

# The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Puerto Rico, Colonialism, and Citizenship

Franklin Rodriguez  
William Paterson University  
rodriguezfl@wpunj.edu

Richard Huizar  
William Paterson University  
huizarr@wpunj.edu

Spanish colonial negligence and US colonial indifference contributed to make the San Ciriaco hurricane a catastrophe without precedent at the end of the nineteenth century. The recent humanitarian crisis caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017 reveals that Puerto Rico has remained in a precarious situation ever since the San Ciriaco hit a hundred and twenty years ago. Even though Puerto Rico is not the same island, the essence of its political and economic foundations has changed very little. The result is a constant crisis mode, an archipelago stuck in the past, trapped on the darker side of the modern and colonial paradigm. Unable to resist violence and trauma caused by military dominance, economic domination, racial hierarchy, and cultural arrogance for more than a century, Puerto Rico faces the crisis caused by unstoppable behemoths of nature and the ongoing consequences from the exploitative effects of US colonial politics. It is in this context that this article discusses key dynamics of inclusion and exclusion and examines how political and economic policies between the two hurricanes expose the replication of practices that perpetuate a crisis mode in the Caribbean island.

**Keywords:** Puerto Rico, colonialism, citizenship

La negligencia colonial por parte de España y la indiferencia colonial por parte de los Estados Unidos contribuyeron a que el huracán de San Ciriaco a fines del siglo diecinueve se convirtiera en una catástrofe sin precedentes. La reciente crisis humanitaria creada por el huracán María en 2017 revela que Puerto Rico ha permanecido en una situación precaria desde el desastre en San Ciriaco hace ciento veinte años. Puerto Rico no es la misma isla de antes, pero la esencia de sus fundaciones políticas y económicas ha cambiado muy poco. El resultado es un estado constante de crisis en un archipiélago anclado en el pasado, atrapado en el lado más oscuro del paradigma colonial moderno. Incapaz de resistir la violencia y el trauma como consecuencia del dominio militar, el dominio económico, la jerarquía racial y la arrogancia cultural durante más de un siglo, Puerto Rico enfrenta la crisis causada por los imparable monstruos de la naturaleza y los efectos explotadores de la política colonial estadounidense. En este contexto presentamos las dinámicas clave de inclusión y exclusión y el análisis de cómo

las normas políticas y económicas vigentes entre los dos huracanes revelan la repetición de prácticas que perpetúan el estado de crisis en la isla caribeña.

**Palabras clave:** Puerto Rico, colonialismo, ciudadanía

Puerto Rico is just another West Indian island.

—C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*

## **Introduction: “From Sea to Shining Sea” and Beyond**

In the nineteenth century, a significant portion of the United States’ territorial expansion, economic development, and political power was a result of the Euro-American conquest of Spanish-speaking America. This includes not only westward expansion but also subsequent direct or indirect forms of intervention and colonialism in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Latin America thus has a long history of serving as a testing ground for US imperial designs.<sup>1</sup>

The Spanish-American War of 1898 is a key point of reference to reflect on American expansion—rooted in ideological, religious, economic, and military reasons—and an opportunity to highlight the case of Puerto Rico: “the oldest colony in the world” (Trías Monge 1997). The reasons for the war were numerous, but two stand out: political unrest in Cuba and strong US economic and geopolitical interests in Cuba and the neighboring island of Puerto Rico. In *The War of 1898* Louis A. Pérez discusses these reasons and the US involvement in detail: “All through the nineteenth century, successive policymakers shared a common view about the future disposition of Cuba. The central policy tenets were defined precisely in terms of national interests, driven by propositions that were perceived as pragmatic” (Pérez 1998, 50). Pérez emphasizes the problems with narratives of the war that suggest a higher moral purpose, idealism, and the nobility of the nation as the reasons behind US involvement: “Strategic interests and security, not sentiment, and matters of vital trade and commercial interests, not idealism, informed the dominant policy formulations of the nineteenth century. Policymakers contemplated the prospects of calamity and catastrophe associated with Cuban independence. These were propositions so deeply embedded in U.S. strategic thinking, so universally endorsed and commonly understood, that they passed as self-evident assumptions of U.S. policy” (Pérez 1998, 50–51).

---

<sup>1</sup> Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America: “From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, the U.S. military sharpened its fighting skills and developed its modern day organizational structure largely in constant conflict with Latin America—in its drive west when it occupied Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century and took more than half of that country’s national territory. And in its push south: by 1930, Washington had sent gunboats into Latin America ports over six thousand times, invaded Cuba, Mexico (again), Guatemala, Honduras, fought protracted guerrilla wars in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Haiti, annexed Puerto Rico, and taken a piece of Colombia to create both the Panamanian nation and the Panama Canal. For their part, American corporations and financial houses came to dominate the economies of Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America, as well as large parts of South America, apprenticing themselves in overseas expansion before they headed elsewhere, to Asia, Africa, and Europe”* (2010, 3).

After a secret meeting in January of 1898, US President William McKinley ordered an armored cruiser to set sail for Havana Harbor the same month. Soon after, the USS *Maine* dropped anchor close to the Morro Castle, symbol of Spanish colonial dominance in the region.<sup>2</sup> This decision dismissed the Monroe Doctrine, which was primarily understood as a warning to the Holy Alliance not to attempt a reconquest<sup>3</sup> and as a commitment by the US not to intervene or colonize recently liberated Latin American countries: “With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power, we have not interfered and shall not interfere” (President James Monroe cited in Holden and Zolov 2011, 15). However, the United States government dreamed of an overseas empire, and a pro-war faction that included future President Theodore Roosevelt, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge from Massachusetts, and other political allies led the way.

On February 15, 1898, the Battleship USS *Maine* exploded, thus triggering the war. Interestingly, in January of 1898, Senator Lodge wrote a message to a diplomat which predicted that explosion: “There may be an explosion any day in Cuba which would settle great many things. We have got a battleship in the harbor of Havana, and our fleet, which overmatches anything the Spanish have, is masked at the Dry Tortugas” (Atwood 2010, 102).<sup>4</sup> The explosion was followed by a newspaper campaign in which the owner of the *New York Journal*, William Randolph Hearst, became the third key member of the pro-war faction. Lodge was the Washington, DC, insider, Roosevelt was the public face of military power, and Hearst was the megaphone for their propaganda: “DESTRUCTION OF THE WAR SHIP MAINE WAS THE WORK OF AN ENEMY...” read the headline of the *New York Journal* on February 17 (Kinzer 2017, 33). The explosion became a conduit for a relentless pro-war campaign.

The United States and Spain then declared war on each other on April 24 and 25, 1898. Spain entered the war reluctantly, as it had little to gain and much to lose. The United States destroyed the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay in the Philippines on May 1, less than ten days after the war had begun, and the war in Cuba ended on July 16. Spain lost the remainder of its former empire and formally surrendered on August 12, 1898. The United States reported 224 casualties while the Spaniards’ totaled 3,429 (McPherson 2016, 43–44). The Treaty of Paris was signed on December 10, 1898 with no

---

<sup>2</sup> The message was clear: “we are watching,” but for President McKinley this was also a calming concession to the pro-war and pro-expansion groups that surrounded and intimidated him.

<sup>3</sup> The fragment quoted below comes from President James Monroe’s annual message to Congress on December 2, 1823: “The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America... We should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety” (Holden and Zolov 2011, 14–15). The Monroe Doctrine clearly warns that the US would oppose any attempt to reconquer or to transfer any remaining European colonies in the Americas—Cuba and Puerto Rico—to another European power.

<sup>4</sup> This statement was just one among many theories that developed in order to explain the suspicious explosion. Not everyone ran to blame Spain. There is no consensus about the causes of the explosion. The three competing explanations are still debated today: (1) it is often argued that the explosion was an accident, an internal problem of the battleship that led to the explosion caused by coal dust buildup; (2) the explosion was the result of evil (Lodge, Roosevelt, Hearst), of Spanish treachery using a mine or a torpedo to sink the ship; (3) Lodge’s prediction and other pro-war actions point to a secretive and internal job by the US pro-war faction in order to justify their agenda.

political representation of Cubans, Filipinos, or Puerto Ricans at the negotiating meeting. Article I turned over control of Cuba to the United States (Holden and Zolov 2011, 78). Other sections gave sovereignty over Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines as well as other islands to the United States. While the treaty said little of the political nature of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the US, a section of Article XIV is key: “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*.” (Holden and Zolov 2011, 78).

US Congressional debates prior to the war focused on the “liberation” of the Cuban colony.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the spoils of war extended far beyond the Cuban colony, further substantiating the expansionist agenda behind the Spanish-American War. Insert the “evangelist of sea power” (Estades Font 1988, 25) into the equation and an unmistakable narrative emerges. Alfred Thayer Mahan met Theodore Roosevelt at the Naval War College in Rhode Island, and they became deeply interested in each other’s views and agendas. Mahan made no secret of his imperialistic position: “Imperialism, the extension of national authority over alien communities, is a dominant note in the world politics of today” (Mahan 1907, 111). He clearly saw his mission as closely connected to an expansion of power: “I am frankly an imperialist, in the sense that I believe that no nation, certainly no great nation, should henceforth maintain the policy of isolation which fitted our early history; above all, should not on that outlived plea refuse to intervene in events obviously thrust upon its conscience” (Mahan 1907, 324).

Mahan’s writings were many, including the famous 1890 book *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, one of the most influential works on military history, and *Lessons of the War with Spain and Other Essays* (1899), a significant text for our understanding of the post-war period. The first emphasized the importance of sea domination for imperialist countries seeking to expand, secure their borders, gain access to markets, and maintain power overseas. To achieve that goal the United States should strengthen its navy, that is, build more and better ships and deploy and position its fleets strategically. Islands, ports, and military bases were necessary to maintain control, protect, and resupply the navy. The second book further developed similar issues and described the colonial model to follow by emphasizing the geopolitical bedrocks of “civilizational” imperialism: the United States needed a powerful naval force in order to become the hemispheric hegemon and compete with Western powers, while also demonstrating its commitment to helping less civilized people. This civilizational, as opposed to colonial, task was an objective that the United States could emulate from its own former colonizer: “it is among subjects and alien races, and not in colonies properly so called, that her [England’s] terrestrial energy chiefly manifests itself, to control, to protect, and to elevate. Of these functions, admirably discharged in the main, India and Egypt are the conspicuous illustrations.

---

<sup>5</sup> During the congressional debates, Congress agreed that Cuba would not be annexed to the US as a territory via statehood. A discussion of the Teller Amendment—Article Four of a Joint Resolution of Congress—would deviate significantly from the purpose of this article. However, it is important to underline, as Pérez states, that: “The rationale to retain control over Cuba was established immediately after the war and found justification in the very congressional resolution that had promised independence” (Pérez 1998, 37). For further reading and a detailed discussion of the debates and problems regarding the Teller Amendment see Pérez 1998.

In them she administers from without, and cannot be said to colonize, for the land was already full” (Mahan 1899, 243).<sup>6</sup>

Imperialists like Roosevelt and Lodge achieved many of their goals after the quick and decisive victory against Spain. Mahan’s ideas about sea power highlighted the importance of the islands, with Hawaii and Puerto Rico, among others, being especially vital. Hawaii, in the Pacific, became the fiftieth state of the union and the last one to be granted statehood (1959), while Puerto Rico, in the Caribbean, would become the “oldest colony in the world.” Together with Cuba and military installations on the west and east coast of the mainland, Hawaii and Puerto Rico served to protect both regions. In addition, the US built the interoceanic canal in Central America after taking possession of the province of Panama, creating a new country, and completing in 1914 the work started by France. Mahan had made it clear that Puerto Rico had an important strategic role to play: “Puerto Rico, considered militarily, is to Cuba, to the future Isthmian canal, and to our Pacific coast, what Malta is, or may be, to Egypt and the beyond... it would be very difficult for a transatlantic state to maintain operations in the western Caribbean with a United States fleet based upon Puerto Rico and the adjacent islands” (Mahan 1899, 28). The sentiment was echoed by US policy makers in the decades that followed, including Congress: “Now that we have dug up the Panama Canal . . . there must be a very clear and direct route from here to Panama, and Puerto Rico is in a very strategic position . . . . Also, Puerto Rico is necessary for the U.S. as a key to the defense of the whole American continent . . .” (Sparrow and Lamm 2017, 291–292).

## **The Endless Promise: The Future Shall be Determined...**

It is in the context of expansionism and empire building, both highly connected to the idea of Manifest Destiny,<sup>7</sup> that post-1898 decisions or ambiguities about the relationship between the United

---

<sup>6</sup> In a similar context Mahan states: “Sea power, as a national interest, commercial and military, rests not upon fleets only, but also upon local territorial bases in distant commercial regions. It rests upon them most securely when they are extensive, and when they have a numerous population bound to the sovereign country by those ties of interest which rest upon the beneficence of the ruler; of which beneficence power to protect is not the least factor. Mere dealing and protection, however, do not exhaust the demands of beneficence towards alien subjects, still in race-childhood” (1899, 248).

<sup>7</sup> Some scholars argue that imperialism and Manifest Destiny—coined as a term in 1845—are demarcated by clear boundaries. However, in this essay, we treat imperialism and Manifest Destiny as two sides of the same coin. For this perspective see Merk 1963; Namikas 1998; Coles 2002. As a nineteenth-century political doctrine, Manifest Destiny greatly influenced the events of 1898. Roberta L. Coles states: “Indeed, many have argued that war is inherent in this doctrine... Manifest Destiny drew upon centuries-old themes of American civil religion; it proffered America’s superior and chosen nature and its duty to redeem the continent and perhaps the globe, as justification to expand America’s geographical and political boundaries. Relying on these tenets, Presidents Polk and Tyler added more than 800 million acres of Mexican land to the United States in the mid-1800s through war and confiscation. Later in the century, again relying overtly on Manifest Destiny in the Spanish-American war, President William McKinley annexed in one status or another the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawaii, and part of Samoa” (Coles 2002, 404). See Anders Stephanson (Part One) and his concise explanation of expansionism and the ideological matrix of Manifest Destiny from 1600–1990 (1995); see also Nugent 2008.

States and Puerto Rico gained more clarity. Although the aforementioned Treaty of Paris did not specify the nature of the political relationship, the civil and political rights of Puerto Ricans were categorized as matters that “*shall be determined by the Congress.*” When President McKinley was questioned after the war of 1898 about the reason why neither the people of the Philippines nor those of Puerto Rico were consulted about their future, he replied tellingly: “do we need their consent to perform a great act for humanity?” (Sparrow and Lamm 2017, 26–27). Puerto Ricans were placed under military rule until 1900. The agricultural economy, overly dependent on coffee, sugar, and international markets, suffered during this particularly difficult period (Pico 1990, 201). To make matters worse, in 1899, Hurricane of San Ciriaco devastated the island following a trajectory that would be closely imitated, in terms of path and destruction, by Hurricane Maria more than a hundred years later in 2017. The island was destroyed and the struggling economy deteriorated even more.

Lengthy and painful recovery processes followed both storms. As Stuart B. Schwartz affirms, Congress did not appropriate funds destined for relief in 1899, and the steps taken to provide aid resembled what he terms “disaster as theater” (2015, 200). Serving as Governor of New York at the time, Theodore Roosevelt exemplified the political and theatrical aspect of the effort: “I appeal to all patriotic citizens to show the suffering people of our new possessions that the extension of our flag over their territory is to be of immediate material as well as moral benefit to them” (qtd. in Schwartz 2015, 201).<sup>8</sup> The blessing of enlightened civilization took central stage at a time of crisis in order to advance the mission and the model of civilizational imperialism. Schwartz adds that “Washington sent relief supplies totaling only about \$200,000, but it also began to coordinate an enormous program of private donations” (2015, 200). Charity, not congressional support, became the main form of relief, mostly supplemented by military spending. The military governor at the time, General George W. Davis, created a Charity Board and provided army rations to those in critical situations who could be reached. In the long run, relief provided by the US military—War Department purchases and expenses—totaled more than a million dollars and supplemented charitable donations.<sup>9</sup> This should come as no surprise, since Puerto Rico was governed under military administration and dictatorship until May 1, 1900.

Schwartz also offers a detailed description of the racial attitudes of the military leaders in charge of the island, members of the Charity Board, and politicians in Puerto Rico and the US. He argues convincingly that US relief efforts were highly influenced by political and economic interests, racial attitudes toward Puerto Ricans (often depicted as underserving, lazy, ignorant, ambitionless, and violent people) and by the honest and generous charitable response of US individuals and organizations. Logistics were stipulated by military and local municipalities. The politics of exclusion and inclusion played an important role, but the exclusion from political, economic, and logistic decisions about the relief effort dominated the US approach to the new territory. Some even questioned the responsibility to offer relief, suggesting that this Malthusian crisis ought to play itself

---

<sup>8</sup> Schwartz describes other forms of “disaster theater,” including newspapers like the *New York Times* publishing lists of contributors and their donations beside articles describing the bloody military campaigns against Philippine insurgents.

<sup>9</sup> Puerto Rico et al. *Report of the Military Governor of Porto Rico on Civil Affairs* (1902, 217–218).

out (Schwartz 1992, 320). The most obvious attempt to negate a strong recovery to the island derived from racial prejudices. Between 1860 and 1930 Congress funded ninety relief bills aimed at providing aid for a variety of disasters (Schwartz 2015, 219). Schwartz establishes this historical precedent while discussing the hurricane that devastated Galveston, Texas, in 1900. As in the case of Puerto Rico in 1899, Congress showed no desire to intervene directly with the appropriation of funds, and the recovery was undertaken by charitable organizations, private contributions, and the Red Cross. The majority of the victims in Galveston were African Americans (Schwartz 2015, 219–220).<sup>10</sup>

A noticeable politics of inclusion and exclusion became apparent starting with the Spanish-American War and changes executed after the invasion. It continued during other natural disasters and, most importantly, manifested at pivotal moments when decisions about the future of the island were at stake. Spanish colonial negligence and new US colonial arrogance and prejudices contributed to make the San Ciriaco a catastrophe without precedent at the end of the nineteenth century. The humanitarian crisis caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017 reveals that Puerto Rico has remained in a precarious situation ever since San Ciriaco hit more than a century ago. Even though Puerto Rico is not the same island, the essence of its political and economic foundations has changed very little. The result is a constant crisis mode, an archipelago stuck in the past, trapped on the darker side of the modern and colonial paradigm. Unable to resist the violence and trauma caused by military dominance, economic dependency, racial hierarchy, and cultural arrogance, Puerto Rico continuously faces the crisis caused by unstoppable behemoths of nature, and the ongoing consequences from the exploitative effects of colonial politics. It is in this context that this article discusses key dynamics of inclusion and exclusion and examines how political and economic policies between the two hurricanes expose the replication of practices that perpetuate a crisis mode in the Caribbean island.

## **The Foraker Act and *Downes v. Bidwell***

For the most part, military governments and short-term military governors either failed to remember, or may never have heard, the ambiguous yet positive words of General Nelson A. Miles when he invaded the island in 1898 “in the cause of liberty, justice and humanity. They [military forces] bring you the fostering arm of a nation of free people . . . to promote your prosperity and bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government. . . the advantages and blessings of enlightened civilization” (qtd. in Trías Monge 1997, 30). General Guy Henry, named governor in 1898, dissolved the Cabinet of Puerto Rico and threatened a major newspaper on the island because of the owner’s call to end the military governments (Trías Monge 1997, 31–33). This call for freedom, justice, and liberal institutions during the invasion of the island and during the road to the Spanish-American War quickly evaporated.

---

<sup>10</sup> There is ample evidence to establish that racist ideology has been a key factor governing the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico, impacting everything from relief aid after disasters to questions of political status and citizenship. For more detailed analyses related to the issues discussed here see Caban 2017, 1999; and Schwartz 2015.

The Foraker Act passed by Congress in 1900 ended the military governments but did little to significantly alter the colonial status of Puerto Rico. Both the civilian governor and key administrators continued to be appointed by the US president. Even though the law permitted a local, elected House of Delegates and allowed for unions to be established, the governor and Congress retained the right to overturn any law passed by the delegates. The federal government maintained control of trade, treaty, and military powers, among others, and gave the island a Resident Commissioner who was later allowed to participate in Congressional deliberations but, to this day, with no voting rights (Pico 1990, 232–233; Trías Monge 1997). As Juan González highlights: “the Foraker gave Puerto Ricans less self-government than they had enjoyed under Spain . . . Island voters had sent as many as 16 voting delegates to the Spanish Cortes” (González 2011, 60). Liberties acquired during four centuries of Spanish rule, which could be revoked at any time, were rolled back by the United States. Puerto Ricans lost equality of citizenship, universal male suffrage, a local parliament almost fully elected and with real powers of legislation, and the power to enter treaties and impose tariffs (Trías Monge 1997, 43).<sup>11</sup> The Foraker Act followed Article IX of the Treaty of Paris and ratified 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” (Holden and Zolov 2011, 78).

Even though Foraker and his small group of allies endorsed the extension of US citizenship to Puerto Ricans in 1900, opposition in Congress was overwhelming, and citizenship was rejected. Instead, Puerto Ricans were declared “Citizens of Puerto Rico” and given a citizenship without true privileges or rights in the new colonial context and without “international juridical benefits” (Pico 1990, 243). The Foraker Act did not incorporate any of the plans discussed or put forth by Puerto Rican leaders favoring annexation, autonomy, or independence in the future. In a letter to the US president, Luis Muñoz Rivera described the Foraker Act as a law in which “Not even a sliver of democratic thought can be found...” (Trías Monge 1997, 53). In fact, the military governors and later the Foraker Act excluded Puerto Ricans from the “blessings” of US liberal institutions and enlightened civilization.

Following the Foraker Act, a series of Supreme Court challenges and controversies known as the *Insular Cases* (1901–1905) debated the right of the United States to acquire and govern territories for which the US Constitution does not extend—put differently, “the Constitution does not follow the flag.” At the time, these cases addressed the ambiguity of Puerto Rico’s territorial status and established a doctrine of territorial expansion that exemplifies the politics of inclusion and exclusion under examination here. One of the key cases was *Downes v. Bidwell*, and it is essential to understanding the vague political status adjudicated to the island. *Downes* was a case about an importer of oranges

---

<sup>11</sup> See Delgado Cintron 2012 for a detailed discussion of the changes enacted by the 1897 Carta Autonómica/Autonomic Charter. Although these changes and others took place, they were not approved by the Spanish Cortes—only the Cortes could issue such decree—and were therefore invalid and their permanence highly questionable. Spain arguably never felt that the Autonomic Charter had any real standing, and the Capitan General had absolute veto powers over all issues concerning the island. As Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones states: “the ‘autonomy’ conceded by Spain in 1897 has been intensely mythologized” (Díaz-Quiñones 1998, 579).

sent from San Juan to New York. The importer complained about the 15 percent duty taxed on the oranges:

He claimed that the imposition violated the clause of the U.S. Constitution that commands that “all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.” This claim effectively put into question the right of the United States to establish a colonial empire, to own territory to which the constitution would not extend. (Trías Monge 1997, 45)

[Justice] White, whose opinion would eventually triumph . . . held that there were two types of territories, both subject to the jurisdiction of the United States: those incorporated to the nation and those that were not. The Constitution extended to the first group, but not to the second, except those parts of the Constitution that referred to principles that could be termed “fundamental.” (Trías Monge 1997, 48)

Justice Edward D. White’s theory of the case prevailed, but none of the five opinions by the judges on the case obtained a majority. According to Venator-Santiago: “the doctrine of territorial incorporation created a new territorial status, the *unincorporated territory*. This territorial status enabled Congress, and U.S. law and policymakers more generally, to selectively rule Puerto Rico as a foreign locality in a domestic or constitutional sense” (Venator-Santiago 2017a, 43).<sup>12</sup> In practical terms, Puerto Rico or other “unincorporated territories” belonged to the United States, but were part of US policy only if Congress declared or determined this to be so; otherwise, they were excluded or ruled as foreign localities. Put simply, the Supreme Court legalized and determined the treatment of US colonies or the colonial empire.<sup>13</sup> The courts affirmed Congress’s authority to continue its practices of exclusion, to acquire and govern territories as colonies, and to do so without applying the Constitution. While the ruling stated that the United States had an obligation to respect the “fundamental rights” of unincorporated territories like Puerto Rico, it was left to the courts or Congress to determine what constituted a “fundamental right” when applied to matters concerning Puerto Rico.

## The Jones Act

The Jones Act, mostly known for granting citizenship in 1917, was a broader piece of legislation including but not limited to: 1) reorganization of the government of the island; 2) revision of the Foraker Act with the majority of the key issues related to the governance of Puerto Rico remaining under control of the US president; 3) establishment of a Bill of Rights; 4) election by Puerto Ricans of a local Resident Commissioner to sit in Congress without voting rights; 5) securing of US

---

<sup>12</sup> See also Venator-Santiago’s *Puerto Rico and the Origins of the U.S. Global Empire: The Disembodied Shade* (2016), where the author expands on this and other issues discussed in this article.

<sup>13</sup> The Court that ruled in the *Insular Cases* was the same that ruled in the Dred Scott Decision, in which the majority opinion stated that because Scott was black, he was not a citizen and therefore had no right to sue. See Torruella 1985.

presence and control over the island; 6) revision of matters dealing with commerce. In the end, however, it did little to address local calls for self-government, resolution of the status question, or improvements in economic conditions. It was a modest albeit well-calculated small step toward inclusion in the form of US citizenship, but instead, it reaffirmed colonialism in the form of unincorporated territorial status. Thus, Puerto Rico remained under the sovereignty of the United States and in the hands of the US Congress.<sup>14</sup>

The reasons for the passing of the Jones-Shafroth<sup>15</sup> Act in 1917 are numerous. According to Edgardo Meléndez, Congress discussed twenty bills from 1900 to 1917 in which citizenship for Puerto Ricans was an issue, as well as other bills to revise the Foraker Act and further secure the bond between the United States and the Island (2017, 317-18). Many of these bills, especially the ones that included citizenship early on, had very little chance to become law. Still, the case was different for the Jones Act with many factors coming together to facilitate or delay its passing, which included US citizenship extended via collective naturalization. It took seventeen years to change the Foraker Act and approve the Jones Act. The following are several important narratives that are relevant for this discussion of the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

*The question of race:* Unfortunately, the racist tone of the debates in Congress and US society explains the resistance toward granting citizenship or any meaningful measure of self-government. The newspapers of the epoch and other historical records exhibit this racism, with references to “the alien races, and civilized, semi-civilized, barbarous, and savage peoples of these [Spanish] islands” (Torruella 2017, 110, 126). The positioning of the colonizer and white Anglo-America as superior and civilized supported the politics of exclusion and marginalization of the other.

*The war and broader strategic context:* In the spirit of the expansionism discussed at the beginning of this article, the war context is often presented as a spark influencing and accelerating the decisions made by the United States regarding Puerto Rico. The First World War (1914–1918) and other national security interests were indeed influential and favored a politics of inclusion. The defense and protection of the Panama Canal, inaugurated in 1914, the strategic location of Puerto Rico, and the loyalty of Puerto Rico in a volatile world, meant that a strong bond with Puerto Rico was imperative to further cement the island’s allegiance to the United States (Sparrow and Lamm 2017, 306).

*The “Bond”:* Undermining the growing independence movement on the island was also important as a means to secure the colonial bond. As Edgardo Meléndez points out, for US leaders like Roosevelt, Foraker, Yager, and Stimson, it was a question of “doing right,” a “matter of justice,” and “securing the bond” (2017, 318). A less frequently voiced concern was the intention to use Puerto Rico to improve relations with the rest of Latin America, or to create a stronger and greater continental relationship. This connection can be understood as an idea that emphasizes inclusion, but a closer examination of the colonial nature of the bond also reveals that it participates in the logic of exclusion.

---

<sup>14</sup> Many of the stipulations and consequences of the Foraker and Jones Acts continue to persist to this day.

<sup>15</sup> The Jones Act had another key sponsor besides Jones in the House of Representatives, Senator John Shafroth, and was officially the Jones-Shafroth Act, though it is commonly known as the Jones Act. In this essay when we are referring to the Jones Act, we mean the Jones-Shafroth Act of 1917.

The political and economic relationship between Puerto Rico and the US has been strong enough to keep the island under colonial control but reduces the possibilities of its integration or separation from the colonizer. In sum, the continuous asymmetrical relationship that bonds Puerto Rico and the US excludes the island from any possibility of self-determination.

*Self-government:* Extensive debates about the degree of self-government to be granted to the island and its people, often tied to questions of race, delayed discussion of the Jones Act in the US Congress. The racial predisposition of some politicians, as well as debates about landholding limits, stalled the process. In the end, and congruous with the goal of maintaining the “bond” discussed above, self-government was minimal. Then in 1913, Democrats gained control of the government and advanced the reforms in the Jones Act; thereby weakening the arguments against citizenship while also doing little to increase self-government.

*Markets:* Securing investment and trade with Puerto Rico and furthering commercial ambitions by controlling the Panama Canal and its traffic gave extra incentive to those supporting citizenship legislation for purely economic reasons.

*The local context:* Discord among Puerto Rican leaders around questions regarding citizenship and the political status of the island was significant and continues to the present. During the time of the Jones Act, Puerto Rican leaders repeatedly asked Congress to grant self-rule as the pro-independence faction gained force, or, alternatively to put the island on a path to statehood. A pivotal year was 1914, when the House of Delegates in Puerto Rico requested independence for the island, only to be ignored. Three years later, Congress extended citizenship despite the objection of the House of Delegates. Citizenship in this context helped secure the bond via inclusion, while excluding the will of the Puerto Rican House of Delegates.

*Indifference:* Indifference to Puerto Rican issues in Congress has been a factor consistent with the characteristic of a colonial empire. Prophetic echoes of “The Future shall be Determined . . .” in the Treaty of Paris have merit and could be the topic of extensive study. Other factors, from the difficulty to gather a quorum for meetings in Congress on the issue to the manifold local pleas for action to define the political status, have been strenuously disregarded.

The reasons just discussed also reveal something important: the Jones Act is often synonymous with citizenship, and time has proven this to be one of its key influences, but the process of approval of the Jones Act was multilayered and challenging. As part of the debate regarding the granting of US citizenship to Puerto Ricans under Section 5 of the Jones Act, the influence of the strategic and military interests of the United States has often been cited as dominant. This rationale is not without merit and remains central and popular; however, the scenario should not be reduced to strategic and military interests. What should not be neglected is that the other factors enumerated above were important as part of a complex process that began in 1898.

## US Colonial Citizenship

What kind of US citizenship was extended to Puerto Ricans by the Jones Act? What have been its implications? As Rogers Smith (2017, 59) and Charles Venator-Santiago (2017a, 47) have explained, implementation of the Jones Act collectively naturalized Puerto Ricans using a citizenship provision that legally permitted them to either retain their Puerto Rican citizenship or acquire US citizenship. The choice given was not realistic for many Puerto Ricans. Only 288 chose to retain Puerto Rican citizenship and were able to complete the process; most became citizens of the United States by collective naturalization. Smith and Venator-Santiago emphasize that this granting of citizenship was by “Congressional statute,” and did not change the island’s territorial status as a foreign territory for the purpose of citizenship (Venator-Santiago 2017, 47).

Ironically, Puerto Ricans born on the island after the Jones Act of 1917, while born “outside” the United States, in an unincorporated territory, were still considered US citizens. It was not until 1940 that the Nationality Act changed the Jones Act and established that all persons born in Puerto Rico after 1940 acquire natural-born citizenship status (birthright citizenship or *jus soli*, right of soil) instead of naturalized status.<sup>16</sup> Smith has emphasized the issues related to these changes: “Even so, this Congressional declaration means that Puerto Ricans’ status was and remains statutory birthright citizenship, not 14th Amendment constitutional birthright citizenship. . . . The courts have not recognized the inhabitants of any of the ‘unincorporated’ territories, including Puerto Rico, as possessing constitutional birthright citizenship. This means that in principle, unlike constitutional birthright citizens, persons born in Puerto Rico could lose their citizenship by an act of Congress alone, no constitutional amendment required” (Smith 2017, 59).

In other words, even if the Nationality Act of 1940 admitted that Puerto Rico is part of the United States for citizenship objectives, some scholars and lawmakers argue that citizenship remains statutory, and Puerto Ricans born on the island are not entitled to the safeguards of constitutional citizenship.<sup>17</sup> If this interpretation, commonly known as *Congress gives, Congress takes*, is correct, the

---

<sup>16</sup> This article focuses on Puerto Ricans born and living in Puerto Rico (residents of the island who were not born in any of the fifty United States), and all references to this group will identify them as Puerto Ricans or as born on the island. The limits of this territorial grounded distinction and how it affects or excludes Puerto Ricans is a key issue in the remaining part of this article. The laws and decisions regarding Puerto Rico consider the territory first, then the people. Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2 of the United States Constitution, the “Territorial Clause,” empowers Congress to “make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States.” Any time we refer to Puerto Ricans born in the US or who moved to any of the fifty states after being born on the island, the article will specify that circumstance. Puerto Ricans born or residing in any of the fifty states are central to a discussion of the politics of inclusion/exclusion: they exercise a broader range of constitutional rights, such as voting in federal elections.

<sup>17</sup> Not everyone agrees with this view of the citizenship granted to Puerto Ricans as statutory. Some scholars, including Harvard Law Professor Lawrence H. Tribe, claim that the Nationality Act (1940) viewed Puerto Rico as a part of the “sovereignty of the United States for the purposes of the Birthright Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment” (Edwin Meléndez 2017a, 10). The article by Venator-Santiago cited here also proposes that citizenship for Puerto Ricans became permanent in 1940 when Congress granted the Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment to Puerto Rico via legislation. His argument focuses on the legislative history of the Naturalization Act of 1940. The citizenship granted to Puerto Ricans born on the island is a form of “differentiated citizenship,” that is

contradiction is evident: citizenship includes and bonds Puerto Ricans born on the island to the US but also excludes them because the inclusion is not guaranteed by the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Puerto Ricans who are native to the unincorporated territory remain excluded and “second-class” US citizens, even though Puerto Rico is part of the United States for citizenship purposes. This is congruous with the Court’s precedents: Justice White’s opinion in *Downes v. Bidwell* (1901, 287–344), one of the controversial Insular Cases, translates here as a US citizenship for Puerto Ricans that is not protected by the 14th Amendment or by the Constitution.<sup>18</sup> Despite other changes during 1940–1952 to the citizenship of those born on the island, Puerto Rican citizenship remains a “differentiated citizenship” (Smith 2017, 58).<sup>19</sup> In the following pages this article discusses some of the political, social, and civil rights provided or denied, included or excluded, by this type of citizenship.

Steenbergen states that the notion of citizenship evolved from a political definition to the broader realm of the citizen’s relationship to society: “citizenship is the notion of participation in public life (which is broader than political life) . . . which implies a greater emphasis on the relationship of the citizen with society as a whole” (1996, 2–3). He adds that a citizen is a person governed who also governs and that citizenship is connected to “rights and entitlements” as well as responsibilities. Research on citizenship and rights expanded greatly in the past decades to include notions of citizenship that overlap, from the classic framework emphasized by T. H. Marshall (1950)—civil, political, social—to global, ecological, and cultural approaches). The citizenship status of people born in Puerto Rico remains unaltered since the authorization of the Nationality Act of 1940. Where do Puerto Ricans stand many decades after the passing of the Jones (1917) and Naturalization (1940) Acts, in regard to the basic understandings of citizenship and those outlined by Marshall and expanded by others? Let’s consider examples in each of these three areas, social, political, and civil rights, that may overlap.

Social rights per Marshall, that is, from “the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live a life . . . according to the standards prevailing in society” (Marshall 1950, 11), covered a range of institutions, social organizations, and associations such as education, healthcare, housing, employment, and social services. Social rights are difficult to define due to what they include and the often complex and changing networks of laws and bureaucracies that serve to apply or negate these rights. For example,

---

not into question, but the question of whether citizenship is permanent and irreversible still remains subject to debates and the politics of inclusion and exclusion.

<sup>18</sup> As Torruella explains: “In a nutshell, the *Insular Cases*, almost all decided by five-to-four plurality vote, pulled from thin air a new doctrine for territorial expansion . . . for the express purpose of facilitating the governance and exploitation of America’s new colonial empire. From this point on, the United States could acquire territories destined for statehood (deemed incorporated), or those not destined for statehood (deemed unincorporated). Only in the case of incorporated territories did the Constitution fully apply. In unincorporated territories, only the fundamental rights established in the Constitution had to be respected by Congress—or whatever the Supreme Court ruled were fundamental rights, decided on a case-by-case basis” (2017, 115).

<sup>19</sup> For a vibrant discussion of different points of view surrounding the issue of citizenship see Venator-Santiago 2017b, where he sketches the history of citizenship, legislation, and policies to govern Puerto Rico; See also Torruella 2017 and Weare 2017.

healthcare as explained by Edwin Meléndez, illustrates a form of “differentiated citizenship” for Puerto Ricans with a familiar institution at the center, a Congress that *shall determine the future*:

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 also had clear adverse implications for Puerto Rico. As part of Congressional negotiations, instead of extending ACA to Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico receives a block grant for the first six years and thereafter depends on ongoing appropriations to sustain Medicaid. Puerto Ricans pay Medicare taxes and those federal benefits are not in question, but the Medicaid formula for Puerto Rico caps reimbursement at 50 percent. The ACA funds expired this year, and Congress approved a stopgap measure of \$300 million supplement instead of the estimated \$900 million needed for the year. Until recently, the Commonwealth government borrowed to cover the cost for Medicaid and other programmatic services. With mounting debt, borrowing is no longer an option (Edwin Meléndez 2017b).

Compared to northern European countries or Canada, the United States is not a welfare state. To the extent that it has created systems to provide social rights such as healthcare, parity and full inclusion will signify that Puerto Rico is treated as a state, which includes the removal of the limit on reimbursement in the case of Medicaid and would entail extending ACA to US citizens in Puerto Rico at the time of enactment. Whether the ACA is a law that lasts for five, ten, or twenty years, like a regulation waiver during disaster relief, or funds for social services, there are inconsistencies and unequal treatment toward the Caribbean island. Other social areas, such as education resources, also show discrimination and differentiation, inclusion and exclusion, to the detriment of the citizens in Puerto Rico.<sup>20</sup>

Civil rights also play an important role in the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. These rights are often associated with courts of justice or a “right to justice,” processes involving criminal and civil trials. Marshall included basic freedoms related to expression and conscience such as liberty, freedom of speech, faith and thought, as well as economic rights as related to contracts, property ownership, and litigation costs (Marshall 1950, 10–11, 38, 43–44). In one of the most cited and important cases concerning civil rights and Puerto Rico, *Balzac v. Porto Rico*, the courts “established that most of the civil rights established by the Constitution, such as the Bill of Rights’ criminal procedural guarantees do not automatically apply to U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico” (Smith 2017, 62). *Balzac*, among others important cases, confirmed that collective naturalization of Puerto Ricans did not change the (unincorporated) territorial status of the island. As explained by Smith, debatable measures were taken to minimize the effects of this situation, such as a Bill of Rights in the Puerto Rican Constitution, with rights “deemed fundamental.” Despite having a Constitution and Bill of Rights, Puerto Ricans are subject to Congressional power and jurisdiction. It remains a matter of debate (and the interpretation of other decisions after *Balzac*), whether Congress can limit civil rights for Puerto Ricans, although it cannot do so for mainland US citizens.

---

<sup>20</sup> There is also a history of well-documented forced sterilization campaigns and drug experimentation on the island that could fall into the category of infringed social rights.

In the economics rights arena, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion also apply. Even though important exclusions persist, today's Puerto Rico is treated as part of the United States for purposes of customs, duties, and tariffs, a significant change since the *Downes v. Bidwell* decision (Smith 2017, 63). Puerto Ricans pay most federal taxes, with the notable exception of federal income taxes. This is an exclusion that many Puerto Ricans view as a desirable advantage, a positive example of exclusion; however, when further analyzed within the contours of a more complex system of exclusion and inclusion, it reveals to be at best a modest concession within a colonial apparatus that greatly benefits the US mainland economically and politically.

A recent example of an adverse exclusion is Chapter 9 of the federal Bankruptcy Code, which has been in effect since 1984. Puerto Rican municipalities and public corporations cannot file for bankruptcy to resolve their debts, unlike those in the mainland United States (Torruella 2017, 121). Currently facing an economic crisis and public debt of seventy billion dollars, Puerto Rico is denied the right to declare bankruptcy. How this change in banking laws took place continues to bewilder experts on these matters. Both courts and Congress denied requests from Puerto Rico to remove this limitation and therefore the right to judiciously fix a complex economic crisis (Edwin Meléndez 2017a, 7; Smith 2017, 63).

The Merchant Marine Act of 1920 adds to the long list of economic limitations to the island's interests (Torruella 2017, 121). The act requires that all goods transported between US ports must be carried in vessels under the US flag, constructed in the United States, and owned and crewed by US citizens. While this requirement serves national, commercial, and security interests and does not adversely affect the majority of the states, it leaves noncontiguous areas like Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam at a disadvantage and under the control of a costly US shipping industry. Multiple attempts to exempt the island from this legislation have been ignored. During the current economic crisis affecting Puerto Rico and after Hurricanes Irma and Maria ravaged the island, the need to change the Merchant Marine Act was clearly evident and attracted attention from mainland media and politicians. Even so, after Maria in 2017, the US government initially refused the waiver of the maritime regulation. Despite political and societal pressure, the government delayed its response by eight days before granting a ten-day waiver that ultimately had minimal impact, whereas in the case of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey in Florida and Texas, respectively, the federal government granted waivers immediately (Vinik 2018; Sullivan 2018; see Table 1). The difference is that those states have something Puerto Ricans lack, which is voting representation in Congress and full protection under the Constitution.

The last example expands on the previous discussions of political rights. Marshall focused on the following rights: to exercise political power, to vote and elect representatives, and to hold office (Marshall 1950, 11). The most commonly understood difference in political rights of US citizens born in Puerto Rico is that they do not have the right to vote in federal elections. Puerto Ricans on the island do not vote for House or Senate representatives, nor do they vote for president or vice president. However, this situation changes if Puerto Ricans move to one of the fifty states and become eligible to vote for president, vice president and members of Congress.

One recent illuminating example of the limited political and economic rights of Puerto Ricans and their island government is the establishment of PROMESA (The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act) in 2016. This law is connected to the exclusion from Chapter 9 of the federal Bankruptcy Code which denies the ability of the island to file for bankruptcy to settle debts. The federal law reinforces the colonial status of the island and gives Puerto Ricans and its elected officials little to no agency in creating their future. The PROMESA board, appointed by the president of the United States, is charged with establishing a process to mitigate the Puerto Rican debt crisis. The approval of PROMESA bolsters the power of Congress and the president over all matters related to the island and underlines their main policy since the Treaty of Paris, which is exemplified by the following statement: “the future shall be determined... .” It is debatable whether PROMESA will solve Puerto Rico’s economic crisis in the long term.<sup>21</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Deprived of the power of political self-determination since 1898 and of other political and economic rights and powers within a colonial situation, Puerto Rico remains like a pendulum swinging back and forth between inclusion and exclusion. In this scenario, all other rights are uncertain and precarious. Across the globe, to be a citizen of a nation-state requires a relationship of equality, a granting of rights and full membership, and inclusion in a political and social community. When it comes to Puerto Rico, the type of citizenship extended by the United States fails to establish such a relationship. Instead, it created a hybrid form of inclusion and exclusion all too familiar to many minorities and underrepresented groups in the United States and across the globe.<sup>22</sup>

How is it possible that after 120 years (1898–2018) Puerto Rico remains a colony? There has been no lack of local political effort from Puerto Ricans to change the status of the island, acquire significant political freedoms, or replace the outdated dependent economic model. The independence route enjoyed its best decades during the first part of the twentieth century, but it never had the opportunity, either by elections or the revolutionary alternative, to stand against a powerful and growing empire. US policy has been and continues to be “take it, own it, manipulate it, and exploit it,” thereby following the model of other empires with overseas possessions that, after the end of the large colonial empires, continue to dominate but now under the advantages of the colonial power. Regardless of limited local self-government, the principle of ceaseless colonialism secured its power and deposited Puerto Rico in the hands of Congress.

The designation of Puerto Rico as a Commonwealth (Estado Libre Asociado), approved in 1952, was the last noticeable attempt to revise the island’s political status. It made some difference,

---

<sup>21</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the politics and economics of PROMESA see Edwin Meléndez, “The Politics of PROMESA” (2018a) and “The Economics of PROMESA” (2018b).

<sup>22</sup> Are Puerto Ricans “natural-born” citizens eligible for the highest office? Is residency in Puerto Rico valid to meet the fourteen-year residency requirement for a president? If previous precedents apply, the hypothetical answer can go either way. See Smith 1997; 2017, 64.

like the Jones Act of 1917, but once again there was no significant political change. Puerto Rico remained subject to Congress's power under the Territorial Clause of the US Constitution, previous Supreme Court rulings, and enacted laws (Torruella 2017, 118–119). Some regarded the process as a fraud or betrayal of the ideals of self-determination resulting in neither statehood nor independence. As Torruella explains, it was another form of a “dressed up unincorporated territory” that did not alter the legal, economic, and political dependency of the island (2017, 118). Puerto Ricans under commonwealth status elect their own local government, governor, and legislature and resolve local matters but are always under the watchful eye of Congress. In terms of electing local and state representatives, Puerto Ricans are no different from US citizens who live in any of the fifty states of the Union. This is consistent with the argument developed through the article regarding the politics of inclusion. Yet, it is clear that Puerto Ricans living on the island are not granted the same rights as other US citizens, such as the basic political right to vote in general presidential elections (García-Bedolla 2014, 110; Meléndez and Venator-Santiago 2018, 25).

Puerto Rico was never groomed for complete exclusion, i.e., independence, like the Philippines, or full inclusion, i.e., statehood, like Hawaii and Alaska. To maintain its colonial status, the policy regarding Puerto Rico was clear: take it, Americanize it, and slowly allow an insignificant amount of self-government and inclusion. The fact that not much of significance has changed in 120 years proves the point. Even today, when the augmented role of the federal government in responding to natural disasters is largely supported and expected,<sup>23</sup> the early reaction of the federal government to Hurricane Maria evoked memories of the San Ciriaco and, more recently, Katrina in New Orleans: that it was indifferent, lazy, inadequate, discriminatory, and self-congratulatory (Vinik 2018; Sullivan 2018). The most elemental and initial response, waiving the Jones Act, took eight days after Hurricane Maria's landfall, and it was waived for only ten days (Meyer 2017). The distribution of aid and the logistics were poorly managed and, worst of all, without urgency. The comparison between the federal responses to Hurricanes Harvey in Texas and Maria in Puerto Rico highlights enormous disparity in funding, resources, and promptness (Vinik 2018; Sullivan 2018; see Table 1). In every category, the support for Texas was superior, even though the destruction was significantly worse in Puerto Rico and the need for help was greater (Vinik 2018; Sullivan 2018; see Table 1).

The inconsistent, unequal, and discriminatory form of emergency response is not a surprise. This can be attributed to the ongoing reality that Puerto Rico has no representation in Congress, its residents' inability to vote in federal elections, and racial and neocolonial attitudes that obstruct and oppress its economic, political, and social progress. The current situation, at a time when the financial crisis is at its worst, will expose once more the politics of inclusion and exclusion, a US government and Congress that act inclusively only when necessary and advantageous.

---

<sup>23</sup> Limited government ideology and resistance to federal government involvement is of course alive today, but not as strong as it was during other natural disasters on the island such as Santa Clara in 1956 or even Hugo in 1989.

**Table 1: Comparing FEMA's (The Federal Emergency Management Agency) response to Hurricanes Maria and Harvey**

Nine days after the hurricane	María (Puerto Rico)	Harvey (Texas)
Individual assistance approved	6.2 million	141.8 million
Meals delivered	1.6 million	5.1 million
Water delivered, in liters	2.8 million	4.5 million
Federal personnel sent to site	10,000	30,000
Days it took FEMA to approve permanent disaster work	43	10

Source: Vinik 2018.

---

Dr. Franklin Rodriguez is Professor of Spanish and Latin American and Latino Studies at William Paterson University. Dr. Richard Huizar is Assistant Professor of Political Science and Director of Latin American and Latino Studies at William Paterson University.

---

## References

Atwood, Paul L.  
2010 *War and Empire: The American Way of Life*. New York: Pluto Press.

*Balzac v. Porto Rico*, 258 U.S. 298 (1922).

Caban, Pedro A.

1999 *Constructing a Colonial People: Puerto Rico and the United States, 1898–1932*. Boulder: Westview Press.

2017 “Puerto Ricans as Contingent Citizens: Shifting Mandated Identities and Imperial Disjunctures.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 238–283.

Coles, Roberta

2002 “Manifest Destiny Adapted for 1990s’ War Discourse: Mission and Destiny Intertwined.” *Sociology of Religion* 63 (4): 403–426.

Delgado Cintrón, Carmelo

2012 *Historia Constitucional de Puerto Rico. 1808–2012, Tomo II. La Constitución de 1869 hasta la implantación del régimen autonómico en Cuba y Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras, Escuela de Derecho (UPR), Derecoop.

Díaz-Quñones, Arcadio

1998 “1898.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78 (4): 577–581.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2518419>. DOI: 10.2307/2518419.

*Donnes v. Bidwell*, 182 U.S. 244 (1901).

Estades Font, María Eugenia

1988 *La presencia militar de Estados Unidos en Puerto Rico 1898–1918*. Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán.

García-Bedolla, Lisa

2014 *Latino Politics*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

González, Juan

2011 *Harvest of Empire*. New York: Penguin.

Grandin, Greg

2010 *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, The United States, and the Rise of U.S. New Imperialism*. New York: Holt.

Holden, Robert, and Eric Zolov

2011 *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kinzer, Stephen

2017 *The True Flag: Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, and the Birth of the American Empire*. New York: Henry Holt.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer

1890 *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.

1899 *Lessons of the War with Spain and Other Essays*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.

1907 *From Sail to Steam: Recollections of Naval Life*. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Marshall, T. H.

1950 *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays*. London: Cambridge University Press.

McPherson, Alan

2016 *A Short History of U.S. Intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.

Meléndez, Edgardo

2017 “Comments on the Jones Act and the Grant of U.S. Citizenship to Puerto Ricans.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 316–24.

Meléndez, Edwin

2017a “Preface.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 6–12.

2017b “The U.S.’s Neglect of Puerto Rico Has Never Been Benign.” *Global Americans*, October 3. <https://theglobalamericans.org/2017/10/neglect-puerto-rico-never-benign/>

2018a “The Politics of PROMESA.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 30: 43–71.

2018b “The Economics of PROMESA,” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 30:72–103.

Meléndez, Edwin, and Charles R. Venator-Santiago

2018 “Introduction to Puerto Rico Post-Maria: Origins and Consequences of a Crisis.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 30: 5–29.

Merk, Frederick

1963 *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Meyer, Robinson

2017 “What is happening with the relief effort in Puerto Rico?” *The Atlantic*, October 4. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/10/what-happened-in-puerto-rico-a-timeline-of-hurricane-maria/541956/>

Namikas, Use

1998 “Somoa and U.S. Empire.” *Peace Review* 10 (3): 375–381. DOI: [10.1080/10402659808426172](https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659808426172)

Nugent, Walter

2008 *Habits of Empire: A History of American Expansion*. New York: Vintage.

Pérez, Louis A.

1998 *The War of 1898. The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press.

Pico, Fernando

1990 *Historia General de Puerto Rico*. Río Piedras: Ediciones Huracán.

Puerto Rico, George W. Davis, John Rutter Brooke, Guy Vernor Henry, and United States

1902 *Report of the Military Governor of Porto Rico on Civil Affairs*. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Schwartz, Stuart B.

- 1992 “The Hurricane of San Ciriaco: Disaster, Politics, and Society in Puerto Rico, 1899-1901.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 72 (3). JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2515987>
- 2015 *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Smith, Rogers

- 1997 *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- 2017 “The Unresolved Constitutional Issues of Puerto Rican Citizenship.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 56–75.

Sparrow, Bartholomew, and Jennifer Lamm

- 2017 “Puerto Ricans and U.S. Citizenship in 1917: Imperatives of Security.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 284–315.

Steenbergen, Bart van

- 1996 “The Condition of Citizenship: An Introduction.” In *The Condition of Citizenship*, edited by Bart van Steenbergen, 1–9. London: Sage.

Stephanson, Anders

- 1995 *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Sullivan, Laura

- 2018 “FEMA Report Acknowledges Failures in Puerto Rico Disaster Response.” *NPR*, July 13. <https://www.npr.org/2018/07/13/628861808/fema-report-acknowledges-failures-in-puerto-rico-disaster-response>

Torruella, Juan R.

- 1985 *The Supreme Court and Puerto Rico: The Doctrine of Separate and Unequal*. Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico.
- 2017 “To Be or Not to Be: Puerto Ricans and their Illusory U.S. Citizenship.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 108–35.

Trías Monge, José

- 1997 *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

U. S. Const. art. IV, § 3, cl. 2 (Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2)

Venator-Santiago, Charles

- 2016 *Puerto Rico and the Origins of the U.S. Global Empire: The Disembodied Shade*. New York: Routledge.
- 2017a “Mapping the Contours of the History of the Extension of U.S. Citizenship to Puerto Rico, 1898–Present.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 38–55.
- 2017b “A Note on the Puerto Rican De-Naturalization Exception of 1948.” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 224–237.

Vinik, Danny

2018 “How Trump Favored Texas over Puerto Rico.” *Politico*. March 27.  
<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/27/donald-trump-fema-hurricane-maria-response-480557>

Weare, Neil

2017 “Citizenship in U.S. Territories: Constitutional Right or Congressional Privilege?” *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies*, guest edited by Charles R. Venator-Santiago and Edgardo Meléndez 29: 136–163.