof (e.g. as happened for Hawaii). With such a **statehood** status, Puerto Ricans would be incorporated into the United States and be allowed to have full representation in U.S. Congress, participate in Presidential elections, and be entitled to receive financial assistance just like inhabitants of other States. It does, however, also mean that certain arrangements between the island and the mainland that are beneficial for Puerto Rico's economy, such as federal tax exemptions, would cease to exist.¹⁶ As U.S. Congress has the ultimate power over the admission of States, it may demand to see some changes in Puerto Rico before it even qualifies for admission. Interestingly, the majority of the current fifty federal states once were U.S. territories. A territory's desire to become incorporated as a state alone did (and does) not oblige U.S. Congress to actually admit the territory. In the past, U.S. territories were admitted into the Union if they fulfilled a set of requirements. For instance, the population had to reach a number of 60,000 inhabitants, who had to express their will

¹³ *Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's status* (2011) 26; K. Bea, 'Political status of Puerto Rico: Background, options, and issues in the 109th Congress', *CRS report for Congress* (2005) 18.

¹⁴ 'Organized territory', *West's encyclopedia of American law* (2008, second ed.): legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Organized+territory (06-07-2016).

¹⁵ R.S. Garrett, 'Political status of Puerto Rico: Options for Congress', *Congressional research service* (2011) 26.

¹⁶ *Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's status* (2011) 24.

for state admission in a territory-wide referendum.¹⁷ Also, there should be enough economic resources to both support the territory and contribute to the greater nation. Finally, the territory had to adopt a form of government and propose a constitution that was in compliance with the U.S. Constitution.¹⁸

A status of complete **independence** from the United States requires the creation of a treaty between the governments of the new independent country and the United States (e.g. as was the case for the Philippines). Still, before full independence becomes applicable to Puerto Rico, U.S. Congress would have to ratify legislation that allows for this. If independence would indeed be granted, it could mean an end to the unhindered travel between island and mainland. Also, Puerto Rico will have to start developing its own economy without financial aid from the United States. A ‘significant transition period’ is necessary to transform the island from its current status to a status of independence.¹⁹

If Puerto Rico were to obtain a status of **free association** with the United States, it would have a certain type of independence. Free associations to the United States (e.g. Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia) receive economic aid and their defence and security policies are controlled by the United States. Although inhabitants of free associations may work in the United States, they do not have U.S. citizenship. Nonetheless, the President’s Task Force on Puerto Rico’s Status is of the opinion that there should be a transition period during which Puerto Ricans still have U.S. citizenship and are guided in their way to economic dependence. If Puerto Rico were to become a free association, the new country would have to create a compact in cooperation with the United States in which they mutually agree upon future arrangements. These compacts are ‘based on the national sovereignty of each country’ and may be unilaterally ended by either country.²⁰

Apart from the implicit use of theory in the theoretical concepts described above, this thesis does not explicitly apply an international relations theory. This is because the use of theory often implies a focus on one side of the story (either Puerto Rico or the United States), while this thesis essentially addresses both sides of the relationship.

¹⁷ It is questioned whether this ‘consent of the governed’ has always been given voluntarily, without U.S. intervention, e.g. with the Indian tribes. T. Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An autobiography* (New York 1916) 66.

¹⁸ *An ordinance for the government of the territory of the United States, north-west of the river Ohio* (1787); R. Longley, ‘The U.S. statehood process: How Congress has traditionally proceeded’: usgovinfo.about.com/od/uscongress/a/statehoodproc.htm (07-07-2016).

¹⁹ *Report by the President’s Task Force on Puerto Rico’s status* (2011), 24-25.

²⁰ *Report by the President’s Task Force on Puerto Rico’s status* (2011) 25.

Moreover, this thesis aims not to set out a provocative or funnelled analysis on a particular aspect, but to seek mutual interests on different fields. Based on these considerations, I will not use a main theory in this thesis.

1.4 Research method and sources

The debate on the Puerto Rico status question, on which the following chapter will elaborate, emerged in the 1960s. For now, it suffices to say that what strikingly follows from the debate is that the United States uses official, ambiguous terms when it refers to its relationship with Puerto Rico, while European and an amount of Puerto Rican sources call attention to indicators of colonialism behind the official terms and statuses. The present study enters this debate by incorporating the U.S. as well as the Puerto Rican view on their relationship. The three specific periods in time that have been chosen to address the issue each include U.S. and Puerto Rican perspectives in order to reach a holistic conclusion regarding their relation. Accordingly, the research method this thesis incorporates is a comparative analysis both through time and space.

By using a large time frame in which I choose three significant periods that are key to grasp the relationship, I hope to bring a new understanding to the topic. Earlier work on the status of Puerto Rico discovered new connections due to its broad time frame.²¹ Being a European scholar that has no interest in an (un-) favourable outcome for any of the parties involved, I hope to put forth an honest, but critical when necessary thesis that will answer the question of what is the status of Puerto Rico to lay readers as well as informed readers from over the world. By linking the interests of both actors with the status of Puerto Rico, which has not been done before in this form, I hope to find an answer to the question why the United States maintains its governance over Puerto Rico.

A challenge is encountered in the occasionally limited amount of sources. That is, critical sources from and about the U.S. perspective are barely found until the mid-sixties, although various authors have argued that there is reason for debate on the status question ever since 1898.²² This may be because Puerto Rico as a colonial possession of the United States was a topic that: Puerto Rican historians tended to shy away from,

²¹ K.A. Santiago-Valles, *'Subject People' and colonial discourses: Economic transformation and social disorder in Puerto Rico, 1898-1947* (New York 1994); L. Thompson, 'Review: "Subject people" and colonial discourses: Economic transformation and social disorder in Puerto Rico, 1898-1947' by Santiago-Valles, K.A., *Journal of Latin American studies* 27/1 (1995) 238-239.

²² E.g. B. Surendra, *The United States and the development of the Puerto Rican status question, 1936 – 1968* (Kansas 1975) 2; P.A. Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people: Puerto Rico and the United States, 1898-1932* (Colorado 1999) 1; M.E. Soto-Viera, 'Puerto Rico: The oldest remaining colony in the world', in D. Lee and A. Salas (eds.), *Unfaithful U.S. colonialism* (Canada 1999) 138.

rather focusing on the pre-acquisition period; Latin American scholars considered outside their scope; and U.S. scholars tended to oversee by accepting the deviation.²³ Puerto Rican news articles that contain their view on the acquisition period are scarce, mainly due to a lack of U.S. independent journals on the island at the time.²⁴ Moreover, journalists from the Puerto Rican press have argued that the press has been rather ignorant on the real situation in Puerto Rico throughout the twentieth century. Those that did write on the topic mostly created sources that were selective and strongly biased due to the political society.²⁵ Several solutions were found to overcome these challenges, which brings me to the sources that are consulted for this study.

Sources

For the sections that are concerned with the U.S. perspective, official documents such as annual U.S. governmental reports are used. It is kept in mind that these reports are probably meant to indicate the beneficial factors of the United States and are not likely to contain a critical tone regarding events from the past. This limits this type of historical source, but clearly indicates the U.S. side of the story. These sources are interchangeably used with support from primary sources and non-U.S. scholars in order to verify the content or even find underlying motives. Biased political opinions in Puerto Rican press are circumvented by the use of a focus on political parties and voting trends, which are used in the repeating sections that focus on the Puerto Rican view towards its relationship with the United States. Doing so, this thesis presents a complete image of the main parties and thus the different Puerto Rican voices. The recurring sections on the political status of Puerto Rico are based on the most relevant laws that were enacted during the time that is discussed. This is to avoid being misled or guided by subjective writings on the meaning of the status. This thesis will draw its own conclusions based on its original method.

The primary sources that I referred to in the paragraph above are primarily collected at the Roosevelt Study Center (RSC), which has archival material from the United States. For instance, it stores editions of *The New York Times* that date back to 1851, of which I use articles mainly for the 1898 period. Secondly, the RSC stores a collection of the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS). This series includes

²³ T.R. Clark, *Puerto Rico and the United States, 1917-1933* (London 1975) xiii.

²⁴ R.B. Lopez, 'The needs of Porto Rico', *The Independent... Devoted to the consideration of politics, social and economic tendencies, history, literature, and the arts*, 29-11-1900.

²⁵ G. McDougall, 'Mainland news' P.S. Falk (ed.), *The political status of Puerto Rico* (1986); J.M. García-Passalacqua, 'Press coverage' in P.S. Falk (ed.), *The political status of Puerto Rico* (1986).

extensive information on U.S. relationships with foreign nations. The FRUS is particularly useful in my elaboration on U.S. expansionism and early interest in Latin America in the chapter on 1898. Thirdly, the RSC provides access to the Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS), where I located some relevant information for Puerto Rico's nationalist movement during the 1930s. Finally, the RSC stores presidential documents on microfilm. I found relevant material for the 1950s period in the files from President Harry S. Truman, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The main consulted sources for the 2000s period are results from and reports on recent referenda in Puerto Rico regarding its political status.

1.5 Thesis design

This introductory chapter is followed by a brief historiography in chapter two from which a debate can be deduced that I enter with this study. The structure for the rest of the thesis, that is chapter three through chapter five, is strongly based on the sub-questions presented in section 1.2. This means that the three chapters that focus on specific periods of time are all constructed according to the same design: A brief introduction that places the chapter in the thesis as a whole followed by...

- Section 1 An informing section that provides the necessary background information for the in-between years (pre-1898, 1900-1950, and 1960-2000) for the reader to grasp the forthcoming information.
- Section 2 U.S. interest in its (continuing) relationship with Puerto Rico.
- Section 3 Puerto Rico's (dis-) interest in its (continuing) ties with the continental States.²⁶
- Section 4 The main implementation regarding the political status of Puerto Rico and the roles of both actors in this.
- Section 5 Briefly summing up the chapter and concluding why the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico is maintained and what the consequence thereof is for the island's status.

Chapter three is concerned with the 1898 acquisition period. It discusses the events leading up to the acquisition and describes it from a U.S. as well as from a Puerto Rican

²⁶ '(Dis-) interest' rather than 'interest', because I assume that the relationship with the United States is, in the first instance, something that happened to the Puerto Ricans.

perspective. Chapter four introduces the Puerto Rican independence revolts from the 1930s and then focuses on the post-war period. It explores why Puerto Rico still is a U.S. unincorporated territory and investigates how both the United States and the Puerto Ricans have a role in this. Chapter five will examine the results of the Puerto Rican political status referenda in recent times as an indicator of a) what Puerto Ricans want, and b) how the United States responds to these votes. It also questions what Puerto Rico's status means in the era of globalization. A final chapter provides a discussion by holistically answering the research sub-questions.

2 Historiography

Much has been written about Puerto Rico, especially since the U.S. acquisition of the island. A sharp contrast exists between texts that are written before and texts that are written after the 1960s. The former primarily describe Puerto Rico's agriculture and demographic situation within the Caribbean setting, whereas the latter critically explore the Puerto Rican status question for the time after it was ceded from Spain to the United States.²⁷ A literary review of these critical texts allows for the deduction of a debate between several parties (U.S., Puerto Rican, Latin American, and European specialists) that reaches its climax in the 1980s. It becomes apparent that, while non-U.S. scholars extensively write on the subject matter and sometimes describe the relation as colonial, U.S. authors produce few critical texts and employ ambiguous terms in order to describe the status situation, indeed avoiding the term colony at all times. I enter this debate by highlighting U.S. as well as Puerto Rican interests in their relationship and comparing them through time. First, it is important to elaborate on the works of previous authors to distinguish some earlier made stances on the Puerto Rican status subject matter.

2.1 Debate on the political status of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico's status received international attention when the issue was brought to the United Nations in the beginning of the 1950s. It appears that this has had its consequences for the role of the United States in the international field. To start with, the United States disapproved of the global importance that Puerto Rico received: its status should only matter in domestic spheres as it is a business of national interest and therefore not within the U.N. jurisdiction.²⁸ However, other member nations of the United Nations seemed to disagree on some facets of the relationship between the United States and its dependency Puerto Rico, for instance the fact that the island needs U.S. consent to change its status. The United States perceived accusations from other U.N. countries based on this perception as hostile and has constantly defended itself on

²⁷ This may be due to the renewed interest in Puerto Rico's status centring the island's first political status referendum in 1967, cf. chapter five, section 2.

²⁸ Cf. 'Nothing (...) in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state', Article 2, section 7, Chapter I, UN Charter: www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/ (21-05-2016); H. García Muñiz, 'Puerto Rico and the United States: The United Nations role 1953-1975', *Revista jurídica de la Universidad de Puerto Rico* 53/4 (1984) 159-171.

the Puerto Rico status matter ever since. Because Puerto Rico's status received an important international role, the U.S. super power could not simply turn its back on the debate and still has to pay high diplomatic fees to remain reliable to the rest of the world regarding the situation with Puerto Rico.²⁹

Not only other U.N. member delegates, but also European and Puerto Rican scholars express their concerns about the Puerto Rico status matter. Some authors explicitly focused on the illegitimacy of commonwealth status under international law.³⁰ Others wrote in the perspective of a reflection based on the 100th anniversary of relations between the United States and Puerto Rico. This group is predominantly concerned with a paradox that revolves around the notion that while the United States proclaims liberty and democracy, it has a dependent, colonial-like possession.³¹ Yet others try to find support for their statement that Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony in the utterances of members of U.S. Congress themselves.³² Taking together a broad range of books, articles, and reviews, Puerto Rico's status has been argued to be *sui generis*, resembling mostly that of a colonial status.³³ Those that claim that Puerto Rico (still) is a colony do so based on the following arguments: U.S. laws not only apply to Puerto Rico without its consent, but can also override the current commonwealth constitution; the United States unilaterally takes decisions that affect Puerto Rico; U.S. courts can judge about the island's local matters; Puerto Ricans that live in the United States have different rights than those that still live on the island; Puerto Rico has no independent role in the international field; and the current commonwealth status does not meet the United Nations decolonization standards.³⁴ More and more has been written on the subject and

²⁹ R. Pastor, 'The international debate on Puerto Rico: The costs of being an agenda-taker', *International organization* 38/3 (1984) 575-595.

³⁰ G. Perez Santiago, *The fate of Puerto Rico: An American and international dilemma* (Florida 1982) 1-4; P. Cabán, 'Redefining Puerto Rico's political status', in E. Meléndez and E. Meléndez (eds.), *Colonial dilemma: Critical perspectives on contemporary Puerto Rico* (1993) 19-39.

³¹ E.g. H. Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony', *International socialist review* 3 (1997): www.isreview.org/issues/03/Puerto_Rico.shtml (01-01-2016); J. Trías Monge, *Puerto Rico: The trials of the oldest colony in the world* (Michigan 1997); Malavet, *America's colony: The political and cultural conflict between the United States and Puerto Rico*; E. Román, 'Empire forgotten: The United States's colonization of Puerto Rico', *International law commons* 42/4 (1997) 1120-1137.

³² Román. 'Empire forgotten', 1121: e.g. Senator Simon who said that 'the reality is that commonwealth status –supported strongly by powerful American corporations who benefit from it financially- is simply another form of old-fashioned colonialism.' Senator Simon, 'The state of Puerto Rico', Congressional record, 22-01-1996, S284: www.congress.gov/crec/1996/01/22/CREC-1996-01-22-pt1-PgS284-2.pdf (07-06-2016).

³³ G.K. Lewis, *Puerto Rico: Freedom and power in the Caribbean* (Jamaica 1964, revised ed. 2004) V.

³⁴ Trías Monge, *Puerto Rico: The trials*, 161-163; Á. Collado-Schwarz, *Decolonization models for America's last colony: Puerto Rico* (New York 2012) VII.

international scholars started to review and react to each other's texts, tightening the non-U.S. party in the debate.³⁵

2.2 Suggestions regarding the island's future status

The different participants in the debate cause for varying views regarding what status development would be best for Puerto Rico. I will touch upon these views in this section and briefly explain the rationale behind them based on writings of some of the most influential authors on Puerto Rican history (Hunter, Lewis, Trías Monge, and Malavet).

No clear unanimous voice comes from the Puerto Rican authors; their opinions regarding status developments for their nation are dependent on the political party they root for. Sources from Puerto Rico do not have a unanimous voice: it depends on which year they come from and which political party the author supports. There are three main groups of Puerto Ricans: those rooting for commonwealth status, rooting for statehood, or for independence. Sources from the United States clearly indicate a preference towards a proposal for self-government with final U.S. jurisdiction, resembling the current situation.³⁶ The group that argues for this commonwealth option argues that it would be a mistake if Puerto Rico were to become independent, as it is highly dependent on U.S. capital and knowhow. Europeans have claimed the exact opposite. Their view is based on the notion that it is exactly because of U.S. presence and domination that Puerto Ricans have gained little understanding of governance. In their opinion, it would be most favourable if Puerto Rico became independent through of process of decolonization.^{37,38} A third group of authors writes in favour of statehood, which will finally grant Puerto Ricans the rights that it feels entitled to as territory of the United States.³⁹

Although the views regarding future status for Puerto Rico differ –which is mainly due to underlying interests of the involved groups-, a general shift is deduced in the 1990s. Critical writings before the 1990s were predominantly exclusive, that is, condemning the U.S. role in the ambiguous status of Puerto Rico and arguing for the

³⁵ E.g. Malavet, *America's colony: The political and cultural conflict*, 149 responds to Ediberto, 'Empire forgotten: The United States's colonization of Puerto Rico'.

³⁶ R.J. Hunter, 'Historical survey of the Puerto Rico status question, 1898-1965' in *Status of Puerto Rico: Selected background studies prepared for the United States-Puerto Rico commission on the status of Puerto Rico* (1966) 65. This report was issued by the U.S. House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs (which in 1993 became the House Committee on Natural Resources) and intended to better understand the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico.

³⁷ Lewis, *Puerto Rico: Freedom and power in the Caribbean*, XXV.

³⁸ Trías Monge, *Puerto Rico: The trials of the oldest colony in the world*.

³⁹ P.A. Malavet, *Reparations theory and postcolonial Puerto Rico: Some preliminary thoughts* (2002).

complete transition of the island's governance from Washington to Puerto Rico. During the 1990s, these works became more inclusive as they argued that Puerto Rico needs the United States and is not likely to endure full self-governance.⁴⁰

For now it suffices to highlight that the opinions on the future developments for Puerto Rico are divided. Chapter three through five elaborate on the several political parties in Puerto Rico to indicate what the several main opinions amongst Puerto Ricans were. In addition, chapter five focuses on several political status referenda that were held in Puerto Rico to indicate what the recent trends regarding the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States have been.

2.3 The power to change Puerto Rico's status

Finally, it appears that there is some minor debate regarding the organ that has the right and power to change the political status of Puerto Rico: U.S. Congress or the Puerto Rican people and government. Puerto Rican authors generally agree upon the idea that the power to change Puerto Rico's status is in the hands of the United States and that the outcomes of their several political status votes are therefore ignored.⁴¹ Sources from the United States, too, agree that this power lies with the U.S. government.⁴² These U.S. sources, however, contain some striking nuances. For instance, former President George H.W. Bush claimed that, while U.S. Congress indeed has final jurisdiction over a change in Puerto Rico's status, 'the will to change must arise from the Puerto Rican people.'⁴³ The question arises if the several Puerto Rican revolts as early in the 1930s and political status referenda throughout recent decades were not enough to indicate this will.

All in all, regardless of who has the power, what should happen to Puerto Rico, and what the current situation is, both Puerto Rico and the United States are argued to have grown passive about the status subject.⁴⁴ I now turn to the three substantive chapters to research what is the case of Puerto Rico's status.

⁴⁰ J.O. Diaz, 'Review: Puerto Rico, the United States, and the 1993 referendum on political status', *Latin American research review* 30/1 (1995) 203-211.

⁴¹ E.g. P.A. Malavet, 'The inconvenience of a "constitution [that] follows the flag... but doesn't quite catch up with it": From *Downes v. Bidwell* to *Boumediene v. Bush*', *Mississippi law journal* 81/1 (2010); C.D. Burnett, "'None of the above" means more of the same: Why solving Puerto Rico's status problem matters', in F. Negrón-Muntaner (ed.) *None of the above: Puerto Ricans in the global era* (2007).

⁴² Bea, 'Political status of Puerto Rico', 18; Puryear, 'Puerto Rico: An American dilemma', in P.S. Falk (ed.), *The political status of Puerto Rico* (1986).

⁴³ Former President George H.W. Bush provided the foreword for D. Thornburgh, *Puerto Rico's future: A time to decide* (Washington 2007) VIII.

⁴⁴ L. Gallardo Rivera, 'The farce of Puerto Rico's status debate', *La respuesta* (2014): larespuestamedia.com/pr-status-debate/ (03-06-2016).

3 1898 – Changing of the guard

In order to comprehend the foundations of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, it is essential to gain a basic understanding of how and why the United States engaged in expansionism during the late nineteenth century. This chapter will provide the reader with an overview of developments that occurred prior to and as a result of the war between Spain and the United States in 1898, which contextualizes the acquisition of Puerto Rico. U.S. interests in the island and vice versa are presented respectively in sections 3.2 and 3.3, followed by a discussion on the status issue for the late nineteenth century. A final section concludes the chapter.

3.1 The Spanish-American War

Puerto Rico has long been a Spanish colony. In 1493, a Spanish fleet led by Christopher Columbus set foot on the island and the Spanish Crown claimed the island. Since then, during a timespan that lasted for more than four centuries, the Spaniards have come to completely control the island from overseas. To the Spanish Empire, Puerto Rico's location was essential as it provided access to the New World.⁴⁵ When the United States was granted independence in 1776, they already shared Spain's interest in the strategic locations of the Spanish colonies. The recently independent nation had a desire to trade overseas and spread commercially liberal ideas. Especially Cuba and Puerto Rico were interesting because of their potential in sugar cane production and their geographically close location, suitable for trade purposes.⁴⁶ Hence, the United States increased its contact with the Spanish colonies.⁴⁷

In the nineteenth century, when Cuba fought for independence from its Spanish colonizer, the United States supported and sympathized with the Cubans. This support incited tensions between the United States and the Spanish Empire. A number of

⁴⁵ M. Brás, "The changing of the guard: Puerto Rico in 1898": www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/bras.html (28-04-2016).

⁴⁶ For further information on the early relations between the United States and Cuba, I refer to T.F. O'Brien, *Making the Americas: The United States and Latin America from the age of revolutions to the era of globalization* (2007) 39-40. Also, L.A. Pérez, *The war of 1898: The United States and Cuba in history and historiography* (1998) is interesting as it explains the relationship in terms of an early interest from the United States in Cuba ever since its own independence. It follows that, amongst other U.S. policy makers, Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams were already interested in Cuba for strategic reasons. So, although Cuba was a Spanish colony, it was already in a close relationship with the United States.

⁴⁷ J. Smith, *The United States and Latin America: A history of American diplomacy 1776-2000* (Routledge: London and New York 2005) 4.

provocative events followed, such as the manifestation of a critical letter from the Spanish minister in the United States about President McKinley and the mysterious explosion of the U.S. warship the Maine, which was located in Havana for naval presence.⁴⁸ Both the United States and Spain started investigations of the sinking of the battleship that ‘sent 258 American sailors to their death.’⁴⁹ However, a series of suggestive articles in U.S. newspapers spread a general feeling that it was ‘the work of an enemy’, i.e. the Spaniards.⁵⁰ This yellow journalism is what aroused hatred amongst Americans towards the Spaniards.

In 1898, the tensions on the Western Hemisphere between Spain and the United States resulted in the Spanish-American War. The war had great consequences for the parties involved, including Puerto Rico. After merely four months of war, the U.S. military prevailed over the Spanish army. It was considered the right of the victor to receive compensation for their costs of war. The United States calculated their costs to lie somewhere between \$250 million and \$300 million. Spain was, however, ‘without money’ and therefore the United States could be paid in territory only.⁵¹ Consequently, the cession of several Spanish colonies was one of the conditions agreed upon in the 1898 Treaty of Paris designed to establish peace between Spain and the United States. Puerto Rico, having an estimated worth between \$40 and \$50 million, was the first territory to be ceded. Other Caribbean islands such as Guam, Cuba (which was relinquished), and the Philippine Islands followed, for which the United States paid a total sum of \$20 million in return.⁵² The fact that the United States chose not to be equally compensated for their costs of war, but instead receive territories from Spain for which they even had to pay, already indicates the interest of the United States in areas beyond its continental borders, such as the Caribbean and the Pacific. A military operation causing immediate evacuation of Spanish colonial rules on Puerto Rican soil and other islands under former Spanish rule left these territories ‘in the military occupation of the United States.’⁵³ U.S. Congress hereby received the power to decide on

⁴⁸ D. Trask, ‘The Spanish-American War’: www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/trask.html (04-07-2016).

⁴⁹ Unknown author, ‘Who destroyed the Maine?’, *New York journal and advertiser*, 17-02-1898, 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 1.

⁵¹ 1898, United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/FRUS (01-2015) 946.

⁵² Unknown author, ‘Spain accepts our peace terms’, *The New York Times*, 29-11-1898; 1898, *Foreign relations of the United States*, 833.

⁵³ 1898, *Foreign relations of the United States*, 909; Unknown author, ‘Spaniards as our guests’, *The New York Times*, 12-10-1898, 4.

civil rights and on the ‘political status of the native inhabitants’ of their new acquisitions.⁵⁴

U.S. sources indeed present the cession of Puerto Rico as a pecuniary debt. Its change in ruler may as well have to do with long-lasting U.S. strategic and economic interests in the island.⁵⁵

3.2 The United States: A rising power

Some authors have argued that the 1898 war with Spain brought the United States new acquisitions by chance, transforming the nation into a reluctant empire.⁵⁶ There are precedents, however, that indicate that U.S. expansionism was a logical consequence of earlier established patterns and therefore not as arbitrary as it may have seemed.⁵⁷ The following paragraphs discuss late nineteenth century U.S. expansionism. Doing so, it becomes clear what interests the United States had in acquiring Puerto Rico.

An urge to expand

Since the independence of the United States, the nation’s foreign policy has recurrently been active in the process of extending U.S. borders. For instance, the first thirteen states expanded westward on the continent towards what was Indian territory; in the Mexican-American War from 1846 through 1848, the United States fought to acquire land from Mexican territory; the United States expressed its interests in expansionism towards Japan and China when it went on missions to establish diplomatic relations in 1853 and 1854, a mission towards Korea followed in 1867.⁵⁸

In the 1890s, there was general awareness of the rising power of the United States. U.S. senators, journalists, and other influential figures spread a feeling of national pride that was intensified by European acknowledgment.⁵⁹ It became apparent that the United States had turned its gaze outside its own frontiers when it demonstrated an interest in trade with Latin America at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago – designed for continental commemoration. The feeling of greatness amongst Americans in the late nineteenth century was accompanied by a sense of fear for external as well as

⁵⁴ 1898, *Foreign relations of the United States*, 831-840.

⁵⁵ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 319.

⁵⁶ S.F. Bemix, *A diplomatic history of the United States* (New York 1965, 5th ed.); I. Musicant, *Empire by default: The Spanish-American war and the dawn of the American century* (New York 1998).

⁵⁷ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 299.

⁵⁸ D.B. Abernethy, *The dynamics of global dominance: European overseas empires 1415-1980* (2000) 86; Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 4, 212.

⁵⁹ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 300.

internal threats. An example of an external concern was the aggrandizing European power during the Scramble for Africa in the 1880s, due to which the European continent internationally became more powerful.⁶⁰ A domestic concern was for instance the settlement of very large numbers of immigrants (who already migrated to the United States during the sixteenth century), which instigated a heterogeneous social order and a collapse of national basic values. Also, the 1893 economic crisis had led to issues of virility, as men no longer had the means to financially support their families. American plutocrats, with whom was most of the wealth, were frightened to lose their power in a revolt from the poorer classes, which were predominantly hit by the crisis. In order to prevent a revolution in their homeland, the plutocrats suggested to ‘openly embrace empire’ so that they could maintain control, while the rest of the American population could be satisfied with new wealth obtained from overseas.⁶¹ The feeling of greatness, threatened by domestic and external developments, indeed led to assertive diplomatic activity and expansion. War and expansionism were useful means to restore national pride.

It appears that an expansionist program functioned as a tool in order to minimize foreign threat and to cope with domestic problems. The total number of supporters had grown between 1895 and 1898 and by that time, the expansionist program had clearly been articulated: Europeans will be evacuated from the Western Hemisphere; the United States will control the isthmian canal; and the United States will acquire Caribbean islands and grant independence to Cuba. As the 1898 Spanish-American War demonstrates, this and more has successfully happened. The United States won this war with an ease that supported the view that the nation was on the verge of becoming a superpower.⁶² As a volunteer in the Spanish-American War, who wrote extensively on his experiences and impressions when his squadron was sent to Puerto Rico, said: ‘There were a few Spaniards round, but no real fighting. There won’t be. We outnumber them, and they won’t ever face us. I am actually enjoying the life here.’⁶³ Besides the fact that the Spaniards were outnumbered by the U.S. military, the United States was also able to relatively easily triumph over the Spaniards because they, together with other European colonizers, had lessened their focus on their Caribbean territories due to the Scramble for Africa. While European interest in the area decreased, the United States had

⁶⁰ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 300.

⁶¹ P.L. Atwood, *War and empire: The American way of life* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2010) 9.

⁶² Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 299-317; J.R. Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and world order: Police power in international relations* (Dulles: Potomac Books 2006) 74-5.

⁶³ G.G. King, *Letters of a volunteer in the Spanish-American War* (Chicago: Hawkins and Loomis 1929) 54.

developed a strong wish to profit from the Caribbean islands, economically and politically.⁶⁴

Limiting European presence in the Western Hemisphere

Now, an expansion towards the Caribbean meant a complete removal of Spanish presence in close vicinity of U.S. territory. Articles from *The New York Times* narrated that the Kingdom of Spain must for reasons of safety 'quit [the] hemisphere' so that it could no longer burden the United States with 'constant irritation and danger.'⁶⁵ Actually, the Spanish Empire had shrunk from its once vast size, which makes it unlikely that the Spaniards posed that great of a safety threat to the United States. It rather seems to be the case that the Spanish continuing grip on Puerto Rico and Cuba posed an obstacle to the American desire to dominate the entire Caribbean, and 'to be rid of the Spanish disturbance (...), Spain must be thrust from her last foothold on American soil.'⁶⁶ In addition, the Caribbean islands could be put to use to increase production of sugar, tobacco, and cotton. The Philippine islands in the Pacific, also dominated by Spain, were of interest to the United States as they could function as a gateway to the lucrative Chinese market.⁶⁷ It appears that President William McKinley deliberately chose to go to war with Spain to remove them from the Western Hemisphere, thereby removing a threat at their backyard and thus defending crucial U.S. economic and military interests.⁶⁸

Not only Spain's presence, but also that of the U.S. former colonizers throughout big parts of Latin America posed a threat to the rising nation. A broader interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine (1823) allowed the United States to intervene in Latin America and thereby minimize British presence.⁶⁹ Unfortunately for the British Empire, it was not able to effectively react to the implementation that granted U.S. hegemonic supremacy in the American continent, as it already encountered other problems in the Middle East and Africa. The British suggested a combination of powers on the American continent, but the United States, already having expansionist plans in mind, turned down this idea.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ C. Gibson, *Empire's crossroads: The Caribbean from Columbus to the present day* (London 2014) 227.

⁶⁵ Unknown author, 'Get Puerto Rico', *The New York Times*, 04-06-1898, 6.

⁶⁶ A.K. Fiske, 'Puerto Rico as a permanent possession', *The New York Times*, 11-07-1898, 6.

⁶⁷ Atwood, *War and empire*, 98.

⁶⁸ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 314.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 307.

⁷⁰ Atwood, *War and empire*, 67.

Imperialism and anti-imperialists

U.S. confiscations and many interventions on the Western Hemisphere led to the fact that the United States has often been associated with a form of imperialism or empire.⁷¹ At the 1899 Hague Peace conference, an attendant wrote that the conference was more about the rise of the United States as a dominating world power than anything else. It was pointed out to international observers the remarkability of a nation that once was a colony and had now obtained or would soon obtain the role of leading actor in international concerns. Where the Founding Fathers had advised to stay away from European policy, it was now obvious that Americans were attached to world affairs.⁷² Not only had the United States broke precedent by obtaining the status of a future world power, also were they in violation with the constitution by acquiring overseas territories without the intention of ever admitting them as states.⁷³

The U.S. press more often than not presented positive articles, siding with the ideas of expansionists. Many articles wrote extensively on what the island had to offer, e.g. it functioned ‘as a naval station (...) preferable in location’ -which indeed fulfilled the need for a naval station in the Caribbean-, had a ‘soil (...) most prolific’, and offered no reason ‘why it should not become (...) an especially charming Winter resort for denizens of the North.’⁷⁴ With rare exceptions to a high amount of news articles supporting the President’s choice to seize the islands, anti-imperialist and critical rumours were heard. The group of anti-imperialists, which originated at the beginning of the U.S. expansionism phase, was a diverse one: some considered U.S. expansion as an act of betrayal towards its own ancestry and tradition of anti-colonialism; others were of the opinion that the United States should take care of complete civilization of their latest acquisitions before any further expansion of the nation could take place; yet others opposed further expansion on racial grounds. Anti-imperialists lacked efficient, coherent leadership and encountered difficulties attempting to convince people of their anti-imperialist beliefs, seen that the American people were enthused by an expansionist administration.⁷⁵

In 1899, a petition was published, signed by ‘prominent opponents [to expansionism] in the United States’ who argued that it was assured to them that ‘the late

⁷¹ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 335; L.A. Pérez, ‘Dependency’, in M.J. Hogan and T.G. Paterson (eds.), *Explaining the history of American foreign relations* (Cambridge: University Press 2004) 163-4.

⁷² Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and world order*, 66-7.

⁷³ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 299, 322.

⁷⁴ Fiske, ‘Puerto Rico as a permanent possession’, 6.

⁷⁵ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 323; F.E. Woodruff, ‘Puerto Rico’, *The New York Times*, 08-12-1898, 6.

war was undertaken with (...) assurance that we did not look toward foreign conquest or the acquisition of territory', instead it was 'undertaken (...) in the cause of humanity and liberty and for no other purpose.'⁷⁶ Therefore, these men reasoned that the Caribbean islands, amongst which Puerto Rico, should not be ceded and fully controlled by the United States without free consent of these islands' citizens. Notwithstanding these cautions, we know in hindsight that they did not have an effect on the acquisition of Puerto Rico. In the words of these 'prominent opponents', however, lies an interesting crux in the history of U.S. expansionism: rather than recognizing a restoration of national pride as objective of war, the U.S. elite declared that the intention of war was the liberation of the peoples of Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippine islands.

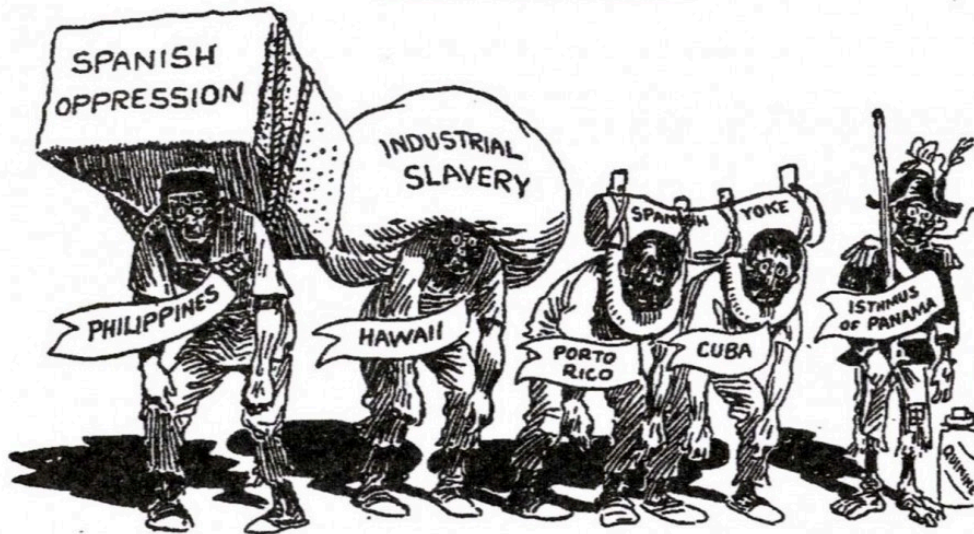
Accordingly, U.S. expansionism was positioned as if it were a deed for the greater cause: a satisfactory, political objective. The press aided a facade for the war by framing it in terms of humanitarianism.⁷⁷ Figure 3-1 below illustrates this with a propagandistic cartoon that was published in a U.S. newspaper in 1914. The following paragraphs elaborate on the justifications.

⁷⁶ Unknown author, 'Anti-expansionists Act', *The New York Times*, 06-02-1899, 3.

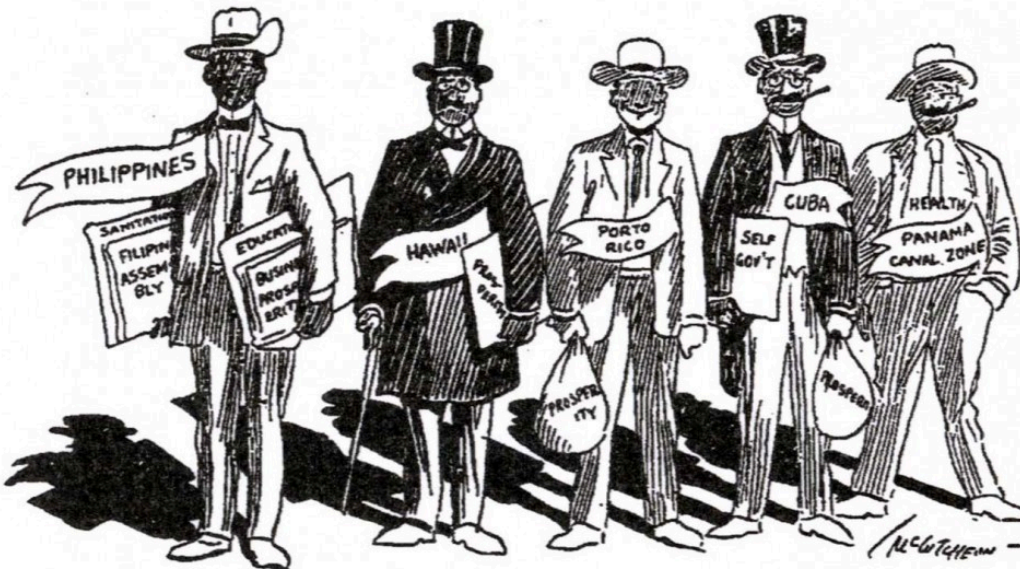
⁷⁷ Atwood, *War and empire*, 100.

WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAS FOUGHT FOR

[Copyright 1914: By John T. McCutcheon.]



Before the United States intervened in behalf of these oppressed people.



After the United States had rescued them from their oppression.

Figure 3-1 Cartoon that in an exaggerated way illustrates what the Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Panama endured under Spanish rule (upper row) and how they became prosperous after the United States 'rescued' them (lower row).

“Source: J.T. McCutcheon, ‘What the United States has fought for’, *The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 26-04-1914.”

Justifications

In order to minimize anti-imperialist rumours, the United States had to construct sensible, acceptable motivations behind their expansion other than the pure cause of imperial expansion. The U.S. victory in the Spanish-American War in itself already implicitly justified dominant U.S. presence in and influence over the Caribbean area.⁷⁸ A foundation for many explicit justifications was the White Man's burden, a term

⁷⁸ Smith, *The United States and Latin America*, 66-67.

introduced at the times of the Spanish-American War. A British poet wrote 'The White Man's burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands,' directed to U.S. leaders.⁷⁹ The White Man's burden rationalized white superiority over less-civilized grounds, a burden that was now to be taken up by the United States, following its European imperial predecessors. The United States positioned this 'burden' as such that it reasoned to be destined to spread knowledge on civilization while extending civilized borders to less civilized territories. This idea appealed to many Americans.⁸⁰

Theodore Roosevelt was a key domestic player in U.S. 1890s expansionism and actively involved in the Spanish-American War as colonel of the First United States Volunteer Cavalry.⁸¹ Roosevelt treated the domestic as an analogue to the international realm. To prevent the world from resulting in a state of anarchy, Roosevelt figured that advanced nations such as the United States should extend some of their police authority beyond their borders and function as a 'superior authority' in the global theatre.⁸² As such, the nation became the highest power in a regularized world order. As 'international police authority', the United States was able to keep order and ensure that the territories in its recently extended borders were provided with good administration.⁸³ Theodore Roosevelt deemed it obvious that some territories should receive a form of U.S. authority, for instance because of their close geographic vicinity to the United States and their gain from the spread of U.S. power and knowledge (based on the White Man's burden). Roosevelt's combative temperament soon made him consider it his task as benefactor to seize whatever territory he could to put in use his idea of world order. Meanwhile, he was able to do so while claiming to be spreading American knowledge as 'overarching good', something that would overrule otherwise opposing legal minutiae.⁸⁴

Furthermore, Roosevelt claimed that U.S. presence on Puerto Rico and in the island's government was part of a transition phase and would eventually transform the island from non-self-governing into self-governing. With the Spaniards gone, the locals faced the prospect of a U.S. form of self-governance. It was the duty of Americans

⁷⁹ R. Kipling, 'The White Man's burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands', *Peace review* 10/3 (1998) 311-312.

⁸⁰ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 323.

⁸¹ This regiment was specifically created to fight the Spanish-American War and the group of men were often referred to as the 'Rough Riders'. I refer to the following autobiography to read more about Theodore Roosevelt: Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An autobiography*, 223, 275.

⁸² Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and world order*, 63; Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An autobiography*, 519.

⁸³ Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and world order*, 63.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 64.

(again, reinforced by the White Man's burden) to support unfit governments until they could sustain themselves.⁸⁵

Historian Frederick Jackson Turner proposed the frontier thesis, from which Roosevelt derived another justification for U.S. expansionism. The frontier thesis argues that 'U.S. interest in overseas colonies' is a logical development after the full acquisition of the North American continent.⁸⁶ It justified annexation of overseas territories by stating that it is similar to earlier annexations of territories on the continent, e.g. the state of Louisiana.⁸⁷ In these earlier instances, the United States ensured that U.S. citizens would settle in the new territories before they initiated a transition period during which the territory would be prepared ready for statehood under the U.S. Constitution. As such, expansionism was constructed to be a typical characteristic of the U.S. nation.

In short, U.S. officials convinced their nation's anti-imperialists of the perception that their imperial mission consisted of moral concerns for the greater good. By this avoidance of being associated with domination purely for self-glorification, the Americans distinguished themselves from European imperialists.⁸⁸ A more critical look into U.S. imperialism indicates that the United States did, in fact, not differ so much from previous great powers. For instance, it vigorously pursued and protected its own interests, it expanded its territory to embrace the entire continent as well as overseas areas (only referring to the act as 'expansionism' rather than 'colonialism'), and it would soon globally extend its economic and political influence.⁸⁹

Early plans for Puerto Rico

Shortly after the Spanish-American War, the United States succeeded in fulfilling its wish to become a dominant player in the Western Hemisphere. The United States had already articulated specific plans for its recent acquisitions. Regarding Puerto Rico; the island was to become a strategic territory in the Caribbean, to which the United States could extend its military and economic influence in the area. The tropical backyard provided the mainland with a place for export, economic investment and profit, agricultural production, and cheap labour. In addition, it formed a gateway into Latin America, which could be used for the expansion of U.S. business, and functioned as a naval station protecting the Panama Canal, which was at the time in the hands of the United States but

⁸⁵ Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and world order*, 67.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 65.

⁸⁷ Bourne, 'A trained colonial civil service', *The North American review*.

⁸⁸ Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and world order*, 74.

⁸⁹ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 8-9.

also very much desired by others due to its powerful position. In order for Puerto Rico to be able to carry out these tasks, its main economic and political institutions would have to undergo some transformations (these will be discussed in chapter 4).⁹⁰

3.3 Puerto Rico: Opportunities for improvement and prosperity

The last decade that Puerto Rico was under Spanish colonial rule, its liberal inhabitants were trying to receive some local autonomy. In 1897, these liberal reformers established the Puerto Rican Autonomist Party (*Partido Autonomista Puertorriqueño*) and wanted Spain to reconsider the colonial relationship. They wanted more local autonomy regarding the island's political and economic affairs, without thereby fully neglecting Spain's authoritative control. While supporters of the Autonomist Party were being persecuted by the Spanish authorities, they achieved their goals in that same year: the Spanish queen granted both Puerto Rico and Cuba the Autonomic Charter, a new constitution that indeed reassessed the colonial relations. Puerto Rico and Cuba could now establish a local government and elect representatives.⁹¹ The outlook towards a possible future of autonomy, however, could only be enjoyed for a brief period of time. Few months later, U.S. expansionism made an end to the little freedom that had recently been gained in Puerto Rico.

A welcoming reception

A soldier in the Spanish-American War wrote that when U.S. military troops set foot on the island in July 1898, Puerto Rican inhabitants were startled and began to flee. Their initial reaction, however, was soon followed by one in which the inhabitants took up a more subservient attitude. The natives shouted *Viva Americanos* to the soldiers 'till [their] ears rang.'⁹² In September, only a few months in the Spanish-American War, natives, of which mostly peasants, started to rebel against the Spanish colonizers. An organized band called the Black Hand was burning, plundering, and murdering at night.⁹³ The U.S. squadron considered this as a longing for interception in the current situation as colony from Spain, particularly amongst poorer natives.

⁹⁰ Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people*, 2; S. del Moral, *Negotiating empire: The cultural politics of schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952* (Wisconsin 2013) 25-26.

⁹¹ Moral, *Negotiating empire*, 24-25.

⁹² King, *Letters of a volunteer in the Spanish-American War*, 55, 61-62.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 102-106.

Indeed, liberal Puerto Ricans were satisfied with the intervention of their northern neighbour. The inhabitants friendly welcomed the U.S. army on the island and cooperated with the new authority. It was generally assumed that they would rapidly benefit from U.S. leadership as core U.S. principles such as democracy and free trade were expected to be extended to those that were under U.S. rule.⁹⁴ The elites in Puerto Rico, which formed a relatively small group compared to the middle and lower classes, encouraged annexation and hoped for eventual statehood.⁹⁵ The native working class expected to gain substantively from the change of the guards: it was likely that the island would become a close market for North American trade and they saw benefits in promoting incorporation of the economy of the metropole.⁹⁶ The enthusiastic attitude of the inhabitants facilitated a rapid U.S. interception. Nevertheless, the ‘honeymoon period’ for Puerto Ricans would not last eternally.⁹⁷ Indeed, as the Puerto Rican correspondent of *The New York Times* wrote: ‘the enthusiasm with which the Americans were received will cool considerably when the inhabitants discover that they must toil as hard under American as under Spanish dominion.’⁹⁸

Political interest and opposition

The general perception of the U.S. intervention in Puerto Rico mutated from appreciated liberation to unwanted interference after 1900, with the enactment of the island’s first, temporary, Organic Act (further discussed in section 3.4). This law by U.S. Congress made Puerto Rico a U.S. territory, which constrained Puerto Rican autonomy and thereby its inhabitants’ hopes for future liberty and prosperity. The natives started to critically think about U.S. presence. Political parties before and after the establishment of the Organic Act indicate Puerto Rican sentiment: the parties that emerged *before* its enactment are positive towards U.S. dominion, still each has nuances according to the interests of the classes that are represented in the particular party; whereas the main party that emerged *after* the 1900 Organic Act attempted to form an alliance against U.S.

⁹⁴ Hunter, ‘Historical survey of the Puerto Rico status question, 1898-1965’, 53, 65.

⁹⁵ F.A. Scarano, ‘Censuses in the transition to modern colonialism: Spain and the United States in Puerto Rico’, in A.W. McCoy and F.A. Scarano (eds.), *Colonial crucible: Empire in the making of the modern American state* (Wisconsin 2009) 210.

⁹⁶ Unknown author, ‘Puerto Rico’s prospects improving’, *The New York Times*, 17-09-1898, 4; Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people*, 5-6.

⁹⁷ Scarano, ‘Censuses in the transition to modern colonialism’, 210.

⁹⁸ Unknown author, ‘Puerto Rico’s prospects improving’, 4.

colonial rule.⁹⁹ The following paragraphs elaborate on the dominant political parties that were active around the turn of the nineteenth century.

The **Puerto Rican Republican Party** (*Partido Republicano Puerto Rico*) consisted of supporters of U.S. rule that favoured dominion because they believed it would prepare Puerto Rico for statehood. The party mainly represented the island's sugar industry, hoping to receive benefits from economic ties with the United States. The Republican Party arose from the former Autonomy Party, which reorganized in 1899. The party members claimed that their aims were now completely different from those under Spanish colonial times, considering the change of ruler and possible benefits therefrom. The newly arisen Republican Party claimed that it wanted to promote direct incorporation of Puerto Rico as a U.S. territory, immediate Americanization, the right to vote, and cooperation with authorities. The Republicans aspired all this because of their conviction that for a small and politically inexperienced country independence would be a mistake.¹⁰⁰

The **American Federalist Party** (*Partido Federal Americano*) consisted mainly of agricultural workers, artisans, merchants, and *hacendados*, a small group of wealthy natives that controlled the island since Spain had granted it some form of autonomy.¹⁰¹ The party saw possibilities for 'progress and prosperity' through union with the United States. However, it favoured domestic rule and opposed proposed institutional changes, as the former native leaders feared that they would be obliterated as soon as 'the aggressive spirit of the Anglo-Saxon' took over.¹⁰² Similarly to the Puerto Rican Republican Party, the Federalist Party had its roots in the Spanish era. Luis Muñoz Rivera, leader of the former Liberal Party (*Partido Liberal*), met with the party's members and together they constituted the American Federalist Party in 1899. They aspired self-government and a *sui generis* territorial status, based on their belief that federal states and U.S. territories enjoy broad autonomy. They asked for the rights of statehood with the exception of voting for representation in Congress. In their opinion, domestic officials should be chosen by the Puerto Rican people and domestic legislature should have final jurisdiction.¹⁰³

During times of the enactment of the Organic Act, it became apparent that Puerto Rican Republicans endorsed the Organic Act –although they were disappointed

⁹⁹ Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁰ Hunter, 'Historical survey of the Puerto Rico status question, 1898-1965', 65-66.

¹⁰¹ Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people*, 163.

¹⁰² Unknown author, 'Future of Puerto Rico'.

¹⁰³ Hunter, 'Historical survey of the Puerto Rico status question, 1898-1965', 65-66.

by the degree of self-government it granted, while the Federalists condemned the Organic Act. The Federalists rebelled and withdrew themselves from the following elections. In 1902, they participated another time but were beaten by the Republicans. Soon after, Rosendo Matienzo Cintrón, a Republican, and Luis Muñoz Rivera started discussions about the establishment of a new party. The **Union of Puerto Rico** (PU, *Partido Unión de Puerto Rico*) was established in 1904. The party centred on the perception that the sharp division between Republicans and Liberalists in Puerto Rico merely caused distress on the island and prolonged U.S. domination as the island could not effectively and unitedly oppose against it. Therefore, its aims were to receive a definitive status for Puerto Ricans in which they would receive more autonomy as soon as possible, after which it would cease to exist. The options proposed by the Union Party were: statehood, independence, or self-rule under the U.S. flag. It was the first time that a Puerto Rican political party proposed independence as an option, which indicated that, already in the beginning of the twentieth century, a desire for territorial incorporation was no longer the norm. The Federalist Party had dissolved itself in order for its members to fully integrate into the Union Party. However, the PU did not merely consist of Federalists, as also a number of Republicans considered the new party as an enhanced platform to spread their frustrations concerning the Organic Act.¹⁰⁴

The PU became the most dominant party in Puerto Rican politics from its establishment until 1920. When it became clear that U.S. governance took longer than expected, the party became more assertive and the amount of supporters for the solution of independence increased.¹⁰⁵

3.4 Puerto Rico as an unspecified U.S. territory

Since the annexation of Puerto Rico, there have been different views regarding the island's prospects.¹⁰⁶ It has been argued that the Puerto Ricans were liberated from the Spaniards only to be ruled by the United States and under worse conditions.¹⁰⁷ More optimistic outlooks reasoned from the opportunities for eventual self-rule that would have been received by being educated by the northern neighbour while under its rule. However, in the first months after the acquisition of Puerto Rico, agricultural workers

¹⁰⁴ Hunter, 'Historical survey of the Puerto Rico status question, 1898-1965', 66-67.

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, 66-67.

¹⁰⁶ S. Erman, 'Citizens of empire: Puerto Rico, status, and constitutional change', in *California law review* 102/5 (2014) 1181-1241.

¹⁰⁷ Atwood, *War and empire*, 102; Unknown author, 'Is Puerto Rico a foreign country', *The New York Times*, 23-05-1899, 6.

and artisans felt exploited by the economic and political power of the *hacendados*.¹⁰⁸ The *hacendados* together with other Puerto Rican elites, in turn, were disappointed not by domestic issues, but by the amount of autonomy and economic wealth they had externally received under the U.S. flag.¹⁰⁹ All classes of Puerto Ricans began to speculate that the island would never become an integrated part of the United States.¹¹⁰ Indeed, an article that appeared in *The New York Times* in 1898 stated that the United States was ‘not pledged to give Puerto Rico independence,’ but that they would allow them self-government in domestic affairs ‘as soon as ... they showed themselves capable of it [after] their providential escape from the cruel stepmother country.’¹¹¹ Discord between Puerto Ricans and the United States increased after passing of the island’s first Organic Act in 1900. Before delving into this Act, it is important to look at the 1898 Treaty of Paris, with which the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States officially began, and the first months under U.S. rule.

The Treaty of Paris (1898)

The 1898 Peace Treaty between the United States and the Kingdom of Spain arranged the cession of Puerto Rico to the United States. Article 9 of this treaty states that: ‘The civil rights and political status of the native inhabitants of the territories hereby ceded to the United States shall be determined by the Congress.’¹¹² Other than this sentence, the treaty does not further specify the status of the newly acquired territories and their residents. It merely relinquishes the island to the United States without specifying the relation that will exist between the mainland and the island. This is in contrast with earlier U.S. acquisitions, for instance in the case of New Mexico, for which the treaty specified that its inhabitants would receive American citizenship.¹¹³ Unfortunately, the overarching U.S. Constitution neither offers a solution to the case, as it does not include a clause that says anything about whether new acquisitions can be maintained without being incorporated into the United States. It appears that there is little legal authority on the matter.¹¹⁴ However, it was clear that Puerto Rico lacked an official or well-defined status for a significant period of time.

¹⁰⁸ Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem, 186.

¹¹⁰ Hunter, ‘Historical survey of the Puerto Rico status question, 1898-1965’, 53.

¹¹¹ Fiske, ‘Puerto Rico as a permanent possession’, 6.

¹¹² 1898, *Foreign relations of the United States*, 837.

¹¹³ Unknown author, ‘Citizenship in Puerto Rico’, *The New York Times*, 19-10-1898.

¹¹⁴ A.L. Lowell, ‘The status of our new possessions –a third view’, *Harvard law review* 13/3 (1899) 171-173.

The lack of political status was expressed through a form of military government imposed by the United States, which would last until the enactment of the island's first Organic Act. The military government ruled over the island directly after the acquisition and aimed to completely control the new possession.¹¹⁵ The United States could, however, not simply replace the indigenous people with U.S. citizens -as they did with former acquisitions on the continent- because Puerto Rico was densely populated with nearly one million inhabitants.¹¹⁶ Hence, the government saw to it that Spanish and local installations were immediately removed in order to reform the island into a U.S. setting and make it capitalistic, conform the early twentieth century. In addition, high amounts of money were spent in an attempt to Americanize the island, as that would help the United States in receiving more foreign investments.¹¹⁷ It was argued that a military government was necessary because it could allegedly teach the Puerto Ricans 'govern themselves.'¹¹⁸ It appeared, however, that the political education in Puerto Rico was restrictive and therefore was more controlling rather than educating the Puerto Ricans.¹¹⁹

Considering the amount of time the military government lasted, it seemed as if U.S. Congress and the President -as Commander-in-chief of the U.S. military- were satisfied with the situation. If not, they would have imposed a different government as, we now know, it was in their power to determine the civil rights and political status of the island. So far, Puerto Rico has been negated civil freedom and civil law.¹²⁰ It was already established in the previous section that all classes of Puerto Ricans felt disheartened with U.S. rule: upper class citizens were dissatisfied with the small amount of autonomy they had received, where lower class citizens were unhappy with the island's economic regression and food overspill due to the imposed restriction that no longer allowed them to trade with Spain duty free.¹²¹ On top of this, a hurricane struck Puerto Rico in 1899. Thousands of people were drowned and enormous amounts of property were destroyed. Puerto Ricans were in dire need of a political change.¹²² Finally, the United States granted it them in the form of the 1900 Organic Act.

¹¹⁵ Garrett, 'Political status of Puerto Rico', 9; J. Go, 'Chains of empire, projects of state: Political education and U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico and the Philippines', *Comparative Study of Society and History: An international quarterly* 42/2 (2000) 333-362.

¹¹⁶ Unknown author, 'Future of Puerto Rico', *The New York Times*, 09-10-1898.

¹¹⁷ Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people*, 5.

¹¹⁸ S.S. Harvey, 'Americanizing Puerto Rico', *The New York Times*, 22-02-1899.

¹¹⁹ Go, 'Chains of empire, projects of state', 355-356.

¹²⁰ Unknown author, 'Military government', *Advocate of peace*, 05-1899, 101.

¹²¹ Unknown author, 'Article 2 - No title', *Life*, 21-09-1899.

¹²² Unknown author, 'Issues of the Spanish War', *The cyclopedic review of current history*, 01-07-1899, 529 ('the [Puerto Rican] people have about given up all thought of obtaining a measure of home rule equivalent to statehood; and (...) the thinking men, the land owners, merchants, and other substantial citizens "are

The Foraker Act

As was outlined in the historiography to this thesis, there is a debate between Puerto Rican and U.S. scholars about the status of Puerto Rico. Specialists in studies on Puerto Rico have argued that it is the 1900 Organic Act that brought the island a colonial framework –and frustration instead of hope amongst Puerto Ricans.¹²³

The reforms that were initiated under the U.S. military government accelerated when Congress enacted the act in 1900 that turned Puerto Rico into a U.S. territory. According to the Territorial Clause in the U.S. Constitution, ‘Congress shall have the power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States.’¹²⁴ In lay terms, this means that U.S. Congress not only fully governs its incorporated states, but also its territories.¹²⁵

Puerto Rico’s first Organic Act, better known as the Foraker Act for its sponsor Republican Senator Joseph Benson Foraker, was meant to be ‘Temporarily to provide revenues and a civil government for Porto Rico.’¹²⁶ Highlighting some sections of the Foraker Act, it appears that: Puerto Rican citizens were entitled to protection of the United States, except for those that remained loyal to the Spanish Crown; the Puerto Rican *peso* could be exchanged for U.S. currency at the rate of 1 *peso* for 60 dollar cents; a chief executive officer, the Governor of Puerto Rico, and an executive council would be appointed by the President; and a house of delegates, consisting of 35 members, would be elected by Puerto Ricans.¹²⁷ Interestingly, it seems that throughout the Act, the United States has enlisted some comments through which it can supersede local authority that was granted in particular sections.¹²⁸ These sections are often marked with the words ‘provided, however’, before which is stated the form of authority and after which follows a restriction on these freedoms.¹²⁹ For instance, laws may originate in the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico (i.e. executive council and house of delegates), but U.S. Congress has the authority to annul these bills. Also, Puerto Rico is allowed to have judicial power in courts and tribunals, but the President appoints the chief of justice.

hoping for a government almost entirely by Americans.” But no one wishes for a continuance of the existing military *régime*.’)

¹²³ Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people*, 2; Scarano, ‘Censuses in the transition to modern colonialism’, 210.

¹²⁴ Constitution of the United States, article IV, section 3.

¹²⁵ Today, these are Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa.

¹²⁶ The Foraker Act of 1900: ifes.org/sites/default/files/con00152.pdf (12-05-2016). The official spelling of *Puerto Rico*, instead of *Porto Rico*, was adopted by the United States in December 1899.

¹²⁷ The Foraker Act of 1900, sections 7, 11, 17, 18, 27, and 28.

¹²⁸ Cabán, *Constructing a colonial people*, 8.

¹²⁹ The Foraker Act of 1900, sections 31 and 33.

In sum, under the Foraker Act, Puerto Rico had become a U.S. territory with a civil government and a chief commissioner appointed by the President. Although the law was supposed to be transitional, it was not before 1917 that Congress ratified a second Act. The passing of a second Act was postponed because of, amongst other reasons, the outbreak of World War I in 1914, which needed the attention of the whole world, including Congress. Meanwhile, amongst Puerto Ricans, the longing for congressional action grew.¹³⁰ The 1917 Jones Act finally provided Puerto Ricans with U.S. citizenship – but with exemptions, such as the lack of the right to vote in Presidential elections- and a Resident Commissioner that would represent Puerto Rico in U.S. Congress –but who is, unlike his colleagues, not allowed to vote on laws. The new Act also provided Puerto Rico with a bill of rights and tax exemptions at the federal, state, and local level.¹³¹

3.5 Conclusion

The United States won from Spain in the 1898 Spanish-American War. The succeeding Treaty of Paris, which established peace after the war, arranged -amongst other measures- for the cession of Puerto Rico from its former colonizer Spain to the United States as means of war tribute. This prescribed change of guard is why the United States acquired Puerto Rico in 1898. It appears, however, that U.S. foreign policy has had its eye on the Caribbean area practically since its very own independence from its European colonizer. The U.S. expansionist mind-set at the end of the nineteenth century plays a crucial factor in understanding the acquisition of Puerto Rico.

The United States suffered several domestic as well as foreign pressures; e.g. the fear for a revolt amongst the poorer classes due to the 1893 economic crisis and the increasing power of European expansionists due to the Scramble for Africa. It was argued that these threats could be solved with the acquisition of new territories in the Western Hemisphere as it would create more wealth and increase American global influence. Since the North American continent was already fully acquired, U.S. leaders turned their gaze outside these borders towards the Pacific and the Caribbean areas. However, because most of these territories were still in hands of European colonizers, this meant that they had to be removed from the Western Hemisphere. Spanish presence was predominantly restricted as a result of the Spanish-American War, the British

¹³⁰ Hunter, 'Historical survey of the Puerto Rico status question, 1898-1965', 77.

¹³¹ Garrett, 'Political status of Puerto Rico', 9.

presence was minimized due to a broader implementation of the Monroe Doctrine that allowed Americans to intervene in their territories.

Whereas earlier –continental- acquisitions of the United States were granted a transition period during which they would be prepared for the incorporation into the United States under its constitution, such a conversion lacked in the case of Puerto Rico. Neither the political status of Puerto Rico in relation to the United States, nor its political prospects were settled in the Treaty of Paris. Instead, a U.S. military government controlled the island in the first years after the acquisition.

The Puerto Ricans had developed no specific interest in the United States. Rather, it all happened to them. The island came into the hands of the United States by the unilateral will of the latter. Puerto Rico was of great strategic value to the United States as neighbouring platform from which the United States could exert control over the Caribbean and economically expand into Latin America. These one-sided political and economic motives for expansion wakened U.S. anti-imperialists. They argued that the United States betrayed its own descent by the subjugation of new territories. In order to soothe these anti-imperialist rumours, U.S. leaders came up with moral justifications for their expansion program. For instance, they argued that the world was in need of a superior police power in order to function properly and that the White Man's burden allowed for the extension of borders by spreading knowledge on civilization to nearby territories.

The Puerto Ricans, seen from the other side, did not offer much resistance to the U.S. occupation and were benevolent to the military, which facilitated the rapid acquisition. Puerto Ricans hoped that they might benefit from rule under the United States. What actually happened was the enactment of the 1900 Foraker Act, which legalized the overseas colonial government. Since then, the territory was under the direct rule of U.S. Congress, which transcended local power.

4 1950s – Futile forces

The previous chapter elaborated on the 1898 cession of Puerto Rico from Spain to the United States. It did so within the historical borders of (the developments leading up to) the acquisition until the enactment of the 1900 Foraker Act, with a short excursion to the 1917 Jones Act. The present chapter continues here by summarizing the main events that happened between the passing of the Jones Act and the declaration of the commonwealth status for Puerto Rico in 1952, which is still effective today. This chapter explores why the United States maintained its governance over Puerto Rico during the 1950s.

4.1 The first decades of a long-lasting relationship

The developments in Puerto Rico between 1900 and 1950 were manifold: its demography and economy underwent great changes, its political status was nuanced by U.S. Congress, and its relation with respect to the United States became a topic of international importance. The succeeding paragraphs will briefly elaborate on these three main developments, which is necessary to understand the information that will be discussed in sections two through four of this chapter.

Under U.S. rule, Puerto Rico's infrastructure had improved, which facilitated the recruitment of soldiers from rural areas and the employment of women. While Puerto Rico once started as a place for cheap labour and resource of sugar, it became military and economically significant to the United States. The United States has used the island as a test area for military training (especially Vieques, one of Puerto Rico's islands, cf. *Isla Vieques* on figure A), for methods to economically infiltrate in Latin America, and for medical improvements (e.g. the birth control pill was tested among Puerto Rican women because of a prohibition on its use on the mainland).¹³² Puerto Rico's economy went from expanding after the U.S. settlement in 1898, to collapsing as a result of the Great Depression in the 1930s, to booming during and after the Second World War due to U.S. investments in defence and high amounts of rum exports.¹³³ The condition of the island fluctuated along with its economic developments. Puerto Ricans were pledged to invest

¹³² E.R.S. Watkins, *On the pill: A social history of oral contraceptives in America, 1950-1970* (1996) 63.

¹³³ Collado-Schwarz, *Decolonization models for America's last colony*, 11. There was a high demand for rum during the war years as distilled beverages were scarce on the mainland, C.J. Ayala and R. Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American century: A history since 1898* (2009) 183.

in the benefit of U.S. corporations that settled on the island. Because of this, it came to the point that the Puerto Ricans could no longer financially support developments for domestic improvement, such as the establishment of schools, hospitals, and aqueducts. When Puerto Rico asked for new loans from the United States in order to invest in U.S. corporations as well as in domestic advancement, it was perceived as a complaint against taxation. The United States considered minimizing the borrowings to Puerto Rico in order to stop the island from developing and becoming more autonomous. As a response, Puerto Ricans argued that it was odd that this was even being considered, as the United States had promised to grant more self-government to Puerto Rico if the island's residents obtained more knowledge on how to do so. This, however, seemed an impossible achievement with a lack of school buildings.¹³⁴ In Puerto Rico, propagandist texts emerged that were against U.S. interference.¹³⁵ In times of the Great Depression, when the island was in a poor state, Puerto Rican nationalists revolted against U.S. intervention and expressed their displeasure by the foundation of the island's independence movement.¹³⁶

The political status of Puerto Rico was nuanced through a series of important Supreme Court verdicts that were reached in the beginning of the twentieth century. In these 'Insular Cases', as the trials were called, it became clear that Puerto Rico was an organized, but unincorporated territory of the United States.¹³⁷ Accordingly, it had local power, but was part of a larger political system. Also, it belonged to, but was not incorporated into the United States.¹³⁸ The next nuance in the island's status would not take place before 1952, when Puerto Rico proposed a constitution that would lead to the present commonwealth status. Related to the introduction of the commonwealth status is the significant position that the island obtained in the international field in the early 1950s.

¹³⁴ 'The problems of Puerto Rico: Speeches delivered by the President of the Senate and the speaker of the House of Representatives of Porto Rico', *La democracia* (San Juan 1927) 23-03-1927, 5-20.

¹³⁵ "'La union de Puerto Rico" esta en la cima gloriosa del patriotismo: Apuntes politicos por Santiago Valle y Velez', *La democracia* (San Juan 1923) 9.

¹³⁶ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

¹³⁷ E. Rivera Ramos, 'Deconstructing colonialism: The "unincorporated territory" as a category of domination', in C.D. Burnett and B. Marshall (eds.), *Foreign in a domestic sense: Puerto Rico, American expansion and the constitution* (London 2001) 105.

¹³⁸ For more information on the Insular Cases, I refer to: M. Wood, "'Insular cases" made Puerto Rican status unclear, panel says' (2007): www.law.virginia.edu/html/news/2007_spr/insular.htm (20-05-2016).

The post-war period: A norm of independence and the Cold War

After the two World Wars, a new global perspective towards independence and sovereignty emerged, in which the United States played several leading roles.¹³⁹ In an attempt to end the First World War, the United States interfered with European colonialism by stressing the importance of self-determination in Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points.¹⁴⁰ After WWII, representatives of 51 countries came together and drafted the United Nations Charter in order to maintain global security and attain worldwide co-operation. This predominantly U.S. and British initiative, which will be discussed in the following section, led to the official foundation of the United Nations on 24 October 1945. The first article of the charter of this intergovernmental organization states that 'friendly relations among nations' should be developed 'based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.'¹⁴¹ The charter also includes a chapter on non-self-governing territories, stating that these territories should be assisted in order to obtain a 'full measure of self-government.'¹⁴² While on their way to independence, reports regarding the situation and developments in these territories should be regularly conferred to the United Nations. The U.N. Charter caused many processes of decolonization for peoples that were still in hands of colonizers.¹⁴³ Especially the United States assisted the dependencies in their struggle for freedom and profiled itself as a proclaimer of independence.¹⁴⁴

The new mind-set of the United States after 1945 only lasted for a brief period of time. Soon after WWII, the super power came face to face with another great power, the Soviet Union. The Cold War that followed was the result of a power vacuum in Europe, in which the most powerful nations were restructuring after WWII. The United States was concerned about the spread of Soviet communism amongst poor nations, many of which were situated in close vicinity of the United States. In order for the United States to self-guard its nation, it needed to expand its borders to these territories. The United States could not simply engage in colonialism because of the global appraisal of

¹³⁹ J. Heine and J.M. García-Passalacqua, 'The Puerto Rican question', in *Foreign policy association headline series* 266 (1983) 50-51.

¹⁴⁰ The Fourteen Points would to some extent form the basis of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which established peace between Germany and the Allied Powers. *President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points; Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)* (1919): www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000002-0043.pdf (08-07-2016).

¹⁴¹ Article 1, Chapter I, UN Charter.

¹⁴² Article 73, Chapter XI, UN Charter.

¹⁴³ Perez Santiago, *The fate of Puerto Rico*, 32.

¹⁴⁴ Román. 'Empire forgotten', 1122-1137.

independence. In addition, U.S. colonialism would geopolitically challenge the Soviet Union and potentially lead to war. Americans could not risk war against the Soviets, because their military was challenged by the Soviet military. Therefore, they engaged in 'informal imperialism.'¹⁴⁵ For instance, the United States captured several Japanese territories in the Pacific as strategically located U.N. Trust Territories in 1947 (cf. Appendix I). Because the islands were small, there was no resistance from the Soviet Union. The situation also explains why the United States held on to Puerto Rico. While the United States distinguished itself from European colonizers in the 1890s by claiming that they did not expand purely for self-glorification, it now positioned the possession of several territories as necessary means to resist the communist threat.¹⁴⁶ It follows that other interests outweighed the granting of independence to dependent territories.¹⁴⁷

This, however, did not go without consequences for the United States. Its continued ties with Puerto Rico caused the island to be enlisted as one of the 74 territories on the U.N. list of non-self-governing territories. Because this did not agree with the anti-imperial claims of the United States, the colossus started discussions with Puerto Rico on how they could obtain insular self-government and thereby remove the territory from the list. The United Nations considered territories self-governing if they had indigenous legislation, an indigenous constitution, and the freedom for the people to (express their opinion about) a status change.¹⁴⁸ In 1952, the United States informed the United Nations about the enactment of a Public Law in 1950 that allowed Puerto Rican citizens to draw their own constitution, to be approved by the Puerto Rican people and U.S. Congress. Accordingly, the United States expected its territory to be removed from the list of non-self-governing territories. After several months of internal discussion in the United Nations, during which neither the president of the Puerto Rican independence party nor the president of the nationalist party were heard on the subject, Puerto Rico was removed from the list and thus considered as politically autonomous.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, the nations that voted in favour of the United States (i.e. agreeing that Puerto Rico has domestic self-government) were mostly Latin American.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ J. Go, 'Global fields and imperial forms: Field theory and the British and American Empires', *Sociological theory* 26/3 (2008) 210.

¹⁴⁶ Herring, *From colony to superpower*, 6-9.

¹⁴⁷ Go, 'Global fields and imperial forms', 201-229.

¹⁴⁸ J. Quigley, 'The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory: the case of United States bases in Puerto Rico', *Denver journal of international law and policy* 16/2-3 (1988) 335-343.

¹⁴⁹ 22 countries voted in favour of Puerto Rico's removal of the list, 18 against, and there were 19 abstentions. J.R. Torruella, *The Supreme Court and Puerto Rico: The doctrine of separate and unequal* (1988) 165.

¹⁵⁰ Heine and García-Passalacqua, 'The Puerto Rican question', 50-51.

Nonetheless, Puerto Rico's removal of the list did not mean that its status was no longer point of debate. On the contrary: the island had just received its role in the international arena.¹⁵¹ Section 4.4 further elaborates on the commonwealth status.

4.2 The United States: Testing and investing

The previous section mentioned that the U.N. Charter ensured decolonization processes for territories that lacked autonomy. Another charter, preceding the U.N. Charter, claimed more or less the same and would form the fundamental basis for the origination of the United Nations. The allies of World War II had signed this Atlantic Charter, drafted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in 1941. The Atlantic Charter stated that military domination (such as in Nazi Germany at the time) was a danger to global civilization. The allies, supporting the Atlantic Charter, declared that they will not engage in 'territorial or other' expansionism after the war and that self-government should be restored to peoples lacking it.¹⁵²

Although the Second World War had postponed any reforms related to status in Puerto Rico, the new global perspective that emerged after the War created expectations regarding a process of decolonization for Puerto Rico.¹⁵³

Notwithstanding these prospects, Puerto Rico was to remain an unincorporated territory of the United States, partly due to the Cold War. It appears that the island was of great value for the mainland due to its strategic location in the Caribbean. The previous chapter (section 3.2) already foreshadowed that the United States would extend its military and economic influence to the territory. The following paragraphs are divided into two subsections focusing on the main military and economic reasons that motivated U.S. continued control over its unincorporated territory.

A nuclear backyard

In 1938, U.S. military bases started to settle in Puerto Rico. This process was fully under U.S. control and the Puerto Ricans were not consulted on the matter.¹⁵⁴ The bases were mainly naval, but there were also a number of smaller bases for the U.S. army and air

¹⁵¹ Pastor, 'The international debate on Puerto Rico', 577.

¹⁵² Atlantic Charter, sections 1 and 3:

resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=urn:gvn:EYDO03:UBL01_DEJONG_49&role=pdf (19-05-2016).

¹⁵³ Collado-Schwarz, *Decolonization models for America's last colony*, 11.

¹⁵⁴ Quigley, 'The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory', 330-331; H. García Muñiz, 'Decolonization, demilitarization, and denuclearization in the Caribbean' in I.L. Griffith (ed.), *Strategy and security in the Caribbean* (New York 1991) 42.

force. By 1944, the United States had acquired land in the north (San Juan harbour), the east (Roosevelt Roads Naval Base), and the west (Borinquen Fields, later Ramey Air Base), together with two thirds of a Puerto Rican island (Vieques) for the construction of bases.¹⁵⁵ Given the rapid growth of military installations, it follows that the military use of Puerto Rico was enormous.¹⁵⁶ U.S. military bases in a U.S. non-self-governing territory generally are to defend that territory as within the borders of the United States, but also to serve the interests of the controlling power.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, while the U.S. army defended Puerto Rico, the island offered a great strategic location in return.¹⁵⁸ For instance, U.S. control over the Panama Canal was better ensured as attacks from other nations could more easily be counterattacked from Puerto Rico. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote: ‘the chain of islands (...) enclosing the Caribbean Sea, formed a vast natural shield for the Panama Canal (...). And of this island shield, Puerto Rico is the centre. Its possession or control by any foreign power-or even the remote threat of such possession-would be repugnant to the most elementary principles of national defence.’¹⁵⁹ It follows that Puerto Rico’s location was vital in protecting the United States from foreign threats and therefore should preferably remain in the hands of the United States.

The military bases that were installed to control the area were frequently used to train soldiers and marines and test new weaponry. Therefore, Puerto Rico also functioned as a backyard for military training purposes.¹⁶⁰ There were several advantages attached to the use of Puerto Rico, rather than a continental state. First of all, the military bases in Puerto Rico had an extent on which weapons could be tested that was not replicable in any continental state. This is because of the fact that Puerto Rico is completely surrounded by sea, allowing for larger targeting distances. Secondly, this kind of training exercises would normally unsettle the life of inhabitants on the mainland, for instance due to forced relocations of societies and due to frequent explosions by means of weaponry testing. Although local communities in Puerto Rico were also forced to relocate, these were less likely to object the settlement of the military bases.¹⁶¹

Puerto Rico was not the only Caribbean island on which military bases settled during WWII. However, while other Caribbean training facilities were shut down after

¹⁵⁵ Quigley, ‘The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory’, 330-331; Reyes, ‘Puerto Rico: The last colony’.

¹⁵⁶ Quigley, ‘The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory’, 330-331.

¹⁵⁷ Ibidem, 329.

¹⁵⁸ Ibidem, 331-332.

¹⁵⁹ *An act to amend the act to provide a civil government for Puerto Rico: Hearings before the committee on insular affairs house of representatives, 78th Congress, 2nd session on S.1407 (1944) 14.*

¹⁶⁰ Quigley, ‘The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory’, 333-334.

¹⁶¹ Ibidem, 346.

the war, the United States continued its military presence in Puerto Rico. Although the defensive significance of the naval bases slightly decreased, the bases remained useful for military training. Also, their offensive role grew in order to support U.S. military operations in the Caribbean with which the United States intervened and exerted pressure in the region.¹⁶²

The 1952 status change settled a shared defence system for the United States and Puerto Rico. It seems, however, as if the mainland has imposed a unilateral military policy. For instance, the United States harboured nuclear vessels on Puerto Rico, thereby constructing the island rather than one of the states on the North American continent as a possible target.¹⁶³ Also, after WWII, U.S. soldiers remained present on the island. Although their duties included the training of land, sea, and air forces from the entire region and the coordination of military recruitment, the United States favoured their continuing presence in order to quell any rebellion against the enemies of the U.S. government. The military society in Puerto Rico supported U.S. military presence because it granted them certain benefits, such as housing and care after they had returned from war.¹⁶⁴ Finally, when Puerto Ricans received U.S. citizenship with the Jones Act, it meant that Puerto Rican boys, who now were U.S. citizens, had to enrol for the military.¹⁶⁵ Puerto Ricans have had a large share in U.S. wars, such as WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.¹⁶⁶

The military importance of Puerto Rico to the United States was to remain great for several years to come. Roosevelt Roads would even grow out to become one of the biggest naval bases in the world.¹⁶⁷ Puerto Rico's economic importance to the United States was also very high during the 1950s, but would later face a slight decline due to an increased focus on economic penetration of the Latin American continent.¹⁶⁸

Operation Bootstrap

The expanding economy of Puerto Rico is explicable if we turn to worldwide developments. In the 1950s, global capitalism was expanding and the economic order

¹⁶² García Muñiz, 'Decolonization, demilitarization, and denuclearization', 27-30, 32-33, 38, 41.

¹⁶³ During the Cold War, Roosevelt Roads Naval Base offered facilities for the harbouring of U.S. nuclear-armed ships, just as did other U.S. territories in the Caribbean. Burns, 'Pentagon reveals weapons locations'; Quigley, 'The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory: the case of United States bases in Puerto Rico', *Denver journal of international law and policy* 16/2-3 (1988) 346; García Muñiz, 'Decolonization, demilitarization, and denuclearization', 38.

¹⁶⁴ García Muñiz, 'Decolonization, demilitarization, and denuclearization', 38-39.

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem, 47-8.

¹⁶⁶ Quigley, 'The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory', 331-332.

¹⁶⁷ García Muñiz, 'Decolonization, demilitarization, and denuclearization', 27-30.

¹⁶⁸ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

saw itself rearranged. For areas that were mainly based on agricultural production, such as Puerto Rico, this meant that they were to become industrialized.¹⁶⁹ Section 3.2 already foreshadowed that Puerto Rican economic institutions would have to undergo some economic improvements, and this is exactly why. The following paragraphs will discuss the main development strategy that was implemented in Puerto Rico: *Operación Manos a la Obra* (which roughly translates to ‘operation let’s get to work’), in English called Operation Bootstrap.

Teodoro Moscoso, a wealthy Puerto Rican businessman, was one of the key figures that played a role in the launch and promotion of Operation Bootstrap. He noticed that the industrialization process of Puerto Rico’s economy could not be led successfully by the labour-oriented Puerto Rican government. He realized that, if Puerto Rico desired to acquire a prosperous economy, the industrialization should be led by the private sector. Therefore, Puerto Rico’s industry was intensively promoted with the hope to attract capital from its northern neighbour.¹⁷⁰ The main pillars of Operation Bootstrap were Puerto Rico’s open access to the U.S. market, exemption from taxes, and relatively low wages. These factors, together with Puerto Rico’s great provisions regarding electricity, water, and infrastructure, easily attracted U.S. capital in the years after the war and caused a welcome increase in Puerto Rico’s economy.¹⁷¹ The island’s economy was almost exclusively U.S. dependent and insular money that was generated thanks to investments from the United States was spent in return on import products from the mainland, therefore circulating back into the continental United States.¹⁷² The agricultural life-style that had fuelled the economy for more than four decades under U.S. rule rapidly transformed into one of industrialization and export processing.¹⁷³

As mentioned before, U.S. businesses were attracted by the relatively low production costs in Puerto Rico and from Puerto Rican labourers. Economic ties with Puerto Rico brought U.S. companies the services of the Migration Division of the Puerto Rico Department of Labour.¹⁷⁴ The division was responsible for the flow of Puerto Rican workers into the mainland’s labour market: U.S. employers that were looking to lower their production costs were eager to hire Puerto Rican labourers, who worked for

¹⁶⁹ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American century*, 179.

¹⁷⁰ A.W. Maldonado, *Teodoro Moscoso and Puerto Rico’s Operation Bootstrap* (1997) 45.

¹⁷¹ Maldonado, *Teodoro Moscoso and Puerto Rico’s Operation Bootstrap*, 95-96.

¹⁷² Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American century*, 179, 189-190.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, 180.

¹⁷⁴ Formerly known as the Migration Office that originated in 1947. Changed its name in 1951.

relatively cheap salaries.¹⁷⁵ In addition, the United States enjoyed cooperating with Puerto Ricans, as their labour mentality had clearly changed under Operation Bootstrap. The working population on the one hand worked hard and was talented, the government on the other hand welcomed foreign industrial investments. North American companies felt welcome and wanted.

Puerto Rico has not merely served as an appealing source of cheap labour and products. The economic penetration of the island had a broader advantage for the United States. The mainland had developed interests in other Caribbean and Latin American countries, as they offered export products in which it could invest more of its capital.¹⁷⁶ Puerto Rico was therefore transformed into a test area for economic infiltration of the Caribbean region and Latin America. The success of Operation Bootstrap turned the economic situation in Puerto Rico into a model for the other countries, attracting visitors to study the island's progression.¹⁷⁷ In fact, this economic strategy with its main pillars of labour-intensity and cheap work would grow out to become the forerunner of the *maquiladora* strategy (Special Economic Zones), which is still used throughout parts of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean by U.S. companies.¹⁷⁸

4.3 Puerto Rico: Migration and independence movements

The spread of the industry with Puerto Rico as its model for material progress encouraged Puerto Rican leaders to change the discourse on Puerto Rico to one in which the island is promoted as an investor, supporter, and essential tool for the rise of U.S. companies in the region.¹⁷⁹ It appears that Puerto Rico was well aware of its importance to the United States. The following paragraphs elaborate on the developments in Puerto Rico during the 1950s and focus on what interest Puerto Rico had in ties with the United States. The second subsection highlights the island's main political parties throughout the 1950s.

¹⁷⁵ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American century*, 196.

¹⁷⁶ Moral, *Negotiating empire*, 6.

¹⁷⁷ Roosevelt Study Center, The papers of Eleanor Roosevelt from the Franklin D. Roosevelt library: General Correspondence, 1945-1952, Part 4: 1951-1952, reel 15, 0057; Collado-Schwarz, *Decolonization models for America's last colony*, 11.

¹⁷⁸ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.

A divided nation: Employment on the mainland and the island

The previous section already touched upon the fact that the presence of military bases turned Puerto Rico into a possible target for foreign attacks. Another consequence of the military instalments of the mainland is that many fertile areas, for instance the island Vieques, were destroyed to be transformed into training areas. Not only did this mean that several Puerto Rican communities had to relocate, but also that the island's agricultural production saw a great decline as there were few places left for cultivation. Puerto Ricans had to look for other ways of making money, and turned mostly to fishing.¹⁸⁰ Fishing, however, was in turn disrupted by the military trainings: at times, the waters were accidentally bombed when trained soldiers missed their land-based targets. On top of this all, it was feared that the military trainings had a negative effect on the existence of endangered species, such as pelicans and turtles.¹⁸¹ In hindsight, it seems that most consequences of the U.S. military settlements in Puerto Rico were negative. There was, however, also a direct advantage linked to their coming. The installation of U.S. military bases in Puerto Rico meant that e.g. roads, training fields, and harbors had to be constructed. Therefore, their emergence provided local inhabitants with job opportunities.¹⁸² However, when WWII was over and the use of military bases and encompassing infrastructure was reduced, Puerto Rico saw a rise in its unemployment numbers.

The gradual decline in use of the U.S. military bases was not the only reason why many Puerto Ricans became unemployed. The rapid success of Operation Bootstrap, despite its attraction of women into the labour market and creation of jobs through the construction of industrial plants, played a role in this as well.¹⁸³ The crux lies in the amount of industrial work that had been generated. Industrial labour had grown so extensively and even became the main source of income for the island. The jobs did, however, not compensate for the amount of people that were skilled in agriculture or performed home-needlework.¹⁸⁴

Surprisingly, unemployment and disruption by military trainings could not harm the general feeling of progress amongst Puerto Ricans.¹⁸⁵ Most Puerto Ricans enjoyed improved living standards. To illustrate, gross investment in the island as percentage

¹⁸⁰ Quigley, 'The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory', 346.

¹⁸¹ Ibidem, 348.

¹⁸² Ibidem, 348.

¹⁸³ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American century*, 190.

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, 181.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem, 200.

from its GNP (Gross National Product) increased from 14.8% in 1950 to 31% in 1970. Moreover, Puerto Rico’s real GNP, which is the GNP adjusted for price changes, increased with 134% between 1940 and 1960.¹⁸⁶ In addition, education, electricity, infrastructure, and many other elements were improved under U.S. rule. Enhanced basic health even prolonged average life expectancy from 46 years in 1940 to 69 years in 1960.¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, those that did not find a job in the Puerto Rican industry simply moved to the mainland.¹⁸⁸ Figure 4-1 below illustrates the consequential massive increase in net migration from Puerto Rico to the United States after WWII.

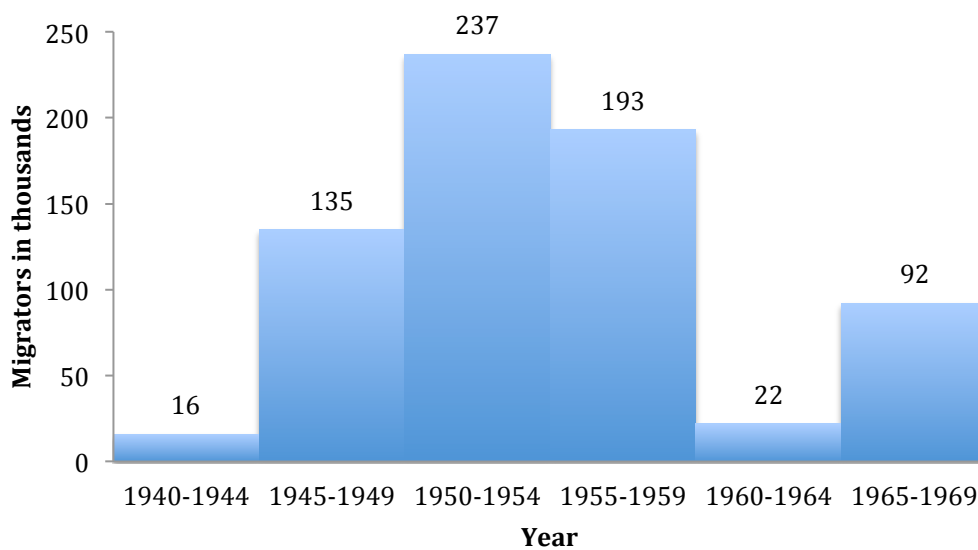


Figure 4-1 Net migration from Puerto Rico to the United States, 1940-1969.

“Source: J.L. Vázquez Calzada, *La población de Puerto Rico y su trayectoria histórica* (1978) 277.”

Mainly motivated by job opportunities and a somewhat better salary, great groups of Puerto Ricans – not unlike inhabitants from other less developed areas – migrated to the successful mainland after the war.¹⁸⁹ In the 1950s, most Puerto Rican migrators came from urban areas. In the 1960s, Puerto Ricans from rural areas followed.¹⁹⁰ Measures were taken in order to facilitate the mass migration in the 1950s. For instance, the Puerto Rican government managed to lower the prices of U.S. airlines from as much as \$180 to

¹⁸⁶ In the 1950s, real GNP increased with 5.3% per year. This number increased to 7% in the 1960s. J.L. Dietz, *Economic history of Puerto Rico: Institutional change and capitalist development* (New Jersey 1986) 245.

¹⁸⁷ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American century*, 181.

¹⁸⁸ Ibidem, 181.

¹⁸⁹ Ibidem, 179.

¹⁹⁰ J.L. Vázquez Calzada, *La población de Puerto Rico y su trayectoria histórica* (1978) 279.

\$35.¹⁹¹ Also, the Migration Division of the Department of Labour of Puerto Rico did not only benefit U.S. employers, but also Puerto Ricans that were looking for a job. The Migration Division functioned as labour recruitment agency and brought workers in contact with U.S. employers.¹⁹² As the first offices were opened in New York, where small numbers of Puerto Ricans had already migrated to in the beginning of the twentieth century, and Chicago, most migrators settled in these states.¹⁹³ In general, Puerto Ricans tended to migrate to U.S. urban areas, such as New York and New Jersey.¹⁹⁴

Political interest and opposition

The general pleasure that was experienced amongst Puerto Ricans as a result of U.S. rule was expressed through the popularity of the island's major political party, which favoured relations with the United States. However, a small group of Puerto Ricans wanted self-rule and revolted against U.S. intervention. These nationalists came together in the island's independence parties. The following paragraphs will delve into the convictions of the main political parties that existed throughout the 1950s.

The **Popular Democratic Party** (PPD, *Partido Popular Democrático*) was founded, predominantly by influential liberalists that used to be members of the abolished PU, in the late 1930s. It initially started as a populist party and aimed for independence from the United States. However, during the war years, the strategy of the party changed considerably and independence was removed from the party's political program.¹⁹⁵ PPD party members reasoned that without U.S. investments, Puerto Rico's economy would weaken. The party became the island's main supporter of Operation Bootstrap and creator of the commonwealth status proposal (further explained in section 4.4).¹⁹⁶ The party leader, Luis Muñoz Marín, political figure and son of Luis Muñoz Rivera, wanted to optimally live up to the rules and benefits of U.S. citizenship that was granted to them by the Jones Act, so that the island's inhabitant would later receive a 'stronger' form of U.S. citizenship.¹⁹⁷ Unlike the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Puerto Rico ruling

¹⁹¹ Ibidem, 194.

¹⁹² Ibidem, 195.

¹⁹³ L. Thomas, 'Puerto Ricans in the United States', *American History: Oxford Research Encyclopedias* (2015).

¹⁹⁴ Vázquez Calzada, *La población de Puerto Rico y su trayectoria histórica*, 279.

¹⁹⁵ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American century*, 189.

¹⁹⁶ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

¹⁹⁷ Roosevelt Study Center, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's office files, 1945-1953, Part 2: International series, reel 26, 0961. To illustrate, Muñoz Marín thought it was for the greater cause that Puerto Rican boys, whose mothers did not understand why they were taken away from them, were sent to fight in U.S. wars.

class preferred to remain distant from U.S. supervision, the elite wanted to strengthen the ties and serve U.S. interests. The PPD became Puerto Rico's major party. Over the years, the party's most liberal members had left in order to create or join a nationalist party.¹⁹⁸

One of Puerto Rico's national parties was the **Puerto Rican Independence Party** (PIP, *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño*). The PIP originated in 1946 and was founded by the liberals that had left the PPD when it no longer aspired to independence. The PIP, indeed, aimed at obtaining independence from the United States. The party's supporters were mainly from the middle class and included small farmers, merchants, and scholars.¹⁹⁹ The ideas of these so-called *independentistas* contradicted the pro-American principles of the PPD. The PIP was of the opinion that the United States had crafted a political construction in order for Puerto Rico to become economically, or at least psychologically, dependent on the mainland. The *independentistas* argued that this feeling of dependence was the main reason why the PPD became the greatest political party of Puerto Rico: Puerto Ricans no longer dared to seek independence.²⁰⁰ It was mentioned in section 4.3 that U.S. military trainings had a possible negative effect on the Puerto Rican flora and fauna. PIP members benefited from the research into the effects of U.S. military presence, because it enabled them to attack the PPD on its support for Operation Bootstrap, of which for instance the petro-chemical industry had negative consequences for the environment.²⁰¹ This kind of parliamentary pressure was key to the principles of the PIP. Their reasonable strategy is what distinguished them from Puerto Rico's second national party.²⁰²

The **Puerto Rican Nationalist Party** (PNPR, *Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico*) also aimed for independence, but handled situations more aggressively. The party, founded in 1922, became active under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos in 1930. The nationalists reasoned from the idea that U.S. Congress has been violating international law since 1898 by not giving the right of self-government to Puerto Ricans.²⁰³ Moreover, PNPR members were of the opinion that the United States has committed several crimes towards Puerto Ricans, such as the deployment of young boys

¹⁹⁸ Roosevelt Study Center, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's office files, 1945-1953, Part 2: International series, reel 26, 0961.

¹⁹⁹ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem.

²⁰¹ Maldonado, *Teodoro Moscoso and Puerto Rico's Operation Bootstrap*, 193, 369

²⁰² Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

²⁰³ Roosevelt Study Center, *Declassified Documents Reference System*, 'Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, results of investigation', 08-11-1950, 1.

to fight in American wars.²⁰⁴ Results of general popular elections indicated the party's unpopularity amongst Puerto Ricans and the party therefore frequently abstained from these elections. Instead, the nationalists turned to violent attacks in an attempt to drive away the 'Yankee Invaders', as they saw them.²⁰⁵ The nationalist party revolts reached their climax in 1950. At the end of October 1950, the PNPR led an armed uprising. The party managed to hold Jayuya, a town in the centre of Puerto Rico. U.S. air troops quickly managed to retake the area, but had to bomb the town in order to do so.²⁰⁶ The bombings on Puerto Rican soil infuriated the nationalists. Two extreme members made plans to assassinate President Harry S. Truman on November 1st, 1950.²⁰⁷ The two men made it to the temporal staying of the President, but were stopped by U.S. policemen. More than 100 nationalists, amongst whom their leader Albizu Campos, were arrested and Governor Muñoz Marín expected 'to make further arrests (...) before the day is over.'²⁰⁸ The nationalist revolt caused hundreds of nationalists to be persecuted and taken to jail without further trial.²⁰⁹ The severe developments resulted in repression of the nationalist as well as the independence movement.

The drop in political popularity of the independence parties caused a rise in the popularity of the Puerto Rico **Republican Party**, which still fervently favoured statehood. In 1956, it became the second greatest political party of Puerto Rico.²¹⁰ It was clear that, since then, the majority of Puerto Ricans preferred association with the United States, rather than complete independence.

4.4 Puerto Rico as a U.S. commonwealth territory

The charters that originated in the 1940s state that all peoples should have the right to choose under what form of government they want to live. The United States experienced

²⁰⁴ Albizu Campos stated that '(...) the greatest crime of the United States was the sending of "our youth as cannon fodder to the slaughterhouse in Korea."' Roosevelt Study Center, *Declassified Documents Reference System*, 'Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, results of investigation', 08-11-1950, 6.

²⁰⁵ Roosevelt Study Center, *Declassified Documents Reference System*, 'Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, results of investigation', 08-11-1950, 1.

²⁰⁶ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

²⁰⁷ 'Fanatics attempt to assassinate Pres. Truman', *News magazine of the screen* (1950): archive.org/details/0069_News_Magazine_of_the_Screen_December_1950_05_45_49_00 (29-05-2016). Roosevelt Study Center, *Declassified Documents Reference System*, 'Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, results of investigation', 08-11-1950, 9.

²⁰⁸ Roosevelt Study Center, President Harry S. Truman's office files, 1945-1953, Part 3: Subject file, reel 14, 0179.

²⁰⁹ Collado-Schwarz, *Decolonization models for America's last colony*, 12.

²¹⁰ Gerald R. Ford Presidential library, James M. Cannon files, box 28, folder Puerto Rico (10). 'Chronology: The status of Puerto Rico.' fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0039/16988363.pdf (12-05-2016).

international pressure regarding its relations with its dependencies.²¹¹ In 1946, President Harry S. Truman approved the appointment of a committee to study ‘the Puerto Rico problem’ by reflecting on the status question and proposals coming from Puerto Rico.²¹² This committee granted Puerto Rico the right to popularly elect their own Governor in 1947.²¹³ International pressure on the United States grew in 1948, when Puerto Rico was enlisted on the U.N. list of non-self-governing territories.²¹⁴ Finally, in 1950, Puerto Rico, President Harry S. Truman, and U.S. Congress enacted Public Law 600, which led to the Puerto Rican status and constitution that are still in effect today.^{215,216}

Public Law 600

Puerto Rico’s Legislative Assembly desired more self-government through greater control over local affairs. Their requests to U.S. Congress resulted in the enactment of Public Law 600, which allowed Puerto Rico to create its own constitution and elect an insular government.²¹⁷ It was agreed upon that the constitution had be approved by U.S. Congress and would officially be enacted upon mutual approval.²¹⁸ Unlike the constitutions for continental states, Puerto Rico was not allowed to make a change regarding political and trade relations with the mainland.²¹⁹ In addition, Public Law 600 explicitly stated that the proposed constitution ‘would not change Puerto Rico’s fundamental political, social, and economic relationship to the United States.’²²⁰ Therefore, U.S. authorities must have been aware that the constitution and form of governance they were going to be asked to agree upon would not have much effect on

²¹¹ A.I. Cepeda Derieux, ‘A most insular minority: Reconsidering judicial deference to unequal treatment in light of Puerto Rico’s political process failure’, *Columbia law review* 110/3 (2010) 811; Collado-Schwarz, *Decolonization models for America’s last colony*, 12.

²¹² Roosevelt Study Center, President Harry S. Truman’s office files, 1945-1953, Part 3: Subject file, reel 14, 0145.

²¹³ *Providing for the organization of a constitutional government by the people of Puerto Rico*, 2nd session on S.3336 (1950): www.puertoricoreport.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Tab_52_HouseRprt_1950.pdf (31-05-2016).

²¹⁴ Cepeda Derieux, ‘A most insular minority’, 811.

²¹⁵ Garrett, ‘Political status of Puerto Rico’, 9.

²¹⁶ Gerald R. Ford Presidential library, ‘Chronology: The status of Puerto Rico’.

²¹⁷ *Ibidem*; Cepeda Derieux, ‘A most insular minority’, 811; Roosevelt Study Center, President Harry S. Truman’s office files, 1945-1953, Part 3: Subject file, reel 14, 0104.

²¹⁸ *Puerto Rico constitution: Hearing before the committee on interior and insular affairs house of representatives*, 82nd Congress, 2nd session on H.J. Res. 430 (1952): babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d02087359j;view=2up;seq=8;size=150 (30-05-2016).

²¹⁹ Roosevelt Study Center, President Harry S. Truman’s office files, 1945-1953, Part 3: Subject file, reel 14, 0104.

²²⁰ *Providing for the organization of a constitutional government by the people of Puerto Rico*, 2nd session on S.3336 (1950) 3: www.puertoricoreport.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Tab_52_HouseRprt_1950.pdf (31-05-2016).

their relationship with the island.²²¹ Between Puerto Rican and mainland citizens, there was some confusion regarding what would become of the relations between the mainland and Puerto Rico once the constitution would take effect. Puerto Ricans generally thought that they would no longer be a U.S. territory, while U.S. Congress was sure that it would not alter the island's submissive relation with the United States.²²²

Puerto Rico sought consent amongst its inhabitants for the substitution of the Jones Act by the creation of a new, constitutional agreement through an island-wide referendum in 1951.²²³ The United States would later use the fact that the majority of Puerto Ricans voted in favour of a new constitution to justify the relationship to the United Nations, because it indicated Puerto Rican agreement with continuing U.S. domination.²²⁴

In March 1952, Puerto Rico finished its constitution proposal. The proposal was sent to President Harry S. Truman for his approval. The President, perhaps under international pressure, approved and handed it to Congress.²²⁵ U.S. Congress demanded some minor alterations and the removal of an entire section on human rights.²²⁶ It was up to the Puerto Ricans if they wanted to accept the altered constitution, which no longer recognized the right to e.g. free elementary and secondary education, adequate health standards, and work.²²⁷

²²¹ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

²²² Cepeda Derieux, 'A most insular minority', 811.

²²³ Roosevelt Study Center, 'The papers of Eleanor Roosevelt from the Franklin D. Roosevelt library: General Correspondence, 1945-1952, Part 4: 1951-1952, reel 8, 0715; Roosevelt Study Center, 'The papers of Eleanor Roosevelt from the Franklin D. Roosevelt library: General Correspondence, 1945-1952, Part 4: 1951-1952, reel 2, 0998.

²²⁴ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

²²⁵ Roosevelt Study Center, 'The papers of Eleanor Roosevelt from the Franklin D. Roosevelt library: General Correspondence, 1945-1952, Part 4: 1951-1952, reel 8, 0715; Cepeda Derieux, 'A most insular minority', 811. In 1952, the U.S. ambassador to India wrote to President Truman that he would like to see him make a statement on the colonial question, perhaps even to the United Nations. 'The United States was the first colonial possession to break free from imperial domination' and should reengage in opposing colonialism in any form. Roosevelt Study Center, President Harry S. Truman's office files, 1945-1953, Part 2: Correspondence file, reel 3, 0094.

²²⁶ Cepeda Derieux, 'A most insular minority', 811; Public Law 447, Chapter 567, 03-07-1952. www.puertoricoreport.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/PL-82-447.pdf (23-05-2016).

²²⁷ Roosevelt Study Center, 'The papers of Eleanor Roosevelt from the Franklin D. Roosevelt library: General Correspondence, 1945-1952, Part 4: 1951-1952, reel 2, 0998. This section (Section 20 of the Bill of Rights) was included in the first place to develop the island's economy, through which the Puerto Ricans expected to gain eventual self-government, cf. Article 2, section 20: babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d02087359j;view=2up;seq=8;size=150

The commonwealth constitution

PPD leader Muñoz Marín invented the *Estado Libre Asociado* (literally, free associated state) status to receive both domestic rule and U.S. aid.²²⁸ Because Puerto Ricans deemed the constitution's existence crucial for the attainment of more self-governance, they approved the U.S. Congress adaptation of their constitution.²²⁹ In July 1952, the 'Commonwealth of Puerto Rico' officially came into existence under the new constitution.²³⁰ By the time that Puerto Rico's new constitution was enacted, Luis Muñoz Marín had become Governor of Puerto Rico. In that capacity, he assured in a letter to President Dwight D. Eisenhower that mutual relations of their nations would grow.²³¹

Although Puerto Ricans had proposed to make their island an *Estado Libre Asociado*, this was translated in English as 'commonwealth'.²³² While the former implies a certain political relationship between two entities (state, associated), the latter does not. In the past, the term commonwealth applied to both states and territories.²³³ When it was used for territories, it usually denoted a self-governing area under its own constitution with a right to self-government that is not to be one-sidedly withdrawn by U.S. Congress.²³⁴ With the new status, Puerto Ricans indeed obtained more insular political authority by means of the right to install a local government.²³⁵ Matters such as foreign affairs and defence would still be controlled by the United States.²³⁶ Although Puerto Ricans had obtained more authority regarding domestic matters, they still lacked a voting

²²⁸ Unknown author, 'Plebiscite postponed', *Time Inc.* 80/22, 30-11-1962.

²²⁹ Roosevelt Study Center, The papers of Eleanor Roosevelt from the Franklin D. Roosevelt library: General Correspondence, 1945-1952, Part 4: 1951-1952, reel 2, 0998.

²³⁰ *Puerto Rico constitution: Hearing before the committee on interior and insular affairs house of representatives*, 82nd Congress, 2nd session on H.J. Res. 430 (1952): babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d02087359j;view=2up;seq=8;size=150 (30-05-2016).

²³¹ Roosevelt Study Center, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's office files, 1945-1953, Part 2: International series, reel 26, 0961.

²³² 'Commonwealth' was an 'equivalent to and appropriate translation' of the *Estado Libre Asociado*, because no other English word covered the meaning better. Vice versa, no Spanish word existed that translated to 'commonwealth'. The meaning of commonwealth for Puerto Rico was entailed as the status of a 'body politic' that had authority over local affairs but was linked to the United States. 'Resolution no. 22, to determine in Spanish and in English the name of the body politic created by the Constitution of the people of Puerto Rico', *Mora v. Torres*, U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico – 113 F. Supp. 309 (1953).

²³³ The federal states of Kentucky, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Pennsylvania are officially called commonwealths in their constitutions, however, they are just like any other state. All four had been colonies of the British Empire, after which the term 'commonwealth' was used to stress that their inhabitants commonly agreed with their new status, as opposed to the colonial situation they were in before. Although commonwealth status previously led to statehood, this is no longer automatically the case.

²³⁴ M.E. Porrata Colón, *¡El engaño del ELA se acabó! ¡Aquí está la verdad!* (2010) 19-21.

²³⁵ Cepeda Derieux, 'A most insular minority', 811; Porrata Colón, *¡El engaño del ELA se acabó!*, 23.

²³⁶ Roosevelt Study Center, The papers of Eleanor Roosevelt from the Franklin D. Roosevelt library: General Correspondence, 1945-1952, Part 4: 1951-1952, reel 8, 0715.

representation in U.S. Congress.²³⁷ In fact, the island's sovereignty was still with the mainland's Congress.²³⁸ In hindsight, it remains a question where exactly the commonwealth translation came from and whether this translation was purposefully chosen to strive for a virtue, or whether this was to disguise a colonial relationship.

Governor Muñoz Marín and President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harry S. Truman's successor since 1953, were satisfied with the established relationship; each year after the implementation of the commonwealth status, they exchanged anniversary letters about the 'politically creative relationship' they had invented and how it set a great example for what underdeveloped territories can do with the help of a greater power.²³⁹ The President described his nation's 'voluntary (...) and in many ways unique' relationship with Puerto Rico as one of 'harmony, cooperation, and mutual understanding' regarding 'ideals of freedom and justice', driving the Puerto Ricans towards progress.²⁴⁰

In November 1953, the case of Puerto Rico's status came before the United Nations. U.S. representative Henry Cabot Lodge made a statement on behalf of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and said that if the Puerto Rican Legislative Assembly requires more or complete independence from the United States and thereto adopts a resolution, the President will 'immediately thereafter' recommend to U.S. Congress to grant the island independence.²⁴¹ In a letter to the Major General of the Puerto Rican National Guard, President Dwight D. Eisenhower reaffirmed that there is no intention to change the relationship between the two. He claimed that the statement was merely made to ensure that the United States does not have a 'possessive (...) relationship' with any area in the world.²⁴² Although petitions from Puerto Rican political parties to the United Nations regarding their removal from the list of non-self-governing territories indicated sharp criticism, the United Nations did allow the island's removal of the list.²⁴³ The United Nations thereby deemed it 'appropriate' that the transmission of

²³⁷ Cepeda Derieux, 'A most insular minority', 813.

²³⁸ Porrata Colón, *¡El engaño del ELA se acabó!*, 23; Collado-Schwarz, *Decolonization models for America's last colony*, 12.

²³⁹ Roosevelt Study Center, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's office files, 1945-1953, Part 2: International series, reel 26, 0961.

²⁴⁰ Roosevelt Study Center, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's office files, 1945-1953, Part 2: International series, reel 26, 0961.

²⁴¹ As quoted in Torruella, *The Supreme Court and Puerto Rico*, 165; Pastor, 'The international debate on Puerto Rico', 577.

²⁴² Roosevelt Study Center, President Dwight D. Eisenhower's office files, 1945-1953, Part 2: International series, reel 26, 096; Gerald R. Ford Presidential library, 'Chronology: The status of Puerto Rico'.

²⁴³ Memorandum to the United Nations: The case of Puerto Rico (New York 1953): archive.org/stream/TheCaseOfPuertoRicoMemorandumToTheUnitedNations/CPPR#page/n1/mode/2up (30-05-2016).

informational reports regarding the relationship between the mainland and Puerto Rico 'should cease.'²⁴⁴ The determining factor for Puerto Rico's removal of the list was the enactment of Public Law 600, granting Puerto Ricans the right to create an insular constitution. Reconsidering the U.N. requirements for a nation to be self-governing, it appears that they are not necessarily met after the enactment of Public Law 600 or the commonwealth constitution; Puerto Rico's legislation and constitution can be superseded by the United States, Puerto Rico is not free to change its island's status (although the United States claims otherwise by pointing at the mutual agreement upon the commonwealth status), and Puerto Ricans do not have the freedom to express their opinions towards status as their choices may have been influenced by the presence of U.S. dominant military forces on the island.²⁴⁵

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored Puerto Rican and U.S. mutual interests in their continued -even strengthened- relationship in the 1950s. It appears that the ties remained because there was only a minority of Puerto Ricans that revolted against the U.S. intervention in their nation. These nationalist forces remained futile, because they did not convince the rest of the Puerto Rican population of the conviction that Puerto Rico was able to successfully govern itself without U.S. interference. The United States, in addition, had developed great military and economic interests in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico had grown to host the most important U.S. base hub in the Caribbean area. The island had a crucial strategic position from which the United States could protect the Caribbean area during WWII. After the war, unlike other Caribbean territories, U.S. military presence in Puerto Rico remained. Their enduring presence indicates that Puerto Rico also was an interesting platform from which the United States could control and exert pressure over the Central American and Caribbean region. Economic interests in ties with Puerto Rico were strengthened by the launch of Operation Bootstrap, which industrialized the island. Puerto Rico offered a flow of labourers who worked in U.S. companies for relatively low wages and functioned as a test area for economic penetration into Latin America. The economic growth of Puerto

²⁴⁴ Roosevelt Study Center, The papers of Eleanor Roosevelt from the Franklin D. Roosevelt library: General Correspondence, 1945-1952, Part 4: 1951-1952, reel 8, 0715; 'Cessation of the transmission of information under Article 73e of the Charter in respect of Puerto Rico', General Assembly, eighth session, 459th plenary meeting.: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/086/13/IMG/NR008613.pdf?OpenElement (31-05-2016).

²⁴⁵ Quigley, 'The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory', 335-343.

Rico increased due to U.S. investments in the island. Puerto Rico soon became an example of successful political and economic modernization for other developing countries on the Western Hemisphere.

The U.S. military bases in Puerto Rico left the island harboring nuclear weapons for the defence of the mainland. It thereby became a target for foreign attacks. Despite a number of negative consequences attached to the settlement of U.S. military bases, the ties with the mainland were favoured by the majority of the Puerto Rican population. This was because the general progress that the island enjoyed in its capacity as U.S. territory. While the military policy was predominantly unilaterally imposed upon Puerto Rico, the island economically and socially advantaged due to a good relationship with the mainland. For instance, Puerto Ricans were encouraged to work in the mainland when the island's unemployment rates increased.

Although the ties continued to exist during the 1950s, Puerto Ricans did make a step forward regarding autonomy in domestic rule. This may have been due to international pressure that was exerted on the United States. After the World Wars, a new global perspective towards colonial dependencies emerged. While the United States became a proclaimer of liberty and aided the global process of decolonization, its own relationship with Puerto Rico has been point of international debate. In 1952, it approved the Puerto Rican constitution that turned the island into a commonwealth of the United States. Although this status change caused the removal of Puerto Rico from the U.N. list of non-self-governing territories, the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States was still internationally discussed. The United States and the majority of Puerto Ricans self were happy with the settled status; the former still had final authority on Puerto Rico's status, whereas the latter had reached a consensus between U.S. aid and home rule.

5 2000s – Territory under construction

The two previous chapters focused on the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States in the late nineteenth century (chapter three) and the mid of the twentieth century (chapter four). It has been established that Puerto Rico was a colony from Spain until the Spanish-American War in 1898. As a result of the treaty that established peace after the war, Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States. The island has continued to exist under U.S. rule as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, a status that was granted during the post-WWII period. The Cold War has come to an end and with that, an argument to maintain an ambiguous relationship with Puerto Rico has become irrelevant. With this in mind, this chapter explores the ties between Puerto Rico and the United States in recent times. It wonders why Puerto Rico continues to exist as a dependent commonwealth territory of the United States and thereby focuses on the results of several referenda on the political status of Puerto Rico.

5.1 The second half of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States

The United Nations declared that all colonial relationships would be eradicated between 1990 and 2000.²⁴⁶ However, the continuing debate on the status of Puerto Rico (cf. section 2.1) indicates that, although the island has been removed from the list of non-self-governing territories, there still is international disagreement on Puerto Rico's autonomy. It has been argued that the United States, a proclaimer of self-determination, denies this fundamentality to its own island dependency as if it falls outside the decolonization debate.²⁴⁷ This is supported by several events that happened during the last decades, for instance: Puerto Rico's economy became less dynamic as a result of the 1970s recession in world capitalism, indicating that despite the island's financial programs in the 1950s it is still highly dependent on U.S. capital; throughout the 1980s, military bases were still frequently used for military training and for interventions in the region, such as the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983 that was launched from Puerto Rico; the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status that was established by President Bill Clinton in 2000 continued to exist under President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, its intentions aimed at recommending political status options for Puerto

²⁴⁶ Román, 'Empire forgotten', 1120.

²⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 1120-26.

Rico so that it enters a process by which it could choose its own status.²⁴⁸ The establishment of the President's Task Force indicates that the final form of the political status of Puerto Rico still needs to be established.

As long as Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States, 'the will of its people regarding their political status should be ascertained periodically' through plebiscites supported either by the U.S. government or the Puerto Rican Legislature.²⁴⁹ Plebiscites are referenda in which people vote for the answer to a certain question, rather than for a person who should represent them. In the case of Puerto Rico, the question centres on the political status that should be obtained. Since the promulgation of the commonwealth constitution in 1952, four of such referenda have taken place: in 1967, 1993, 1998, and in 2012. Their outcomes will be discussed in section two, which elaborates on U.S. interests in ties with Puerto Rico. It has been decided to discuss the results in that section because U.S. interests in Puerto Rico have not explicitly been stated in recent times. Rather, the United States has made several claims that it wants to help Puerto Rico in obtaining a definitive status.²⁵⁰ However, it appears that after these promises and status referenda no change has been granted regarding Puerto Rico's status. I wonder how it can be that the United States claims to use its final authority to change Puerto Rico's status if its inhabitants indicate a will, but that when these inhabitants do so, the island's status remains to be an issue. From the lack of subsequent congressional action following the status plebiscites, it can be deduced that there is an interest in the United States to keep Puerto Rico close, and in its current ambiguous capacity.

5.2 The United States: Proclamations and plebiscites

When the United States economically infiltrated Latin American countries at the end of the twentieth century, Puerto Rico lost somewhat of its relative advantage, especially to Mexico.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, Puerto Rico has remained economically significant. Most of Puerto Rico's trade still takes place with the continental United States. There are indicators that reveal that the military importance of Puerto Rico as well has remained high until recent times. For instance, Roosevelt Roads and Vieques remained active as

²⁴⁸ Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American century*, 182. Quigley, 'The legality of military bases in non-self-governing territory', 330-334. *Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's status* (2011) 15.

²⁴⁹ President George H.W. Bush, 'Memorandum for the heads of executive departments and agencies' (1992). *Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's status* (2007) Appendix A.

²⁵⁰ E.g. Henry Cabot Lodge's statement before the United Nations and Roosevelt Study Center, *Declassified Documents Reference System*, 'Draft presidential proclamation to the people of Puerto Rico July 25, 1978', 21-07-1978.

²⁵¹ Reyes, 'Puerto Rico: The last colony'.

training and testing areas throughout the first years of the twenty-first century.²⁵² Because of a lack of sources that explicitly state recent U.S. interest in Puerto Rico, I will now turn to the Puerto Rican status plebiscites and examine what action the United States undertook as response to the results.

Plebiscites on the political status of Puerto Rico

In an attempt to eternalize the unique commonwealth status with respect to the United States, Governor Muñoz Marín called for a plebiscite to test whether Puerto Ricans would choose between independence from the United States, congressional approval for admittance as state, or continuance of the commonwealth status with a maximal form of self-government.²⁵³ The first status referendum took place in 1967. It followed the recommendations made in a report from the Commission on the Status of Puerto Rico and would be the only status plebiscite to be approved by U.S. Congress.²⁵⁴ The majority of votes went to the option for commonwealth status.²⁵⁵ This victory was no real surprise, given that the island was under a commonwealth administration. Figure 5-1 below illustrates that the popularity for the commonwealth proposal was followed by the statehood option, and that independence received the minority of the votes.²⁵⁶

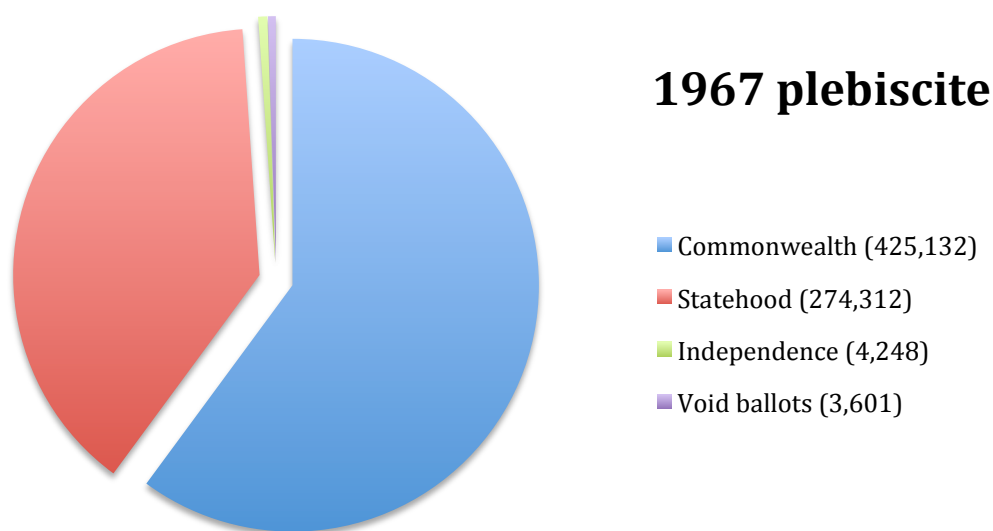


Figure 5-1 *Distribution of votes in the 1967 plebiscite on the political status of Puerto Rico*

“Source: ‘Consulta de resultados’: 209.68.12.238/cgi-bin/municipios.pl?municipio= (11-06-2016).”

²⁵² García Muñiz, ‘Decolonization, demilitarization, and denuclearization’, 36-38.

²⁵³ Unknown author, ‘Plebiscite postponed’; ‘Ley Núm. 1 del 23 de diciembre de 1966’: www.eleccionespuertorico.org/referencia/plebiscito67.html (11-06-2016); M.O. Rodriguez, *The political status of Puerto Rico – A comparative study of the 1967 and 1993 plebiscites* (1998) 29.

²⁵⁴ Garrett, ‘Political status of Puerto Rico’, 13; Hunter, ‘Historical survey of the Puerto Rico status question, 1898-1965’.

²⁵⁵ Unknown author, ‘Pocketbook plebiscite’, *Time Inc.* 90/3, 21-07-1967.

²⁵⁶ ‘Consulta de resultados’: 209.68.12.238/cgi-bin/municipios.pl?municipio= (11-06-2016).

After several decades in which U.S. Congress did not approve of political status legislature, a second political status referendum was arranged for by the Puerto Rican Legislative Assembly in 1993. The status definitions, proposed by the corresponding political parties themselves, were more elaborate from those that were proposed in the previous plebiscite. To start with, the 1967 proposal lacked true definitions for statehood and independence -they merely contained the statement that Puerto Rico would, respectively, request U.S. Congress to become a federal state within the United States or to request independence from the continental states. The enhanced commonwealth definition already was elaborate in 1967. Its proposal was based on maintenance of Puerto Rican culture, U.S. citizenship, and U.S. security due to a common defence policy. In 1993, statehood became defined with terms of rights and responsibilities that were inherent to federal states, while it also included assurance that Puerto Rico would keep its cultural heritage and own flag by means of a mutual agreement upon terms of statehood. Independence was amplified with the right for self-government in local and foreign matters. In the case of independence, a treaty was proposed that would settle a transition period during which the island would still receive U.S. aid and profit from the benefits that were granted to them (e.g. Social Security and entitlements). This proposal also argued for demilitarization of the island. However, this part was not substituted for with other suggestions on how to solve national security measures. The commonwealth status was somewhat extended by expressing its aim to gain more federal aid and at the same time remain culturally dependent, for instance at the Olympic Games at which Puerto Rico desired to have its own flag and anthem.²⁵⁷ U.S. Congress was of the opinion that these status definitions did not meet U.S. constitutional requirements. Therefore, they did not support the plebiscite.²⁵⁸

The outcome of the 1993 plebiscite is illustrated in figure 5-2. Again, the commonwealth supporters won from the statehood supporters and the *independentistas*.²⁵⁹ At first sight, it appears that nothing much has changed between the 1967 and the 1993 plebiscite. However, the first plebiscite did bring Puerto Rico in the news due to which an interest arose amongst U.S. public and the discussion regarding the political status of Puerto Rico grew. Also, Puerto Ricans and U.S. mainland citizens realized that the political status issue of Puerto Rico still is a question to which there are no easy answers,

²⁵⁷ Rodriguez, *The political status of Puerto Rico*, 31-34.

²⁵⁸ Garrett, 'Political status of Puerto Rico', 13-15.

²⁵⁹ 'Consulta de resultados': 209.68.12.238/cgi-bin/municipios.pl?municipio= (11-06-2016).

e.g. what would happen after this plebiscite, seen the fact that the majority of people still voted for the status quo.²⁶⁰ Compared to the prior plebiscite, the statehood party had gained votes substantially. This can be accounted for by the fact that Puerto Rico’s inhabitants had recently elected a pro-statehood government.

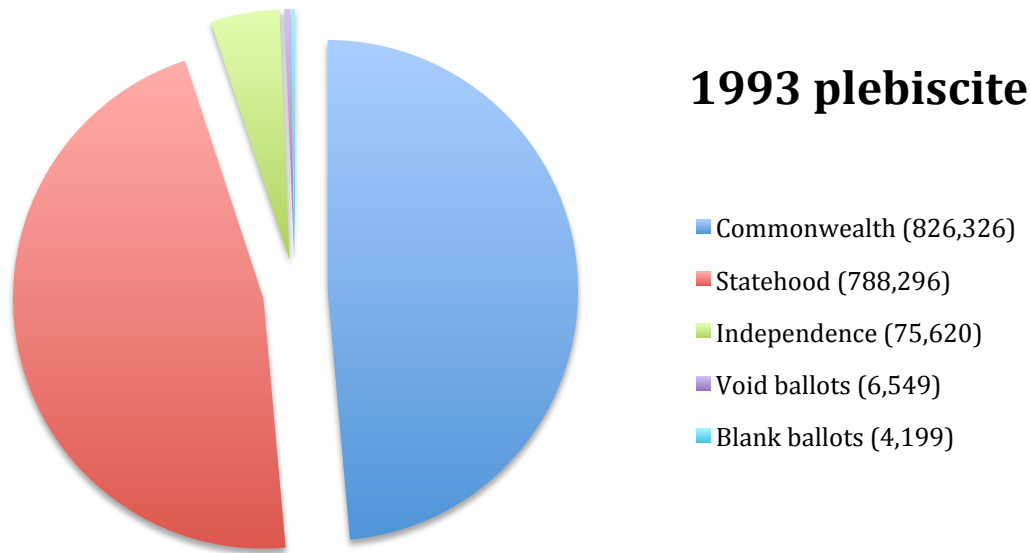


Figure 5-2 *Distribution of votes in the 1993 plebiscite on the political status of Puerto Rico*

“Source: ‘Consulta de resultados’: 209.68.12.238/cgi-bin/municipios.pl?municipio= (11-06-2016).”

In 1994 and 1997, Puerto Rico requested Congress to support a new referendum in which statuses would be proposed that were compatible with the U.S. Constitution. In 1998, Puerto Rico received two responses to its requests. Firstly, the House of Representatives responded by approving the United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act, or Young Bill after its greatest supporter Don Young. The Young Bill declared that Puerto Ricans, after 400 years of colonial rule under Spain and 100 years of U.S. administration, should finally have the right to a federally supported plebiscite at least once every ten years in which they can decide whether they want to continue the commonwealth, attain self-governance through sovereignty, or self-governance through statehood, and that in the case of the latter two options the President should make a transition plan.²⁶¹ The second response to Puerto Rico’s requests came from the Senate, which enacted a resolution that supported self-governance and also secured that the final authority of Puerto Rico’s status is with U.S. Congress.²⁶² Although these actions seem to indicate mainland support for status resolution, the Young Bill failed to pass the Senate’s

²⁶⁰ Diaz, ‘Review: Puerto Rico, the United States, and the 1993 referendum on political status’, 203-204.

²⁶¹ ‘Major provisions of H.R. 856: United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act’, *Congressional digest* 77/5 (1998).

²⁶² Rivera Ramos, ‘Deconstructing colonialism’, 111.

approval. No formal action was therefore taken based on the United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act.²⁶³ At least, not from the continental states. Puerto Ricans, self, arranged for a domestic statute, approved by U.S. Senate, that allowed them to define status proposals based on the House approved Young Bill.²⁶⁴ They came up with five proposals: territorial commonwealth, free association, statehood, independence, and none of the above. The results of the 1998 plebiscite are illustrated in figure 5-3 below. It follows that ‘none of the above’ won from the other options.²⁶⁵ The victory of ‘none of the above’ can be explained by disapproval amongst commonwealth supporters, who were dissatisfied with the ‘territorial commonwealth’ option that was listed instead of their ‘enhanced commonwealth’ proposal and therefore massively voted for ‘none of the above’.²⁶⁶ In 1998, Puerto Rico was still under a statehood administration. Therefore, the statehood supporters were somewhat disappointed by the inconclusive results.

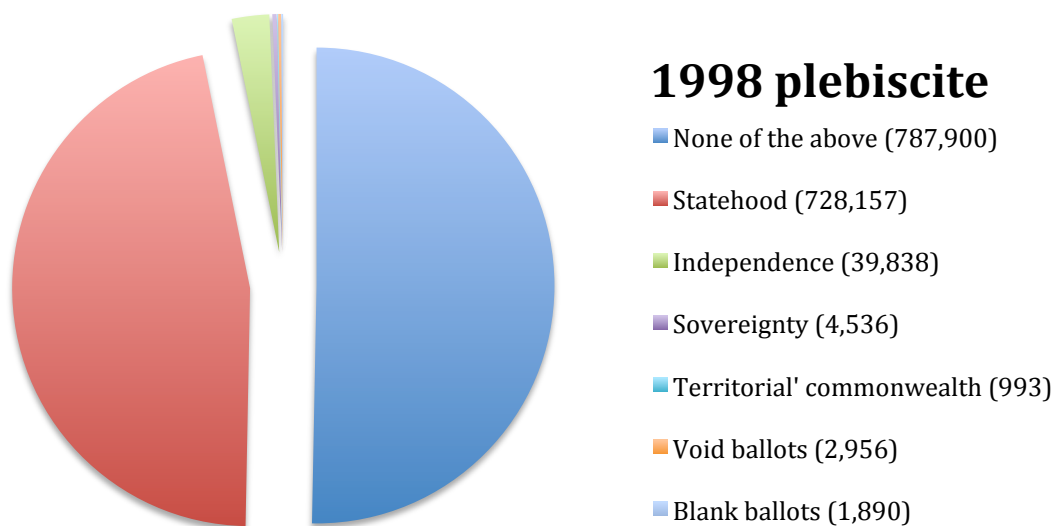


Figure 5-3 *Distribution of votes in the 1998 plebiscite on the political status of Puerto Rico*

“Source: ‘Consulta de resultados’: 209.68.12.238/cgi-bin/municipios.pl?municipio= (11-06-2016).”

After the 1998 plebiscite, it was reassured that Puerto Rico could not unilaterally solve the status issue, and that U.S. governmental aid was needed. Several plans to reach consensus on the status issue were developed, but one after the other remained without further action. For instance, a bill that recognized Puerto Rico as a nation (H.R. 4751) in

²⁶³ *The results of the 1998 Puerto Rico plebiscite: Report by Chairman Don Young and Senior democratic member George Miller to members, committee on resources.* 106th Congress, 1st session (1999) 5-6; Rivera Ramos, ‘Deconstructing colonialism’, 111.

²⁶⁴ *The results of the 1998 Puerto Rico plebiscite*, 106th Congress, 1st session, 5-6.

²⁶⁵ ‘Consulta de resultados’: 209.68.12.238/cgi-bin/municipios.pl?municipio= (11-06-2016).

²⁶⁶ Garrett, ‘Political status of Puerto Rico’, 14-15.

2000 lacked follow-up. Also, a by U.S. Congress suggested amount of \$2.5 million to help Puerto Ricans further their status developments in 2001 was not allocated because Puerto Rico's legislation did not submit an expenditure plan.²⁶⁷ So, questions arose why nothing significant regarding the status resolution has occurred after the inconclusive plebiscites. It may help if U.S. Congress would help drafting the ballots, and especially agree upon the definition of the status proposals. This would allow for more clarity regarding the enlisted options on the ballots and more confidence in an actual ratification by the U.S. government. It would at least benefit the discussion on whether the inconclusive referenda results are due to ambiguous status proposals, a lack of confidence in the U.S. government, or a truly divided nation.²⁶⁸

The Puerto Rico status situation was left dormant after the proposed 1998 Young Bill and subsequent plebiscite. Nearly a decade later, U.S. Congress began to reconsider the matter. In 2010, Puerto Rico's pro-statehood Resident Commissioner, Pedro Pierluisi, proposed a status referendum to Congress. Pierluisi suggested a ballot on which Puerto Ricans would have to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a question about their sentiment regarding the statehood proposal. A second vote, proposing other status options, would follow if only a minority voted in favour of the statehood proposal. This bill was amended and passed by the House, but rejected by the Senate.²⁶⁹

The first plebiscite to be held after the inconclusive results of the 1998 vote was on November 6, 2012. Due to the recent rejection by U.S. Congress, the plebiscite was organized and authorized by Puerto Rico's Legislative Assembly. The design of the 2012 plebiscite was based on Pierluisi's proposed format in 2010. The recent ballot (included in Appendix II) consisted of two questions.²⁷⁰ The first question was concerned with the public opinion regarding a continuance of the territorial commonwealth status. Figure 5-4 illustrates that the majority of Puerto Ricans preferred a change in status.

²⁶⁷ Garrett, 'Political status of Puerto Rico', 15-19.

²⁶⁸ *Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's status* (2011) 30-32.

²⁶⁹ R.S. Garrett, 'Puerto Rico's political status and the 2012 plebiscite: Background and key questions', *Congressional research service* (2013) 9.

²⁷⁰ 'Ballot for 2012 plebiscite': cepur.org/es-pr/Documents/PapeletaModeloPlebiscito12.pdf (11-06-2016).

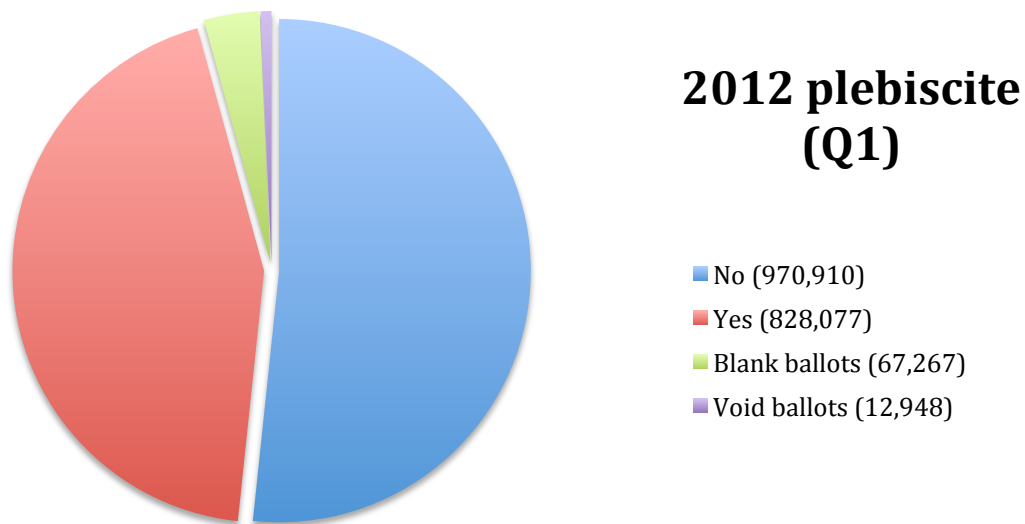


Figure 5-4 *Distribution of votes in the 2012 plebiscite on the political status of Puerto Rico (Q1: Do you agree that Puerto Rico should continue to have its present form of territorial status?)*

“Source: ‘General election and status plebiscite – Present form of territorial status’: www.eleccionespuertorico.org/cgi-bin/events.cgi?evento=2012&voto=p (11-06-2016)”

The second question of the 2012 vote was concerned with the preferred solution to the status question. The President’s Task Force, and the House in their amended version of the Pierluisi proposal, had recommended four answers to be included: statehood, independence, a sovereign free associated state, and the current commonwealth status. It was argued that, even though the commonwealth status may be said to be territorial, ambiguous, or temporary, denying the preference of the Puerto Rican people – as it appeared in previous plebiscites-, would make the results questionable.²⁷¹ The 2012 plebiscite, however, merely allowed voters to choose between three options (cf. ballot in Appendix II): statehood, independence, or a sovereign free associated state. The exact reason for the exclusion of commonwealth option is unclear, but it may have to do with the fact that at the time of the plebiscite, the island was under a pro-statehood administration. Certified results by Puerto Rico’s State Commission on Elections (CEE) indicate an overwhelming majority for the statehood proposal. However, a closer look at the plebiscite results indicates that this does not necessarily present a right interpretation of the referendum. The CEE excluded 498,604 ballots in their counting on which the second question was left unanswered.²⁷² As the pie chart in figure 5-5 illustrates, counting these blank ballots provides for a less decisive outcome. The exact intent of the people that handed in blank ballots was unclear. However, the fact that commonwealth

²⁷¹ *Report by the President’s Task Force on Puerto Rico’s status* (2011) 30-32; Garrett, ‘Puerto Rico’s political status and the 2012 plebiscite’, 9.

²⁷² Garrett, ‘Puerto Rico’s political status and the 2012 plebiscite’, 5-8.

supporters were encouraged by the PPD to abstain from voting on the second question will probably have had its influence on the voting behaviour.²⁷³ I speculate that the high amount of blank ballots was due either to disagreement with the enlisted options amongst commonwealth supporters, thereby hindering the then Puerto Rican pro-statehood government, or to a lack of confidence in the promised ratification process, thereby making a point towards U.S. government.

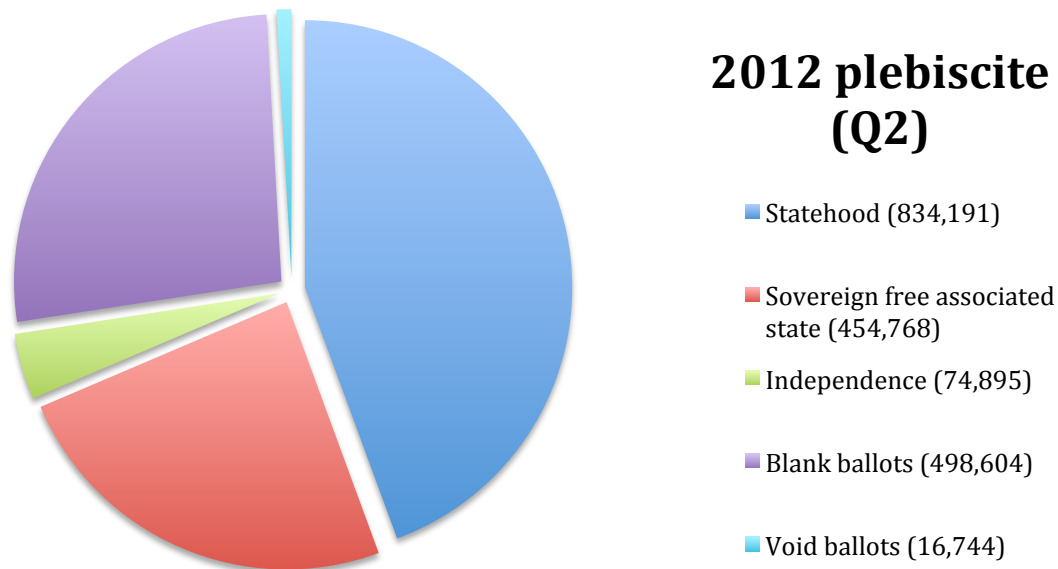


Figure 5-5 Distribution of votes in the 2012 plebiscite on the political status of Puerto Rico (Q2: Please mark which of the following non-territorial options would you prefer)

“Source: ‘General election and status plebiscite – Non-territorial options’: www.eleccionespuertorico.org/cgi-bin/events.cgi?evento=2012&voto=o (11-06-2016)”

Although Puerto Rican law says that a blank ballot ‘shall not be deemed to be a cast vote’, Puerto Rico’s Legislative Assembly did, in contrast to the CEE, include these votes in its count and considered the results inconclusive.²⁷⁴ Apparently, the amount of blank ballots was too high to leave out of consideration. Because of the lack of clear preference amongst Puerto Ricans that followed from their calculation, the Legislative Assembly did not undertake further action. This lack of further action may be due to the island’s governmental transition from pro-statehood to pro-commonwealth, as a result of the

²⁷³ Garrett, ‘Puerto Rico’s political status and the 2012 plebiscite’, 13.

²⁷⁴ Section 2.002, 54, *An act to authorize, provide, and regulate all matters related to the election system in Puerto Rico; to adopt the Puerto Rico Election Code for the 21st Century; to repeal Act No. 4 of December 20, 1977, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Electoral Act”, in its entirety; to establish the State Election Commission and the officials thereof, and to define its main offices and their functions; to provide for the implementation of an electronic voting and/or canvassing system, as well as safeguards for voters; to establish provisions regarding compliance and harmonization with the applicable State and Federal laws and case law; to define election-related crimes and impose penalties for violations of this Act; and for other related purposes*, H.B. 1863 (2011).

general elections that took place on the same day on which the political status referendum did. In January 2013, Alejandro García Padilla took seat as the new Governor of Puerto Rico. It was decided that the ambiguous plebiscite results would not be taken to U.S. Congress. Regardless, Pierluisi did appeal to Congress.²⁷⁵ Although it is unsure if this was accepted, mainly because U.S. Congress requires clear results before it takes legislative action, Pierluisi still attempts to make Puerto Rico the 51st state.²⁷⁶ Searching for recent legislation on Puerto Rico's status in congressional documents only provides for the Resident Commissioner's attempts to have a status referendum in Puerto Rico of the kind that he had proposed in 1998.²⁷⁷

5.3 Puerto Rico: Restoration of national pride

Over the last decades, Puerto Rico has attempted to shut down the last active U.S. military bases on the island. Not only did these bases restrict living area, they also caused health problems for people that lived nearby. A recent struggle for the removal of U.S. presence was encountered on the small island of Vieques. The island's inhabitants protested against the military bases that covered more than two-thirds of the island. In 2001, the residents expressed their displeasure in a nonbinding referendum that concerned direct cessation of military trainings. In 2003, after 60 years of U.S. military presence, the bombings and other military exercises finally stopped. The clearance of weaponry, however, would take another decade. Today, Vieques is still affected by U.S. military presence. Amongst Vieques inhabitants, cancer, unemployment, and crime rates are higher than in the rest of Puerto Rico. Next to this, the environment is severely polluted. Although the military bases are largely removed, the parts that originally were taken by the U.S. navy are still controlled by the United States, now in the form of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior.²⁷⁸ A Puerto Rican newspaper has referred to the Vieques situation as a crime against humanity²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ R. Gonzalez, 'Puerto Rico's status debate continues as island marks 61 years as a commonwealth', *The Huffington post* (2013, updated 2014): www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/25/puerto-rico-status-debate_n_3651755.html (19-06-2016).

²⁷⁶ Garrett, 'Puerto Rico's political status and the 2012 plebiscite', 13.

²⁷⁷ E.g. *A bill to set forth the process for Puerto Rico to be admitted as a State of the Union*, 113th Congress, 1st session on H.R.2000 (2013) and *A bill to set forth the process of Puerto Rico to be admitted as a State of the Union*, 114th Congress, 1st session on H.R.727 (2015).

²⁷⁸ 'Vieques island', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2016).

²⁷⁹ 'Vieques: Un crimen contra la humanidad', *El nuevo día* (2013): vieques.elnuevodia.com/ (18-06-2016).

Puerto Rico's national identity

Throughout the twentieth century, Puerto Ricans have created a strong national identity. This is mainly because historians, teachers, and other influential people have portrayed the island's history and culture in comparison to that of the United States.²⁸⁰ The contrast caused for an emerging national identity amongst the *boricuas*, as Puerto Ricans tend to call themselves.²⁸¹ Circular migration between the island and the mainland, for instance for reasons of employment or reconciliation with relatives, has been the norm rather than the exception in historical as well as in contemporary Puerto Rico. Despite mass migration, Puerto Ricans have maintained their strong identity. The Puerto Ricans consider themselves a 'translocal nation' divided over the U.S. mainland and the island of Puerto Rico.²⁸² Although there is everyday contact between Puerto Ricans and U.S. mainland citizens, Puerto Rican identity is usually defined along the lines of Latin American or Hispanic ancestry –amongst other reasons because of the island's Catholic disposition and predominant use of Spanish.²⁸³ This portrayal corresponds with the identity that the majority of Puerto Ricans relates to: in a recent study that asked Puerto Ricans about their national identity, nearly three-quarter of the respondents responded with 'Puerto Rican', rather than 'Latin American' or 'U.S. American'. In fact, the latter option was not chosen by any participant.²⁸⁴

Political interest and opposition

That a well-defined relationship with the United States is of paramount importance in Puerto Rico follows from the island's political system. Political parties in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have never been predominantly divided by a right wing versus left wing system, rather, they have been divided by the preference for a specific status proposal.²⁸⁵ Puerto Rico's most recent main political status proposals are a) retaining the status as a U.S. commonwealth, b) becoming the 51st state of the United States, c) becoming independent from the United States, and d) becoming a sovereign free associated state. The corresponding parties are, respectively, the PPD, the New Progressive Party (PNP, *Partido Nuevo Progresista*), the PIP, and the Sovereign Union

²⁸⁰ Moral, *Negotiating empire*, 11, 16, 25.

²⁸¹ *Boricua* comes from *Boricuen*, the Taíno name for Puerto Rico that was given by the natives who originally lived on the island. *Boricuen* means 'land of the brave and noble lords.'

²⁸² J. Duany, 'Nation, migration, identity: The case of Puerto Ricans', *Latino studies* (2003) 424-444.

²⁸³ Spanish is the common language in public schools, whereas private schools predominantly teach in English. Moral, *Negotiating empire*, 11, 16, 25.

²⁸⁴ B. Korver, 'Spanish-English code-switching amongst Puerto Rican bilinguals' (2014 unpublished), results are supported by Duany, 'Nation, migration, identity', 424-444.

²⁸⁵ Gallardo Rivera, 'The farce of Puerto Rico's status debate'.

Movement (MUS, *Movimiento Unión Soberanista*). As the previous section of this chapter indicated, the majority of the island's support goes to the commonwealth and the statehood proposal. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on the most recent positions that the parties have taken, based on their campaign websites and booklets.²⁸⁶ The first two parties that will be discussed below aim for a relationship that continues association with the United States, while the last two seek independence (cf. theoretical concepts in section 1.3).

Until 1972, the **PPD** has existed under the presidency of Muñoz Marín. He claimed that the commonwealth status was valuable to Puerto Rico as its citizens enjoyed U.S. citizenship, the nation received economic aid without having to pay federal taxes, and its economy had rapidly transformed from agricultural to industrial under U.S. rule. These factors, together with the obtainment of local autonomy, has improved the quality of life of Puerto Ricans. This manifested itself in Puerto Rico's comparison of its nation's standards against those of the United States, as opposed to those of Latin American countries, which they did before.²⁸⁷ Currently, under the island's re-elected PPD administration, the party wants to reconsider the island's relationship with the United States so that it is truly based on mutual dignity, clear terms, and necessary tools to improve stability, the quality of life, and economic improvement of the island. The party explicitly states that the relationship is based on common citizenship and mutual respect, instead of on colonial or territories ties. The island's democracy is also a high priority of the PPD. For instance, regarding Pierluisi's efforts to establish a 'yes' or 'no' referendum for statehood, the PPD claims to fully support PNP's efforts. However, the PPD expects a 'no' victory in the proposed referendum. In that case, they will convoke a Constitutional Assembly for the Status of Puerto Rico, which will initiate immediate negotiations with the United States in order to realize a status resolution.²⁸⁸

The **New Progressive Party** was founded in 1967 by Luis Ferré, a former supporter of the island's Republican Party.²⁸⁹ Disagreement between Ferré and the other party leader of the former Republican Party led to a split in the party, which caused the eventual eradication of the Republican Statehood Party branch and success of the PNP branch. Several factors account for the success of the new statehood movement. The

²⁸⁶ PPD last updated in 2016 under the new president of the party, PNP last updated in 2014 under the previous party leader (the new leader was very recently elected on 05-06-2016), PIP updated in 2012, MUS updated in 2014.

²⁸⁷ Unknown author, 'Pocketbook plebiscite'.

²⁸⁸ 'Resolver de una vez y por todas el dilema del estatus político de Puerto Rico': www.ppdpr.net/ (18-06-2016).

²⁸⁹ 'Luis A. Ferré', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2016).

party was mainly supported by people that were employed in sectors linked to U.S. interests. Therefore, it had a broad support from the working class as well as from the growing middle class. These people were assimilated to U.S. culture and used to U.S. modern welfare standards. Accordingly, they wanted Puerto Rico to resemble the United States as much as possible – which could be realized if the island were to become a state.²⁹⁰ Nowadays, the PNP argues that history teaches us that statehood or independence are the only options to successfully change a colonial relationship. They add that as a commonwealth, Puerto Rico has pretended to live like a state, while ‘(...) if you want to live in the style of a state from the United States, then you have to be a state of the United States. There is no other possible way.’²⁹¹ The PNP strives for equal rights of U.S. citizenship, such as being allowed to vote for the President, just as any other federal state. The party wants a fair share in federal programs and funds, all for the improvement of the quality of lives of Puerto Ricans.²⁹²

Independentistas argue that, after more than a century of U.S. colonial rule, Puerto Ricans have developed a feeling of inferiority towards other nations and have come to fear the idea of liberty from the United States. This is expressed by the relative unpopularity of their political party, the **PIP** (cf. section 5.2). Generally, the party desires for Puerto Rico to fully control its own foreign relations and act as it considers apt or beneficial for its own interests. Puerto Rico should be subject only to its own constitution. Of vital importance for *independentistas* is that Puerto Ricans keep their own language and culture, of which they are afraid it will become assimilated to U.S. culture if Puerto Rico were to be incorporated as a state.²⁹³ Independence will restore Puerto Rico’s national pride and identity. Recently, the PIP has articulated a program that partially answers the questions that exist surrounding a U.S. independent status. For instance, PIP supporters take away doubts regarding congressional acceptance of the independence option. They argue that the United States is disposed to grant freedom because of the economic benefits it will bring both nations. Puerto Rico’s current economic dependency on the United States is due to the commonwealth relationship. Hence, if Puerto Rico becomes independent, the United States would no longer have to

²⁹⁰ E. Meléndez, *The development of the statehood movement in Puerto Rico* vol. 1 and 2 (1985) 6-12.

²⁹¹ Literally translated from: ‘(...) si quieres vivir el estilo de vida de un estado de la Unión, entonces tienes que ser un Estado de la Unión. No hay otra manera posible.’

²⁹² *Reglamento Partido Nuevo Progresista*: www.pnppr.com/ (19-06-2016).

²⁹³ Puerto Rico is a bilingual language community in which inhabitants switch between the Spanish and English language. It somewhat resembles ‘Spanglish’, which also exists in Hispanic communities in the United States. If Puerto Rico were to become a state, its inhabitants will probably be required to learn English as first language.

invest in the Puerto Rican economy to keep it alive. Moreover, an independent Puerto Rico would be able to enter the free market and restore its economy, so that it can invest in U.S. products. Another issue, which was already briefly touched upon in section 5.2, is concerned with demilitarization of the island. The PIP is convinced that complete demilitarization, without substitution of a national army, would be best for Puerto Rico. The island should have peaceful relationships with every country in the world.

Independentistas argue that from the twentieth century until today, no Caribbean island has been invaded by a military other than that from the United States and that they therefore have no reason to fear external attacks. A third question involves the situation after independence is chosen. First of all, there will be a transition period during which a U.S. and Puerto Rican Joint Commission cooperate in the process that leads to the island's political, economic, and social freedom. During the transition period, Puerto Ricans hold the right to Social Security, veteran privileges, and federal funds. After the transition period, a treaty will have been established that includes all arrangements as how they will be from the moment of independence onwards. PIP supporters argue that the economic relations with the United States will endure and improve; Puerto Rico is one of the largest markets for U.S. products in the Western Hemisphere. Likewise, U.S. investments in Puerto Rico are substantial. Another important issue that needs to be settled is that of U.S. citizenship. The PIP, as well as the President's Task Force, recommends that Puerto Ricans should be able to choose whether they want American or Puerto Rican citizenship.²⁹⁴

The second party that favours a form of independence is the **Sovereign Union Movement**. The MUS came into existence in 2010 to initiate a new project that would educate Puerto Ricans about politics. The main principle that the MUS strives to achieve is the *Gran Alianza Puertorriqueña* (Great Alliance of Puerto Rico), which unifies different sectors and classes in order for them to interact based on what they have in common, rather than what they do not have in common. The MUS argues that such an inclusive system will change the politics of Puerto Rico and will help the decolonization progress. The island will shut down organizations that negatively affect Puerto Rico's economy and a Constitutional Assembly for the Status of Puerto Rico will be appointed. This Assembly will make a detailed report for the exact status definition for Puerto Rico as a sovereign state. There will be no territorial or colonial association with the United States, rather, Puerto Rico will become a democratic state in which all layers of society are

²⁹⁴ *Report by the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's status* (2011) 30; *Lo que debes saber sobre la independencia: www.independencia.net/* (17-06-2016).

represented equally. The MUS will help Puerto Rico in its struggle for social and economic justice, for the defence of the island's national interests, and for the preservation of the Puerto Rican national identity.²⁹⁵

5.4 Puerto Rico as a sustained U.S. commonwealth territory

Today, Puerto Rico still is a commonwealth of the United States. There have been some minor changes regarding status resolution (as indicated in section 5.2), but there has been no major transformation in Puerto Rico's status since the 1950s. Accordingly, Puerto Ricans enjoy limited local autonomy and the island's constitution can be superseded by U.S. governmental decisions. Moreover, the island remains dependent on imports and federal aid, has few insular industries, and has a weak local economy.²⁹⁶ Since the enactment of the commonwealth constitution, no real improvements have taken place in the quality of life of Puerto Ricans, which is exactly that what current political parties strive to obtain.

I would like to make a last, brief comment on President Barack Obama's recent weekly review before I turn to the final conclusions of this thesis. On June 11, 2016, the President addressed the current situation in Puerto Rico. He did not explicitly mention the issue of Puerto Rico's status or its relationship with the United States. However, he did state that 'only Congress can fix the problem' of the island's lingering economy. As a bill to help restructure Puerto Rico's economy has just passed the House, the President now urges the Senate to move quickly. Conclusively, President Obama states that Puerto Rico has been vital to American success and that the United States will not turn their back on fellow Americans.²⁹⁷ President Obama's latest assurance is one of the many promises that U.S. leaders have made to help Puerto Rico.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the enduring, unaltered commonwealth relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States in recent times. It appeared that the commonwealth status has been under construction for several decades by means of political status plebiscites that are meant to reach consensus regarding a status resolution. However, results came back inconclusive and/or did not receive further action from U.S. Congress.

²⁹⁵ *Plan estratégico del MUS*: www.muspr.org/ (20-06-2016).

²⁹⁶ Gallardo Rivera, 'The farce of Puerto Rico's status debate'.

²⁹⁷ 'Weekly Address: Addressing Puerto Rico's economic crisis': www.whitehouse.gov/ (17-06-2016).

This is striking, because the United States has claimed to help the Puerto Rican people on their way to status resolution if they are determined to change their current status.

The United States has shown its goodwill regarding the creation of a more definitive relationship with Puerto Rico by attempting to move the status issue forward at several occasions, for instance with the establishment of a Presidential Task Force on the status issue or through the publication of congressional recommendations regarding the island's status. At the same time, these attempts reaffirm the dominating power of U.S. Congress, which is what from time to time fuels the debate on Puerto Rico's status.

Puerto Rico's first plebiscite in 1967 was the only plebiscite of four to be approved by U.S. Congress. The other three plebiscites did not pass congressional approval because the status definitions did not meet requirements of the U.S. Constitution. When the results of the 1998 plebiscite came back inconclusive, it was clear that Puerto Rico could not settle the status issue on its own. Not only does it need U.S. Congress to approve a status change, it also needs U.S. Congress so that it can help Puerto Ricans in the construction of plausible and legally approvable status proposals. However, several appeals to Congress failed to reach a vote. And so, Puerto Rico again organized a plebiscite by itself. The results of this 2012 referendum caused for a discussion: if only cast ballots were counted, i.e. those that are completely filled out, the statehood proposal won; however, if blank ballots were included in the calculation, the results were, yet again, inconclusive. The high amount of blank ballots indicates a divided nation, a nation that lacks confidence in the eventual implementation of their decision, or a nation that does perhaps not clearly understand the proposed statuses.

A recapitulation of the status plebiscites indicates that Puerto Ricans want to move beyond the status quo: commonwealth supporters want to make a new pact with the United States that grants them more equality, statehood supporters want to be incorporated into the United States, and *independentistas* want to exist on their own without U.S. continuous intervention. The majority of votes has, since the first plebiscite, always gone to the parties that seek affiliation with the United States (statehood, PNP and commonwealth, PPD). This is probably because Puerto Ricans have grown to fear the idea of independence from the United States, especially now that the island has grown so economically independent on the mainland. The question that remains is why, if Puerto Ricans have indicated a will to change its relationship with the United States (not only in the referenda, but also in their protests against the continued presence of U.S. military bases on Puerto Rico), this has not happened. It may be due to an

interaction of requirements of both parties: both U.S. Congress and the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico desire to see an overwhelming majority vote for a status proposal before they undertake legislative action. Although Presidential reports have recommended status options for Puerto Rico, these were –from the continental side- not used to cooperatively establish political status referenda, and –from the Puerto Rican side- not followed in their self-organized referenda. This has not fostered the outcomes of the status plebiscites. President Barack Obama recently stated that Puerto Rico needs aid from the United States in order to resolve its economic crisis. This equally applies to the status issue.

6 Discussion and conclusions

This thesis explored the contested ties between Puerto Rico and the United States by delving into several significant periods throughout the history of their relationship. The main question that led the present study was: *What has been the interest of the United States in Puerto Rico since its colonization in 1898 and how does this relate to the interest of the Puerto Ricans in the United States until today?*

The question was constructed as such because I expected the answer to account for the continuing relationship. The applied method allows me to draw conclusions based on a comparative analysis not only through time, but also through space, as the study is concerned with the perspectives and interests from both parties involved. In the paragraphs below, I will reiterate and answer the research questions, which together are necessary to answer the central question and yield new insights. I also realize there are certain limitations to this study. Therefore, the thesis ends with a critical note and makes suggestions for further research.

6.1 A history of reciprocal interests

This section reiterates the (sub-) research questions and provides succinct answers in order to facilitate the final discussion.

Why did the United States acquire Puerto Rico in 1898?

The Treaty of Paris, which established peace after the brief Spanish-American War, arranged for the cession of Puerto Rico from its colonizer Spain to the United States. As such, Puerto Rico fell into the hands of the United States as a tribute of war. However, U.S. foreign policy already had its eye on the Caribbean islands before it went to war with Spain. This interest can be explained by the expansionist mind-set amongst U.S. leaders at the end of the nineteenth century. Global and domestic developments, such as the expanding power of European colonizers and the 1893 economic crisis, created a desire for territorial and economic expansion. The acquisition of Puerto Rico provided just that; it was a strategic gateway to Latin America, which enabled U.S. dominion on the Western Hemisphere, and offered a new market for U.S. products, which increased North American wealth. Puerto Ricans had no specific interest in relations with the

United States (because it was U.S. imperialism that happened to them) but friendly welcomed the U.S. military troops that invaded and governed the island until the enactment of Puerto Rico's first Organic Act. This facilitated the rapid acquisition. A striking detail in the U.S. acquisition of Puerto Rico, as contrasted to former U.S. territorial acquisitions, is that the island was granted neither a specific status with respect to the United States nor a transition period that would prepare the island for incorporation in the federal states. Rather, Puerto Rico would remain an unincorporated, but organized territory, as became apparent after the Foraker Act and Insular Cases. When Puerto Ricans realized this, their view towards the U.S. invasion changed. Although they first hoped to benefit from U.S. rule, they now realized that they were, again, under the authority of a foreign government. Together with Puerto Ricans, U.S. anti-imperialists disliked the subjugation of Puerto Rico. These anti-imperialists considered it a betrayal to the nation's own ancestry. U.S. leaders responded with the claim that they were merely following their providential cause by spreading their knowledge on Western civilization.

Why did the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico continue in the post-war era?

The United States enjoyed great military and economic advantages from its ties with Puerto Rico. Firstly, Puerto Rico hosted U.S. military bases from which the navy could defend the Caribbean during WWII and from which soldiers could continue to exert control over the region after the war. Secondly, Operation Bootstrap provided U.S. businesses with relatively cheap labour and with the opportunity to test ways in which it could economically penetrate Latin America. Puerto Rico was a perfect external location on and in which the continental states could test weaponry and invest money. Moreover, the island was one of the several territories in close proximity of the United States that were rather to be held than released within the context of the communist spread among poor countries during the Cold War. Although there was some resistance amongst Puerto Ricans against continued U.S. intervention on the island, these rebellions from the island's independence movements were insufficient to drive the Americans away. The majority of Puerto Ricans appeared to be content with U.S. investments because they improved the quality of life on the island and positioned Puerto Rico in the international field as a model for other post-war developing countries in Latin America. In addition, because of their U.S. citizenship, Puerto Ricans were able to migrate to the mainland, which was particularly interesting when the island's unemployment rate increased. The

relation continued to exist, and under international pressure, Puerto Ricans were allowed to draw their own constitution. Under the new constitution, which granted the island restricted local autonomy, Puerto Rico had become a commonwealth of the United States. Although the change in status caused Puerto Rico's removal from the U.N. list of non-self-governing territories, it instigated the international debate on Puerto Rico's status. Puerto Rico's limited authority was questioned, because it could still be superseded by the United States.

Why does the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States remain unaltered in current times?

The relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States currently is under construction. In fact, it has been under construction by means of political status plebiscites for nearly five decades. Because a lack of U.S. approval and consensus on status recommendations, Puerto Rico has on its own initiative organized four status referenda. The referenda indicated a preference amongst the majority of Puerto Ricans to remain affiliated with the United States. However, the political parties proposed status definitions that were in discordance with the U.S. Constitution. Little subsequent action from U.S. Congress -despite several proclamations to help Puerto Rico- and inconclusive plebiscite results have not furthered the process towards a status resolution. Rather, it has raised many questions and fuelled the debate on Puerto Rico's status. Since all the tools for a status change seem present (Puerto Ricans express their will to change their status through status plebiscites, the United States expresses its will to help Puerto Rico through official reports and recommendations), it remains to be answered why, then, this has not happened. It is clear that Puerto Rico needs the United States in this issue to provide reasonable status recommendations and to give final authority for approval of a status change. It is unclear why the United States does not act and help Puerto Ricans in their way to restore national pride, which is what current political programs stress to achieve. Along with this remains the question why in recent times, the United States breaks faith with its own proclamations regarding the right to self-determination.

6.2 Discussion on hypothesis

I hypothesized that mutual interests in the Puerto Rico – United States ties, rather than unilateral non-wilful behaviour of the United States, is what has kept the relationship intact. I expected to deduce these mutual interests with the help of a historical analysis of the relationship. This study incontestably provided evidence for mutual interests

throughout their shared history. It found that the United States predominantly benefited from Puerto Rico as a strategic naval point from which it could exert pressure in the Western Hemisphere and as an external location for testing of multiple novelties and military training exercises. Puerto Ricans as well, with the exception of the island's independence movement that originated in the first half of the nineteenth century, seemed to have benefited from U.S. intervention on their soil. The main reason for this has been that U.S. investments in the island generated a feeling of progress amongst Puerto Ricans. Interestingly, the programs of several current political parties state that their aim is to obtain an improvement in the quality of life of Puerto Ricans. For recent times, it appears that Puerto Ricans no longer have an interest in the current relationship. Several political status plebiscites have in fact indicated that Puerto Ricans want to change the status quo. However, the results of the plebiscites indicate a deeply divided opinion on what should be the exact status resolution.

U.S. interest in the present relationship has become more challenging to determine. This is the consequence of a lack of access to sources that may indicate such an interest (section 6.3 will elaborate on this). Although this thesis does not contain irrefutable evidence for U.S. interest in the commonwealth relationship with Puerto Rico today, it did offer reason to believe that there still is interest. This is based on the lack of congressional action on the status issue. Moreover, the findings not only indicate U.S. interest in a relationship with Puerto Rico, but in the relationship as it *is*—as it *has been* since the enactment of the commonwealth status. This is deduced from the fact that the majority of Puerto Ricans voted for a status in which they remain affiliated with the mainland.

The continued relationship with Puerto Rico had its impact on U.S. foreign policy, as it required the United States to justify the situation both domestically and internationally. In the acquisition period, there was little resistance to U.S. expansionism into the Caribbean. This changed in the 1950s, when the United States proved to be a proclaimer of independence in formal charters, but not so much in practice with respect to its own territories. In more recent times, the United States seems to both address and remain quiescent on the topic, for instance by establishing task forces while at the same time ignoring Puerto Rican requests to help them obtain a permanent status. It has appeared that, although the United States does not verbally acknowledge this, little remains of its pro-independence claims with respect to Puerto Rico.

I can conclude that the major part of the 118-years-old relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States was maintained due to mutual interests. For a future status alteration to take place, it needs the involvement of both actors. It follows that it takes two to tango: not only throughout history has this saying played a role in the continuance of the beneficial relationship, but it also plays the leading role in the present now that there is a desire to alter the relationship.

I have to both accept and refute the hypothesis that the continuing relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States is due to mutual interests: it applies to the early acquisition and post-war period, but does no longer seem to apply in current times.

6.3 Limitations of the study

This thesis has gathered substantial information to answer my research question. Still, the implication of the study's main challenge (cf. section 1.4) may not be ignored. Due to a lack of access to -or perhaps existence of- confidential U.S. governmental sources, chapter five could not present a straightforward analysis of U.S. interests in its commonwealth relationship with Puerto Rico. Although one could speculate in order to provide motivations behind the continued relationship and low priority that the Puerto Rican status issue has in Congress, undeniable evidence remains to be found.

This thesis provides the basis from which academics from different fields of study can continue. I recommend judicial and economic disciplines to dig into exact laws and numbers, in order to construct a complete image for the current relationship. They might look at economic dependency, international law, and apply a more quantitative method. This provides for an overview of the (dis-) advantages of the lasting relationship for both parties. Further research for scholars within my discipline should delve into the attainment of access to U.S. governmental documents or perhaps even wait for the declassification of current private files. Private documents have proven to be of use in the historical parts of the thesis and may be essential to more fairly present the U.S. perspective. Their incorporation is something that, given the size of and time for this research, was beyond the scope of the present study. I hope, however, that before the time in which present official documents become declassified, the Puerto Rico status issue will be resolved.

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Appendix I A list of U.S. (former) territories and their statuses

	Puerto Rico	Guam	Philippines	Cuba	Hawaii	American Samoa
Year of U.S. acquisition	1898 (Treaty of Paris)	1898 (Treaty of Paris)	1898 (Treaty of Paris)	1898 (Treaty of Paris)	1898	1900
Number of inhabitants	3,598,357 (2015)	161,785 (2015)	100,998,376 (2015)	11,031,433 (2015)	1,431,603 (2015)	54,343 (2015)
Political status	Dependent: U.S. unincorporated, organized territory with commonwealth status (1952)	Dependent: U.S. unincorporated, organized territory (1950)	Independent (1946) Before: Commonwealth (1935)	Independent (1902)	Federal state (1959) Before: U.S. incorporated, organized territory	Dependent: U.S. unincorporated, unorganized territory
Other	U.S. citizenship; self-governing territory; removed from U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1952); Administered by Office of the President; NAFTA applies	U.S. citizenship; self-governing territory; On U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1946); Administered by Department of the Interior	U.N. member state	U.N. member state	U.S. citizenship; removed from U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1959); Administered by Office of the President; NAFTA applies	U.S. nationals; self-governing territory; On U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1946); Administered by Department of the Interior

	Alaska	U.S. Virgin Islands	Northern Mariana Islands	Federated States of Micronesia	Marshall Islands	Palau
Year of U.S. acquisition	1912	1917	1947 (U.N. trust territory)	1947 (U.N. trust territory)	1947 (U.N. trust territory)	1947 (U.N. trust territory)
Number of inhabitants	738,432 (2015)	103,574 (2015)	52,344 (2015)	105,216 (2015)	72,191 (2015)	21,265 (2015)
Political status	Federal state (1959) Before: U.S. incorporated, organized territory	Dependent: U.S. unincorporated, organized territory (1954)	Dependent: U.S. unincorporated, organized territory with commonwealth status (1978)	Independent: Free Association with United States (1986)	Independent: Free Association with United States (1986)	Independent: Free Association with United States (1994)
Other	U.S. citizenship; removed from U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1959); Administered by Office of the President; NAFTA applies	U.S. citizenship; self-governing territory; On U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1946); Administered by Department of the Interior	U.N. member state; removed from U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1990); Administered by Department of the Interior	U.N. member state; removed from U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1990)	U.N. member state; removed from U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1990)	U.N. member state; removed from U.N. list of non-self-governing territories (1994)

Appendix II Ballot for 2012 political status plebiscite in Puerto Rico

<p>PAPELETA OFICIAL OFFICIAL BALLOT</p> <p>MODELO</p>	 <p>COMISIÓN ESTATAL DE ELECCIONES STATE ELECTIONS COMMISSION MARTES, 6 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2012 TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2012</p>	<p>CONSULTA PLEBISCITE</p> <p>SAMPLE</p>
<p>CONSULTA SOBRE EL ESTATUS POLÍTICO DE PUERTO RICO PLEBISCITE ON PUERTO RICO POLITICAL STATUS</p>		
<p>Instrucciones: Marque la opción de su preferencia. La papeleta con más de una (1) opción marcada en esta sección no será contabilizada. <i>Instructions: Mark your option of preference. Those ballots with more than one (1) mark in this section shall not be tallied.</i></p>		
<p>¿Está usted de acuerdo con mantener la condición política territorial actual? <i>Do you agree that Puerto Rico should continue to have its present form of territorial status?</i></p>		
<p>Sí / Yes _____</p>		<p>No / No _____</p>
<p>Instrucciones: Irrespectivamente de su contestación a la primera pregunta, conteste cuál de las siguientes opciones no territoriales usted prefiere. <i>Instructions: Regardless of your selection in the first question, please mark which of the following non-territorial options would you prefer.</i></p> <p>La consulta con más de una (1) opción marcada en esta sección no será contabilizada. <i>Those ballots with more than one (1) mark in this Section shall not be tallied.</i></p>		
 <p>Estadidad: Prefiero que Puerto Rico sea un estado de Estados Unidos de América, para que todos los ciudadanos americanos residentes en Puerto Rico tengan iguales derechos, beneficios y responsabilidades que los demás ciudadanos de los estados de la Unión, incluyendo derecho a la plena representación en el Congreso y participación en las elecciones presidenciales, y que se requiera al Congreso Federal que promulgue la legislación necesaria para iniciar la transición hacia la estadidad. Si está de acuerdo marque aquí:</p> <p>Statehood: <i>Puerto Rico should be admitted as a state of the United States of America so that all United States citizens residing in Puerto Rico may have rights, benefits, and responsibilities equal to those enjoyed by all other citizens of the states of the Union, and be entitled to full representation in Congress and to participate in the Presidential elections, and the United States Congress would be required to pass any necessary legislation to begin the transition into Statehood. If you agree, mark here:</i></p> <p>_____</p>	 <p>Independencia: Prefiero que Puerto Rico sea una nación soberana y totalmente independiente de Estados Unidos y que se requiera al Congreso Federal que promulgue la legislación necesaria para iniciar la transición hacia la nación independiente de Puerto Rico. Si está de acuerdo marque aquí:</p> <p>Independence: <i>Puerto Rico should become a sovereign nation, fully independent from the United States and the United States Congress would be required to pass any necessary legislation to begin the transition into independent nation of Puerto Rico. If you agree, mark here:</i></p> <p>_____</p>	 <p>Estado Libre Asociado Soberano: Prefiero que Puerto Rico adopte un estatus fuera de la Cláusula Territorial de la Constitución de Estados Unidos, que reconozca la soberanía del Pueblo de Puerto Rico. El Estado Libre Asociado Soberano se basaría en una asociación política libre y voluntaria, cuyos términos específicos se acordarían entre Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico como naciones soberanas. Dicho acuerdo dispondría el alcance de los poderes jurisdiccionales que el pueblo de Puerto Rico autorice dejar en manos de Estados Unidos retendría los restantes poderes o autoridades jurisdiccionales. Si está de acuerdo, marque aquí:</p> <p>Sovereign Free Associated State <i>Puerto Rico should adopt a status outside of the Territory Clause of the Constitution of the United States that recognizes the sovereignty of the People of Puerto Rico. The Sovereign Free Associated State would be based on a free and voluntary political association, the specific terms of which shall be agreed upon between the United States and Puerto Rico as sovereign nations. Such agreement would provide the scope of the jurisdictional powers that the People of Puerto Rico agree to confer to the United States and retain all other jurisdictional powers and authorities. If you agree, mark here:</i></p> <p>_____</p>