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**Identity Conflict in Puerto Rico: Remaining a
Commonwealth, Promoting Statehood or Becoming an
Independent Country**

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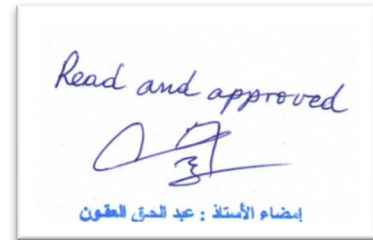
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Dedication

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the dimensions of Puerto Rico's political status, which presents some exceptional challenges. The study depicts a detailed historical, cultural and political portrait of the island's inhabitants who are partly Taino Indians, partly Spanish and partly African Americans. It also gives an overview of Puerto Rico's exceptional relationship with the United States, ponders the meaning of Puerto Rican identity, and describes various aspects of Puerto Rico's cultural dilemma. In addition, the study examines the political peculiarity of the island, an unincorporated territory of the United States and officially known as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. In this logic, the focus is essentially on the reasons that have split Puerto Ricans between three options for the political status of the island: a sustained Commonwealth, a state or full integration with the United States or total independence. This study concludes that Puerto Rico's political status is a real quandary. Puerto Ricans have not enjoyed total freedom within the American system for more than a century. During that era, they, in fact, lived between colonization and self-determination. For Puerto Ricans, the island is an American community, while for American policymakers; Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory of the United States. Therefore, if the cultural conflict on the island persists and as long as the status of the Commonwealth continues, it will be more difficult to reach a definitive solution.

Résumé

Ce mémoire examine les dimensions du statut politique de Porto Rico, qui présentent des défis exceptionnels. L'étude peint un portrait historique, culturel et politique détaillé des habitants de l'île qui sont en partie indiens Taino, en partie espagnols et en partie afro-américains. Il présente également un aperçu des relations exceptionnelles de Porto Rico avec les États-Unis, examine le sens de l'identité portoricaine et décrit divers aspects du dilemme culturel de Porto Rico. En outre, l'étude examine la particularité politique de l'île, un territoire non incorporé aux États-Unis et officiellement connu sous le nom du Commonwealth de Porto Rico. Dans cette logique, l'accent est essentiellement mis sur les raisons qui ont fractionné les Portoricains entre trois options pour le statut politique de l'île: un Commonwealth soutenu, un État ou une pleine intégration avec les États-Unis ou une indépendance totale. Cette étude conclue que le statut politique de Porto Rico est un véritable dilemme. Les Portoricains n'ont pas jouit de la liberté totale au sein du système américain depuis plus d'un siècle. En effet, pendant cette ère, ils vivaient entre la colonisation et l'autodétermination. Pour les Portoricains, l'île est une communauté Américaine, tandis que pour les décideurs américains, Porto Rico est un territoire non incorporé des États-Unis. Par conséquent, si le conflit culturel sur l'île persiste et tant que le statut du Commonwealth se poursuivra, il sera plus difficile de parvenir à une solution définitive.

ملخص

تتناول هذه المذكرة أبعاد الوضع السياسي لبورتوريكو والتي تمثل تحديات استثنائية. كما أنها ترسم صورة تاريخية وثقافية وسياسية مفصلة لسكان الجزيرة باعتبارهم جزء هنود تاينو، وجزء إسباني وجزء من الأمريكيين الأفارقة. كما يوفر هذا البحث نظرة عامة حول العلاقات الاستثنائية لبورتوريكو مع الولايات المتحدة، ويدرس معنى الهوية البورتوريكية من خلال وصف جوانب مختلفة من المعضلة الثقافية لبورتوريكو. بالإضافة إلى ذلك يتطرق البحث إلى الوضع السياسي الخاص للجزيرة وهي إقليم غير مدمج تابع للولايات المتحدة ويعرف رسمياً باسم كومونولث بورتوريكو. وفي هذا المنطق، ينصب التركيز أساساً على الأسباب التي أدت إلى انقسام البورتوريكيين بين ثلاثة خيارات تتعلق بالوضع السياسي للجزيرة: الكومونولث المستدام، أو الولاية أي الاندماج الكامل مع الولايات المتحدة أو الاستقلال التام. وتستننتج هذه الدراسة أن الوضع السياسي في بورتوريكو هي معضلة حقيقية. لم يتمتع البورتوريكيون بالحرية التامة تحت النظام الأمريكي منذ أكثر من قرن. وخلال تلك الحقبة عاشوا بين الاستعمار وتقرير المصير. بالنسبة للبورتوريكيين تعد الجزيرة جالية أمريكية، بينما بالنسبة لصناع القرار الأمريكيين يعتبر بورتوريكو إقليمًا غير مدمج في الولايات المتحدة. ولذلك، إذا استمر الصراع الثقافي في الجزيرة و مادام وضع الكومونولث مستمرًا سيكون من الصعب التوصل إلى حل نهائي.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

FP	Federal Party
MLA	The Modern Language Association
NPP	New Progressive Party
PDP	Popular Democratic Party
PR	Puerto Rico
PRIP	Puerto Rico Independence Party
PRRP	Puerto Rico Republican Party
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UPPR	United Party of Puerto Rico
USA/US	United States of America/United States
WASP	White Anglo-Saxon Protestant
WW	World War

Introduction

This dissertation aims at providing a general historical background on the Puerto Rican island. It also discusses and analyzes the constitutional validity of the United States-Puerto Rico's relationship as described by the Supreme Court in the Insular Cases. It focuses on identification and analysis of the Puerto Rican's culture and identity as viewed by its inhabitants today. The research identifies the set of causes and surrounding conditions of the Puerto Rican political dilemma in order to dig up the source that pushed the Puerto Rican people into a triple crossroad identity conflict.

In 2017, Donald Trump, President of the United States and President of the Virgin Islands, said at the Values Voter Summit: "I will tell you, I left Texas and I left Florida and I left Louisiana, and I went to Puerto Rico, and I met with the President of the Virgin Islands". Trump's statement meant that the Virgin Islands is a sovereign territory but has two different presidents. This shows the confusion surrounding the political status of unincorporated territories of the United States. As the United States continues to show its pride in its democracy and attempts to promote it around the world, one cannot ignore the fact that it does great injustice to millions of its citizens by depriving them of their rights to political, social and economic equality under the US flag, as well as their right to self-government and independence. One of the major landmasses in the Caribbean region is the United States' overseas territory of Puerto Rico.

Officially known as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the island had been colonized by Spain from 1493 to 1898. After more than four centuries of Spanish rule, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States after the end of the "splendid little war", or the Spanish-American war. The United States did not grant Puerto Rico autonomy but rather ruled it by installing various governments and establishing various laws throughout the years.

One of the most important of those laws is the Jones Act of 1917, which granted US citizenship to all Puerto Ricans. Today, Puerto Rico has a limited internal self-rule. Its current powers are all delegated by the United States Congress and lack full protection under the United States Constitution. Although the US citizenship links Puerto Ricans to the United States on paper, but culture and history, separate the two.

Residents take pride in their Hispanic background with few African and American influences. These contradictions between the American and the Puerto Rican cultures, in addition to the ambiguous political situation of the islands caused a major conflict in the society resulting in an identity clash that people still suffer from until this day. This identity crisis seems to come from a political background that extends to every other life domain.

The nature of Puerto Rico's political relationship with the US is the subject of an ongoing debate in Puerto Rico, the United States Congress, and the United Nations. Specifically, the basic question is whether Puerto Rico should remain a US territory, become a US state, or become an independent country. To resolve the political status issue, the government of Puerto Rico with the co-operation of that of the United States held political status referendums, yet, they did not find a final and permanent answer.

Puerto Rico is an unincorporated territory or a commonwealth of the United States of America since 1898. This means that its political status is somewhere between being a state and being an independent nation. Although its citizens are considered American citizens, Puerto Ricans have their own flag, own government, and own constitution. They cannot, however, vote in federal elections unless they live on the US mainland, Alaska, or Hawaii.

“When the people of Puerto Rico make a clear decision, my administration will stand by you” said Barak Obama in 2011 on the first official visit made by a sitting US President to the islands since that made by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. It may seem that American policymakers support Puerto Rico's right to decide its future, and are, at the same time, proud

to see Puerto Ricans as US citizens. Reality, however, says otherwise. Morning Consult, a global data intelligence company, conducted in 2017 a National Tracking Poll after Hurricane Maria hit the island. The poll revealed that 46% of Americans did not know that Puerto Ricans are American citizens.

Nowadays, citizenship is what legally links Puerto Rico to the United States despite the cultural and historical background separating the dominated Spanish speaking islands (Puerto Rico) from the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) dominated mainland, the United States of America. The cultural and historical differences resulted in a political and cultural identity conflict that has divided the nation further than any time before. The split among the people of Puerto Rico has partitioned the island into three different camps.

The first faction includes those who believe in the “Americanness” of the islands versus those who distinguish the Puerto Rican identity as a purely national one. In-between the two, there is another group of those who believe that what identifies them is a combination of both identities (Puerto Rican-American). The result, hence, is a hybrid society that struggles to identify the position where it belongs. The political leaders, in both Puerto Rico and the United States, took the issue to the voting booth many times throughout previous decades. Puerto Ricans were asked to choose between becoming a state, becoming an independent nation, or remaining a commonwealth to the United States. This political issue, however, has not been solved up until now.

Accordingly, the present study addresses the history, and culture of Puerto Rico, going back to the four hundred years under the Spanish rule, and more than one hundred and twenty years under American control. In addition to the history and cultural struggle, an everlasting problem emerged and added insult to injury. It is the political argument that is tearing apart the islands between three different political affiliations.

The islands, once dominated by those who wished just to enhance the status quo and adjust the commonwealth status (referendum of 1967), have two waves striking the shores of Puerto Rico harder and harder every time trouble hits the islands: the statehood and independence movements. The popularity of the statehood option, considered a companion of the oldest demand (better commonwealth), rose rapidly in the last years. It was led by the *Sociedad Civil Estadista*, or the Civil Society for Statehood and took the lead in the popular opinion as shown by the referendums of 2012 and 2017.

Independence, although relatively new to the options' table, is the third option. Yet, it is the most trouble-causing part in the political equation of the islands. In fact, many of its supporters have been accused of violence whenever they demonstrated in spite of the rising popularity and demand for this option with each referendum (0.6 % in 1967, 4.5 % in 1993, and 5.5 % in 2012).

This split on the model of governance that has politically divided the inhabitants of Puerto Rico greatly affected the economy of the islands. The difference in opinions among Puerto Ricans has also harmed their sense of belonging. This political division is clearly shown by the massive immigration wave that hit the island during the first decade of the twenty-first century; when more than 600,000 Puerto Ricans (1/4 of the population) immigrated to the United States.

The core issue that guides this research work is the conflict over the political status in Puerto Rico. The latter concerns keeping the status quo, promoting statehood or becoming an independent country. The study encompasses many questions that are crucial to understanding the history of Puerto Ricans who have been governed by the United States since 1898, acquired the American citizenship in 1917, and then became a self-governing commonwealth in 1952.

The main questions of this research work aim to reveal the contours and evolution of the US-Puerto Rican relationship. They are also meant to find explanations to why many Puerto Ricans have been happy to remain a commonwealth while a second faction has called for statehood, and a third group has leaned toward total independence. Among the questions, that need convincing answers, are the following: What are the underpinnings of the US-Puerto Rican relationship? How did this relationship evolve throughout history? What does the US Constitution say concerning US territories? Other questions include: What is the Puerto Rican identity? How was it formed? Did the US influence the Puerto Rican identity? What are the reasons behind the identity conflict in Puerto Rico? What are the pros and cons of the three options offered to Puerto Rico's political status? What is the political orientation that the majority of Puerto Ricans prefer?

In order to highlight the importance of this study, it is crucial to refer to some of the major scholarly works that have already dealt with and tackled this theme in relation to Puerto Rico's political dilemma. Many research works on the political conflict in Puerto Rico were published before but few of them discussed it from a comparative side taking into account the three political options; namely remaining a commonwealth, promoting statehood or becoming an independent country.

Hence, this work examines the various cultural and political aspects that have been largely overlooked in theoretical considerations of the topic by previous works. This leaves enough space for this study to investigate the extent to which Puerto Rican political elites have been influential in expressing their own cultural identity and political orientation under US dominance.

To scrutinize the identity question in Puerto Rico, this research work is drawn on several scholarly studies that investigated the island's national identity through the lens of Puerto Rico and through the voices of Puerto Ricans. For instance, in her book *Puerto Rico Culture*,

Politics and Identity, Nancy Morris tracks the growth of Puerto Rican identity in the 20th century using historical and interview information. Her work analyzes how and why, in the face of direct and indirect stress on their heritage, Puerto Ricans have retained a clear sense of differentiation; even after the United States launched a sustained campaign to Americanize it after winning control over Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898.

Nelson A. Denis, on the other hand, presents the moving story of the 1950 revolution for independence through Pedro Albizu Campos' life, in *War against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony*. Pedro, who served as president of the Nationalist Party (NP), was the first Puerto Rican to graduate from Harvard Law School. He was jailed for 25 years and died in mysterious circumstances. Denis shares Albizu's point of view and, therefore, the point of view of those who wished Puerto Ricans to gain free sovereignty on their islands. He used oral histories, personal interviews, eyewitness accounts, congressional testimony, and recently declassified FBI files in his stories.

In his *Puerto Rico*, Jose Javier Lopez studied the American-Puerto Rican relationships and stated that politically; uncertainty in the island was a norm, as neither the US Congress nor the inhabitants of Puerto Rico were able to decide on the island's political future: whether to retain commonwealth status, seek independence, or become the fifty-first US State. This state of uncertainty affirms the existence of a political and cultural conflict on the island.

Laura Briggs wrote *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and US Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, a book in which she portrayed Puerto Rico in 1898 as the "good" territory that appreciated the help of the US, unlike Cuba and the Philippines, which showed resistance. She affirmed, however, that Puerto Rico has also been the territory of great denial and silence. She argued that the majority of the inhabitants of the US mainland have been incapable of identifying the island's status vis-à-vis the mainland, and that this ignorance was not a mere

coincidence, but rather a result of continuous silences in the media, in popular culture, and in the teaching of US history.

In his *America's Colony: The Political and Cultural Conflict between the United States and Puerto Rico*, Pedro A. Malavet argues that Puerto Rico was highly dominated by the US cultural imperialism. However, the Puerto Rican society has shown a lot of resistance and tenaciousness when it came to its peoples' cultural identity and this was seen by the US as a threat that must be controlled. At the same time, Puerto Rico's independence has been viewed as an unacceptable solution for the United States; and a disaster for the Puerto Ricans. The inhabitants have rejected statehood, or full incorporation, as they refuse to give up their cultural identity to the American norms. This is why Puerto Ricans have been perceived as ungrateful or stubborn for choosing to stick to their cultural identity.

The present dissertation reflects on the factors, which paved the way for a political irreversible split among the Puerto Rican community. The main intention is to reveal with convincing evidence whether Puerto Ricans want to be independent, full American citizens or have a hyphenated identity of both. It also accounts for the contradiction between the United States' domestic and foreign policies in relation to the concept of 'giving the right of self-determination' to the oppressed nations and denying its own subjects.

The significance of this research project lies in its attempt to shed light on both Puerto Rico's history, before and after the American domination, as well as its ongoing political plight. Equally important, is the endeavor to provide a closer and clearer image on the division of the Puerto Rican people over deciding on the political future of their country.

A combination of methods is deemed necessary to address the questions raised in this research work. The descriptive and historical research method is chosen for this study. The descriptive research approach is used to describe characteristics of the Puerto Rican society and the related political issues being studied, while the historical method is employed to

report events and/or conditions that happened in the past. This approach involves exploring, documenting, analyzing and clarifying events of the past. In short, the descriptive and historical research method is employed to establish facts in order to arrive at conclusions concerning the understanding of past events, understanding the present and anticipating future events.

To add value and more substance to the present study, the comparative approach is also used to compare the different political directions and policy options offered to the citizens of Puerto Rico. This method is utilized chiefly to explain and gain a better understanding of the underlying processes and variables involved in the political struggle of Puerto Ricans in their attempts to become an independent country.

In order to cite other people's works and ideas in this work, it is deemed necessary to make reference to the used sources precisely as a tacit recognition of the original authors of the work and give the reader the possibility to check the original source. To do so, the main source of information for this dissertation is the MLA Handbook (8th ed.) but the MLA Style Center (style.mla.org/) is also used. In-text citations (within the body of this dissertation) and the list of sources used and cited (the Works Cited list on separate pages at the end in this dissertation) are made according to the MLA formatting and style guide for academic work (Updated 2020).

The main intention of this study is to examine the issue of the political and identity crisis that divides Puerto Ricans into three groups: being American, being Puerto Rican or a hyphenated identity. The first chapter is entitled "Puerto Rico: Historical Background and Legal Relations with the United States". First, the focus is on identifying the historical background of the island as well as analyzing the US laws and US Constitution when it comes to embracing land territories and regions to the mainland as a commonwealth. Then, the spotlight is on the criteria and prosecutors to be followed in order to insert a land as a state in

the Union. Finally, the chapter discusses the international and the United Nations (UN) conditions to recognize states and nations as independent and let them join the international community.

The second chapter is entitled “Puerto Rican Culture and Cultural Conflict”. It extensively deals with the islands’ culture and the American cultural influence. It also clarifies the image of the different Puerto Rican identities and shows the changes to the core and levels of the identity of Puerto Rico. It aims at identifying and analyzing the reasons and effects behind this ongoing identity conflict. It discusses the beginning of the islands’ drift into the three directions.

The third chapter is entitled “The Three Political Options for Puerto Ricans”. It examines the collection of causes and surrounding conditions to uncover the sources that pushed the Puerto Rican people into this triple crossroad identity conflict, or the three political variables with regard to the political status Puerto Ricans want to choose for the future of their nation. The chapter also questions whether there is a real possibility to implement one of these three options. It emphasizes on the processes Puerto Ricans followed in order to achieve each one option with an objective criticism for each. The conclusion highlights on the political inclination that the majority of Puerto Ricans favor.

Chapter One

Puerto Rico: Historical Background and Legal Relations with the United States

Puerto Rico, officially known as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, is a vacation destination for many tourists around the world. Dubbed, ‘the oldest colony known to mankind’ does not mean Puerto Rico has no history before that. The islands went through three massive changes to reach its present status. The group of Islands has a unique situation as it is an American territory and its citizens are Americans but Puerto Rico is not considered a state. This state of affairs made its political status confusing. To understand the current status of Puerto Rico, we need to briefly look back through centuries of history.

1.1. The Historical Background of Puerto Rico

As far as the records show, the history of Puerto Rico started with the settlement of the islands of Puerto Rico by the Ortoiroid¹ people between 3,000 and 2,000 BC. Other ethnic groups, such as the Saladoid² and Arawak³ Native Puerto Ricans, inhabited the island between 430 BC and 1000 AD. Ever since then, the island has witnessed the arrival of different people from various villages, tribes, as well as European colonizers. These settlers brought their own artistic, political, and agricultural accomplishments forming Puerto Rico that we know today.

Situated in the north-eastern Caribbean, Puerto Rico formed a significant part of the Spanish Empire from the early years of the discovery, occupation and colonization of the New World. Puerto Rico was a key military post during many wars between Spain and other European nations for control of the region in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

1.1.1. Pre-contact Era

Lisa Pierce Flores in her book *The History of Puerto Rico* explains that the pre-contact era stands for the time before the arrival of the European people into the islands of Puerto Rico. This era is also known as Pre-encounter and Prehistory. To find out how the people of

the island lived in the pre-contact era, Caribbean historians relied on two different approaches: archeology⁴ and ethnohistory⁵. These historians reported that the first-ever human inhabitation on the island was by a group of sea travelers back in 2000 BCE (8).

According to archeology, these travelers came from what is present-day Venezuela and settled on the island's mangrove swamps. From 500 to 200 BCE, a new wave of settlers arrived to the island and brought their own advanced agricultural and pottery skills. These people were known as the 'Saladoid'. Even though these first inhabitants left no written records, historians were able to discover that these settlers had arrived to the island using their boats, bringing their artifacts and skills (Flores 9-10). In other words, the first-ever human settlers of Puerto Rico were people who came from close areas mostly the northern parts of South America and Central America.

By 1200 BCE, the Saladoid people gave rise to another culture known as the Taino⁶. It is also argued that the Tainos were not decedents of the Saladoid people but rather a wave of new settlers who came from Mexico and Central America. Regardless of their roots, the Taino was the dominant culture all across the great Antilles (present-day Cuba, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic/Haiti, and Puerto Rico), as the Tainos created communities with highly sophisticated agriculture, fishing methods and elaborate religious artifacts (Flores 10).

At the time of contact, the Tainos were divided into classes, the ruling Nitainos⁷, and the Naborias⁸ or laborers. Their communities were ruled by a decedent of the Nitainos called cacique (chief). The cacique decided the position of the workers, and took all goods and distributed them on the people according to their rank and needs. The Tainos did not wear any clothes but rather covered their skin in oils that they derived from plants; these oils protected their skin from bug bites and gave it a red color. Because of their cultural achievements, historians have named their period as the Taino florescence (Flores 11).

Jose Javier Lopez, in his book *Puerto Rico*, reported that the majority of the Tainos were successful farmers and fishermen. They traveled between the islands of the Caribbean using simple transportation methods like the canoes. These people lived peacefully among each other and they named their island Borinquen which stands for “land of the brave lord” (32).

Taken as a whole, there are not many details concerning the pre-contact era. The majority of history books dealt with the historical background of the islands after the Spanish conquest. However, Caribbean historians proved that human inhabitation dates back to 2000 BCE. Many cultures have flourished on the island and formed sophisticated communities. At the time of the arrival of the European people, the Tainos were the principal inhabitants of the Caribbean region and the first new world peoples to be encountered by Christopher Columbus.

1.1.2. The Spanish Conquest

In 1492, during Christopher Columbus’s first voyage to the west, the first people he encountered were the Tainos of Hispaniola. In his accounts, Columbus described the Tainos as peaceful and was very impressed by their lifestyle and their golden ornaments. After his return to Spain, Columbus reported his discoveries back to Queen Isabella of Castile, the sovereign who had paid for his voyage, and her husband, King Ferdinand of Aragon. The king and queen requested Pope Alexander VI to grant any new land discoveries to them, therefore, they were determined that any future discoveries were Spanish lands “by divine right” (Flores 18).

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, on November 19, 1493, Christopher took his second voyage to the west heading to the island of Hispaniola. During that voyage, he encountered prisoners who were kidnapped by a group of Caribbean called Carib⁹. He helped return these prisoners back to their homeland they called Borinquen¹⁰, and they guided him

throughout the way. Christopher landed on an island of Puerto Rico, and he named the bay on the west coast of Boriquén as ‘San Juan Bautista’.

Christopher Columbus reported his discoveries back to the king and queen of Spain and more Spanish came to the island. The Spanish encountered numerous forms of resistance by the indigenous people. However, they blamed these attacks on the Caribs as they described them as savages and cannibals and claimed that the Tainos were peaceful and welcoming. Because of their resistance, a big number of the Caribs were enslaved, tortured, and killed. The Spanish settlers showed little to no interest in colonizing or permanently settling the island. They were only interested in retrieving its riches, like the gold (Encyclopedia Britannica).

Lopez reported that it was only until 1508 where Captain Juan Ponce de Leon¹¹ was ordered to colonize the island. In the beginning, Tainos held a relatively positive relationship with the Spaniards. Captain Juan colonized the island to extract gold so he constructed gold mines and farms in the new colonies. The Spanish realized that extracting gold requires hard labor, so they developed a system known as ‘Encomienda’ system. The crown commissioned this system and specified that colonists could get a piece of land; in return, they had to provide food, shelter, protection, Christian education, and good treatment to the Tainos while they worked in the mines. The Spanish, however, failed greatly in delivering any of the above measures. The Tainos were not aware of the element of money so the Spanish took advantage of their lack of awareness and did not pay them for their hard work (34). Because of the severe working conditions and harsh treatment, many Tainos lost their lives. Many more also passed away because they refused to submit to the system and fought the Spanish for their freedom.

To round up, 1493 was the year of encounter between two cultures that became the turning point of the lives of the indigenous people of Puerto Rico. The Spanish conquistadors’

thirst for gold, duty to take more lands, and desire to spread Christianity torn apart an entire culture and replaced it with a new system under the Spanish rule.

What began as a friendly encounter turned into a discordant relationship after the Tainos felt that these newcomers threatened their way of living. Brutality, violence, and oppression forced the natives to stand against the Spanish. The book entitled *The History of Puerto Rico* reports that the year 1511 marked the commencement of the rebellion. This military conflict was between the Conquistadors of Castile led by Juan Ponce de León and the Tainos of Boriken led by Agueybana II, a powerful Taino chief. Initially, the Tainos thought that the Spaniards were gods, but chief Agueybana thought otherwise so he wanted to test their mortality (Middeldyk and Grove 30-31).

Middeldyk and Grove recounted that one day, a group of Tainos authorized by the chief, lured a Spanish soldier named Diego Salcedo to the river and drowned him. After they made sure he was dead, the Tainos knew that the Spaniards were not Gods and the news spread fast causing major rebellion and resistance of the abuse they had against them. The Tainos in cooperation with the Caribs fought and killed every Spaniard that crossed their way. The rebellion lasted until 1513 in which a lot the Tainos have killed many Spaniards (32).

Likewise, many Tainos had also lost their lives in the battle, and those who refused to surrender decided to kill themselves and their children. The Tainos, eventually, lost the war after the death of chief Agueybana as the Spaniards were more equipped with powerful weapons (Middeldyk and Grove 34). Bartolomé de las Casas, Spanish colonist who acted as a historian and social reformer before becoming a Dominican religious man, affirmed to the brutality that the Spanish committed against the indigenous people in his book *History of the Indies*. He avowed that “what we committed in the Indies stands out among the most unpardonable offenses ever committed against God and mankind” (3).

The year 1513 marked the end of the rebellion as the Spaniards won the war. By that time, many Tainos lost their lives either murdered, died because epidemics of Europeans introduced disease that swept the island, or killed themselves as they refused to live under the Spanish rule. Those who remained alive went back working in the gold mines and were assimilated into the Spanish society. Stories about the the pure Taino race, a mix of legend and historical fact, said that the pure Taino race was extinct during those times because of interracial-marriage (Lopez 35).

Lopez commented that many Spanish colonists left the island searching for gold in other areas in South America and those who stayed shifted their attention toward making crops for export. As a result, African slaves were extensively introduced during that era. The strategic location of the island also incited other European powers to look for the richness of central and South American (36-37). The Spanish, therefore, wasted no time building protective walls and fortresses all through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Spain maintained its control over Puerto Rico. Spanish born colonists were the powerful citizens and “the top of the island ‘social class pyramid’”. At the bottom of the social ladder came, in this respective order, the local rich landowners, the racially mixed workers and black slaves. Black slaves tried to gain their freedom several times but failed, it was not until 1873 where Puerto Rico abolished slavery (Lopez 38).

The beginning of the nineteenth century marked the loss of many Spanish colonial territories and because of Puerto Rico’s strategic location, Spain did its best not to lose it. By 1867, Puerto Rico had 656,328 inhabitants. Though the latter were racially mixed, they nonetheless, formed one national identity. Frustrated with poverty, illiteracy, taxation, tariffs, increasing repression and slavery, Puerto Ricans decided that it was high time to gain independence (Brás).

Irritated by the lack of freedom, and frustrated by the ongoing cruelty on the island, a group of pro-independence inhabitants formed the Revolutionary Committee of Puerto Rico and launched an armed rebellion on September 23, 1868. Although the attack was a failure, “It marked the beginning of the idea that Puerto Ricans were members of a separate nation”. By the end of 1880, many violent incidents were committed against the Spanish and there was a large movement to boycott the Spanish products. On November 25, 1897, the Spanish “Cortes”, which was a national assembly, approved a form of a constitutional autonomy known as “Carta Autonómica” and granted autonomy to Puerto Rico (Lopez 39-40).

To deduce, the Spanish colonized Puerto Rico for four centuries causing major sufferance and destruction. Under oppressive rule and slavery, they exerted violence and committed genocide operations that led to the sufferance of its inhabitants and to the eventual disappearance of an entire culture of the indigenous Taino people. The Spanish conquest was merely the result of greed for gold and more territory to control. Even though Puerto Ricans resisted and fought repeatedly for their freedom and reached it at some point in history, the short-lived self-government dream ended with the start of the Spanish-American War.

1.1.3. Puerto Rico under United States Control

When Puerto Ricans were finally granted independence, they slowly but firmly started to build their free nation. Many events that happened soon after, however, would shatter all the expectations and took the island on a completely different direction. In 1895, both Cuba and the Philippines started a revolution against the Spanish invasion. The American newspapers shared the tragic events of the revolution which made many American citizens upset and urged the government to take a stand.

On January 1898, an American battleship, named Maine, blew up and sank in the harbor of Havana, killing all 266 members of its crew. The Spanish claimed that the explosion had been the result of a malfunction aboard the ship, but Americans were convinced that Maine

had been destroyed by Spanish sabotage. As a result, the United States declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898. To prevent the possibility of the US annexation of Cuba, Congress passed the Teller Amendment¹², which proclaimed that the United States would help the Cuban people gain their freedom from Spain but would not annex the island after victory (Flores 71-72).

Even though the conflict was between Cuba and the United States, the battles were all over the Caribbean area. On July 21, 1898, more than six American ships were on their way to Puerto Rico to expel the Spanish invaders. Puerto Ricans warmly welcomed the Americans as liberators, and many participated in the Spanish-American war by helping US troops with navigation and food supply. After battling for ten weeks, the Spanish realized that victory is far from reach so they initiated peace terms with Washington leading to the Paris Treaty¹³ in which Spain gave up its colonies: Guam, Puerto Rico, its possessions in the West Indies, and the Philippines in exchange for \$20 million US Dollars (Flores 73; The Spanish-American War 1-2).

Gervasio Luis Garcia endorsed the previous idea in his article “I am the Other: Puerto Rico in the Eyes of North Americans.” He quoted the words of Elihu Root¹⁴, US Secretary of War: “Before the people of Porto Rico can be fully entrusted with self-government they must first learn the lesson of self-control and respect for the principles of constitutional government, which requires acceptance of its peaceful decisions”. Garcia explained that Root meant that the Puerto Rican society is not educated or developed enough to understand the standards of democracy and follow the rules and regulations of an established government because, in his defense, the Puerto Ricans “never learned to obey majority” (41). In other words, after the United States expelled the Spanish from Puerto Rico, they did not grant them autonomy because the majority of the population was illiterate so they did not believe in their ability to govern themselves according to democratic standards.

In 1917, Puerto Rico became known as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and its citizens gained American citizenship. In 1952, popular elections were allowed and the people could vote for their governor. Even though Puerto Rico has gained a decent level of self-government, the people lived a rough life during the first half of the twentieth century. Working conditions were catastrophic, diseases were spreading, and the people barely had enough to eat due to poverty (Lopez 43).

Lopez claimed that the government of the United States had to intervene to solve this crisis, implementing what became known as Operation Bootstrap. The latter is a “modernization program” that intended to attract investments and industrialization to the island. This has been achieved by offering “building space and a ten-year exemption from the payment of taxes”. Besides, the government also worked on improving the tourism sector by building luxurious hotels. The country soon turned to the destination of many tourists and the industry replaced agriculture (44).

1.2. The Legal and Political Situation of Puerto Rico

As previously mentioned, the political situation of Puerto Rico remained an unresolved question. This is the result of many laws that established the roots of the political relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. They took the islands from Spain with no promise of annexation to the United States, leaving it to Congress as the US Constitution delegates such cases.

1.2.1. The Legitimacy of the United States Presence in Puerto Rico

In the late 1800s, stronger European nations created empires by dominating weaker nations of Africa and Asia. Though supporters of expansion denied that the United States sought to annex foreign lands, by 1890, the United States was eager to join the competition for new territories. Soon afterwards, the United States became involved in the Cuban rebellion against Spain, to protect American business interests. Congress recognized Cuban

independence and authorized force against Spain. In the Spanish-American war that started on May 1, 1898, and ended on July 3, 1898 the US defeated Spain. By means of the ensuing Treaty of Paris, the Spanish government recognized Cuba's independence, and gave up the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico then became an unincorporated territory of the United States. What does this mean?

1.2.1.1. The Paris Treaty of 1898

The Paris treaty came to end the war between the United States and Spain, or as John Hay described it "the Splendid Little War", over the control of what is left of the Spanish foothold in the Americas. Signed on December 10th, 1898, the Paris Treaty represented the upsurge of US imperialism. Soon, Washington became a significant world power and gained the title of the "Liberator of the Americas from European rule" (Cabranes 531).

This treaty, published in Yale Law School website, mentions Puerto Rico in Article II along with other territories. It reads: "Spain cedes to the United States the island of Porto Rico and other islands now under Spanish sovereignty in the West Indies, and the island of Guam in the Marianas or Ladrones". This Article represents the passing of authority and rules over the islands from the Spanish Crown to the United States military as payback of 400 million dollars of Cuban debt ("A Treaty of Peace between the United States and Spain").

Although the treaty mentions the future treatment and rights of ceded territories' natives in Article XI, it does ignore mentioning the fate of their civil rights explicitly and disclaiming it by saying 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". This left an open door for the United States to decide the status of the people of Puerto Rico along the Islands themselves. That resulted in a US Supreme Court verdict that Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam were not incorporated nor even administered directly under the US Constitution. It falls under Congress to decide whether to apply or not to apply the federal laws in the states

or incorporated territories with US citizens to the unincorporated territories inhabited by noncitizen native peoples (“A Treaty of Peace between the United States and Spain”).

Pedro Malavet pulls attention to fact that this treaty kept the island under the military rule that started in September 1898 until April 12th, 1900. It included a sort of fighting back from a well-organized mob called “*Partidas*” in the mountains of Puerto Rico. They used Guerilla tactics in their attacks against the Spanish until the US Army restored a form of order to the islands (36).

1.2.1.2. The Monroe Doctrine

According to Grace Livingstone, the presidency of James Monroe had a massive impact on US foreign policies for the decades that followed. Although his 1823 speech was defensive, it came as a threat to European powers interested in the western hemisphere. Under the Monroe Doctrine, the United States promised that it would not take sides in European conflicts, and stated that it would not allow further colonization of the Western Hemisphere. Monroe’s doctrine became a justification for future intervention in Latin America. In 1880, many US fruit companies took control of the southern neighborhood and the Caribbean islands and in twenty years, ‘United Fruit’ controlled the imports and exports of those islands perversely owned by European companies (12).

In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt became president of an industrial country with more than half of its population living in cities. His economic boost needed raw materials and new markets to sell its products. Therefore, the United States resorted to making a ‘sphere of influence’ and depending on the Monroe Doctrine; they militarily intervened, between 1898 and 1934, more than thirty times in Latin America and the Caribbean.

One of the most interesting and reflective quotes of that era was President Theodore Roosevelt’s use of an old African proverb to guide his foreign policy: “speak softly and carry a big stick and you will go far”. This was an update to the Monroe Doctrine to mean that the

United States will simply act as “an international police power” in the Western Hemisphere and intervene to prevent intervention by other powers. Under Roosevelt’s presidency, the United States often intervened in Latin America (Livingstone 15). This was seen as a show of confidence and emergence of the conceit of a new world power.

1.2.2. The Commonwealth Status

Commonwealths are territories in free association with the United States, enjoying virtual autonomy in internal affairs but subject to the United States in foreign and defense matters (Encyclopedia Britannica). This status gave the natives and residents of these territories US citizenship, which made them pay federal taxes and allowed them to move freely within the United States.

Dennis Mahoney reveals that these people have some form of a special situation in the US legislative sector as they do have each one elected representative in Congress (The Commissioner), who can attend and speak in sessions but do not have a vote when it comes to legislation. The people have voting rights when it comes to electing a representative in the house and they do participate in presidential primaries but they cannot vote for the President or have a seat in the Senate ("Commonwealth Status"). The foundation of the commonwealth relation is a ‘social contract’ between the US government and the citizens of the regions, because the power of the US Congress to ratify the pact derives from its plenary control over the territories (Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2).

Antonio Fernós-Isern reports that Puerto Rico, the three times colony and once a commonwealth, finds itself once again in this latter position, now straightened with a constitutional federal alliance, with Union citizenship as a common bond. The variation between the Commonwealth of 1897 and the present is tremendous. Instead of being a part of a monarchy system whose political institutions could not avoid the decline of the old world,

Puerto Rico now lives in protection within the republican structure of independence and protection of the United States of America (21).

Over the years, the commonwealth of Puerto Rico acquired a degree of control over its internal affairs, such as the adoption of its constitution, the formation and election of its legislature, and the right to legislate on important aspects of its economy, social, cultural and political existence. The degree and consequences of this development have been the subject of significant controversy within Puerto Rico.

The standardizing structure, however, established by the United States to rule Puerto Rico since the early days of invasion, has left the country in a state of undeniable political subordination. This condition is reflected in the Jurisprudential Doctrine that the US Congress retains full powers to dispose of matters relating to Puerto Rico as an unincorporated territory (Rivera-Ramos 115).

1.2.3. The Way to the Status Quo in Puerto Rico

The Citizenship clause in the fourteenth amendment of the US Constitution stipulates that, “All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside”. This means the United States gives citizenship to anyone born on American soil. Accordingly, there is a hot debate on whether to give Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico US citizenship or not. This is based on another confusion issue, that of considering the island as American Soil or not.

The second part of the fourteenth amendment says, “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws”. Based on this statement and with an emphasis on the word ‘State’, one can perceive that Puerto Rico is not a state of the union. However, it falls inside the union under the umbrella of the federal government.

In his article “Race Space and the Puerto Rican Citizenship,” Venator Santiago reports that Rogers M. Smith, distinguished Professor of political science, contends that United States “justices were apparently willing for Puerto Ricans, like other peoples of color, to be designated 'American' so long as what that meant in terms of citizenship status remained unclear”. This left an open door for the interpretation of the fourteenth amendment and many laws were passed in favor of both sides until the Puerto Ricans received the form of citizenship they have today.

1.2.3.1. The Insular Cases

A series of opinions by the United States Supreme Court were decided during 1901 about the position of United States territories obtained in the Spanish-American War, and the periods that followed soon after. This list of cases, known as the “insular cases”, essentially helped to establish the oblivion legal status of Puerto Rico’s nationhood and the shortage of individualistic Puerto Rican citizenship. In this respect, Ramón Betances, a Puerto Rican independence advocate, once noted that “If Puerto Ricans do not act fast after the Americans invade; the island will be an American colony forever” (qtd. in Arnold Leibowitz 35).

In his book, *Defining Status: A Comprehensive Analysis of United States Territorial Relations*, Arnold Leibowitz informs us about how the United States Supreme Court decided many cases about the status of the territories, including a group of six cases in 1901 and many others between 1901 and 1922, which specifically addressed the case of Puerto Rico. These cases are known as the “Insular Cases”. These decisions paved the way for an academic exchange that exhibited the Courts’ opinion seen in the *Harvard Law Review*. This discussion was sustained by the fact that the US Constitution allows the United States to acquire new territories to include them as states in the future, unlike what the European powers did in the Americas (17).

Arnold Leibowitz adds that the formal legal argument for this position relied on the analyses of Justice Marshall in the case of *Loughborough v. Blake* and on that of Justice Taney in the case of *Scott v. Stanford*. Marshall said: “The United States is the name given to our great republic, which is composed of States, and territories of west Missouri are not less within the United States than Maryland or Pennsylvania....” Taney said: “an Act of Congress which deprives a citizen of the United States of his liberty or property, merely because he came himself or brought his property into a particular Territory of the United States... could hardly be dignified with the name of due process of law” (18).

In another case, Sam Erman reported that Justice Edward White, in *Downes v. Bidwell*, introduced the doctrine of territorial non-incorporation, which replaced the Reconstruction Constitution as the dominant legal framework for overseas territories. He claimed Puerto Rico as "foreign to the United States in a domestic sense" as it was unincorporated by the US Congress or by the Paris Treaty into the American Union. After this case, Puerto Ricans found themselves in an “institutional limbo”, as it did not clarify or answer with a definite response. The Courts assisted US imperialism by not clarifying US citizenship and US nationality. This made immigration officers treat Puerto Ricans as ‘Aliens’ due to the confusion about classifying the natives of unincorporated territories as aliens, nationals, citizens or subjects (6).

In *De Lima v. Bidwell*, the US double standards were shown as the Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Rico was not a foreign land because it was a territory of the US because the Paris Treaty said that it had not been incorporated into the United States. Incorporation required an affirmative act by the entire Congress, not just the ratification of a treaty. This left the Puerto Ricans as citizens of the islands, not of the United States. Unlike them, their land, however, is not foreign to the US (Malavet 38). Nowadays Puerto Ricans obtain US citizenship, however not a full one. Their citizenship has a form of constitutional inferiority derived from the

'retroactive narrowing' of the fourteen amendment's citizenship clause because the federal government revoked Puerto Ricans' US citizenship.

1.2.3.2. The Foraker Act of 1900

In his "Race Space and the Puerto Rican Citizenship", Venator Santiago mentions that the 1900 Foraker Act falls under the umbrella of Organic Acts made by the United States to establish those territories and how they should be governed. This Act allowed the United States to switch from a military governing regime to a civil one. Section VII of this act was created for the residents of the island. In 1904, the United States Supreme Court, in its ruling in *Gonzales v. Williams*, reaffirmed the Puerto Rican citizenship.

Efrén Rivera-Ramos argues that the Foraker Act of 1900 allowed the president of the United States to appoint the first civil government and its governor. The constitutional powers of the United States president allowed him to appoint the chief justice and the members of the Executive Council, who acted as the equivalent to the Senate house and executive cabinet. The lower house of thirty-five delegates was elected by the people of Puerto Rico. This measure was upheld until the Jones Act of 1917 (99).

1.2.3.3. The Jones Act of 1917

In 1917, the United States Congress passed the Jones Act in the exercise of its constitutional powers over the territories of Puerto Rico. The Jones Act incorporated some changes to the governance system of the islands. This called for a constitutional bill of rights. This new organic act to rehabilitate the government of Puerto Rico did not repair the relationship between the islands and the United States in any profound way. Several essential aspects of the Foraker Act of 1900 remained flat after the Jones Act of 1917, including the clause for the compulsory application of the United States federal legislation to the territory (Rivera-Ramos 100).

1.2.3.4. The Public Law 600 of 1950

The Public Law 600 of 1950 allowed Puerto Ricans to outline their internal constitution without acknowledging their full autonomy. It required the new constitution to establish a republic. This abolished much of the provisions of the Foraker and Jones Acts relating to the inner structure of the government of the Territory but left unchanged other important aspects of those matters as Puerto Rico's economic relationship to the United States, the presence and effect of federal legislation (The Commissioner), and the form of representation in Washington. The remaining clauses have been formalized into a new law known as the Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act. This act allowed the people of Puerto Rico to structure a local government in accordance with their own constitution (Rivera-Ramos 101).

The Puerto Rican electorate gave its express permission to the provisions of Public Law 600 in a plebiscite to that effect. A constitutional convention has been appointed, and almost all existing political parties participated in the convention's procedures. The constitutional text sketched by the convention was submitted to the electorate and approved by a majority vote. Congress approved the new constitution on condition that several of its provisions were repealed and others modified. The American Constitutional Convention admitted the modifications and Governor Munoz Marín declared the Constitution was into effect on July 25, 1952 (Rivera-Ramos 102). However, it was until the local elections of November of 1952 that the electorate would have the potential to ratify the amendments needed by Congress.

As Rowe reported, the US Supreme Court made a distinction three times in the status of Porto Rico. The first concerned the time between the military invasion and the implementation of the Paris Treaty, at which the island was established as a foreign territory. During that time, the tariffs were still enforced under the war powers clause. The second period started from the ratification of the 1898 Paris Treaty and ended with the adoption of the Foraker Act of 1900. For the Supreme Court, the purpose of such ratification was to make

Porto Rico a national territory and to exclude it from the category of ‘independent countries’. Therefore, the collection of tariffs on Porto Rican goods during this second time was considered illegal. These two questions were decided in the cases of *De Lima v. Bidwell* and *Dooley v. United States*¹⁴. The third period started with the establishment of the local government, which was a major key reference in *Downes v. Bidwell*. In this case, the US Supreme Court decided whether American territories were subject to the provisions and protections of the US Constitution (39).

1.2.4. The International Perspective to Puerto Rico

From the perspective of the outside world, discussed in the article “The Status of Puerto Rico Revisited: Does the US-Puerto Rico Relationship Uphold International Law?”, Dorian A. Shaw argues that much of what has occurred in Puerto Rico must seem like an almost insoluble mystery. The international view of the situation in the islands and the laws relating to its status indicate that the Commonwealth Government seems to be unable to satisfy the requirements of the Free Associated Territory. This is so, because Resolutions 742 and 1541 as stipulated out in the United Nations General Assembly see that the Puerto Rico Constitution continues to be subordinate to the Territorial Clause of the US Constitution (1053).

In 1960, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) created a Decolonization Committee based on Resolution 1514, which provided a hearing for members to establish the "colonial" status of the territory. Within one month of its formulation, the Committee issued Resolution 1541, which established the principles for determining whether a Member State must provide information according to Article 73(e) of the Charter (Shaw 1026).

One of the most important principles is Principle VI, which states that a free association with another state is one method by which a territory may achieve full self-government; which is very applicable to nowadays Puerto Rico. The United States did meet with the above

UN Guidelines until the General Assembly adopted Resolution 748, which provided for the termination of transmission of information on Puerto Rico thereunder Article 73(e). This included the creation of a legitimate political union between Puerto Rico and the United States, as evidenced by the formation of the Commonwealth Government, and the entry into force of the Constitution of Puerto Rico. Resolution 748 acknowledged respect for the unique cultural traits of Puerto Rico by the United States, the acceptance of a new status through truly democratic discourse, and the establishment of an elected political body (Shaw 1027-1028).

As stated above, the history of Puerto Rico is very rich. It began with the settlement of sea travelers back in 2000 BC. Other tribes, such as the Saladoid and Arawak Native Puerto Ricans, populated the island between 430 BC and 1000 AD. However, the dominant indigenous culture was that of the Taínos and they were the first people Christopher Columbus encountered during his first arrival to the New World in 1493. With the Spanish settlement of the island, the Taino culture disappeared because of infectious diseases carried by Europeans, exploitation by Spanish settlers, and subsequent wars. In 1898, the United States took sovereignty over the island after they won the Spanish-American war. Puerto Rico has become a United States possession and its citizens are Americans.

The enduring Puerto Rican political situation left the Island within the hands of the United States. The different laws and acts passed, even before the annexation of Puerto Rico, paved the way for US policymakers to have full control over Puerto Rico's political scene. It is true that the commonwealth statutes gave the island few benefits and advantages, compared to the mainland, however, it acted as handcuffs in many areas especially in the civil sector. There is a bright side, however, as Puerto Ricans obtained an international recognition and support to proclaim self-determination as UN resolutions show.

Endnotes

¹ The Ortoiroid people were the second wave of human settlers of the Caribbean who began their migration into the Antilles around 2000 B.C. (Flores, *The History of Puerto Rico*. Greenwood Press, 2010).

² The Saladoid is a pre-Columbian indigenous culture of territory in present-day Venezuela and the Caribbean that flourished from 500 BCE to 545 B.C. (Flores, *The History of Puerto Rico*. Greenwood Press, 2010).

³ The Arawak are a group of indigenous peoples of South America and of the Caribbean who lived in the Greater Antilles and northern Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean (Encyclopedia Britannica).

⁴ Archeology is the scientific study of material remains (such as tools, pottery, jewelry, stone walls, and monuments) of past human life and activities. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

⁵ Ethnohistory is the study of cultures that combines cross-disciplinary methods of historical document research and ethnographic studies such as anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, and ecology to give as complete a picture as possible of a whole culture (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

⁶ The Taínos were an indigenous people of the Caribbean. At the time of European contact in the late fifteenth century, they were the principal inhabitants of most of Cuba, Hispaniola (the Dominican Republic and Haiti), Jamaica, Puerto Rico, The Bahamas and the northern Lesser Antilles (Encyclopedia Britannica).

⁷ The Nitainos represented the nobles and upper class of the Tainos (Encyclopedia Britannica).

⁸ Naborias were the commoners or the workers in the Taino society and they represented the second class (Encyclopedia Britannica).

⁹ Caribs are an indigenous people of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean. They may have been related to the Mainland Caribs (Kalina) of South America, but they spoke an unrelated language known as Island Carib (Encyclopedia Britannica).

¹⁰ Borinquen is the ancient name of the island of Puerto Rico. Before the Spanish arrived and renamed it Puerto Rico the indigenous Indians, The Tainos, called the land "Borinquen", which means "Land of the Valiant Lord" (Encyclopedia Britannica).

¹¹ Juan Ponce de León was a Spanish explorer and conquistador known for leading the first official European expedition to Florida and the first governor of Puerto Rico (Encyclopedia Britannica).

¹² The Teller Amendment was an amendment to a joint resolution of the United States Congress, enacted on April 20, 1898, in reply to President William McKinley's War Message. It proclaimed that the United States would not establish permanent control over Cuba (Flores).

¹³ The Treaty of Paris is a treaty concluding the Spanish-American War. It was signed by representatives of Spain and the United States in Paris on Dec. 10, 1898 (Encyclopedia Britannica).

¹⁴ Elihu Root was an American lawyer and statesman who served as the Secretary of State under President Theodore Roosevelt and as Secretary of War under Roosevelt and President William McKinley (Encyclopedia Britannica).

¹⁵De Lima v. Bidwell and Dooley Vs. United States are two cases ruled not to consider Puerto Rico as a foreign land in the literal meaning while engaging in business (Brown, *De Lima v. ...*).

Chapter Two

Puerto Rican Culture and Cultural Conflict

The people of Puerto Rico developed a very rich and distinctive culture through the collection and combination of different cultures and traditions that were developed by ancient generations over many centuries to finally produce, as a result, one that is relatively and uniquely new. However, the history of the island and the different waves of immigrants and colonists who controlled it throughout the centuries since its discovery, namely Spain and the United States, deeply reshaped the culture of the Puerto Rico.

2.1. Culture as a Separate Concept

Culture may represent diverse things to different people. One approach in which culture has often been known is as a body of knowledge that people have about a particular society. This body of facts can be understood in a variety of ways: as information about works of art; as data about places and institutions; as facts about events and symbols; or as understanding about ways of living. Culture is not, however, only an amount of learning but rather a structure in which people live their lives and converse collective meanings with each other.

While Robert Redfield defines culture as “an organization of conventional understandings, manifest in act and artifact” (133), Tylor contends that “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (1). Sidney Mintz and Richard Price state that ‘Culture analysis’ is the contexts that refer to most human societies and institutions, and work on culture attempts to recognize the commonalities and differences that occur in the human concept of reality. He goes on saying that "culture" and "society" are closely connected but theoretically distinct concepts in American anthropological usage (344).

Meanwhile, Eli Hinkel thinks that the word culture does not adhere to a particular concept. He says that one interpretation is, at best, oversimplification of the meaning of

culture and, at worst, unsatisfactory to reach an exact meaning. He adds, “It is not an overstatement when one says that there are almost as many concepts of culture as there are fields of study into human communities, classes, structures, and behavior” (1).

This leads to assert the idea that culture is too broad as a term to be agreed upon, as it is prominent in each section in human lifestyle and surroundings. Culture is the creation of humankind that they choose to reflect through their perception of their existence, identity, and set of beliefs. It may seem to be hard to define, however, it is easy to identify when seen, observed, or experienced. It could also become a huge umbrella for human anthropology domains and fields, which help to identify or introduce certain people to others as in the case of Puerto Rico.

2.1.1. The Puerto Rican Culture

In their constant struggle to maintain their cultural heritage, Puerto Ricans have always expressed resistance to the US domination, and celebrated their ancient history and ties with Spain. Their various cultural manifestations and expressions indicated that the primary sources of Puerto Rican identity are the ethnic component, the land, the Spanish language, and folklore. The political conflict during the early decades of US rule turned, largely, around the issue of language.

Language was a central component of conflict between both Americans and Puerto Ricans, and continued so all over the twentieth century. Most Puerto Ricans assert that their American citizenship is distinct from their national identity, and being part-Spaniard continues to be one of the principal symbols of their identity. In fact, the prevailing talk is that being Puerto Rican is practically equal with speaking Spanish. Puerto Ricans, undoubtedly, believe that the Spanish language is necessary to preserving their cultural identity.

Conversely, those interested in the annexation of Puerto Rico to the United States emphasized the belonging to the United States and the self-rule provided by federalism,

underlining the value and worth of democratic culture in converting the regressive Spanish cultural legacy.

2.1.2. The Clichés of the Puerto Rican Culture

Ramirez highlights five redundant key factors that he labeled “clichés”, which have been recognized after decades of discussion on the features of Puerto Rican society. First, after three centuries of Spanish conquest, traditional culture of Puerto Rico became unique by the characteristics derived from the Hispanic heritage with some African and Indian influence. Other features, which have existed at the national level over the last century of US hegemony, became also part of the national culture that flourished in the nineteenth century (109).

Second, relying on Stewart and Bennett study of cultural patterns of perception and thinking (37-48), Ramirez summarizes Puerto Ricans’ main common cultural traits in the following points: Strong kinship bonds, including the bilateral extended family and ritual kinship, double sex standard and male dominance in the family, emphasis upon hospitality and interpersonal relations, cooperative labor exchange patterns, the Spanish language, Catholicism, and hierarchical and authoritarian socio-economic and political institutions (110-11). Ramirez also confirms the idea that Puerto Ricans are very docile and that obedience is the central feature of their society (112).

Third, De Granda hints to the idea that the history of Puerto Rico has been corrupted by US imperialism. Therefore, the Hispanic identity was undermined by the adoption of American cultural traditions and ideals (qtd. in Ramirez 113). Fourth, in relationship with the institutions and values of the United States, Puerto Ricans turned their traditional identity into a new environment. National culture stabilization was within the structure of the political and economic structures of the United States. Fifth, culture has no clear connection to economic development or political influence. Culture is what people believe, how they view themselves,

and is composed of all customs that can be preserved regardless of the interaction with the economic and political structure of the United States (Ramirez 114-15).

The debate over these clichés defined a huge portion of today's Puerto Ricans' culture as they preserve the ideological frameworks for such modern, nationalistic, cultural society. This also explains the dominance of these clichés over the discussion over the national society.

2.2. The People of Puerto Rico

The culture of these islands, known today as Puerto Rico, is a combination of the many cultures that passed through the land. The name of the land stands as a great example of the development of the culture as the Taino Arawak Indians originally called their Islands "Borinquen", which means "Land of the Great Lords". When Christopher Columbus arrived in 1493, he changed the name to "San Juan Bautista" Island, and he also established a small settlement next to the port, which is called Puerto Rico (Rich Port). After the arrival of Juan Ponce de León and other Spanish settlers on the island in 1508, the names were reversed: the main city and the port became San Juan, and the entire island was called Puerto Rico (Galvan 1). In the US era, the misspelling of the name of Puerto Rico went on for several years as 'Porto Rico', but it was subsequently rectified.

Since Puerto Rico has nearly 3.1 million people living on the island, it is considered as one of the most densely populated islands in the world. Migration patterns have also created large Puerto Rican communities abroad, mostly concentrated in the northeastern part of the United States (US Census of 2018). The population of Puerto Rico is known for its multiracial and ethnic mix, which reflects its complicated history, and the various migration flows to and from Puerto Rico. The people are often referred to as "Trigueros" (a shade of brown similar to wheat) (Galvan 14). All this helped in the formation of the current culture of the island.

The evidence of the African heritage in Puerto Rico is beyond the demographics. It reaches the island's culture in all aspects be it cuisine, art forms, or even religious icons. The

word Negro in Puerto Rico, for example, does not only refer to people of African background but is a term of fondness that is used for people of all races. The word mulatto is also oftentimes used in Puerto Rico as a reference to the people who have a mixed racial background of half black and half white. Puerto Ricans are a fusion of historical influences that carved a collective of their cultural identity (Galvan 15-16). This explains their unwillingness to define themselves with a distinct ethnic background.

This community of an island has in a very impressive manner to immerge as one in its special form under the same situations that other nations lived under but failed to accomplish what the Puerto Ricans managed to do. They were united under the terms of two consecutive colonizers. The harmony between the concurred natives and the enslaved black people is rarely found in the Americas and the Caribbean islands added a particular richness to the area Puerto Rico is located in and the culture it upholds.

2.3. Women's Roles and Family Status

In her article, "Puerto Rico: Feminism and Feminist Studies", Alice E. Colón Warren observes that Puerto Rican women have a major role in the social life of the community and unlike the rest of Latin societies where women are looked down upon to a certain extent. Since the 1980s, women in Puerto Rico have joined more and more the workforce and obtained high academic degrees (665). Many female Puerto Ricans are pioneers in many fields. This opened the doors for future generations of "Borinquen" women, and Hispanics in general.

Warren cites the examples of Rita Moreno, Dr. Dolores Pinero, Antonia Novello, Felisa Rincon de Gautier and many more who made significant contributions in the fields of entertainment, medicine, military, and politics respectively. Felisa Rincon de Gautier, for example, was the first female mayor of the capital in all Latin countries; she served for twenty years (1948-1968) in office (668). This position witnessed the massive improvement of Puerto

Rico after the Second World War; where it reached the level of demographic trends of a fellow developed country with the increase of women education to surpass that of the men by the 1990s.

Many laws helped establish the position of Puerto Rican women today. One of the most important is the fourteenth amendment, the Equal Protection Clause, that banned discrimination based on sex. In the 1970s, Puerto Rican legislators promulgated many laws that fell under the same scope. They banned employment discrimination on the same basis and others that enforced the equality between the marital partners and reformed the family laws against sexual harassment and domestic violence (Warren 670).

Warren explains that the eighties and nineties showed a reinvestment of problems and identities. The formation of coalitions against violence toward women and for access to abortion included support, research, and even governmental organizations as well as independent feminist-identified groupings. All the alliances and the parties have diversified their views, concentrating on the welfare needs of particular populations such as women. Many organizations of Black women such as 'Unión de Mujeres Puertorriqueñas Negras' and the 'Grupo de Identidad de la Mujer Negra' helped in this process alongside many identifiable feminist groups. In this respect, many research works demonstrated how the gender discrimination challenge could be present even among people in community building programs who may not incorporate a feminist label which create some form of challenge for feminists to cross their point of view while not having a united front with women against them (672-73).

2.4. Folklore and Traditions

The true expression of Puerto Rican history is in its holidays. The celebrations commemorate a combination of ethnic legends, African origins, Hispanic ancestry, religious fervor, democratic ideals, and official US federal holidays. The festivities directly related to

Puerto Rico's historic events include the Abolition of Slavery Day on March 22nd, celebrating the abolition of slavery from its island in 1873. It also includes Luis Munoz Rivera Day on the Third Monday in July, the Constitution Day on July 25th, Jose Celso Barbosa Day on July 27th, the Invention of the New World on October 8th, and the Founding of Puerto Rico on November 19th (Galvan 57). Religious festivals are often related to the Roman Catholic roots of the island, such as Thanksgiving, Good Friday and Easter.

Perhaps the most famous cultural event on the entire island is the Fiesta de Santiago, or the loiza Fiesta patronal. Loiza actually has one of Puerto Rico's highest black populations. It is a nine-day festival from the end of July to the beginning of August. The festivals are dedicated to St. James the Moor Slayer, the patron saint of the city. The Yoruba slaves have selected the priest as they were then prohibited to worship their Yoruba African gods or 'Orishas¹'. Drummers, dancers, parades, beautifully crafted costumes, traditional full music and masks created from cocoa husks of devil-type pattern are the colored gatherings (Galvan 60).

2.5. The Sense of Uniqueness

Present day Puerto Ricans are a result of their history, which they fought and still fight in order to found an identity of their own. They developed a sense of distinguishing what is Puerto Rican away from what is "capitalist American" and away from their Caribbean surrounding islands and countries. This island was put under two frames; the first one was the Catholic-Spanish for over 405 years, and the second one was under the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) dominated US society that lasted for 122 years. The people of the island have been looking for something that makes them different or defines them away from those two camps in terms of language, traditions, and beliefs, as they are different in history.

2.5.1. Language in Puerto Rico

Since 1898 and throughout the next fifty years, the interaction between the English and Spanish became unequal of sorts. English language policies communicated two messages: First, English is superior and Spanish is inferior. The second is that Puerto Rican Spanish is inferior to other varieties. Juan José Osuna cleared the image about that above stated idea when he said: “Their language is a patois almost unintelligible to the native of Barcelona and Madrid. It possesses no literature and has little value as an intellectual medium. There is a bare possibility that it will be nearly as easy to educate these people out of their patois into English as it would be to educate them into the elegant tongue of Castile” (324). This avowal appears to be wrong because Zentella asserts that in 1898, any native of Spain or Latin America could easily understand Puerto Ricans’ spoken Spanish. It is as legitimate a variety of Spanish as is the Castilian dialect (42).

The borrowing of English words by the Spanish communities both in the US and Puerto Rico is a proof for the impossibility of Puerto Rico to become an English-speaking nation. The ‘Spanglish’ language comes as a theory to replace the two in the community as a hybrid language with simplified grammar. ‘Spanglish’, supposed to be predominantly distinctive of Puerto Ricans in the United States, nowadays, characterizes both people of the mainland and in Puerto Rico (Dillard 178). Some even took ‘Spanglish’ so far as to predict that Spanish will no longer be the language of Puerto Rico within fifty years. The Puerto Rican Language raised many questions on how it developed.

Zentella reports that German de Granda, an expert in historical socio-dialectology of Spanish in America, believed there was an extreme intervention in English that had settled on nine syntactic points. For example, Granda believed that in many Spanish conversations, Puerto Ricans say 'en' (in) rather than 'a' (to). Rubén del Rosario, a respected philologist from the University of Puerto Rico, refutes four of those syntactic issues, such as the random use of

the pronouns unlike Spanish that rather remove them, the replacement of the simple present with the present progressive, and the use of the active voice rather than the passive voice, substitution of “aquel”, “aquella” for “ese”, “esa”. One example at hand is, in addition to traditional speaking and non-standard English and Spanish variants, El Barrio's Puerto Ricans indulge in a manner of communicating that alternates borrowing and very intense code-switching, single phrases, and longer stretches of expression in both languages in order to reach varying discourse aims (44-49).

The language used in those islands is a true reflection of the process that the people had to go through to arrive to what they are today. The emergence of a hybrid language refers to double identities of the islands as it could refer also to the beginning of the emergence of a new third identity that would make culture identifiable among the rest of nations who went through the same process.

2.5.2. Religion and Beliefs

Puerto Rico has a population of 3.1 million. Although there are several online religious studies on Puerto Rico, there is no agreement as to how many Puerto Ricans adhere to each faith. Nevertheless, the overall trend reveals that about 80 % of the population is Roman Catholic, even though they are not very active in religious attendance at church services. About 15 % adhere to the Evangelical Lutheran religions²: Pentecostals³, Methodists⁴, Presbyterians⁵, Mormons⁶, and Jehovah's Witnesses⁷, among others. Approximately 2 % of the population is non-religious. The remaining 3 % are individuals belonging to religions in smaller numbers, such as Islam and Judaism (Vidal 122).

Catholicism is the primary component of Puerto Rico's popular religious tradition. Unlike the religions of Native Americans, in places like Mexico and Peru which had a fairly large population and a high degree of society that guaranteed ethnic and cultural longevity, Puerto Rico lost a great deal of their native population due to diseases and hard labor in the

Spanish mines. The Native American element is therefore not present in Puerto Rico except as a strain in a racially mixed people, and its influence in the island's religious practices is not easy to determine. However, importing black slaves to labor in the sugar plantations caused the other significant element in the Puerto Rican community. Since the slave population was focused mainly in specific areas notably in the coastal plain which was ideal for such plantations (Vidal 123).

For several factors, this black population in Puerto Rico was culturally assimilated to a larger extent than elsewhere in the Caribbean. Although it has made a major contribution to Puerto Rican culture in the fields of literature, music, social ideology, and lifestyles as the expansion of the demographic mass in Puerto Rico could be related to their faith and belief in Catholicism that forbids birth control and abortion. However, not all this created a distinct Afro-Puerto Rican ethic, except in some places of exceptionally high concentration, nor did it maintain the African religion in a syncretized form with Catholicism, as happened in Cuba (Vidal 124).

2.6. The Puerto Rican Identity

Puerto Rico is not a state, nor an independent nation, but still it has its own history, language, territory, culture and autonomy. More importantly, people do have the awareness of being separate from other nations in the world, including the United States. So, what does it mean to be Puerto Rican?

For over five centuries, the people of the island have struggled to answer that question. Nowadays, American citizenship links Puerto Ricans to the United States on paper, but culture and history separate the two. The US citizenship provides Puerto Ricans access to many things such as a strong currency and a strong passport. Puerto Ricans, however, believe that their ethnic identity remains present. Hence, the result was an ongoing contradiction or an identity conflict.

2.6.1. Defining Identity Conflict

In order to deal with the issue of identity conflict in Puerto Rico, one must first identify the meaning of each term. In fact, finding a straightforward definition to the term ‘Identity’ has turned to be a painstaking undertaking. “Identity can be described as the entirety of how we as individuals view or perceive ourselves as unique from others” (“Cultural Identity” 3). In his article “Language and Identity,” Bonny Norton identifies identity, as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and the person understands possibilities for the future” (5). In other words, identity comprises a sense of shared values and feelings of belonging to one group rather than the other.

Since Puerto Rico is dealt with as a society, another term that is essential to define is ‘social identity’. Social identity refers to individuals’ perception of who they are based on multiple sources such as nationality, gender, ethnicity, social class, and community. Social identity is what links a certain group of people together and differentiates them from other groups (Woodward qtd. in Ennaji 23). Put differently, social identity is individuals’ sense of who they are based on the group they belong to.

Additionally, “Identity conflict” is a term used to describe troubles one encounters in relation with his belonging to one group. According to Merriam Webster’s dictionary, identity conflict (crisis) means “a state of confusion in an institution or organization regarding its nature or direction.” Another definition by Cambridge dictionary is “a feeling of being uncertain about who or what you are.” In her book *Identity and Difference*, Kathryn Woodward affirms that an identity crisis is caused when new changes; either politically, economically, or socially, have destructed previous and stable values (1). Put differently, identity conflict refers to a feeling of confusion and uncertainty about one’s self and about where one belongs.

2.6.1.1. Contemporary Puerto Rican Identity

In terms of nationhood, Puerto Ricans possess the requirements that entitle them to be a nation. In other words, Puerto Rico is a piece of land inhabited by a group of people who share the same history, language, and a common heritage. However, since the island has been colonized by different nations, its people do not always have a sense of a shared Puerto Rican identity.

In her book, *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics and Identity*, Nancy Morris states that it was only until the nineteenth century when Puerto Ricans developed their own unique identity. An identity where they did not reject their “Spanishness” but rather differentiated it from that of Spain. The landowners and the educated elite of the society initiated a project, which aimed to start a separate Puerto Rican identity. This sense of a separate unique identity from Spain was felt throughout all the Caribbean area leading to major independence movements. None of the pro-independence uprisings that took place in Puerto Rico succeeded in front of the Spanish military power. A pro-independence group, however, gathered up in New York to develop a separate Puerto Rican flag as a sign of aspiration. That flag still exists today and it represents and symbolizes the island of Puerto Rico and its people (21-22).

2.6.2. The Identity Conflict in Puerto Rico

Puerto Ricans are American citizens. They use US mails and US currency, benefit from US Social Security and US welfare, and have the US passport. Although they have their own language, flag, heritage, and culture, they cannot vote for their president. The result is an identity conflict that tears the people apart. In his book *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, Muḥammad Ennaji states that an identity conflict occurs if an individual “has many different identities that compete and sometimes contradict each other” (23).

Another definition was provided by Richard D. Trent in his article “Economic Development and Identity Conflict in Puerto Rico.” He noted that “An identity conflict may be defined operationally as the relation between culturally defined models of what men and women believe they should be and what they believe they are. The lower the degree of conformity between actual and ideal models, the greater is the identity conflict” (293). This is the case of many Puerto Ricans who feel guilty because they are more immersed in the American culture than in their own.

Colonized by the Spanish for more than 400 years, Puerto Ricans became “Spanish oriented”. In other words, they lived a Spanish life style and held Spanish values and characteristics. This includes a collectivist society that highly appreciates family ties; a patriarchal society that emphasizes the authority of males and the subordination of the females, and the prominence of major institutions such as the government and the Catholic Church as well as authoritarian figures such as the teachers, father figures and the police (Trent 294).

Later on, the United States colonized Puerto Rico bringing major changes to the island, politically, economically and most importantly culturally. Trent adds that the Americans inhabited the island spreading a value system that countered the Spanish one. This value system includes an individualistic society that values individual freedom and independence, Protestantism, sex selling, emphasis on money as a value and American “customs and fetishes (including dieting, health foods, racial prejudice, commercialization of sex, high-powered techniques of selling, rock and roll music, the twist, early bottle feeding of infants, etc...” (295). The contradiction between the American culture and the Hispanic culture caused a major clash of cultures in the Puerto Rican society resulting in an identity conflict that people still endure and suffer from until this day.

Pedro Malavet, in his book *America's Colony: The Political and Cultural Conflict Between the United States and Puerto Rico*, affirmed Trent's idea when he revealed that the Puerto Ricans' culture conflicts with what they are living in reality. He stressed that multicolonialism has resulted in the clash of cultures between two "large overseas nations", namely the Spanish culture and the Anglo-American culture (49). Spanish colonialism has effectively diminished the Taino, culture of the indigenous people, opening the way for the establishment of the new Spanish culture. Over time and as a result of slave trade, and inter-racial marriage with the native women and new settlers, Puerto Ricans developed their own and unique identity that is Spanish oriented but different from that of Spain (106). Today, Puerto Rico is a catholic, Spanish speaking society. Its culture is generally patriarchy, homophobic, xenophobic and sexist, contrasting with the American society that is generally Protestant, English speaking and tolerant (107).

Even though Puerto Rico witnessed several attempts of "Americanization" in the twentieth century through educational and legal action, the citizens of the island do not regard themselves as Americans. Puerto Ricans resisted United States' influence and held to their unique identity. This shows that, contrary to common belief, external pressure on a society can make its citizens hold to their identity even stronger (Morris 7).

To round up, Puerto Ricans have been colonized by two strong nations. Nonetheless, the island had witnessed remarkable changes throughout the past two centuries. Nowadays, the Puerto Rican culture reflects the influence of two colonial powers, the Anglo-American and the Spanish. The Hispanic and American values, which are opposing in nature, met in Puerto Rico resulting in a confusion of individual roles in the society and eventually in a persistent identity conflict.

2.6.3. Causes of the Identity Conflict

Puerto Rico has been a disjointed colonized tropical paradise for more than 500 years. It is this condition and its consequences that has shaped the identity, culture, religious beliefs, traditions, and language of present-day Puerto Rican society. The actual identity conflict that the Puerto Rican society is suffering from is a result of many factors that changed the island over the years.

2.6.3.1. Operation Bootstrap

The factors that affected the Puerto Rican society include Operation Bootstrap, a strategy to develop and modernize Puerto Rico's economy that was put forward in 1947. This strategy had major changes on the culture of the island. Trent argued that despite the economic benefits that it brought to the Puerto Rican society; Operation Bootstrap is regarded as the cause of the shift in the Puerto Rican identity (298). Trent reckons that cheap labor and tax exemption attracted many investments. Similarly, the rapid development of the economy provided job for many citizens and increased per capita income. As previously mentioned, Puerto Rico is Hispanic oriented; the people relied on agriculture, spoke Spanish, lived in rural areas and are mostly catholic. The rapid industrialization of the island, however, introduced a different life style. People moved to urban areas, agriculture was replaced with industry, the towns were full with cars and supermarkets and middle and upper class of the society were Americanized (302).

2.6.3.2. The Issue of Language

Language not only expresses identities but it also constructs them. Morris, in her article "Language and Identity in Twentieth Century Puerto Rico", argues that language has been an issue in Puerto Rico ever since the United States took over in 1898. While Spanish remained the language of communication in Puerto Rico, its people held different feelings and positions

when it came to the English language because language has always been considered a symbol of identity (3).

After the United States domination, the assimilation process began with a reform of the educational system. The imposition of English as the language of instruction in schools started after the executive council passed the Official Languages Act in 1902. Teachers, students, and politicians met the latter with staunch resistance (Morris 5). This opposition was attributed to the fact that Puerto Ricans could not speak English very well, and consequently they received a bad general education. In addition, Puerto Ricans refused to drop their language that represents their culture and identity and confirms their distinctiveness from the United States. This practice, however, was officially modified in 1948, when English was required in schools only as a second language, and not as a language of instruction in all academic high school subjects (28).

Catherine M. Mazak conducted a study in which she observed and interviewed a sample of the Puerto Rican community living in a small town in the rural, central region of Puerto Rico called Ramona. She summarized her work in an article entitled “My Cousin Talks Bad Like You: Relationships Between Language and Identity in a Rural Puerto Rican Community”, in which she wrote that participants help different attitudes about the English language. Pedro and Migdaly are two kids who were part of the case study. Pedro said few sentences in English but received a snapping response from his friend Migdaly, “¡Si quieres hablar inglés, búscate un gringo!” [If you want to speak English, go find yourself a gringo!] Pedro ignored her. She continued, “¡Búscate un papel, escríbelo, y dilo!” [Go find some paper, write it, and then say it!]. Pedro finally turned to her and snapped back, “¡No soy tú, que no habla inglés!” [I’m not you who doesn’t speak English!]” (43-44).

Migdaly’s response shows the connection between the language and identity as she implicitly states that Puerto Ricans should not speak the English language among each other

and that it is a betrayal to the Puerto Rican identity. Another participant, a Puerto Rican who worked on the mainland, stated that he was almost attacked in a café by a group of Puerto Ricans for speaking English in public. This resistance of the English language by students and people in general is seen as an act of proving their Puerto Ricanness. In fact, English is seen as the language of technology and science. So, it “gave a particular prestige among adults in the community who occupied roles that were accompanied by a certain amount of community responsibility and accountability” (Mazak 50).

In short, considered as a cultural symbol, language is tightly related to the identity of Puerto Ricans. The latter, even though are American citizens, refuse the use of the English language in their daily communications as they see it as anti-Puerto Rican. This issue of language creates an identity conflict and more confusion especially for those who travel back and forth between the island and the mainland. These people find difficulty coping as they use the English language on the mainland but can face harsh response if they spoke English in Puerto Rico.

2.6.3.3. The Americanization Project

The Americanization project is an assimilation process whose aim is to make newcomers adopt the American social norms and values. This project targeted the immigrants who came into the United States from different parts of the world in order to integrate them into the American society. This project was similarly practiced on Puerto Ricans after the United States took control of the island. As already mentioned, Puerto Ricans welcomed US soldiers as liberators and hoped they would be integrated into the United States as another state. The Americans, conversely, regarded Puerto Ricans as uncivilized and barbarian people who cannot fit the American social standards.

For this reason, the assimilation process was launched in order to civilize the Puerto Rican society. The Americanization project began in 1900 with the aim to assimilate Puerto

Rico politically. The US Congress passed the Foraker Act of 1900, which is a federal law that established a civilian government on the island of Puerto Rico. Organized and ran by American citizens appointed by the US president, this civil government worked for the American benefit only. The economic assimilation followed the political one. This set up the dollar as the official currency and established a free market between the United States and Puerto Rico (Torres).

On the cultural side, American teachers were sent to teach in Puerto Rican schools after English became the language of instruction in public schools. In addition, Catholicism was replaced with Protestantism after the establishment of new Protestant churches on the demand of the US government. The most crucial Americanization act was the implementation of the US Citizenship in 1917. Granting Puerto Ricans an American citizenship had a major influence on their identity, especially men who were drafted into the US army to defend US land and values (Torres).

2.6.3.4. The United States Influence

The United States took control of Puerto Rico in 1898. Since that time, the island has been exposed to US influence. Morris asserted that Americanizing Puerto Rico is no longer “a political objective” because the commonwealth status led to more exposure to American values and culture. Since the United States has full control over the island, the presence of the American life style will outlast. This includes the post office, the court system, the park service, and the military.

A census, conducted in 1990 about the Puerto Rican identity, asked the interviewees about the United States influence on the island. For instance, a Puerto Rican taxi driver replied: “The most Puerto Rican thing that exists is the name. The customs and all the things from before, from my parents' time, don't exist anymore. Everything is Americanized” (qtd. in Morris 129).

Answers differed but the majority agreed that the presence of the US had had an effect on their identity and culture. The overall results about the US influence can be summarized in the response of the Commonwealth party interviewee:

This process has been imperceptible. Without realizing it, every day we are a little less Puerto Ricans and become more the North American prototype. And they have not imposed this by force, but rather through the way they bring us their culture—through communications, through jobs for which the applications are in English (Morris 131).

While the majority confirmed that the island is under US influence, different attitudes prevailed on whether that influence is positive or negative. Some argued that the American influence helped the island flourish economically and politically, bringing modern materials such as the TV and cars. While others argued that, the US influence ruined the foundation of the Puerto Rican society and its values (Morris 132).

Because the island has remained under US sovereignty for over a century, the American culture has had a lot of influence on the local culture of the Puerto Ricans. A great number of Puerto Ricans are aware that the US power and influence have led to major changes on the Puerto Rican society. Puerto Ricans, however, hold different opinions and attitudes on this issue. Some regard this influence as the cause of economic and political prosperity, while others regard it as a threat to the Puerto Rican values and culture.

2.6.4. Effects of the Identity Conflict

The conflicting values between the Hispanic culture and the Anglo-American culture had a major impact and effect on the life style and identity of the Puerto Ricans. Trent discussed the effects of the economic development brought by the Americans on the people of the island. He argued that the clash between the American and the Hispanic value system affected the psyche of the Puerto Ricans but more importantly, it impinged on “family values and

family pattern”. The majority of the middle and upper class were Americanized, this means that both parents went to work and left their children in the care of a baby sitter or a grandmother (304).

In addition, men were no longer the only provider in the household since women were able to get out of the shell of just being housewives and were able to get regular jobs in different institutions following the American model. This caused confusion in sexual roles with more women demanding to be equal to men and refuse to play the traditional social role in the house. Moreover, parents, especially in urban areas, lost their authority over their children and are generally confused on how to deal with them since new generations are becoming less dependent on their families. The loss of parental discipline directed the children toward a replacement. The youth, following the American teenagers, started to look up to celebrities from TV and media as role models of behavior on what is known as “peer culture” (Trent 305).

In the previously mentioned 1990 census, Morris asked the interviewees on how much they value US influence on their country. The commonwealth party interviewee depreciated the effects brought by the US arguing that Puerto Ricans were better before, stressing that values such as interdependence is replaced with individualism and the desire to obtain more materials. People became more like Americans and replaced their “human virtues” with “material comfort”. Another common wealth focus group devalued US presence expressing that Puerto Ricans lost their essential values such as “the concept of family” and this was the result of the clash between Hispanic and American customs (132).

Puerto Rico’s culture was largely influenced by its history. The blend of the Taino Indians’ culture with Spanish and African cultures and the subsequent impact of the political and social exchange between the United States and Puerto Rico on every aspect of life, all gave birth to a melting pot of peoples and traditions. Spanish and English are the official

languages, but despite US government attempts to eliminate Spanish or, at least, encourage bilingualism; Puerto Rico is still predominantly Spanish speaking.

The Taíno influence is obvious on the language beside the code mixing and switching between English and Spanish due to the American influence. The people of the Island are very distinct compared to surrounding countries and islands. They have this kind of uniqueness in their life style that resembles a blend between what they have reshaped in a new distinctive way from any other be it in religious practices, traditions, standards of living and the social life, which effected their political culture and identity.

Puerto Ricans are aware of the identity conflict. The clash between the Hispanic and the American culture is evident, especially when it comes to family values. More people are affected by US customs such as individualism and gender equality resulting in a visible confusion in social and sexual roles. Parents no longer know how to raise their children and youth are looking at celebrities as role models to fill that void. In addition, some Puerto Ricans follow the American model of obtaining materials for happiness and neglect their human virtues. The effects of this identity conflict tore apart the youth between being modern and follow the American life style, or stick to traditions and maintain the Puerto Rican values.

Endnotes

¹ Orishas are spirits sent by higher divinities for the guidance of all creation and of humanity in particular any of the deities of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria (Brandon, "Orisha").

² The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with about 4 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations across the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands ("American Evangelical Lutheran Church").

³ Pentecostals are charismatic religious movement that gave rise to a number of Protestant churches in the United States in the 20th century (Bainton, "Protestantism").

⁴ Methodist Church, in the United States, a major Protestant church formed in 1968 in Dallas, Texas, by the union of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren ("Wesleyan Church").

⁵ Presbyterianism is the name given to one of the groups of ecclesiastical bodies that represent the features of Protestantism emphasized by French lawyer John Calvin (1509-1564) (McHugh, "Presbyterianism").

⁶ Mormons, also called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are a religious and cultural group related to Mormonism, the principal branch of the Latter-Day Saint movement of Restorationist Christianity, initiated by Joseph Smith in upstate New York during the 1820s (Harris, "Mormons").

⁷ Jehovah's Witnesses are an outgrowth of the International Bible Students Association, which was founded in 1872 in Pittsburgh by Charles Taze Russell (Melton, "Jehovah's Witness").

Chapter Three

The Three Political Options for Puerto Ricans

Puerto Rico has been facing a political indeterminate state for centuries. While, in the twenty first century, independence and self-government is the norm, Puerto Rico still struggles to define its political status. Under the Constitution of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico is described as a Commonwealth or an unincorporated territory to the United States and Puerto Ricans have a degree of administrative autonomy similar to that of any US state. The nature of Puerto Rico's political relationship with the United States is the subject of an ongoing debate in Puerto Rico, in the United States, the United Nations and the International Community, with all major political parties in the Island calling it a colonial relationship.

Policymakers in the United States, however, say that once Puerto Ricans decide their political future, they shall receive US support. Different referendums on the political status were held in Puerto Rico. The referendum had three options: becoming a state of the United States, independence/free association, or maintaining the current territorial status. Puerto Rico, nevertheless, still struggles with this political crisis and people are losing hope over time.

3.1. The Political Life of Puerto Rico under United States Control

The politics of Puerto Rico takes place in the framework of a democratic republic form of government that is under the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the United States as an organized unincorporated territory. Since the 1898 invasion of Puerto Rico by the United States during the Spanish–American War, politics in Puerto Rico have been significantly shaped by its status as a territory of the United States. Flores comments that after the Spanish-American war, the United States appointed a military government in Puerto Rico. The military governors took power from the Spanish colonial leaders as well as from the elected native

Puerto Ricans. New officers were appointed and the American Flag replaced the Spanish flag (76).

Flores argues that the military officers practiced an authoritarian regime. They curbed on freedom of the press as well as threatened and censored whoever dared to criticize the government or report on strikes. In other words, the US wanted to portray to the world that there was a “peaceful transfer of power”. In the US mainland, opinions differed and a debate raised on whether the sovereignty over Puerto Rico is legitimate and legal. On one hand, Expansionists argued that Puerto Ricans did not help defeat the Spanish as they were “passive” of their future and US did not owe them anything. On the other hand, anti-expansionists argued that taking a land by force is against the constitution and that any act besides statehood or independence is illegal (77).

Besides, US policymakers did not favor statehood as they argued that Puerto Ricans could not “fit” the American standards, because they were not “civilized” enough. The same argument was used to prevent Puerto Ricans from getting self-governance. American officials claimed that Puerto Ricans were not educated enough or have the adequate democratic experience to govern themselves (Flores 78). The United States freed Puerto Rico from the Spanish based on the idea that colonialism is unjust just to colonize it again.

The Military government ended with the implementation of the Foraker Act in 1900 also known as the Organic Act and the institution of a civilian government, which included an executive council, house of legislature, and a supreme court appointed by the US president under the supervision of a civilian governor named Charles Allen¹. It was not until 1904 when the US government appointed a non-voting delegate in the House of Representative to represent the Puerto Rican people (“Foraker Act or Organic Act of 1900...”).

Luis Munoz Rivera who was a Puerto Rican poet, journalist, politician, and a leading autonomist initiated the first step, toward the future political determination of Puerto Rico. He

suggested a referendum for the people to decide their destiny. Sadly, he died without achieving this goal. The political situation in Puerto Rico improved with the declaration of the Jones Act in 1916². This act allowed the election of the two chambers of the legislative body by popular vote. In addition, it granted Puerto Ricans the American citizenship. The pro citizenship members in the US Congress argued that this step could “help to silence the independence movement”, others argued that it would help calm the labor strikes. Meanwhile, Puerto Rican political leaders argued that US citizenship would be considered as a restriction if Puerto Ricans wanted independence. Still, others argued that granting Puerto Ricans US citizenship was only meant to legitimize drafting them to take part in WW1 (Flores 82).

The period from 1944 to 1948 was a crucial one to the country. Luis Muñoz Marín, president of the Puerto Rican Senate, wanted to improve the economic conditions on the Island. He proposed a new political plan where Puerto Rico would be neither a state nor a free country, but rather what he called ‘Estado Libre Asociado’ or a free-associated state. He drafted a new constitution for the island, which was approved by the majority of the voters (Lopez 62).

Eventually, the US Congress approved the constitution, which enacted the Public Law 81-600 on July 25, 1952 allowing internal self-rule. The United States refused to use the term free associated state and changed it with “the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico” and Luis Muñoz Marín became the first elected governor in the history of Puerto Rico. The majority of Puerto Ricans were content with the new political status because it allowed them to benefit economically from the United States without losing their culture and “national identity” (Lopez 63).

Gándara-Sánchez reports that Muñoz Marín promised Puerto Ricans that the commonwealth status would not be permanent but rather a temporary solution to improve the economic circumstances until the Puerto Rican people decide their political future in a

democratic manner. After the commonwealth status was officially established, politicians in Puerto Rico split into three groups based on the political status they advocate: independence, commonwealth, or statehood. Nowadays, the government of Puerto Rico is a republican form of government with separation of powers, subject to the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the United States. Structurally, the government is composed of three branches: the executive, which is headed by the governor, the legislative that consists of two chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives; whose members are elected by the people through a direct vote, and the judicial branch (“Puerto Rico’s Government Structure”). Each branch is under the service of the Puerto Rican citizens.

Jose Javier Colon Morera and others affirmed Morris’ idea in their article “The United States Congress and the Puerto Rican Political Status Question: A Report from the Field”. They argued that Puerto Rican political leaders chose the commonwealth status solely for economic purposes, planning that in the future either independence or statehood would be the final solution. This plan, however, did not help Puerto Ricans reach the economic development they aspired for, and this resulted in a distressing “political stagnation” (364).

Puerto Rico’s political life under the US rule went through a lot of change. The military rule put the people under harsh conditions. With time, however, the political life continued to improve. In 1900, the US Congress established a civilian government on the island with the mission to put into practice the Foraker Act, which established an executive council consisting of a presidentially appointed civilian governor and various department heads. In addition, the Jones Act of 1916 also extended US citizenship to Puerto Ricans. Moreover, major governmental changes included establishing a three-branch government similar to the one on the mainland.

3.2. The Political Dilemma

The format of the government of Puerto Rico is the result of the diversity in the political life of Puerto Rico and the distinguished political culture on the islands. The political uncertainty created by the Foraker Act of 1900 and the relationship with the United States failed to address questions of stability and sovereignty and established the essence of the policy and partnership between the two countries throughout the twentieth century. This hesitation compelled local political parties and local academics to find three key ways out of the prevailing chaos (García-Passalacqua 156).

3.2.1. What is Political Culture?

Political culture is, inherently, a strong and unifying principle in political science. Almond and Powell suggest that “Political culture may provide us with a valuable conceptual tool employing which we can bridge the 'micro-macro' gap in political theory... the patterns of orientations to political action helps us connect individual tendencies to system characteristics” (51-52). Culture, similar to political culture, often surpasses the individual, though not to the degree that it fully negates human behavior.

Chilton comments that people are socialized by their society, but they have also created and replicated it. The culture was often known to constrain the institutional system by being similar to it. The political culture is famous for constraining institutional processes, without being similar to them: only those processes could suit a given culture, but the unforeseen effects of the structures could change the culture that created those institutional processes (419).

3.2.2. Political Culture in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico has a political characteristic that challenges its people and deals with their reality. Puerto Rico is characterized by broad political engagement, especially in elections, in all social sectors. This mass mobilization is taking place in the sense of a lack of trust among

Puerto Ricans in the political institutions, which create an interesting paradox. Mobilization shows, however, that more and more voters make personal assessments of candidates based on family continuity and personal interests and ties rather than trust in the parties. Another paradox is that Puerto Rico's political climate is characterized by empathy for social inequality while at the same time evaluating the state's human freedoms and social services, such as education, health care, housing, defense, and labor (Gándara-Sánchez, "Puerto Rican Political Culture").

The emphasis put on welfare state policies is characteristic of underdeveloped societies, which gives importance to the quality of primary public services. However, this political culture also displays the features of developed nations, where the populist tradition sees social stability as an effective means of achieving individual wealth. This shift between reliance on the welfare state social care, on the one hand, and ambitions for social stability, on the other, causes uncertainty in the political culture of Puerto Rico. The short-term and long-term consequences of this confused and unpredictable image are impossible to foresee in terms of political membership patterns, voting actions, and the possible potential of democratic growth in the eventual institutional development in Puerto Rico (Gándara-Sánchez, "Puerto Rican Political Culture").

Puerto Rican political culture is the result of unfinished and unresolved problems that the public has with their representation and the undecided status of the nation in the world. Nevertheless, these issues did not manage to turn down the public fighting spirit and commitment, as they preserve it, to themselves and to their nation and islands, as it is still proved with every election's participation. The Puerto Ricans show their awareness in solving this dilemma in the most democratic way available for them as a nation. That spirit can explain the paradox happening on the island, the people believe that participating in the political life has far more impact on the future generations than it has on the present.

3.3. Puerto Rico's Political Parties Development

One of the established values of political science is that the development of political parties reveals the frequently changing relations of class and industrial and/or political interests. The expression of political principles in party programs becomes, therefore, the real manifestation of economic interests and political ideals. The history of political parties in Puerto Rico illustrates well these principles. The swift split with Spanish traditions, together with the recent political and industrial opportunities afforded under American rule, served to explain the impetus behind the development of political parties in Porto Rico. These parties practice their duties based on clientelist, personalistic, and totalitarian values (Gándara Sánchez, "Puerto Rico's Government Structure").

Anderson points out that Puerto Rican political parties in have been formed in the sense of a democratic electoral structure and a rapidly growing network of public participation throughout the years. Many acts, such as the Foraker Act and the Jones Act, helped in paving the way for these political parties to emerge (Anderson 1-6).

3.3.1. Major Early Political Parties (1898-1938)

The basic essence of the political parties rests on the history and political tradition of the countries in which they function. The party system in Puerto Rico developed around three main parties, each standing for one position alternative. The Popular Democratic Party (PPD) supports Commonwealth and better autonomy. The New Progressive Party (PNP) promotes Puerto Rico's admission to the United States as a state. The Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) struggles for the independence of Puerto Rico.

3.3.1.1. The Puerto Rican Republican Party (1898–1932)

As previously mentioned, after the end of the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rico was settled as a colony of the United States. At that point, the former Spanish colonial era parties that operated in Puerto Rico were compelled to reposition and redefine themselves, despite

the then political environment generated by the change of government. On July 4th, 1899, Dr. José Celso Barbosa³ founded a political party with an agenda of annexation to the United States and renamed it Partido Republicano Puertorriqueño (RPP). This new party advocated entering the United States as a federated entity, that is to say a State. Its social objectives were to support women's rights, entrepreneurship, universal healthcare and education (Felipe).

The support of massive business, such as the sugar companies, enormously empowered the RPP. After all, it was just a link of interests when it started as a party. The republicans built themselves upon American principles with few of the principles they used against the Spanish rule (Rowe 356). The RPP won the election in 1900 and again in 1902. The new government of Puerto Rico, constituted under the Foraker Act of 1900, composed of the House of Representatives, directly chosen by the electorate and the cabinet selected by the Governor and the President of the United States became the basis of the Senate. This led them to have a strong hold on the island politically speaking at that time (Nolla-Acosta 19-20). The support of the Republican Defense Committee better known as "Turbas"⁴ physically attacked the supporters of Muñoz Rivera's Partido Federal the only opposition at the time (Ayala 53-54).

3.3.1.2. The Union Party (1904–1932)

The Union Party of Puerto Rico (UPPR) was born following a coalition between dissident leaders of the RPP and the Federal Party (FP). Initially, it endorsed the 'catch-all' policy of freedom, statehood and sovereignty and was firmly in favor of amending the Foraker Act of 1900 to provide a greater degree of self-government. Eventually, the removal of statehood from the agenda in 1912 came as a serious disagreement inside the UPPR in 1915. The leaders of the party disagreed on the party's underlying principle: Should it push for commonwealth or demand independence? Félix Córdova Dávila⁵ preferred autonomy, while Muñoz Rivera opted for independence. Jose De Diego⁶ was the one who wanted

independence, however, he could reason to autonomy in the case of the impossibility of the first. In addition to that, they had an annexationist wing, led by Marcín Travieso⁷ and Juan B. Huyke, the interim Governor of Puerto Rico among others (Ayala 57).

Some of the members kept the party and fully embraced independence in 1922, to become a self-governing sovereignty ("Political Parties of Puerto Rico..."). They rejected the mainstream in Washington for Statehood as it was the case with the RPP, and opted for independence and to have a sovereign nation through gradual reforms within the relation of non-incorporation or as known as "autonomism". This made Puerto Rico become dominated by two parties, the RPP and the UPPR, which did not challenge the limits of the relation of non-incorporation imposed on them in 1900 (Ayala 53).

3.3.2. Major Contemporary Political Parties, 1938 Onward

Puerto Rico has three major parties, each advocating a separate political position for the island. The two main parties are the Popular Democratic Party (PDP), which supports the preservation of the commonwealth status, and the New Progressive Party (NPP), which favors statehood in the United States. Together, these two parties have, since the late 20th century, dominated nearly every vote in elections. Around 5 % of the population supports the Puerto Rican Independence Party (IP), which received one-fifth of the vote in 1952 and that was the highest percentage this party received (Mathews).

3.3.2.1. The Popular Democratic Party (1938-to the Present)

Led by Luis Muñoz Marin, the Popular Democratic Party (PDP) was a major proponent of a number of social and economic changes in the 1930s and 1940s. It backed the creation of the 'Estado Libre Asociado' that is the Free Affiliated State in 1952, and subsequently promoted autonomy in the commonwealth status. It became the dominant party on the island between the 1940s and the late 1960s ("Political Parties of Puerto Rico..."). However, the

Commonwealth was not the first party policy as it focused and intended to become a full independence movement since 1938 until 1945 (Martínez 105).

The PPD helped to change the diplomatic relationship of the island with the United States, which led President Truman to sign the Puerto Rico Commonwealth Bill, on October 1950. This allowed the citizens of the island to create their own constitution. Today, the PDP, which identifies itself as a liberal centralist party, holds a great share of the political platform in Puerto Rico as one of the major two parties on the islands as it occupies seven seats in the Senate and fifteen in the House of Representatives (Mathews). Their political presence was noticed in every election or referendum on the islands, which explains its position as one of the oldest and the longest serving party in the history of Puerto Rico.

3.2.2.2. The Puerto Rican Independence Party, 1946-Onward

In 1943, a non-partisan pro-independence Congress of Puerto Rico petitioned the USA for independence under the leadership of Luis Muñoz Marin. However, the United States used the situation of WWII and the ensuing Cold War to grab even stronger on the Caribbean and Puerto Rican pro-independence government. The federal government planned to remove all pro-independence members of the PDP with the help of Luis Muñoz Marin, while putting a lot of them in jail. In February 1945, the PDP expelled independentists from its ranks. This repression led to the creation of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) in October 1946, which became the largest opposition party (Martínez 105).

The PIP is known for its past of violence as Simplicio says, in his book *La Vida*: “What they (independentists) want is a republic, which means that if you're a bad governor they'll get you out without an election or anything, but with bullets” (qtd. Johnson 235). This led to many issues of the party with the federal government and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The party, however, participated and led many anti-war movements such as the one against the war in Iraq in 2004 when they demanded the American government to stop this

war and stop drafting Puerto Rican youth to the army to participate in the war (*The Progressive Editors*).

Johnson explains that the independence movement never had an easy welcome, ever since the first days of the US existence on the islands. He quotes Maldonado Denis⁸ who compared the bitter 1920s, when Governor E. Mont Reilly of Puerto Rico purged independence from all political positions to the 1940s, when FBI agents at the beginning seemed to “investigate everything” particularly during the Second World War because the Puerto Rican bases were strategically close to the Panama Canal, where German threats were placed (233).

3.3.2.3. The New Progressive Party (1967 to the Present)

The New Progressive Party (NPP) was the product of the statehood’s parallel division movement, caused by the referendum status in 1967. The majority of the leadership had decided to postpone the ballot. The party led by Ferre disagreed. He ordered to participate in the plebiscite and they formed Estadistas Unidos (the United Statemen). The group became the NPP nucleus (Ayala 225).

In 1967, the Statehood alternative led by longtime republican Luis Ferre achieved 39% of the votes casted on July 25th, which was very admirable and new to the political scene at the time. This made the way for a new political party under the name of the New Progressive Party (NPP). In 1968, this party gave the governorship to Ferre to be a Statehood oriented party for the first time in the history of the island. The NPP had a vicious competition for that seat with the PDP; creating a close tight two-party system over the years with an exchange between the two each election (Anderson 13).

The NPP was able to leverage the fact that the living standard of Puerto Ricans was both higher than that of neighboring independent nations, which proved a claim against

independence, and smaller than that of even the poorest union members which allowed an alliance of Statehood with increased quality of life (Ayala 226).

3.4. Political Status Referendums in Puerto Rico

As previously mentioned, Puerto Rico became a colony of the United States in 1898. The territory is described as a commonwealth of the United States. Scholars have debated whether this status title has a legal significance. Residents of the island are US citizens, but they cannot elect federal representatives with voting privileges or the President. For that reason, Puerto Rico has been in a political flux. The United States government declared that the political future of the island is in the hands of Puerto Ricans, whether they desire statehood, independence, or commonwealth. That is why the matter was taken to the voting booth on what is known as the political status referendum.

3.4.1. Referendum Definition

According to Washington Secretary of State's official website, referendums are electoral devices by which voters may express their wishes, that is to say accept or reject, with regard to government policy or proposed legislation. In other words, this process allows citizens or voters to give their point of view on a proposed law. Another definition by the Cambridge dictionary is "a vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion about or decide an important political or social question".

3.4.2. Background

R. Sam Garret observed in his report, *Political Status of Puerto Rico: Brief Background and Recent Developments for Congress*, that since the US Congress declared Puerto Rico as a commonwealth in 1952, the political status have not changed. This political inertia was not part of the plan because the commonwealth status was not supposed to be permanent but rather a temporary solution that should be followed by independence or statehood as natural steps (5).

The use of the term “commonwealth” has been subject to debate among many scholars and historians. Some argue that the commonwealth status is a form of “unique recognition” that is internationally recognized, while others argue that the commonwealth status is illegal and does not hold any political significance but rather is a historical term. Whatever the case, Puerto Rico cannot remain in the current political status and must move forward to achieve a more democratic position (Garret 5). The change of the political status of Puerto Rico is in the hands of the US Congress.

Morera et al. assert that the political status has been subject to debate since the 1950s. The political leaders of Puerto Rico have been significantly invested in the division between those who desire independence, statehood, or the current commonwealth status. For that reason, the United States government, following the international norms, should allow the people of the island to decide their political future and support their right to self-determination (4).

In his article “The Politics of Puerto Rico's Plebiscite,” Edgardo Meléndez notes that it is “ludicrous” to believe that the Puerto Rican political leaders initiate the plebiscite or referendum process, but rather it is proposed, planned, and controlled by US decision makers to guarantee their interests in Puerto Rico. Since the island is an unincorporated territory to the United States, Congress has full power to decide its political future with or without a plebiscite (120).

The US government made this process to solely show to the world that Puerto Ricans have the right to self-determination and that the US is following the international laws declared by the United Nations. In addition, the three major political parties have little to no saying in the plebiscite process or the options from which Puerto Ricans have to choose. In fact, the party participants were given a certain amount of money to promote the idea that Puerto Ricans are exercising their right of self-determination (Meléndez 121).

3.4.3. The 1967 Political Status Referendum

The first political status referendum was held in Puerto Rico on July 23rd, 1967. Voters were given the choice between being a Commonwealth, Statehood or Independence. The majority of voters living on the island voted for the Commonwealth status, with a voter turnout of 60 %. At that time, the ruling party was the Popular Democratic Party (PDP) with Roberto Sánchez Vilella and as a governor. As a pro-independence party, the Puerto Rico Statehood Republican Party boycotted the referendum. The reason advanced for the victory of the commonwealth option was that Puerto Rican citizens were content with their government as the living standards improved and the economic circumstances got better after the improvement of the relationship with Washington. Few people cared about not being able to vote for the presidential elections and were content with their ability to vote for the governor and legislature solely (Flores 102).

In 1962, the PDP suggested a plebiscite on the US Congress, which was eventually rejected. The plebiscite bill presented to the US congress demanded more autonomy to the commonwealth but also demanded more integration in the US politics which was conflicting and contradicting. Later on, a commission was held with the cooperation of members of the Congress and few members of the Puerto Rican parties to discuss Puerto Rico political status issue. In 1965, a public hearing was organized and a year later, a report was submitted. This rapport discussed Puerto Rico's political status and suggested a plebiscite. In 1967, the plebiscite was held and the PDP won with a total of 60 % of the votes for the commonwealth (Meléndez 129-130).

In brief, Puerto Rico held its first political status referendum in 1967. This referendum ended with the victory of the commonwealth status and affirmed the PDP commonwealth government. The reason behind the success of the commonwealth government is that the

living circumstances considerably improved and the majority were confident that this improvement would continue with the commonwealth status.

3.4.4. The 1993 Political Status Referendum

A referendum on the status of the island was held in Puerto Rico again on November 14th, 1993. Voters were given the choice between being a Commonwealth, a Statehood or Independence. This referendum was held by the pro-statehood governor. The results of the 1993 referendum were “mixed” and they reflected the disagreement of the Puerto Ricans on the future orientation of their nation. 48.8 % of voters voted for an “improved” Commonwealth status, 46.2 % voted for Statehood, and 4.4 % voted for Independence (Flores 112-13). However, since no political option reached 50 % of the vote, Puerto Rican political leaders could not use these results for further legal change.

In his article “Puerto Rico, the United States, and the 1993 Referendum on Political Status,” José O. Diaz illustrated that the 1993 referendum results pushed the pro-statehood to promote their political movement, while the independence supporters continued to argue that Puerto Rico has the full right to become an independent nation. Even if this referendum did not affect the political status of the island, it brought new changes. These changes included putting the focus on the Puerto Rican political dilemma on the US national news, which ultimately made the US public more aware and considerate of the issue (204).

These changes also made Puerto Ricans both on the island and on the mainland realize that the political status dilemma is complicated and far from being resolved. Moreover, the referendum turnouts embodied “a key set of statistics”: since the last referendum was held, support for statehood increased from 38.9 to 42 %, meanwhile support for commonwealth decreased from 60 to 49 %. These statistics showed that Puerto Ricans started to lean more toward the statehood option, and less satisfied or “disillusioned” with the commonwealth status (Diaz 206).

3.4.5. The 1998 Political Status Referendum

In their report, *The Results of the 1998 Puerto Rico Plebiscite*, to the members of the Committee on Resources; Chairman Don Young and senior democratic member George Miller observed that on January 23rd, 1997, Puerto Rico requested another political status referendum from the United States government to determine its political future. A petition was sent to the US Congress demanding the referendum sponsorship. By September 17th, 1998, both the Senate and the House of the Representatives supported the option of self-determination to Puerto Rico. However, the 105th Congress was postponed without consent on a final legislation that would permit a federally recognized self-determination process for Puerto Rico (5-8).

For that reason, Young and Miller added that the Puerto Rican local government held local elections based on local election laws on December 13th, 1998. The referendum gave the voters five options: statehood, independence, free association, being a territorial commonwealth, or none of the given options. 50.5 % of the voters voted for none of the above, 46.5 % voted for statehood, 2.5 % voted for independence, 0.3 % voted for the free association option, and 0.1 % voted for the Commonwealth (10).

Flores assumed that the journalists and the political experts of that that time argued that the 1998 political status referendum results were a way for the Puerto Rican voters to express their disappointment and dissatisfaction with the New Progressive Party's way of ruling. The people of the island did not appreciate the party attempts to transform public services into private ones such as the state-owned telephone company which caused a lot of strikes between 1997 and 1998 (113).

3.4.6. The 2012 Political Status Referendum

In his report, *Puerto Rico's Political Status and the 2012 Plebiscite: Background and Key Questions*, Garrett noted that the fourth political status referendum in Puerto Rico was

held on November 6th, 2012. That time the ballot was a little different from the previous ones. The voters were asked to answer two questions with “yes” or “no”. The first question was: whether they agreed to continue with Puerto Rico's territorial status. Regardless of their answers to the first question, they were also expected to answer the second question that says whether they preferred statehood, independence, or a “sovereign free-associated state”. Fifty four % of the voters said “no” to the first question. Concerning the answer to the second question, 61.2 % of voters supported statehood (5).

That was the first time in their history that Puerto Ricans voted in favor of statehood. However, since the results were approximate (54% voted “no” and 46% voted “yes”), Governor-elect Alejandro García Padilla, who had been critical of the process, said that the plebiscite was unfair and that it did not offer clear results. Therefore, he declared that the results were “inconclusive”. In addition, because there were almost 500,000 blank ballots, a situation which generated doubts about the vote’s political legitimacy and created doubt as to the voters’ true desire, Congress decided to ignore the vote. The House of Representatives provided funds for holding a fifth referendum in the future (Garrett 8).

Mariano Castillo reported, in the *CNN* newspaper article “Puerto Ricans Favor Statehood for First Time”, that even though the 2012 referendum results came with Statehood as the winning affiliation, no legal change can be made without the consent of the US Congress and that change was not “guaranteed”. He also argued that the reason behind the support of Statehood was the terrible economic circumstances, in addition to the mass immigration to the mainland and “shrinking of population”. Puerto Rico Secretary of State Kenneth McClintock declared, “I think people just came to realize that the current relationship simply does not create the number of jobs that we need”. In other words, Puerto Ricans reached a situation where they were dissatisfied with the political status due to bad economic circumstances and lack of job opportunities.

3.4.7. The 2017 Political Status Referendum

The last referendum on the political status of Puerto Rico was held on June 11th, 2017. Ricardo Rosselló Nevareshad became the governor in January 2017, and the New Progressive Party was the ruling party at that time. The initial ballot, which was proposed by the Puerto Rican legislature contained only two options: “statehood” and “Free association/independence”. The initial plebiscite ballot law also indicated that if “Free association/independence” option won the majority, another plebiscite would be held to decide between the two. The US Department of Justice, however, rejected this plebiscite and required the Puerto Rico government to add the “Commonwealth” status option in order to get the federal funding from Washington (Garret 10).

Even though Puerto Rico did not need the federal funding from the US, they agreed to add the status-quo option in order to gain the US support, which ultimately would give the plebiscite more legitimacy in the Congress. Therefore, the amended and the final plebiscite ballot contained three options: becoming a state of the United States, independence/free association, or maintaining the current territorial status. Those who voted overwhelmingly chose statehood by 97 %. The voter turnout, however, was 23%, a very low figure compared to previous referendums (Garret 11-12).

Frances Robles noted, in an article published in the *New York Times* under the title “23% of Puerto Ricans Vote in Referendum, 97% of them for Statehood”, that Puerto Rico faced one of the hardest times in its history after the economic 2014 crisis and which put the island on 70 billion dollars in debt. The governor of Puerto Rico Ricardo Rossello’s campaign was built on the idea of becoming a US state. He called for a referendum to solve the political status issue that he argues was behind the financial crisis. Even though Statehood won the majority of votes (97%), the US Congress did not endorse the results because the turnout was low.

Robles added that the reason behind the low turnout was that the opposition parties called for the boycott of the plebiscite. The purpose of the boycott was that the opposition asserted that the governing party had manipulated the language of the ballot in their favor. Another reason was that the title of the ballot “Plebiscite for the Immediate Decolonization of Puerto Rico” which openly avowed that Puerto Rico is a colony. The Popular Democratic Party (PPD) has historically rejected that notion. If the citizens of Puerto Rico had participated in the referendum, they claim, it would have meant that they had approved those claims implicitly, regardless of whether the assertions were true.

The 2017 referendum confirmed the pattern that Puerto Ricans are in favor of the statehood option. The political reaction over the situation of the current US administration and the island of Puerto Rico helped greatly. During a press conference, Donald Trump addressed Puerto Ricans as if they were a liability on the US government. He noted that the recovery effort for the island territory has "thrown our budget a little out of whack" following the devastation of Hurricane Maria (*CBS News*).

Trump's comments did not please the Puerto Rican public as they saw it as prejudicial and untrue when he said that Puerto Ricans are not doing enough to help themselves (“How Puerto Ricans See President...”). This brought the idea that, even as US Citizens, they could not vote for the one who will save them in times of need such as after Hurricane Maria. This discontent was shown in the response of Puerto Ricans on the mainland when it came to the Midterm elections of 2018. This movement was empowered by Puerto Ricans who moved after the hurricane to one of the major states such as Florida (*CBC News*: “The National...”).

The island’s only representative, Resident Commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez Colon, introduced to Congress another bill to establish one more plebiscite on the statehood status on the same day as the coming Presidential Elections of November 2020. The reason is to avoid the low participation rate like that of 2017 which was a separated from any general elections.

The suggested referendum will only include one question “Statehood? Yes or No”, said the Commissioner (Begnaud). This comes to prove the overwhelming passion for this option on the island in the last years, who firmly believe that it is time for Puerto Ricans to have the same status that both Alaska and Hawaii had in the 1950s.

3.5. Puerto Rico Compared to Similar Cases

There are similar cases of nations that went under US control in the same way as Puerto Rico, and approximately at the same period. These cases, however, had known a different outcome than the one of Puerto Rico. Each model represents one of the options presented to Puerto Rico, be it independence such as the one of the Philippines, the option ‘Statehood’ such as Alaska and Hawaii, or similarity in the status quo as that of Guam.

3.5.1. The Philippines’ Model: Independence

The Spanish colonized the Philippines, a large island archipelago situated off Southeast Asia, in the later part of the 16th century. After the end of the American-Spanish War, the Paris Treaty of 1898 enabled the US to take control over the Philippines’ islands. The latter received their independence from the United States in March 24th, 1934, after 36 years of domination (“History of The Philippines”). In a similar way to Puerto Rico, the Philippines remained under the US military with the beginning of the US presence.

Shirley Jenkins reports that this independence was the result of the enactment of the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 by the US Congress. This decision became the subject of many interpretations. Some viewed it as a fulfillment of the self-government promise from the US toward the islands, while others perceived it as simply changing the dependence status on the US from formal to informal (35).

Schirmer and Shalom add that lobbies from special interests’ groups and the Democratic Party pushed this decision to the floor and made sure it passed. This decision was in the benefit of the Federation of Labor due to the competition from the cheap Asian workforce that

was harming the farming industry on the mainland. The Tydings-McDuffie Act came with few provisos including an oversight and political and economic provisions. The Filipinos agreed to these requirements, believing this was the best-case scenario at hand for their country (Jenkins 36).

The Philippines started its commonwealth status that lasted from the Tydings-1935 McDuffie Act, officially known as the Independence Act, in 1935 until 1946 under the name of the Commonwealth of Philippines. During that time, the Pacific War⁹ took over and Japan invaded the archipelago in 1941 until its restoration by US troops alongside Filipino soldiers in 1945. It was granted independence by the United States on July 4th, 1946 as mentioned in the Tydings-McDuffie Act ("Tydings-Mcduffie Act...").

In view of all the historical and legal facts presented above, the case could reflect that of Puerto Rico in many ways. As the Filipino people never demanded this form of independence, actually there was a raising demand for statehood during the 1940s. The US Congress decided following domestic pressures to cut all ties with the archipelago because of economic threats while still holding to both political and economic benefits for ten more years before giving full independence.

This situation warned Puerto Rico that, at any time it might become a threat to domestic or mainland interests it would face the same destiny. This outcome could be realized with a single act of Congress, based on the property clause in the US Constitution, with no need to consult the people of the islands of Puerto Rico. As Simeon E. Baldwin observed: "it would be unwise to give the half-civilized Moros of the Philippines, or the ignorant and lawless brigands that infest Puerto Rico... the benefits of the Constitution" (qtd. In Gelpi 10). The difference that prevents Puerto Rico from having the same destiny is that the Philippines had a promise of independence from Washington, whereas Puerto Rico had no promise of upcoming change of status from the US Federal Government.

3.5.2. Hawaii's Pattern: Statehood

On August 21st, 1959, Hawaii became the 50th US state. Hawaii is a volcanic archipelago in the central Pacific Ocean. The islands are 3,857 km from the mainland of the United States. The state government system of Hawaii is unique among the US states. It is limited to two tiers of government: The State and the four counties, each with a mayor and council (Heckathorn).

The United States started its presence on the archipelago after the King of Hawaii Kamehameha III endured recurrent threats to his sovereignty from both the French and the British during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, the years that followed resulted in the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875, a free trade arrangement between the United States and Hawaii that would effectively protect US interests in Hawaii. The treaty was renewed in 1887, and Hawaii granted the United States exclusive rights to enter and establish a naval base at Pearl Harbor (Heckathorn).

Three years later, however, Congress abolished all duties on imported sugar and gave the mainland local farmers a bounty of two cents on each pound to prevent Hawaii from receiving any benefits from the Reciprocity Treaty. This action uncovered, ironically, that the US intention was the annexation of the Island as it made the Hawaiian people, especially the white settlers, know that annexation is the life line for the archipelago (Bell 20).

The US annexation of the archipelago did not come until the birth of the Hawaiian republic after a rebellion against the new Queen in 1893, and the Japanese threats from the west to annex the archipelago. In 1896, under the presidency of McKinley and a republican dominated Congress, US officials moved fast and control the situation in Hawaii by issuing the Annexation Act in 1897. After the American-Spanish War and the battle of Manila in the Philippines, the annexation was welcomed by the ruling white class on the islands, and two

years later Congress declared it an 'Incorporated Territory' which paved the way for statehood (Bell 28-34).

After the addition of New Mexico and Arizona to the Union in 1901, only Alaska and Hawaii remained 'incorporated territories.' It was until 1919, that the representative of Hawaii presented the first bill to make the islands a member of the union as a state, followed by another one in 1920, both bills died at the committee of the territories. The Statehood was granted to Alaska in 1950 but not to Hawaii out of fear of the immigration of the Japanese and Hawaiian nationals to the mainland. Those two ethnic groups represented about 70 % versus the 30 % whites of the population of the islands (Bell 40-45).

It was not until 1958 that statehood became a real option for Hawaii. This allowed a referendum to take place with two options 'Yes, for statehood' or 'No, for statehood'. The results were 87 % of the votes for the first option with a participation rate of 88 % of the registered voters. This Plebiscite drove the US Congress to pass the statehood bill on March 1959 (Bell 285-291).

The Hawaiian experience is nearly identical to the Puerto Rican one, as both came under US control at the same time, which was in 1898. This scenario shed lights on the assumed similar reasons preventing Puerto Rico from incorporation and statehood. The reason that makes Hawaii different, considering treatment, from Puerto Rico is the existence of an imminent threat from a foreign power, the Empire of Japan at that time. They, nonetheless, share a reason that denied Statehood for both at a certain time; the massive none-white population that threatened the ethnographic balance of the United States.

This was the major reason to justify the rejection of the first two bills in 1919 and 1920. In this regard, US Representative James Beauchamp Clark of Missouri stated back then: "How can we endure our shame, when a Chinese Senator from Hawai'i with his pig-tail hanging down his back, with his pagan joss in his hand, shall rise from his curule chair and in

pidgin English proceed to chop logic with George Frisbie Hoar or Henry Cabot Lodge" (qtd. in Gelpi 13). This image of the people of Hawaii was expressed by the people who had the archipelago in their hands to prove and justify the delay of 50 years in the case of Hawaii and 122 years in the case of Puerto Rico.

3.5.3. Guam's Example: Unincorporated Territory

The organized, unincorporated territory of the United States, Guam, is the largest archipelago in Micronesia. It was controlled by the United States in 1898 by means of the requirements of the Treaty of Paris after the Spanish-American war, in the same way as Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Guam remained a military base for the US army to stop the German and Japanese forces in the Pacific during WWI, or to prevent its occupation by Japanese forces in 1941 until the US army retrieved the island by force in 1944. Guam was under a naval government until the issue of the Organic Act of 1950 was approved by the US Congress to give the inhabitants the American citizenship and an elected government (Blackford 167-172).

Statham points out that in response to persistent US government negligence of the island's concerns, the local leaders were inspired by the experience of Puerto Rico to obtain the commonwealth status. Since the 1980s and 1990s, Guam attempted to pursue the path to the commonwealth status. Statham hints to Roger¹⁰'s point that of Guam's demand for mutual consent and local control over immigration that blocked the commonwealth status pursuit due to their confederal¹¹ in nature, and therefore contradict US constitutional principles, which is obvious since that Guam's Chamorro (native people) leaders expected nothing less in their commonwealth negotiations. Interestingly, the US Constitution does not mention once in its text the term 'commonwealth' (101-102).

Guam has a lot in common with Puerto Rico as that United States chose these two territories to keep away from Spain, unlike the Philippines and Cuba, which were chosen for

their strategic location for military bases. Puerto Rico is the US takeoff point to protect the Panama Canal while Guam is the number one navy base of the US in the Pacific Ocean due to its position in Micronesia. This could explain why the Federal government and the US Congress did not make any serious move toward developing or changing the situation of these specific territories. Keeping these strategic locations under the federal government would ease the way for future protection; unlike when dealing with a state, which can cause a more complicated situation of jurisdiction between the state and the government.

To go over the main points of this chapter, Puerto Rico has been facing a political quandary for centuries. This dilemma began when the United States took control of Puerto Rico in 1898. It initially installed a military government, which ruled the local people by means of power and force. In 1900, the US Congress established a civilian government on the island under the Foraker Act, and in 1916, Puerto Ricans were given the US citizenship under the Jones Act. July 25, 1952 was a crucial date in the history of the island since it saw the establishment of the new constitution and the Commonwealth status as a temporary solution to improve economic circumstances. However, what was supposed to be a temporary solution is still going on until this day.

This situation effected the political life of the islands of Puerto Rico on so many levels. It defined the political identity and self-evaluation that Puerto Ricans started to identify themselves with these political attachments. This hesitation compelled local political parties and local academics to found three key ways out of the chaos. The unresolved situation was generate by US politicians to let the people of Puerto Rico at the center of an empty discussion trying to come to a final decision on their political identity and common destiny.

The political status has been subject to ongoing heated debate since the 1950s. The political leaders argued that the commonwealth status is not legal and should be followed by either independence or statehood. Dissatisfaction with the island's political status continued

and the United States had publicly supported Puerto Rico's right for self-determination. For that reason, referendums were held containing the options: maintaining the status quo of commonwealth, statehood, independence, or even free association with the United States.

Puerto Rico held five political status referendums over the years 1967, 1993, 1998, 2012, and 2017. The "Commonwealth" status received a sweeping victory in the 1967 and 1993 referendums. In 1998, the majority voted for "none of the above". However, the 2012 and 2017 referendums, the "statehood" option won the majority. These results, however, were not enough to make any legal change. The US Congress decided to ignore the votes because the results were inconclusive due to the low turnout and the large boycott to the election.

Other similar cases to the Puerto Rican question, such as that of the Philippines, Guam, and even Hawaii, show that the only way for change of status of any of these territories comes from within the United States government, not from the native people or local inhabitants because the US Constitution gives much power to Congress. Accordingly, this leads to the idea that if the United States government wishes to change the Status of Puerto Rico, it can do it without referring to any other political means, such as referendums or local elected representatives.

Endnotes

¹ Charles Allen the first civil Governor of Puerto Rico 1900-1902 (Aitken).

² The Jones Act gave Puerto Ricans US citizenship and separated the Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches of Puerto Rican government, provided civil rights to the individual, and created a locally elected bicameral legislature (Encyclopedia Britannica).

³ Dr. José Celso Barbosa was a medical doctor, sociologist, political leader. he was known as the “Father of the Statehood for Puerto Rico” movement. He founded the Puerto Rican Republican Party in 1899 (Barbosa, “The World of ...”).

⁴ Turbas are armed alt-republicans in Puerto Rico who organized the committee of defense of the Republican Party. They were known for their aggressive actions against the Federal party as they considered them “Anti-American” (Negrón-Portillo).

⁵ Puerto Rico's Resident Commissioner in the US Congress and later as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico (Dávila).

⁶ Jose De Diego is a Puerto Rican poet who entered politics as a co-founder of the Union Party with Muñoz Rivera. He fought for the independence of Puerto Rico and dreamed of creating a confederation between Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic (Diego, “The World of ...”).

⁷ Martín Travieso was a lawyer and a politician. He was a member of the Unionist Party from 1904 to 1931. During those years, he served as a member of the Executive Cabinet (1908-1914) and was the first Puerto Rican to serve as a Secretary of Puerto Rico and then provisional governor (1917). In 1931, he left the Unionist Party and became a member of the Puerto Rican Liberal Party (Travieso, “The World of ...”).

⁸ Maldonado Denis was an essayist, historian and Puerto Rican literary critic (Cano).

⁹ Pacific War, major theatre of World War II that covered a large portion of the Pacific Ocean, East Asia, and Southeast Asia, with significant engagements occurring as far south as northern Australia and as far north as the Aleutian Islands (“Pacific War...”).

¹⁰ Roger is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He is the author of numerous publications on international relations and the US territories.

¹¹ Confederal relating to, being or denoting a confederation of independent nations (Collins English Dictionary).

Conclusion

The present dissertation investigated and discussed Puerto Rico's identity conflict and its political predicament. Taken together, the three chapters provided a detailed discussion on the issue of the political status of Puerto Rico. Specifically, the work examined Puerto Rico from a historical, cultural, and a political side to provide a clear vision about how the political flux has pushed the people of the island into this triple crossroad identity conflict. The case of the island seems to come from a political background that extended to every other life domain. In their struggle to determine their political orientation, the people of Puerto Rico divided into three camps: those who wish to maintain the status quo, those who wish to become an independent nation, and those who wish to see Puerto Rico becoming the 51st state.

This study tackled the historical background of the island, which began with the settlement of sea travelers back in 2000 BC to the control of the island by the United States in 1898. It also dealt with the legal relationship with the United States, which entailed the examination of the different laws and acts that have linked the United States to Puerto Rico. It also discussed the legitimacy of the US existence and political and economic domination of Puerto Rico.

The research work also highlighted the Puerto Rican political situation by resorting to both the US constitution and international law. It addressed many facts about the islands' condition in relation to the commonwealth statues that gave the island few benefits such as US citizenship and US currency. It also engendered drawbacks since it denied Puerto Ricans access to many rights such as the right to vote in presidential elections or the right to elect representatives to the US Congress.

The dissertation also surveyed the Puerto Rican culture, pertinent to the people of the islands, women, family status, folklore, traditions, and sense of uniqueness, language, and

religion. It appeared that the Puerto Rican culture is a mixture between the culture of the Tainos, the Spanish, and the Africans with a significant American influence.

Puerto Rico has been a colonized island by two major powers. This is the reason why it is culturally diverse. This cultural diversity shaped the current identity conflict that the Puerto Rican society is suffering from. The clash between the Hispanic and the American cultures is evident. It resulted in a confusion of individual roles in the society. The reasons of this conflict were discussed in depth and were found to have deeply affected the political situation of the people of the islands as well as their culture and daily life.

The dissertation examined as well the political life of the island since the United States took sovereignty. The US government had full control over the political scene. It installed various governments and enacted various laws. Besides, the work explored and identified the main players within the Puerto Rican political scene. It also investigated the political options provided to the people of Puerto Rico and highlighted the increasing tendency toward to the choice of Statehood throughout the island's history. Similarly, it analyzed the results of the different referendums held on the island. In addition, it included various examples that reflected the three options offered to the people of the island.

The study concluded that the people of the island consider the statehood option as the political solution due to the growing number of voters and percentage of supporters. This option became more and more alluring to the public due to the benefits that would come with it. As previously mentioned, Puerto Ricans cannot vote in presidential elections, but individual Puerto Ricans do have the right to vote if they live on the mainland, Alaska, and Hawaii. Statehood would allow the Puerto Rican population to vote in all elections as the residents of the fifty states already do.

In addition, statehood might be useful as a means of dealing with economic depression, like the financial crisis that left the island in debt with 72 billion Dollars by 2017. Other

benefits of the statehood option include increased disability benefits and Medicaid funding as well as the higher minimum wage. Being part of the larger US economy automatically means being in a stronger economic position which would provide more jobs and more business investments.

However, being a state, in the US federal union, has certain drawbacks. Statehood for Puerto Rico would mean that its residents would have to pay federal income taxes. It also means that English would replace Spanish as the first language. It also means that Puerto Rico would lose its team in the Olympics and the Miss Universe Pageant, in which Puerto Ricans participate with great pride. Likewise, statehood entails to sacrifice elements of their culture in the process of assimilating to the American lifestyle. In general, many people are leaning toward the option of statehood because they are no longer satisfied with the commonwealth status. They have been suffering economically for years.

The work discussed Puerto Rico's history and cultural identity as well as the important questions that needed conclusive answers about the island's future. It highlighted the different options available to Puerto Ricans: independence, maintenance of the commonwealth, and statehood. It also examined the consequences of each.

This research also underlined the fundamental role that language played in forming Puerto Rico's national identity. Most Puerto Ricans claim that the Spanish language continues to be one of the principal emblems of their identity, and that the American citizenship is distinct from their national identity. In reality, they firmly believe that being Puerto Rican is tightly linked with speaking Spanish. Undoubtedly, for the Puerto Ricans the Spanish language is essential to preserving their cultural identity.

However, if they seek statehood, they have to understand that the English language is also essential to being an American. Because statehood is a permanent phase, the US Congress refused the integration of a large population with a different culture, and required

Puerto Rican voters to approve the statehood option with an overwhelming majority. The two most recent states admitted to the Federal Union, Alaska and Hawaii, accepted statehood by high margins that went beyond eighty percent in favor.

Finally, it is reasonable to say that this study came as another modest step in the efforts that tend to explain the situation of “the oldest colony in history”, in particular to Algerian students interested in the history of the United States. It leaves an open door for other studies to conduct further research about the political dilemma of Puerto Rico. Such works may lead an inquiry to identify the best preconditions to statehood that would amply satisfy the inhabitants of Puerto Rico, and at the same time preserve US benefits. Knowing that most of the EFL students, at least our classmates, ignore the history and political standing of Puerto Rico, one may assume that this study will cover this knowledge gap about the Puerto Rican cultural conflict and political identity problem.

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