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Preface

Before and after Philippine independence on 4 July 1946, the U.S. Department of State conducted technical courses known as the Philippine Foreign Affairs Training Program (PFATP) to train the first officers of the incipient Philippine Foreign Service. Forty Filipinos, divided into five groups, were selected to undergo training in diplomatic and consular work in the State Department and later on in selected U.S. Foreign Service posts. The trainees eventually formed the initial officer corps of the Philippine Foreign Service and were considered the pioneering Filipino career diplomats. They became the stewards of the future Philippine Foreign Service and were fondly and collectively labeled the “State Department Boys.”

The State Department Boys were among those Filipinos originally called *pensionados*, meaning Philippine government scholars who were sent to the United States to study or train in the best institutions of that country during the American colonial regime. As time moved on, the term *pensionados* fell out of use. Besides, the term itself is generic and failed to distinguish the State Department trainees from other Filipino scholars in America. After their training in Washington, D.C., they called themselves “Mill’s Boys” in honor of Edward W. Mill, their training director at the State Department. When Mill later left the U.S. Foreign Service, they became known as the “PFATP Boys.” But the acronym “PFATP” is not just a mouthful and a tongue twister, it is also incomprehensible even to many Foreign Service personnel. Thus, a new name, “State Department Boys,” with a stress on “State Department,” was coined. The moniker is fancier and more modern and appealing to the younger generation. Perhaps the State Department Boys themselves popularized it. “Boys” in this context has a ring of youth, energy, and

dynamism to it. It also denotes a select group of Filipino Foreign Service officers bristling with newly acquired knowledge from the United States. A sense of mystique also developed. Thus, being a State Department Boy eventually became a sort of status symbol and a badge of prestige.

Some officials in the Philippine Foreign Service, however, were critical of the term “boys,” as they perceived it as subservient or amateurish. Indeed, they were grown “men” and not “boys.” Most were in their thirties and early forties and were experienced bureaucrats and lawyers when they were sent to America. Strictly speaking, however, they were trainees rather than professional diplomats or experts on foreign relations. It is possible that the State Department Boys wanted to be called that way so that they would not be remembered by the new generation of Filipino diplomats as the “old timers,” or they simply wanted to remain forever young in our minds. Yes, they were the “originals” or the “trailblazers,” as some want to call them, but State Department Boys was the name that stuck. Some female diplomats in the Philippine Foreign Service were unhappy that all were men, with not a single woman included. Well, it was like that during those days – diplomacy, like so many other professions, was male-dominated.

The State Department Boys not only enjoyed the distinction of being the pioneers of the Philippine Foreign Service; they were also well respected and looked up to by the next generation of Filipino diplomats and admired by their peers in the Philippine government and abroad. Serving as mentors and role models, they left an indelible impression on those who knew them, especially those who saw and worked with them at close range. A retired ambassador I interviewed nostalgically recalled how as a vice consul he had the good fortune of working with a State Department Boy who taught him the nuts and bolts of consular work, effective interpersonal skills, office management, and social graces. Another retired ambassador fondly remembered how his chief of mission, a State Department Boy, cared for him and treated him like a son upon his arrival at post as a new third secretary. His boss made sure his adjustment to his new post was smooth, making all the necessary arrangements so that his family could settle quickly. Yet another retired ambassador remembered how the head of the Philippine delegation to a UN Conference, again a State Department Boy, brilliantly extricated the Philippines from taking sides in a crucial issue, to the amazement and amusement of other delegations.

Other insights and stories abound and are documented and narrated in this book. These anecdotal evidences and personal testimonies show the humanity of the State Department Boys through their respect for and positive outlook toward their work and their younger colleagues in the Foreign Service. Their lives, both public and private, inspired those who have followed their footsteps in the challenging world of diplomacy. Indeed, they were not only one of the most successful groups in the annals of the Philippine Foreign Service; but, more important, they left a legacy worthy of recognition and emulation. The career paths of the State Department Boys, however, were an interesting mix. Some became successful and rose to prominence, becoming distinguished ambassadors to major countries and permanent representatives to the UN, while others led less brilliant careers. A few left the Foreign Service shortly after joining.

This research project aims to reconstruct the stories of these pioneers of the Philippine Foreign Service and to discuss the evolution of Philippine diplomacy after independence and Philippine foreign relations during the Cold War. It also highlights Philippine-American relations, in particular the efforts of the United States to smoothly transition the Philippines from a colony to an independent state able to conduct its foreign relations with a core of professional diplomats. The present study aims to understand the beginning and evolution of the Philippine Foreign Service and examines other outstanding Filipino diplomats who led the development of the Philippine Foreign Service, including Elpidio Quirino, Carlos P. Romulo, Joaquin M. Elizalde, Narciso Ramos, Diosdado Macapagal, Bernabe Africa, Roberto Regala, and Melquiades Gamboa.

It is often assumed that simply because of the Philippines' former status as a U.S. colony, the country has patterned its institutions on the American model. Such a sweeping generalization, however, falls short and needs to be both qualified and quantified. To what extent did the Americanization of the Philippine Foreign Service take hold? Who were the American personalities or institutions that played a significant role in this process? How long did this influence or legacy last? These are some of the questions that we must answer to understand the extent of American influence on the Philippine Foreign Service.

The Philippines started well in the conduct of foreign relations. The American and Filipino leaders exerted tremendous efforts to ensure that the Philippines could hold its own in the international arena. The United States' nurturing of Philippine diplomacy was

not confined to the training of the first generation of Filipino career diplomats under the PFATP. The State Department, on request of the Philippine government, also seconded an American foreign affairs adviser to the Philippine government to help set up the Department of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, the two countries signed the Treaty of General Relations, the first bilateral agreement between the Philippines and the United States after Philippine independence, whereby the U.S. Foreign Service would represent Philippine interests in countries where the Philippines did not yet have a formal diplomatic presence. Thus, the State Department played a key role in the establishment of the Home Office and in shaping the early development of the Philippine Foreign Service. The Philippine government decided at that time to tap American expertise for assistance in professionalizing the Philippine Foreign Service both at home and abroad, because it needed sensitive guidance, especially in the early years of the Republic, to avoid committing so easily so many mistakes.

Did the Philippine Foreign Affairs Training Program and the secondment of an American foreign affairs adviser place the Philippines in the thrall of America? To a certain extent, yes. But the U.S. government did not foot the bill. The State Department agreed to conduct the training and send an adviser under the condition that the Philippines would shoulder all the expenses and compensation of the Filipino trainees and the American foreign affairs adviser. Despite the great financial constraints, the Philippine commonwealth government and later on the government of the new republic defrayed the cost of the PFATP conducted in Washington, D.C., and selected American Foreign Service establishments and the hiring of the American foreign affairs adviser. Under the terms of the Treaty of General Relations, the Philippine government deposited a lump sum in the State Department account to pay for the expenses of repatriation and other needs of distressed Filipino nationals overseas. There is a price to sovereignty. The Philippines early on learned that it had to bear the cost of independence and could not depend entirely on America to promote its national interests abroad. Notwithstanding its dependence on American tutelage in the conduct of its early foreign relations, the Philippines slowly and steadily crafted its own foreign policy based on its national interests and capabilities.

All of the above contribute to what I consider the “American heritage of Philippine diplomacy” about which there has been a

dearth of research and serious study. This research project will, one hopes, fill the gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the beginnings of the Philippine Foreign Service and the American diplomatic and consular practice that permeated it. The fascinating story of the State Department Boys – the creation of the training program, the background and selection of qualified foreign affairs trainees, the nature of training in Washington and several American Foreign Service posts, and the establishment of the Department of Foreign Affairs – reflected a crucial time in Philippine history, the beginnings of Philippine navigation of international affairs and linkages with the world.

The training program in the State Department did not facilitate the career advancement nor ensure the professional success of the trainees. On the contrary, their careers were marked with frustration and disenchantment until a career Foreign Service was legally and firmly established. Rampant politicking by untrained aspirants and the absence of a career system were major obstacles that the trainees had to overcome, particularly those who did not have political connections. Furthermore, the growing nationalism and anti-American sentiment in Philippine society slowly diminished the prestige and distinction of having been American-trained. Those schooled in American diplomatic tradition and practice became vulnerable to criticism of being either too pro-American or being less attentive to the needs of the Philippines.

In the State Department, Edward W. Mill, then the assistant chief of the Philippine Affairs Division, supervised the Filipino trainees. For his work as the architect and director of the Philippine Foreign Affairs Training Program from 1945 to 1947, he became known as the “Father of the Philippine Foreign Service.” Mill had a hands-on approach to the training, conducting some sessions himself, and saw to it that the trainees were fully harnessed by the Philippine government after their training in America. He worked hard to ensure that his “boys” would be given appointments in the incipient Foreign Service and pushed for the creation of a career Foreign Service in the Philippines.

After his stint in the State Department, Mill was assigned to the U.S. embassy in Manila in 1948 and in Surabaya, Indonesia, in 1950. Two years thereafter, he left the Foreign Service to pursue a career in academe. While obtaining a PhD in political science from Princeton University, he returned to Manila as a visiting professor of political science at the University of the Philippines from 1953

to 1954. Throughout his life, Mill kept in touch with many of the State Department Boys, meeting them whenever he had a chance to visit countries where they were posted. His dedication transcended the training program he had managed, and he remained a lifelong friend to the State Department Boys and the Philippines.

The saga and legacy of the State Department Boys are largely unknown to the Filipino and American public alike, even to those who belong to the Foreign Service establishment. Sixty-seven years after the State Department conducted the first Philippine Foreign Affairs Training Program, the memory of the State Department Boys has inexorably faded. This book seeks to save their memory from total oblivion and to restore their worthy place in Philippine diplomatic history and Philippine-American relations.

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