CHAPTER 6

“THE SKELETON IN OUR CLOSET;” CONGRESSIONAL DEBATES OVER
THE PHILIPPINES IN THE 1930’S
“There is no place in this Republic for a dependent colony. [...] We have no legal or moral right to hold the Filipinos a dependent people. Not being an integral part of the Nation and our country not an empire with dependent colonies, but a Republic composed of free States and Territories, we should take immediate steps to grant them independence.”
Edwin S. Broussard (D-Louisiana)

“No colonization scheme in all history of the world, especially insofar as the Orient is concerned, can compare with that of the United States in the Philippine Islands.”
John McDuffie (D-Alabama)

In October 1929, the U.S. economy entered a severe crisis as a result of the relentless speculation of the 1920s. In less than a year, eight hundred banks had declared bankruptcy, taking with them the savings of millions of Americans. By 1933, 12.6 millions of workers were unemployed. The gross national product dropped from $104 billion in 1929 to $56 billion in 1933. The economic loss had several social and political repercussions. The nation was threatened by unemployment, hunger, despair and social conflicts.

The effects of this crisis had serious repercussions on the discourse regarding the political future of the Philippines. In their deep frustration and despair, the American agricultural and working class sectors became enraged against the Philippines. They saw unfair competition from Filipino products and migrant workers as one of the causes

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underlying the economic crisis. They favored the Philippines’ immediate independence to end this competition, and intense political pressure from these sectors opened a new stage in the national debate regarding the political future of the Philippines.

The United States Congress was one of the main stages where this debate took place, and, Congress took concrete measures to deal with the Philippine problem. During the first few years of the 1930s, various bills were presented before Congress, seeking to solve the Philippine problem by granting the country’s independence. Towards the beginning of 1932, Senators Harry Hawes (D-MO) and Bronson Cutting (R-NM) introduced a bill for the independence of the Philippines. The Hawes-Cutting bill provided for a transition period to during which the Filipinos would govern the islands under the supervision of a United States High Commissioner. In March 1932, Congressman Butler B. Hare (D-NC) introduced a similar bill in the House of Representatives. After the discussion of each bill in the House and the Senate, an agreement was reached to create a single bill, the Hare-Hawes-Cutting (HHC) bill. The HCC established a 15-year period of transition to independence, allowing for the drafting of a constitution with full local autonomy, and requiring the approval of the Filipino Legislature. The bill passed the Senate and the House, but was vetoed by President Hebert Hoover. Congress then overrode the presidential veto, but the Philippine Legislature rejected the HCC in October 1933.

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9 Ibid. p. 121.
In 1934, Manuel L. Quezon, ex-Resident Commissioner, President of the Philippine Senate and central architect of the defeat of the HHC in the Philippine legislature, traveled to Washington to negotiate another independence bill for the islands. Using the contacts, he had established during his years as Resident Commissioner, Quezon managed to get Senator Millard Tydings (D-Maryland) and Representative John McDuffie (D-Alabama) to introduce a new bill, Tydings-McDuffie, which added the provision that, after independence, the United States would close down all military bases in the islands, with the exception of a naval and coaling base. Both the House and the Senate approved the Tydings-McDuffie bill without major opposition; it was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on March 24th, 1934 and unanimously ratified by the Philippine Assembly on May 1st of the same year. An important chapter in the history of Filipino-American relations was thus sealed.

This chapter will examine the congressional debate around the HHC and Tydings McDuffie bills. For almost four years, both Senators and Representatives analyzed and debated the meaning of keeping the Philippines in the U.S. hands. These discussions offer a unique chance to study the way in which the set of ideas and representations of the Philippines that had been created in the first two decades of the 20th century were deployed during the crisis of the 1930s.

**KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN THE 1920’S AND 1930’S**

The production of knowledge about the Philippines did not disappear during the 1920s and 30s. On the contrary, the Philippines continued attracting the attention of Americans during that period. The search for answers to the questions raised by U.S. control of the Philippines caused a never-ending public discussion characterized by the

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11 According to Borden, the bill established that “Conferences will be held by the governments [Filipino and American] after independence to discuss naval bases”. Borden, Op. cit. p. 124.

12 Ibid. p. 126
publication of books and articles, speeches, lectures, and even high school debates. This discussion intensified after the collapse of the American economy in 1929.

The main ideas and representations about the Philippines and the Filipinos that had been created during the first decade of the 20th century were redeployed in the 1920s and 1930s. Themes such as American exceptionalism, enlightened colonialism, republicanism and imperialism, widely used in the first decades of the 20th century, continued to play a very important role during those years Americans imagined, described and understood the Philippines and the Filipinos in a quite consistent manner between 1900 and 1934.

American legislators were similarly consistent in the way they analyzed and approached the subject of the Philippines between 1900 and 1934. The strategic and geopolitical analysis of the islands’ importance for the United States is a clear example of this continuity. Throughout the period between 1900 and 1934, the members of Congress asked the same questions, voiced the same concerns and proposed the same solutions to the strategic and defense issues U.S. control of the Philippine archipelago entailed.

The political and ideological meaning of the Philippines also received the consistent attention of Congress during the first three decades of the 20th century. For example, in 1927 a compilation of articles about the Philippines entitled Independence for the Philippines was published. According to the compiler, Eleonor Ball, the book was a publication of the Reference Shelf Collection that “supplements and takes place of a previous number in the series, Independence for the Philippines, compiled by Julia E. Johnsen, and now out of print.” Another example of the attention the Philippines received in the 1930s comes from a high school debating handbook, published in 1931 and compiled by E.R. Rankin, entitled Independence for the Philippines. The book was published by the High School Debating Union of North Carolina for the 1930-1931 debate season. According to its compiler, “The question as to whether the United States should grant independence to the Philippines has long been an important national question and events of the past several months have served to arouse a great deal of interest in this subject at the present time. It is the hope of the central committee that the state-wide debates on the subject of independence for the Philippines will be one of the most successful state-wide contests which have been held. […] The thanks of the compilers of this debate handbook are extended to the publishers who kindly gave permission for the reprinting of articles carried in the handbook.” See Eleonor Ball, compiler, Independence for the Philippines, New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1927, p.4 and Rankin, E.R., and High School Debating Union. Independence for the Philippines. University of North Carolina Extension Bulletin, v. X, no. 5. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1931, p.1. Emphasis is mine. For a more detailed list of books and articles about the Philippines published in the 1920s and 1930s see Appendix 2. Emphasis mine.
more than 30 years, senators and representatives reproduced the same ideas and concerns about the Philippines’ meaning for American democracy.

Thus, it could be argued that the major issues in congressional debates about the Philippines during the first three decades of the 20th century were not economic in nature, but rather ideological, strategic and political. Proof of this can be found in the fact that even those congressmen who were most concerned about economic problems were not able to approach the issue of the Philippines from a purely economic perspective. Rather, they resorted to cultural, racial, strategic, ideological and political arguments to justify independence for the islands. Though it might be argued that these ideas were deployed merely as justification of an economic agenda, the mere fact that they were used confirms their importance, usefulness and continuity.

ENLIGHTENED COLONIALISM

As the previous chapters have argued, the representation of American colonialism in the Philippines as an expression of American exceptionalism was a constant among those who supported keeping the islands under the dominion of the United States. According to them, the American presence in the archipelago constituted a break with European colonialism, given that it was based on altruism and not on exploitation; Americans were not in the Philippines in search of economic profit, but in order to civilize, democratize and enlighten the Filipinos. For those who supported this argument, only an exceptional nation with a solid democratic and anti-colonialist tradition such as the United States could take control of a people like the Filipinos and govern them as disciples, rather than colonial subjects.

This idea was reproduced with no major changes in the congressional debates of the second half of the 1920s. An example can be found in the reaction to Otis T. Wingo’s address to Congress in 1925. Representative Wingo (D-AR) launched a withering attack on the concept of enlightened colonialism. According to him, the American presence in the Philippines was not altruistic at all, but promoted the sugar growers and commercial interests. He also maintained that the national development and protection of the

Filipinos was not the responsibility of the American government, contrary to what others had suggested.15

Wingo’s comments drew a strong reaction from representatives Louis W. Fairfield (R-IN), James H. MacLafferty (R-CA) and Heartsill Ragon (D-AR). They reaffirmed that the American presence in the Philippines was exclusively dictated by the altruistic desire to help the Filipinos. To them, U.S. rule in the Philippines was not only an expression of the American nation’s exceptional nature, but also its ultimate demonstration.16 In MacLafferty’s words, the work of the United States in the Philippines was “the greatest act of altruism ever manifested by any government since history began”.17

Enlightened colonialism was also invoked during the congressional debates of 1926.18 Representatives Robert L. Bacon (R-NY) and Charles L. Underhill (R-MA), and Senator Samuel M. Shortridge (R-CA) used it to justify the American presence in the Philippines.19 According to Shortridge, the American occupation had been a blessing for the Filipino people because the U.S. had “lifted them up” morally, materially and intellectually; Americans had freed Filipinos from three hundred years of Spanish tyranny.20

15 In his own words: “What is our duty in the Philippines? Why […] is the duty of this great, strong, benevolent Government to protect these people from their own sins and stupidity and confusion of tongues.” Ibid. 2597. Emphasis is mine.


17 Ibid. p. 2596. Emphasis mine.

18 In 1929, Senator Knutson, a staunch advocate of Filipino independence based on economic reasons, reproduced the idea of an enlightened colonialism on a letter to the Saint Paul Pioneer Press. He also identified American work in the Philippines as part of worldwide American altruism. CR, H, December 14, 1929, p.690.


20 In Shortridge’s own words: “We have been an unmixed blessing for the people of those islands. […] We have given them within a few years all the blessings for which our ancestors fought for centuries.” CR, Senate, 69th-1st, 1926, vol. 67, February 16, 1926, p.4075. Shortridge’s use of Spanish colonialism to justify American control of the Philippines must be emphasized.
During the 1930s, the debate around the altruistic nature of American colonialism in the Philippines intensified, but very few congressmen used this notion to justify retention of the Philippines. On the contrary, it served to justify Philippine independence as the logical end of more than 30 years of American work in the archipelago. Neither rejected nor denied, the idea of enlightened colonialism was transformed into an argument in favor of independence: Philippine independence was not only possible because of the unselfish work of the United States; it was the ultimate confirmation of its success. According to this new formula, to deny the Filipinos’ competence to be independent would also deny American colonialism’s success. Furthermore, granting independence would confirm the notion that the U.S. presence in the Philippines had always been driven by altruistic and generous intentions. For instance, in 1930, Representative Harold Knutson (R-MN), a major defender of Philippine independence on economic grounds, proposed that American work in the archipelago had been completed since the Filipinos had already developed the ability to govern themselves. Therefore, Knutson argued, it was time to grant them independence.

However, the notion of enlightened colonialism was not exempt from criticism. For instance, Senators Harry B. Hawes (D-MO) and Huey Long (D-LA) highlighted the limitations of American colonialism in the Philippines, arguing that the American ability to transform the Filipino people had been racially limited. In Hawes’ words:


22 Representatives Adolph J. Sabath (D-Illinois) and Ralph F. Lozier (D-Missouri).


24 Hawes was a lawyer from Missouri with a long public career. He was president of the St. Louis Police Board (1898-1904), member of Missouri State Legislature (1916-1917), veteran of World War One, member of the House of Representatives (1921-1925), and Senator (1926-1933). He was also one the authors of the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act granting independence to the Philippines. University of Missouri, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Columbia, This Week in Missouri History, http://www.umsystem.edu/wbmc/Mohist/nov15.html and Bioguide, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/ biodisplay.pl?index=H000362.

The inhabitants of these islands belong to the Malay race. They are active, intelligent, and have had 30 years of education supplied by the United States Government. It is claimed by selfish interests that their education is not yet complete, that it will require another 30 years to complete their understanding of Anglo-Saxon theories and Anglo-Saxon law. For over 300 years, the Spaniards controlled them, and while conditions change, 300 years of Spanish rule did not change their characteristics. We have had 30 years’ control and their characteristics, according to the best observers, have not changed, will not change. In my opinion the thought of a change is a dream, iridescent, incapable of realization. We can no more change the minds, the thoughts, the characteristics and national aspirations of these people than we can change the color of their hair, the texture of their skin, or their physical characteristics. They will always be Malays; they will always think with a Malay mind.  

Hawes pointed to the limitations of the American civilizing work in the Philippines. According to him, Americans could not change the Filipinos’ racial nature; attempting had been utopian. If the Spaniards had not been able to do it in 300 years, it was not surprising that Americans had not yet managed it in 30. And given that the Filipinos could not be changed (i.e. Americanized), there was no reason for the United States to keep the archipelago under its control.  

On the other hand, Long not only highlighted the limitations of American colonialism in the Philippines described it as far from enlightened. For this Louisiana senator, Americans had never been capable of Americanizing Filipinos because the latter were Asiatic. It was therefore absurd to retain a territory that would never be politically incorporated into the American nation. He also suggested that the work undertaken by


27 It should be noted that Hawes did not share the idea of Spain as a medieval, exploitative and oppressive colonial power that was so popular among the members of Congress. On the contrary, Hawes used Spanish colonialism’s “failures” in the Philippines to underline American colonialism’s limitations. In doing this, he equated the American and Spanish colonial efforts in the Philippines. The notion of Spain used during the congressional discussions of the 1930s will be discussed later in the present chapter.

28 “We do not owe the Filipinos so much that we have to go over there and try to Americanize them. We will never be able to Americanize them. The whole world is disturbed. I think the Filipinos should swim along with the Asiatic; in other words, according to what is over there.” CR, S, 73rd-1st, March 21, 1934, p. 5009. Emphasis mine.
Americans in the Philippines was not the result of altruism but an act of charity motivated by pity.\textsuperscript{29} It was time, according to Long, for the American government to start to exercise that same charity towards its own citizens.

Senator William H. King (D-UT) also denied that U.S. colonialism in the Philippines had been enlightened, but from a perspective different from Hawes’ and Long’s. In his arguments, King combined forceful anti-imperialism with a bit of idealism. To him, it was impossible to deny the fact that in the Philippines, just as in many other regions of the world, the United States had acted as an imperialistic nation.\textsuperscript{30} King had no problem acknowledging that United States imperialism, and denied any American altruistic motivation in the Philippines. The situation according to him was quite clear: the American government in the Philippines was not based on the consent of the governed, but on military force. Therefore, it was impossible to claim that it was a generous and unselfish government, and the fact that, after more than 30 years of American government, the Filipinos were still demanding their independence gave lie to the United States’ supposed altruism.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} “I have great trouble reconciling myself to the view that in our pity and charity we should go to the point of undertaking to Americanize the Filipinos. We have an American industry here which is growing, and we need to lift Americans engaged in that industry to the standards enjoyed by other American people. If we can bring about a condition in which these Asiatics, living under entirely different conditions, and under entirely different climatic conditions from those obtaining in America, may so adjust themselves that will be able to live on a level with oriental standards, according to the oriental manner and oriental customs, enjoying the ordinary fruits of other oriental peoples, that seems to me to be about all the duty we have to discharge toward them.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{30} “Mr. President, notwithstanding the constant asseverations that we are not imperialistic, there are more than symptoms of imperialism in our attitude toward and treatment of other countries. There is economic imperialism, as well as other forms. American capital is flowing in golden streams from the borders of the United States. Enormous investments are being made in Haiti, Santo Domingo, Cuba, Nicaragua, and various countries of South and Central America, the Philippine Islands, and in other lands and climes. Large investments are being made in Cuba. Sugar plantations are being developed in the Philippines by American capital ad important American interests are acquiring control of resources which will strengthen the grip of the United States upon them.” King, CR, S, 70th-2nd. Vol. 70, February 20, 1929, p.3838.

\textsuperscript{31} CR, S, 73rd-2nd, March 1, 1934, p.3461.
King noted that it is common for colonial powers to justify their control over other peoples by claiming that the relationship benefited the subjugated. He acknowledged that the latter might benefit from it, but also stated that “many wrongs have been committed against helpless people by powerful nations under this and other pretexts. [...] Under the imperialistic policies serious wrongs and indeed crimes, have been committed. Peoples have been held in slavery, physical and economic, as well as mental. Self-determination is the right of small states.” In this way, King not only questioned the basis of American colonialism in the Philippines, but the idea of exceptionalism itself. In arguing that their presence in the Philippines was driven by the desire to help the Filipinos, Americans were behaving like every other imperialistic nation had behaved, and not exceptionally at all. King’s advocacy of self-determination for small nations is significant.

Thus, the idea of an enlightened and altruistic U.S. colonialism in the Philippines underwent a serious transformation during the 1930s. It was used by a southern Democrat (Sabath), and northwestern Republicans (Knutson and Selvig) from a sugar beet-producing state (Minnesota), to justify granting independence to the islands. Despite their political and regional differences, they appropriated a traditionally anti-independence argument to justify American withdrawal from the Philippines. There was also a tendency among some southern Democrats (Long and Hawes) to question the limits of the alleged American altruism, a more traditional pro-independence stance.

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32 This is not an idea that King developed in the 1930s. In February 1926, King argued that: “Every imperialistic nation that has subjugated a people loudly proclaimed its high purposes and its altruistic designs; and yet history is replete with examples where conquest, even when inspired by honourable motives, has corroded the victor, dulled its conscience, and roused ambitions harmful to its own moral and material progress. [...] The conquering nation usually declares that its purposes are lofty and altruistic and that it only desires the moral and material welfare of the subjugated people.” CR, S, 69th-1st, 1926, vol. 67, February 16th, 1926, p. 4075.


34 See Chapter 4.
REPUBLICANISM

Since the beginning of the 20th century, opponents of American retention of the Philippines used a series of ideological arguments, among which republicanism was one of the most important. They argued that colonialism and republicanism were absolutely incompatible, given that the former negated the fundamental basis of the latter: a government based on the consent of those who are being governed. The argument further maintained that the international competition associated with colonialism inevitably led to militarism, which in turn led to the destruction of republican institutions. Given that the nature of the American retention of the Philippines was colonial, it constituted a threat to the political institutions of the United States. The independence of the Philippines would not only reconcile the United States with its anti-colonial tradition, but also ensure the survival of freedom, democracy and the American way of life.35

The potential impact of the Philippines upon American political institutions was also discussed in Congress during the 1930s, although the discussion did not reach the intensity of the previous years.36 As in previous decades, Philippine independence was presented as the reaffirmation of the republican and, thus, anti-imperialist character of the United States. For those who shared this belief, granting independence would bring the United States back to its “foundation principles”.37

The most consistent among the defenders of this idea during the 1930s was Representative Ralph Lozier (D-MO), one of the main congressional supporters of Filipino independence during the 1930’s. During that period, Lozier participated in almost every congressional discussion on Filipino independence. Why did a lawyer and

35 See Chapter 1.

36 Crail, Martin, Lozier, King, Broussard, Jones.

37 CR, H, 73rd-1st, March 19, 1934, p.4842. Utah Senator King defined this issue during the 1929 congressional debates: “This great Republic cannot afford to embark upon imperialistic policies. It would weaken our institutions, corrode the spirit of liberty and democracy which should guide our lives and determine our national policies. Lincoln perceived that the United States could not exist half free and half slave. This Republic can not be imperialistic and at the same time preserve its integrity, its ideals, and its democratic institutions. We must have a democratic republic, and if we depart from the ideals and the spirit of a government of that character, and embark upon the tempestuous sea of conquest, of colonial possessions, of imperialism, economic or otherwise, the work of our fathers will be in danger and the foundations of this Republic imperilled. CR, S, 70th-2nd, vol. 70, February 20, 1929, p.3836.
farmer from Carrolton Missouri engage in such passionate and intense defense of Filipino independence? There is no a definitive answer for this question, but a tentative one could be found in Lozier’s agricultural interests. After he was not renominated for the 1934 election, Lozier returned to Carrolton and “engaged in agricultural pursuit.” Three years later, he was a witness during the House Committee on Ways and Means hearings on the 1937 Marihuana Tax Act. He testified as “General Consul” of the National Institute of Oilseed Products, “an association composed of about 15 or 20 concerns dealing in and crushing vegetable oil-bearing seed.” During the 1930’s, American vegetable oil producers, concerned about real or imagined competition from Filipino coconut oil, joined farmers and labor leaders in their crusade in favor of Filipino independence. Consequently, it could be argued that Lozier’s Filipino pro-independence stand was influenced by his links with American vegetable oil production interests. Significantly, however, despite Lozier’s ties to economic interests, he based his defense of Filipino independence on moral, ideological, and political issues.

Lozier opposed the retention of the Philippines based on ideological principles. For him, the United States was “the outstanding Republic of the world”:

> It may not be inconsistent for monarchies to rule subject people on the other side of the globe, hold in subjection alien races, and deny their subjects to the birthright of self-government, but those policies are absolutely repugnant to the genius and spirit of our institutions. We must not allow cynical and baneful doctrine to swerve us from the old paths and landmarks or permit it to override the sober judgment, destroy the high ideals, dull the conscience, repress the better impulses or smother the overwhelming sentiment of the American people.

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40 Ibid.

41 Brands, Bound to Empire, p. 150.

Thus, for Lozier, the possession of colonies was compatible only with monarchic governments, not republics; U.S. retention of the Philippines was an aberration because it went against “the genius and spirit of our institutions.” Lozier also related retention of the Philippines to the despotism that was associated to monarchies. To him, liberty and democracy were both republican expressions, and to deny freedom was, therefore, anti-republican. Thus, to keep the Filipinos under U.S. rule was also anti-republican. The United States had to be true to itself, and grant the Philippines independence.

The Democratic Senator for Louisiana, Edwin S. Broussard, also opposed the retention of the Philippines on ideological grounds. However, his stance was different because the Senator advocated the archipelago’s independence for economic reasons. On September 30, 1929, Broussard supported the Philippines’ independence as a way to end competition from Filipino agricultural products, which affected American farmers. Significantly, although Broussard’s speech began justifying the need for the Philippine independence on economic grounds, it ended with the theme of republicanism:

> There is no place in this Republic for a dependent colony. We repudiated the colonial idea when we separated from the British Empire. Our ideal, as demonstrated by the past, has been a country of free States and Territories, each an integral part of the Nation between which free trade is provided. [...] We have no legal or moral right to hold the Filipinos a dependent people. Not being an integral part of the Nation and our country not an empire with dependent colonies, but a Republic composed of free States and Territories, we should take immediate steps to grant them independence.

Broussard’s use of ideological elements to conclude his argument confirms these elements’ importance in the congressional debates over the future of the Philippines.

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid, April 5, 1932, p.7516.
THE PHILIPPINES AS A MORAL DILEMMA

During the 1900s and the 1910s, those congressmen who opposed the retention of the Philippines used moral arguments in order to question the U.S. presence in the archipelago. The use of these arguments during the 1920’s and 1930s reveals an interesting turn: it not only became more intense, but it was characterized by a strong anti-colonial tendency and the defense of the right of self-determination.

A good number of congressmen questioned U.S. rule on the grounds that it was immoral, since it was not based on the Filipinos’ consent. To them, it was unfair and wrong to maintain the islands under the American flag against the will of their inhabitants. In using this sort of argument, they questioned the ideological basis of American control: the idea of enlightened colonialism itself. How could a government based on military force be altruistic?

On January 28, 1925, Representative Otis T. Wingo (D-AR) proposed that U.S. control of the Philippines was immoral because it lacked the Filipinos’ consent. To Wingo, the Filipinos’ alleged economic and cultural backwardness was not reason enough to justify American rule. He also did not believe that independence should depend on the ability of the Filipinos to maintain “that peculiar form of government which the American people in their wisdom have set up in continental United States”. Wingo believed that the Filipinos, just as any other people who inhabit the Earth, would be capable of developing the kind of government “that meets their peculiar needs.”

Wingo’s comments provoked the reaction of Representative Knutson (R-MN), who asked him if he believed that Native Americans and Haitians also had the right to self-government. Wingo’s reply is very interesting, since he defended both the right of self-government and the decolonization:

I stand for the independence of the individual; for the independence of every community to govern itself; and it certainly

46 See Chapter 1, pp. 19 and 23; and Chapter 3, pp. 12, 20, and 22.
48 “I do not like for my government to hold a people who are alien in their history, in their habits, and in their customs in political bondage over their protest.” Ibid. p. 2595.
is the right of every people segregated away from us, as are the Filipino people, to govern themselves as they see fit. Let's rise above partisan politics and recognize their right.49

This reply reflects a strongly liberal position, acknowledging three non-white peoples’ right to govern themselves. Furthermore, Wingo is the first member of Congress I have found defending the independence of the Philippines as a right, which Americans could not deny the Filipinos without damaging the nature of the American nation itself.50

In February 1926, Senator William H. King (D-UT) launched an intense partisan attack against Calvin Coolidge administration’s naval expenses. During the debate, King criticized the U.S. naval presence in the Philippines. For him, the administration’s insistence on “maintain naval bases indefinitely at Manila Bay or some other point or harbor” proved that the Republicans wanted to keep “control over the Philippine Archipelago.”51 For him, that was a terrible mistake, because American naval authorities had acknowledged that the Philippines were indefensible. What is interesting about King’s comments is that what began as an attack on the strategic wisdom behind retention of the Philippines, ended as an assault on the morality of American rule. The Senator from Utah questioned American control of the Philippines in terms that were very similar to Wingo’s: U.S. rule in the Philippines was immoral because it did not have the Filipinos’ support. Like Wingo, King brought together moral propositions and a serious concern regarding the potential impact that the Philippines could have on the American political system. For the Utah Senator, no republic could govern another nation without endangering its own political institutions. In other words, King made use of an

49 Ibid. p. 2597.

50 “I do not want the opportunity to pass without registering any protest as a citizen of this Republic against the Nation holding another people in political bondage. That bloodguilt ought not to be on the Nation’s soul. We ought to the Filipino people go their way and order their life to suit themselves. […] let them work out their own destiny, and let us show them we believe that no man is wise enough to govern another man against that man’s consent”. Ibid. p.2595. Emphasis mine.

argument that had been extensively used by those who opposed U.S. policy in the Philippines: colonialism and republicanism were absolutely incompatible.52

During the 1930s, the moral challenges to U.S. control of the Philippines grew stronger. Given the strength of some of the economic arguments used to justify Philippine independence, a group of legislators53 insisted that the Philippine issue was more than just an economic matter but presented a serious moral and ethical problem. In the words of Representative Edward E. Cox (D-GA), the Philippines were “the skeleton in our closet, as a long as we keep it there we will be trouble with self-accusation.”54 For these legislators, independence was a Filipino right that the American government could not and should not deny.

Representative Ralph F. Lozier (D-MO) was the most persistent of the members of this group and also one of the strongest advocates of Filipino independence during the 1930s. Lozier argued for independence on both moral and ideological grounds, combining a strong anti-imperialism, republicanism and idealism.55 Lozier proposed that both United States foreign policy, and specifically its Philippine policy, should be based on respect, consistency and sincerity.56 American control was immoral because it was not based on Filipinos’ consent, and independence was a right that the United States could not deny the Filipino people. He also denied that the Filipino problem was economic, arguing that what was at stake in the Philippines was the honor and prestige of the United States. Thus, the only way out was complete and absolute independence:

52 Ibid., p. 4075.


54 CR, H, 72nd-1st, January 4, 1932, p.1240.


56 CR, H, 72nd, 1st, April 5, 1932, p.7517.
We should compose our controversy with the Filipinos in a manner that will involve no sacrifice of our national honor, no violation of the principles and ideals on which our Government is founded, no infringements on the rights of the Filipinos, no abandonment of their self-respect and God-given rights, and no diminution of the confidence, good will, and affection that now exists and should always continue between the people of the United States and the Filipino race.57

“An American Pledge”

The congressmen who placed some weight on the moral side of the Filipino problem claimed the existence of a pledge of independence made by the United States. None of them made the origin of this alleged pledge clear, but it seems that some of them based their demands on the preamble of the Jones Act and on an alleged historical commitment to the independence of the Philippines.58 Regardless of the origin of this pledge, the legislators who supported its existence argued that the honor and credibility of the United States were at stake in the Philippines. To them, breaking such a “solemn pledge” would damage the international reputation of the United States.59 Therefore, there was no choice regarding the granting of independence to the Philippines, and it was not to be conceived of as an act of cowardice, but as an obligation. That is, Americans had to abandon the Philippines, not because they feared the (mainly military) consequences of their presence in the islands, but because they had given their word.60

The idea was not important during the congressional debates that took place between 1925 and 1929,61 but this does not mean that during this period the issue of


58 For the preamble of the Jones Act, see Chapter 5, page 187, note 107.

59 The phrase is from Representative John E. Rankin (D-MS), CR, H, 73rd-2nd, March 19, 1934, p.4840. Emphasis mine.

60 Among the members of Congress that supported this argument were Senators Kenneth D. Mackellar (D-TN), William H. King (D-UT), Dingell (D-MI), and Representatives Ralph Gilbert (D-KY), John McDuffie (D-AL), Richard J. Welch (R-CA), Ralph F. Lozier (D-MO), John D.M. Johnson (Farmer Laborite-MN), John E. Rankin (D-MS), Charles G. Edwards (D-GA), Edward E. Cox (D-GA), Jones (D-TX), and Oliver H. Cross (D-TX).

61 During that period, I only found two members of Congress who supported Filipino independence from a moral standpoint: Gilbert, in 1926 and 1928, and King, in 1929.
Filipino independence was not approached from an ethical standpoint. For instance, in 1929, Senator King argued that there was an American commitment towards the independence of the Philippines, and strongly defended the Filipinos’ political capacity:

The United States cannot afford to be insincere or to indulge in sharp practice or to trifle with a proud and progressive people. The Philippine Islands belong to the Filipinos, not to the United States. They are demanding that this Government redeem its promise and withdraw its sovereignty over the Philippine Islands and recognize the independence of the Filipinos. They have demonstrated their capacity for self-government; they have made progress and are advancing in a satisfactory manner along the pathway of national development and intellectual and moral progress.62

During the 1930s, a number of congressmen used the idea of a pledge for independence. One of them was Representative Richard J. Welch (R-CA), who in 1934 argued that in 1898, the United States expressed its wish not to occupy the Philippines permanently, but to assist the Filipinos in the development of a stable government that would guarantee their freedom.63 The Filipinos’ request for independence was in perfect harmony with the “pledge” that had been made thirty years before. In other words, the Filipinos’ request was not extraordinary; they were asking for something for which they were fully prepared, and had been promised they would receive.64

Representative Magnus Johnson (Farmer Laborite-MN) joined economic and moral concerns in his argument in favor of Filipino independence. Johnson, a representative of a labor party, was a fierce defender of independence to stop competition from Filipino products and Filipino immigrants’ labor.65 The labor movement was one of


63 Unfortunately, Welch did not make clear how or when that pledge was made.


65 On March 19, 1934, Johnson made a strong economic defense of Filipino independence, arguing that Filipino independence was crucial for American farmers and workers because it would stop unfair competition from Filipino agricultural products and immigrants, and aid America’s economic recovery. Ibid. p. 4842.
the biggest sources of support for Filipino independence, but he also acknowledged that there was a moral aspect to independence that the United States could not neglect, because there was a pledge that had to be fulfilled. For Johnson, Filipino independence would do justice both to American workers and farmers and the Filipino people.

Representative Charles Gordon Edwards (D-GA) believed the United States had not fulfilled its independence pledge to the Philippines because of the size of American dollars investments in the archipelago. According to him, the United States had to live up to its own traditions and fulfill the pledge. Interestingly, Edwards endorsed the innocence of the United States, stating that the American nation “has never been an imperialistic country.” The U.S. occupation of the Philippines was not colonial in nature, since a pledge of independence lay behind it. Edwards asserted the altruistic nature of the United States, insisting that it had always been acted “in the interests of humanity, wherever her flag has gone.” However, the Georgia democrat believed the United States had to fulfill its pledge in order to demonstrate that in fact it was not an imperialistic nation. Moreover,

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67 CR, H, 73rd-2nd, March 19, 1934, p.4842. Representative Oliver H. Cross (D-TX) also combined moral, economic and strategic concerns. In 1930, he stated that “if we would befriend the primary industry of this country, agriculture, if we would maintain our international prestige and avoid the destruction, sooner or later, of our billion dollar navy, if we would live up to our pretensions and fulfill our oft-made promises and keep our national honor unsullied, then we should grant to the Filipinos their unqualified independence without further delay”. Senator Kenneth D. McKellar combined moral concerns with ideological issues. According to him, “it seems to me we ought not to violate our own Constitution, we ought not to violate our own governmental policies and principles, and above all, we ought not to violate the word we have given to these people to give them their freedom. I think they have met every requirement and their freedom ought to be granted to them at the earliest possible moment.” CR, H, May 12, 1930, p. 8797 and CR, S, March 5, 1930, p. 4803. Emphasis mine.


69 Ibid.
fulfilling the pledge was not difficult, because after thirty years of training the Filipinos were ready to govern their own country.

I am proud of that great flag of ours, because it has never been one of aggression; it has never been a land-grabbing flag, but it has moved only in the interest of human welfare wherever it has gone. Let us hope our country will never depart from this course. We promised independence to these people, who have been quite patient, as soon as they were capable of self-government. Is there any doubt at this time they are capable of governing themselves?  

It is necessary to point out that the idea that the United States had promised the Philippines independence found very little opposition. Representative Jonathan M. Wainwright (R-NY) stated, in 1930, that some generals and presidents had committed to the independence of the Philippines, but that was no reason to argue that there was a pledge by the American people. Furthermore, there was no law or political promise that would stand above the will of the American people, who had expressed their support of the retention of the Philippines in 1900.

**Independence as a right**

As we have seen, some of the congressmen who questioned the retention of the Philippines on moral grounds approached the Filipino problem from a human rights perspective. For them, the Filipinos had the right to self-determination and to independence; denying them their right to be free would be immoral. These congressmen believed the United States had no choice but to acknowledge the Filipinos’ right to independence and to leave the islands.

The Democratic Senator from Utah, William H. King, was the most ardent proponent of this idea. In 1934, he argued that the Filipino problem was one of human rights, whose solution was beyond any legal formula. King saw independence as a

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70 Ibid. Emphasis mine.
72 John D. Dingell (D-MI) and William H. King (D-UT).
“precious right of man” that the United States had been denying the Filipinos. He argued, furthermore, that this position was “unworthy of this Republic” and had to be corrected.  

King had a broad view of the meaning of Philippine independence, linking it to the promotion of respect for small nations worldwide:

We must not return to the days of autocratic government; to the rule of powerful states, which exercise dominion over distant lands and alien peoples. Rather we must encourage democracy, a spirit of liberalism, the development of smaller units, the recognition of the individual as the real vital unit, and the most important factor in the social, political, intellectual and moral development of the world.

For King, the independence of the Philippines was one step towards the de-colonization of the world, and the creation of a new world order based on equality of all nations. King favoured a foreign policy that would promote democracy and liberalism, with the United States on the side of the weak and the small, confronting the colonial aggressiveness of the other world powers. King’s attitude toward Filipino independence was close to the ideas of group of congressional dissenters called the peace progressives. This group of congressmen adopted a clear anti-imperial position during the 1920’s. They wanted to promote world peace through an American foreign policy based on “reformist lines.”

According to Robert D. Johnson, the peace progressives

[...] wanted the United States to employ a variety of economic, moral, and diplomatic tactics on behalf of weaker states and peoples to help create what they hoped would be a more stable and peaceful international order.

Despite his closeness to the peace progressives, King was an unusual congressional dissenter because he was a conservative politician. A Mormon corporate lawyer from


76 Ibid, p. 3.
Utah, King was a “Red-baiter” that “did not fit the profile of a classic Senate dissenter.”

However, he became an obstinate enemy of naval spending, fierce opponent of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, and strong supporter of the League of Nations. He opposed a big Navy arguing that it would be used against “the rights of smaller states.” He also authored a number of amendments calling for a U.S. withdrawal from Haiti. Like the peace progressives, King wanted an American foreign policy based on respect for small countries’ rights.

King posed the issue of Filipino independence as necessary to put an end to the questions about the United States’ anti-imperialist nature. In honoring its pledge to the Filipinos, the U.S. would significantly improve its worldwide credibility and leadership.

Thus, King’s attitude combined moralism, anti-imperialism and idealism. Another example of such blend can be found in a debate with Senator Millard Tydings (D-MD) in February 1929, during which Tydings argued that the Philippines were safer as a United States’ colony than they would ever be as a sovereign nation. According to Tydings, once the United States had left, the Philippines would become the easy prey of some other world power that would not treat them as “kindly” as Americans had. The Senator from Maryland admitted that this possibility troubled him. Tydings’ arguments provoked a strong reaction from King, who reminded the Senator that ever since Roman times the colonial powers had justified their dominion over weaker nations on the basis of the supposed benefits of colonialism; such an argument was anti-republican and, therefore, un-American. In a fit of idealism, King told Tydings he would rather see the Philippines subjugated by another power than retained under the American flag against the will of the Filipinos.

He closed his speech underlying his anti-colonialist position:

77 Ibid, pp. 263-265.

78 Ibid. H. W. Brands notes that King was a senator from a sugar state, which helps explain his support for Filipino independence because U.S. sugar interests also favored it. Op. cit., p. 155.

79 For King, “The world will acclaim our course and people everywhere who now criticize because they fear we are imperialistic will be disarmed and will add their voices to the chorus of praise and good will which I feel will sure be heard in all parts of the world” Ibid. p. 3842.

80 Ibid. pp. 3842-43.
“We have no right to impose upon them [the Filipinos] our views by force, even though our views and civilization measure up to a higher standard.”

In this debate, Tydings reproduced the idea of enlightened colonialism, the representation of American colonialism as a source of protection and material progress for the Filipinos. For Tydings, American dominion was preferable to the uncertainties and dangers of independence. On the other hand, King believed that the Philippines’ right to freedom was more important than any supposed material benefit that they could obtain in their role as colonies of the United States, including the potential for protection against an attack. In other words, colonialism was not justifiable in King’s eyes. The Senator from Utah also expressed concern for America’s republican institutions. For him, ruling the Filipinos against their will was contrary to American republican values. King defended Filipino independence as the necessary reconciliation of American political discourse and practice. It was not enough for the U.S. to claim to be a democratic, anti-colonial republic. It had to act like one.

Again, King was arguing that the idea of enlightened colonialism was not exclusive to Americans. On the contrary, he linked it to imperialism since Roman times, arguing that empires had always justified their dominion on the basis that it was beneficial for those who were dominated. King thus struck hard against one of the main justifications of the U.S. presence in the Philippines: American colonialism was not exceptional at all and there was no possible way to justify it.

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE FILIPINOS

From the moment the Americans arrived in the Philippines, the Filipinos were submitted to observation and scrutiny by American writers, colonial officers, missionaries, journalists, travellers and intellectuals, who analyzed, described and catalogued the Filipinos for their readers in the United States. The Filipinos were represented as a people who lacked linguistic and religious homogeneity, a savage, racially inferior people with no history who were divided in tribes and completely

81 Ibid. p. 3843.
82 See Chapter 2.
incapable of self-government. This representation played a vital role in the justification of American control as a civilizing and nation-building process.\textsuperscript{83}

As previous chapters have described, the images and stereotypes of Filipinos created in the first decades of the 20th century were often used in the congressional debates over the Philippines. Members of Congress used them to justify or to attack American colonialism in the archipelago, but they also participated in producing these representations. Congressmen such as Richmond P. Hobson (D-Alabama) and Albert J. Beveridge (R-Indiana) created their own images of the Filipinos.\textsuperscript{84}

Between 1925 and 1934, the questions regarding the Filipino political ability, educational level, racial nature and history continued to generate serious debate among U.S. lawmakers. After the more than thirty years of American control, some congressmen felt the need to explain and describe the Philippines. To them, it was because of the American people’s ignorance regarding the Philippines that they failed to understand the true dimensions of the Filipino issue.\textsuperscript{85} In trying to remedy this ignorance, some members of Congress explained and described the Philippines and the Filipinos not only to their colleagues, but also to their fellow citizens. One of them, Representative John M. Nelson (R-WI), argued in 1930 that Americans had an incorrect impression of the Philippines due to the publicity campaign launched by the enemies of Filipino independence. According to Nelson, his comments sought precisely to overcome this incorrect representation of the Filipinos that was prevalent among Americans.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{83} See Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{84} See Chapters 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{85} According to Senator Hawes, “If Americans will for a little while withdraw their gaze from Haiti, at our door, and Nicaragua, to both of which countries we have sent our marines, and devote attention to the Philippines, the problem which these people present to us and to themselves could be adjusted otherwise. Once Americans come to realize that the Philippines are part of Asia; that their 13,000,000 people are Malays and Orientals; that the islands are not in the trade route between the United States and China and Japan; that the distance from our coast to Manila is almost beyond the ability of our Navy or our Army to neutralize, they will deal decisively with the question of Filipino independence.” CR, S, 72nd-1st, July 1, 1932, p.14476.

\textsuperscript{86} According to Nelson, “From a false propaganda America has a mistaken idea of the Philippines. It is not unusual for one country to have a bizarre opinion of the whole people of another country. The story is told that after a Chinese lecturer had appeared before an American audience an American woman went up to the Chinese and said ‘Is it true that they eat mice in
Also in 1930, Representative Lozier, a fervent supporter of Filipino independence, argued “many Americans lack accurate information in reference to the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands.” To combat such ignorance, Lozier provided a description of the geography, history and racial origins of the Filipinos. He described the Philippines as a set of islands found 12,000 miles from New York City and 7,000 from San Francisco. Lozier then recounted the history of the Philippines, from the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century to the time of the American conquest in 1898. Interestingly, Lozier began his history of the Philippines before the arrival of the Spaniards, paying particular attention to the archipelago’s historic relationship with China and the Muslim world. Lozier further informed his fellow congressmen that the Philippines had been part of the Malaysian Empire. By acknowledging that the Filipino history and culture did not begin with the arrival of the Spaniards or the Americans, Lozier justified Philippine independence by portraying the Filipinos as a nation.

Lozier also devoted attention to the population of the Philippines, classifying it in three cultural-religious groups: the “mountain people”, the Moros, and the Christians. He subdivided the Christians into two social classes: the “caciques” (“largely mestizos or mixed [Spanish and Chinese] blood”), who constituted the “moneyed class”, and the Taos, who constituted the peasant class. It is important to note that he made no mention of the supposedly irreconcilable differences between the cultural groups (Moors vs. China? ’ He politely replied, ‘Madam, is it really true that they eat hot dogs in America?’ Some of the misrepresentations about the Filipinos are just absurd.”


88 Ibid.

89 Ibid. Lozier emphasized the great distance between the Philippines and the United States as an element that Americans should pay attention to. This was a topic other members of Congress addressed when they analyzed the strategic meaning of the Philippines for the United States. Representative John E. Rankin (D-MS) also emphasized the Filipinos’ historical links with Japan and China, stating that “They have a civilization that goes back as far as that of the Japanese or that of the Chinese; and to say that we are giving them something they cannot handle is beside the question, it seems to me. In my opinion they can take as good care of themselves as many of the other nations of the world are doing at this time.”


91 Ibid. p. 11701.
Christians), and that he does not classify them as tribes. Lozier acknowledged that there were differences between the groups, but did not give them any importance, nor consider them an obstacle for independence. This was a significant rupture with traditional representations of the Filipinos, given that Lozier acknowledged the religious and cultural differences between the Filipinos, without considering them an obstacle to the islands’ independence.

Lozier racialized the Filipinos by identifying them as members of the Malayan race, but again broke with previous representations of the Filipinos by describing them as the most civilized members of that race, thanks to their direct contact with western civilization and religion. According to Lozier, they were a more Christian race than other “backward or subject race.”

Nelson’s and Lozier’s arguments are important because they spoke for a number of members of Congress who, in the 1930s, reinvented the Filipinos and their history in order to justify an American departure from the islands. In their speeches, Filipinos were no longer a savage people, religiously and linguistically divided, lacking history and political ability, but a people ready for independence.

Lozier argued that “the Malayan, or brown race, of which the Filipino is an offshoot, is one of the five great families of humanity according to the classification made by Jean Frederick Bluumenbach in 1775, and comprises the dominant and non-Nigritic inhabitants of the coastal regions of the Malay Peninsula and Oceania, or the East Indian Archipelago, extending from the Malay Peninsula to Timor and from Timor north of Luzon, which, of course, includes Sumatra, Java, Celebes, the Philippines and numerous smaller islands.” Ibid. p. 11701-02. Emphasis mine.

For him, “It is a significant fact, and one too frequently overlooked, that the Filipinos are more universally Christian than any other so-called backward or subject race. Largely of Malayan blood, they have developed the spiritual side of their natures to a remarkable degree, and in religion, ethics, morals, culture and right living they have outstripped and left all other Malayan groups far behind. Of this numerous and far-flung ethnological stock, the Filipinos have demonstrated the greatest genius and capacity for efficient self-government. They are highly imitative and readily accept and skillfully utilize that which is best in western civilization.” Ibid. p.11703.

Lozier, Hawes, John M. Nelson (R-WI), Wingo, Dyer, Wheeler (D-MT), McDuffie, Snyder (D-PA), Rankin (D-MS), Colden, King, Cross, Gilbert, Lamneck, and Crail.
The political ability of the Filipinos

Since 1898, retention of the Philippines had been justified by the argument that Filipinos lacked the political ability to govern their own country, and therefore the U.S. could not abandon them. In other words, Americans’ motivation to retain control of the Philippines was not expansionistic or imperialistic in nature, but a product of the Filipinos’ lack of political ability, a kind of historical accident which left the U.S. no other choice but to retain the Philippines to fulfil their responsibility to educate the Filipinos. For those who shared this view, the United States could not abandon the islands until the Filipinos were capable to govern themselves. This idea was one of the bases upon which the representation of American colonialism as an altruistic enterprise was built. Thus, to argue that the Filipinos were ready for self-government meant that it was time for American tutelage to end. This was, therefore, a topic that was discussed from the beginning to the end of American rule in the Philippines.

During the period between 1925 and 1934, the Filipinos’ political ability figured prominently in the congressional debates about the future of the Philippines. For instance, in 1926 Representative Ralph Gilbert (D-KY) argued that it was not fair to use American political achievements as a standard for judging the Filipinos. Gilbert reminded his colleagues “the English-speaking people are as outstanding in matters of government in the modern world as the Romans were in the ancient world and, of course, it is not fair to apply the standard of that government which has the greatest capacity for governing.” In other words, political ability was an innate skill of the Anglo-Saxon race. For Gilbert, the Filipinos would be able to develop this ability to some degree, but would never equal Americans’ achievements because of their racial limitations.

95 The legislators who addressed this issue were Wingo (D-AR), Lozier, Lamneck, Ralph Gilbert (D-KY), Cross, Tydings, McDuffie, Snyder, Ranking, Colden, Dyer, Crail and Nelson.

96 Senator King also argued against evaluating Filipinos’ political skills using American standards. For him, it was wrong to expect the Filipinos to develop their political skills as the Americans had done after independence. He also argued that American control was not helping the Filipinos prepare to be a free and sovereign nation, because only free peoples could develop self-government abilities. CR, Senate, 69th-1st, 1926, vol. 67, February 16, 1926, p.4075.

In the 1930s, Filipinos’ political ability was again discussed in Congress. However, during this period, very few legislators questioned Filipinos’ political skills.\textsuperscript{98} On the contrary, a large group of congressmen defended the Filipinos’ political ability as they advocated independence for the archipelago.\textsuperscript{99} They acknowledged that the Filipinos’ supposed political inability had been an argument put forward by those who opposed the independence of the islands. However, they argued, there was no reason to further postpone independence, since the Filipinos were now ready for it.

In 1931, Representative Leonidas C. Dyer (R-MO) argued that, as long as the Filipinos remained under American control, it would be impossible to determine with certainty how ready they were for self-government. Personally, he believed they were capable of self-government, and recommended that they should first be granted independence, for only after this could their political ability be judged.\textsuperscript{100} In other words, the Filipino people would never be able to fully demonstrate their political abilities as long as they remained colonial subjects.\textsuperscript{101} Significantly, Dyer’s efforts to demonstrate that the Filipinos were ready for independence included his acknowledgement that they had organized a republic in 1899. However, he did not fully break with the past, failing to mention what happened to the republic Aguinaldo had organized.\textsuperscript{102}

Undoubtedly, the most ardent defender of the Filipinos’ political ability during the congressional debates of the 1930s was Representative Lozier. Like Dyer, Lozier acknowledged that the alleged lack of political ability had been used to deny

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\textsuperscript{98} I found only one representative arguing that Filipinos were not ready for self-government in 1934: Representative Colden (D-CA). CR, H, 73rd-2nd, March 19, 1934, p. 963.

\textsuperscript{99} Among them were Lamneck, Gilbert, Lozier, Dyer, McDuffie, Nelson, Crail and King.

\textsuperscript{100} Representative Lozier also thought that it was unfair to ask the Filipinos to show their administrative efficiency without granting them independence because that efficiency was a “fruitage of opportunity and experience.” CF, H, 71st-3rd, May 6, 1930, p.8466.


\textsuperscript{102} According to Dyer, “the Philippine people have acquired a reasonable degree of appreciation of the Anglo-Saxon concept of individual rights. \textbf{Even before the operation of American influence on the islands there was set up by the people in their own constitution for the Philippine republic a guaranty of individual rights}. Thirty years of the application of the American Bill of Rights cannot have had a salutary influence in furthering these concepts.” Ibid. Emphasis mine.
\end{flushleft}
independence to the Philippines. Lozier expected that the Filipinos would develop “the same genius and capacity” that the American people had developed:

It would be extremely unreasonable to demand or expect of the Filipino masses, but recently emerging from three centuries of exploitation and oppression, the same intimate knowledge and efficient application of the useful mechanic, liberal, and fine arts, the same passion for power, the same nationwide culture. The same comprehension of governmental problems, and the same mastery of statecraft that the citizens of the United States are presumed to possess after 150 years of national life and experience.

Lozier believed that the Filipino people were not at the same level of political maturity of Americans, but that they had in fact developed enough political skills to govern themselves. The quotation above includes also an ideological element: Lozier believed that American exceptionalism required the United States to behave in a fair and magnanimous way when judging the Filipinos’ abilities, since it was impossible for them to reach the Americans’ level of political development. To Lozier, such magnanimity would further demonstrate the altruistic nature of American rule in the Philippines.

Lozier believed that the Filipinos’ political abilities were, to a great extent, the result of the Americans’ educational work in the islands. Both education and teaching in English were important in Lozier’s arguments, but it is important to note that he was not the only member of Congress to praise American educational work in the Philippines. A group of congressmen argued that the Filipinos had developed the political ability required for independence thanks to the nation-making experiment implemented by

103 Lozier called this argument “an ancient sophistry [...] It has been invoked and worked overtime by the governing classes since the beginning of time in order to withhold from citizens and subjects a participation in the affairs of their own Government. No republic has ever been established that did not have to combat this fallacy.” CR, H, 72nd-1st, April 5, 1932, p.7516. Emphasis mine.


106 Dyer, Crail, Cross, McDuffie, King, and Snyder (D-PA) also mentioned the impact of American education on Filipino political skills.
Americans in the archipelago. They agreed with Lozier in that the teaching of English had played and important role in transforming the Filipinos into a nation that was ready for independence.

In 1934, Senator King analyzed the meaning of the educational system that had been established by the United States in the Philippines. King emphasized its achievements: 8,000 schools built, 30,000 teachers trained, and the creation of colleges and universities. Despite the American government’s undeniable achievements, there was no guarantee that continued U.S. control of the Philippines would better prepare Filipinos for independence. King had no doubts that Americans had fulfilled their task, and believed that proof of this was the democratic character and political abilities the Filipinos now demonstrated. It was thus necessary, according to King, to give them the opportunity to prove the world that they were ready to be free. King’s approach was quite realistic, given that it conceded that the Filipino independence entailed great risks, but believed that those risks needed to be faced. To continue American colonial rule would not guarantee the continuation of the Filipinos’ progress to date, and independence would not necessarily lead to its automatic destruction.

**REINVENTING FILIPINO HISTORY**

The history of the Philippines played an important role in the congressional debates the islands’ future during the first two decades of the 20th century. Both opponents and defenders of U.S. Philippine policy used the islands’ history to support their positions, appropriating the right to define the Filipinos’ history and denying that

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107 According to Dyer, “While there are many dialects in the Philippines, just as there are in all oriental countries, there are but three basic dialects, the Tagalog, the Ilocano, and the Visayan. There are three other important dialects, but the testimony was that it was a simple matter for the people to have a speaking knowledge of two or three of these dialects. Moreover, as the result of the teaching of English in the islands for more than 30 years, a great number of Filipinos, regardless of their groups or their dialects, speak the English language, which is rapidly becoming a common language throughout the islands, especially among the younger generation.” CR, H, 71st-3rd, vol. 74, part 7, January 13, 1931, p.2112.


right to the Filipinos. In this regard, the interpretation of the first few years of American presence in the Philippines are remarkably interesting and important, and in particular, the actions of a group of American diplomatic, military and naval officers during the period between Dewey’s victory, in May 1898, and the beginning of the Filipino-American war in February 1899. The existence of an alleged Filipino-American alliance against Spain that was based on the promise of independence to the Philippines, and the issue of who began hostilities in the Filipino-American war, were controversial subjects not only in Congress, but also in the public arena.110

During the 1930s, Congress addressed these questions in ways very different from those of previous years. The 1930’s witnessed the reinvention of the history of Filipino-American relations by a group of congressmen who had no problem acknowledging the existence of a Filipino-American alliance, or the Filipinos’ contribution to the defeat of Spain. They criticized the process that made the Philippines an American territory, harshly questioned the actions of Admiral George Dewey and other American officers, made Aguinaldo a national hero and accepted American troops’ responsibility for the outbreak of the Filipino-American war.

The acquisition of the Philippines

The United States’ acquisition of the Philippines was one of the topics of Filipino history that was least mentioned by members of Congress during the 1930s. Some of them repeated the traditional explanation, which attributed American presence in the Philippines to a historical accident. According to them, the acquisition of the Philippines had been the indirect result of a war to free Cuba. Those who used this argument posited purely humanitarian, as opposed to imperialistic and expansionistic, motivations for the war against Spain. In this view, the Philippines ended up in U.S. hands because Americans had no choice but to keep them, given the Filipinos’ lack of political skills.111 For instance, in May 1930, Representative Lozier argued that

110 See Chapter 2.

111 Representatives Lozier and John D. Dingell (D-MI), and Senators Tydings and Hawes.
By the fortunes of war into which we were reluctantly drawn, these islands [the Philippines] with their millions of brown-skinned men and women were left on our front doorstep. They are not the fruits of a war of conquest, of for territorial expansion or for national aggrandizement. They are the residue of an adventure in the initiation of which we were undeniably actuated by altruistic, unselfish, and humanitarian motives.\textsuperscript{112}

Even Lozier, a staunch defender of Philippine independence, adopted this traditional explanation for the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines: the United States did not conquer the Philippines, but inherited them. Americans welcomed the Filipinos under their protective wing, like an orphan who abandoned on a convent’s doorstep.

Not all congressmen shared Lozier’s views. For instance, in 1932, Representative Edward E. Cox (D-GA) argued that the annexation of the Philippines happened against the will of the American people. According to him, Americans expected that after the defeat of Spain, the Philippines would receive the same treatment as Cuba: they would be granted independence. However, American imperialists had other plans for the islands. It is important to note that Cox admitted that the Filipinos were fighting for their independence when Dewey’s fleet arrived, that there was a Filipino-American alliance, and that the Filipino contribution was vital to the American victory.\textsuperscript{113}

Senator Huey P. Long (D-LA) harshly criticized the acquisition of the Philippines. Long was a very important political figure of the 1930’s, a flamboyant southern senator with presidential ambitions. As governor of Louisiana (1928-1932) he developed a strong populist agenda and a strong state political machinery which helped Long to become a U.S. Senator in 1932. He supported Franklin D. Roosevelt’s election in 1932, but split with the President in 1933, expressing disappointment with the New Deal’s extent and nature. Long was a radical populist who supported income redistribution, not reforms, as the only way out of Depression. For him, the federal government should use its power to close the gap between rich and poor Americans taxing the millionaires and the corporations. After breaking with the President, Long


\textsuperscript{113} CR, H, 72nd-1st, January 28, 1932, p.2918.
launched a campaign against Roosevelt and New Deal with clear presidential ambitions. In 1935, an assassin ended Huey P. Long’s political career.114

Long’s remarks about the Philippines can be understood as part of his campaign against the Roosevelt administration, but also as a reflection of his staunch isolationism. He saw the war with Spain and American participation in the First World War as costly mistakes. Furthermore, according to him,

The acquisition of the Philippines as the Senator from Maryland [Tydings] disclosed yesterday, represents a black mark against the American Government that it never has washed off. In the first place, we went into war with Spain that we had no business ever going into. Then, after we had gone into war with Spain, we hailed over toward the Philippine Islands, and we propagated among the Filipinos the idea that they ought to throw off the Spanish yoke and declare themselves free. It was the American envoys and the American admirals and the American generals who encouraged Aguinaldo’s forces in the Philippine Islands to throw off the Spanish yoke and declare themselves free and independent. When the Filipinos had won their independence, Spain did not want to surrender to the Filipinos, but wanted to surrender to the United States; and after we had aroused the Filipinos to throw off the Spanish yoke and had declared war on Spain, we turned around and accepted a surrender of the Philippines from Spain, and paid $15,000,000 and took over the Philippine Islands ourselves. If that was not double-crossing both Spain and the Filipinos at the same time, I do not know how a nation could do it. It was a perfect piece of international piracy that was done by the United States Government in encouraging those people in one breath to declare war and throw off the Spanish yoke, and then, when they had declared war and had won independence in a war that the Americans had encouraged them to make, America went in and accepted the surrender of the islands to keep the Filipinos from having what they had won by force of arms.115


This quote reflects a complex interpretation of Filipino history. First, Long described the acquisition of the Philippines as a black mark in the history of the United States, making clear his opposition to retaining the islands and questioning the basis of American colonialism. However, he did not recognize the existence of an independence movement in the Philippines before the arrival of the United States. For him, the Filipino people had only rebelled against the Spaniards because they were incited to do so by the Americans. In taking this position Long forgot or ignored the fact that the Filipinos had been fighting for independence since 1896. Finally, Long acknowledged that the Filipinos had earned their independence and that the U.S. had betrayed them by taking it from them.116

Senator King also offers an interesting interpretation of the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines. According to him, Americans had not freed the Filipinos, since by 1898 the Filipinos had full control of the islands and had organized a republican government. For King, the Filipino people had freed themselves and it was Americans who deprived them of that freedom.117 This led King to make a much more radical argument than Long’s. According to King, the Filipinos had ended Spanish rule before the arrival of American troops. Therefore, Spain had no power to transfer the islands to the United States, and the Treaty of Paris and American control of the Filipino archipelago were illegal because by 1898 the Philippines were a sovereign country.118

Representatives John M. Nelson (R-WI) and Oliver H. Cross (D-TX) agreed with King that the Filipinos had freed themselves before the arrival of American troops. According to Nelson, “it becomes self-evident that the Filipino people had won their independence before we Americans came in.”119 Cross even agrees with King in that Spain had no power to transfer the Philippines to the United States in exchange for

116 Long saw Spain was a tyrannical power, but he saw no reason why the United States had to fight Spain in 1898.

117 According to King, “we did not free the Filipinos; they freed themselves from Spanish rule and we, by force of arms, destroyed their government and imposed upon them our will and our rule.” CR, S, 69th-1st, Vol. 67, February 16, 1926, p. 4077. Emphasis mine.


$20,000,000. According to Cross, sovereignty in the Philippines was “exercised by the Philippine Republic, with General Aguinaldo as its president” at the time the Treaty of Paris was signed.\textsuperscript{120} He thus acknowledged the existence of a republic created by the Filipinos, denied that Spain had any right to turn the Philippines over to the United States, and challenged the legality of American control of the Philippines. The quote also casts Aguinaldo not as a bandit, but the legitimate leader of the Filipino people.

**The Filipino-American alliance**

The issue of an alleged Filipino-American alliance was a recurrent topic in the congressional debates regarding the Philippines. According to Filipino nationalists and their American supporters, in 1898 American naval officers and diplomats had offered independence to the Filipino rebels in exchange for a military alliance against Spain. In fulfilment of this alliance, the Filipino rebels attacked the Spanish forces in the islands and besieged Manila, the capital city. According to Filipino nationalists, the rebels actions facilitated the American forces’ victory.

Throughout the first two decades of the 20th century, opponents of Philippine independence minimized the Filipino contribution to the defeat of Spanish forces, and denied the existence of any alliance. However, in the 1930s a group of congressmen not only recognized the alliance, but emphasized the Filipinos’ role in defeating Spain.\textsuperscript{121}

In 1932, one of these congressmen, Representative Oliver H. Cross (D-TX), presented a detailed analysis of events in the Philippines from Dewey’s victory in May 1898 until the Spanish surrender in August. Cross, a lawyer and farmer, arrived at seven conclusions.\textsuperscript{122} First, that the Filipinos supported the Americans against the Spaniards because they believed that they would thus achieve their independence. Second, that this assumption was correct because the Americans had achieved their own independence through French aid. Third, that the American consul in Hong Kong had met with

\textsuperscript{120} CR, H, 71st-2nd, May 12, 1930, p.8798. Emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{121} Cross, Cox and Nelson.

\textsuperscript{122} For more information about Cross see: Bioguide, \texttt{http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=C000931}.
Aguinaldo in November 1897, to discuss the terms of an alliance against Spain. Fourth, that Admiral Dewey was in contact with Aguinaldo while the Filipino leader was in Hong Kong. Fifth, that Aguinaldo returned to the Philippines on board a U.S. navy ship after the destruction of the Spanish fleet in Cavite. Sixth, that the American consul in Hong Kong bought rifles that were delivered to Aguinaldo. Finally, that Dewey himself ordered that all rifles and cannons captured from the Spaniards should be handed over to Aguinaldo. Thus Cross concluded that there had in fact been a Filipino-American alliance.

Cross also emphasized the Filipinos role in defeating Spain, arguing that the Filipinos weakened the Spanish troops, facilitating the American victory. Proof of this was the fact that when American troops arrived in the Philippines, they found most of the archipelago in hands of the Filipino rebels who had besieged the Spanish garrison in Manila. According to Cross:

Had not been for the insurgents, instead of having 20 killed and 105 wounded, would we not have thousands killed and wounded, not to mention those would have languished with disease in the jungles?

Cross completely broke with earlier explanations of the 1898 American victory in his advocacy of Filipino independence: Filipino help had been crucial for that victory, sparing the lives of thousands of American soldiers. According to Cross, such valuable help had been rewarded with betrayal, because once the victorious American troops entered Manila, they kept out the Filipino troops who had so gallantly aided them.

It is interesting to note how, in his reinvention of Philippine history, Representative Cross harshly questioned Admiral Dewey’s credibility. This is because Dewey’s image as a national hero had been previously used to reject any questioning of

123 CR, H., 73rd-2nd, April 4, 1932, p.7405-06.
125 Ibid.
his actions in the Philippines. Cross posed a series of simple questions: How could Dewey and other naval and military officers not understand that Aguinaldo believed that the war against Spain would lead to the independence of the Philippines? How did Dewey and other American officers understand the fact that the Filipinos organized a republic? How could they contact Aguinaldo in Hong Kong, bring him back to the Philippines, arm him and, at the same time, argue that they did not know Aguinaldo sought independence for his country? For Cross, Dewey’s version was completely implausible, because Aguinaldo’s intentions were obvious.

“The great Filipino revolutionist”

Chapter 5 described how opponents of Filipino independence demonized Emilio Aguinaldo. They de-politicised Aguinaldo by describing him not as the leader of a political movement but as an ambitious bandit, a tyrant and a traitor of his own people who was responsible for the outbreak of the Filipino-American war. Thus, the war was explained as the result of a madman’s ambition, rather than the consequence of American actions in the Philippines.

In the 1930s, in one of the most striking aspects of the reinvention of the Filipino history, representations of Aguinaldo made an abrupt about-face: no longer a bandit and traitor, he suddenly became a national hero. For instance, in 1932, Senator Harry Hawes (D-MO) justified Philippine independence on the grounds that Aguinaldo’s call for independence was supported by the majority of Filipinos. According to Hawes,

But, so far, all that we have heard is the united voice of all the Philippine people expressed in their national congress, expressed by old Aguinaldo, their national hero, expressed in

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127 See Chapter 2 (1), p.44 and Chapter 4, p.8.

128 In 1932, Cross questioned Dewey’s alleged ignorance of Aguinaldo’s intentions: “Did Admiral Dewey and the Americans in command at Cavite have any doubts as to the purpose actuating Aguinaldo and his followers in taking up arms?” Two years before, he raised the same question using the same words. CR, H, 72nd-1st, April 4, 1932, p.7406 and CR, H, 71st-2nd, May 12, 1930, p. 8797.

129 See pages 178-184.
communications by their leading business men, pressed by every group in the islands.\textsuperscript{130}

Hawes not only argues that the majority of Filipinos favored independence, he also identifies Aguinaldo as a Filipino national hero, although that he does not specify against whom Aguinaldo acted so heroically. That is, Aguinaldo’s heroism was acknowledged, but not the context in which it was expressed, rendering American colonialism invisible.

Representative Cox also participated in Aguinaldo’s political rehabilitation. In 1932, he told the House of Representatives that

At the time the war was declared, Aguinaldo, \textbf{the great Filipino revolutionist}, was at Singapore; and the American consul at the port, realizing his value as a leader of his people, counseled with him in behalf of his rejoining the Philippine insurgents and making common cause with the United States in warring upon Spain. Aguinaldo accepted the proposal, whereupon the consul telegraphed Commodore Dewey through our consul at Hong Kong as follows: Aguinaldo, insurgent leader, here. Will come Hong Kong. Arrange with Commodore for general cooperation insurgents Manila if desired. To which message the Commodore replied: Tell Aguinaldo come as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{131}

In this quote, Cox acknowledges Aguinaldo’s political leadership, recognizes that there was an exchange between Aguinaldo and American diplomatic authorities, and hints at an alliance between the two. Cox also re-evaluated other aspects of Filipino history.

Why this revision of Aguinaldo’s historic role? Sources are not clear in this respect, but it could be ventured that by the 1930s Aguinaldo was not a major threat to the United States, so recognizing his leadership appeared less treasonous than when he was a political force to be reckoned with.

\textbf{The Filipino-American war}

The origin and causes of the Filipino-American war were debated in Congress from the beginning of American control of the islands. Determining how and why the war started was an important issue because if it were true that the Americans had


\textsuperscript{131} CR, H, 72nd-2nd, January 28, 1932, p.2917. Emphasis is mine.
provoked the war, as the supporters of Filipino independence argued, then American altruism could be questioned and with it the ideological bases of U.S. rule.

During the 1920s and 1930, Congress debated this issue with less intensity than in previous periods. Most congressmen did not hesitate to question the official account of the war’s origin. That is, they did not blame the Filipinos for starting the conflict, and were highly critical of American troops’ behavior during the war. For instance, in 1930, Representative John M. Nelson (R-WI) argued that Americans behaved in the Philippines in the same way that General Valeriano Weyler had behaved in Cuba, creating “reconcentration camps.” Nelson argued that Americans had not only betrayed the Filipinos, but they had also concentrated them in death camps and had brutally repressed them. Nelson actually cast the Filipino insurgents not as savages or bandits, but as men fighting for their country’s freedom against an invading power.132

Representative Cox also addressed this issue, agreeing with Nelson that American behaviour during the war had been highly questionable, but focusing his attention on exonerating Filipinos of any responsibility for the outbreak of war. To him it was clear that the Americans had started hostilities.133

It is interesting to note that both Nelson and Cox resurrected the issue of alleged atrocities committed by American soldiers during the Filipino-American war, a topic of great importance at the beginning of the 20th century, but which had disappeared from congressional debate. In this way, Cox and Nelson contributed to the reinvention of Filipino history as they justified independence for the islands.

SPANISH COLONIALISM

The use of Spanish colonialism to justify its American counterpart in the Philippines has been a constant element in this study. Since 1898, Americans repeatedly referenced Spanish colonialism’s “wrongs” and “limitations” to justify American colonialism as a liberating experience for the Filipinos. The idea did not disappear from congressional debates in the 1930s, but an interesting change in the attitude of certain


congressmen towards the three hundred year of Spanish presence in the Philippines did take place. They continued referring to the Spanish yoke and tyranny in the Philippines, but the aim of this reference was no longer to justify the continuation of American colonialism in the archipelago, but to highlight the alleged American altruism towards the Filipino people. That is, the United States had retained control over the Philippines, not because of economic or imperialistic ambitions, but with the hope of freeing the Filipinos from Spanish tyranny. The American presence in the Philippines was thus presented as an altruistic act and as a sacrifice on the part of the American nation. However, the supporters of this position in the 1930s also believed that the task of the United States in the Philippines had ended, and that it was time to grant the Filipinos independence. In other words, Spanish colonialism was not invoked to justify the prolongation of American colonialism, as had previously been the case.

Lozier, the great champion of the Philippine independence during the 1930s, also described Spanish colonialism as medieval, bloodthirsty, cruel, selfish and tyrannical. According to him the reason underlying American retention of the Philippines in 1898 was not mere expansionism, but rather “because no other course was open to us consistent with our national dignity and honor, and because the interest of the inhabitants required that they be forever removed from the pitiless control of Spain.” Here Lozier not only reaffirms American innocence and altruism, but he also argues that the United States did not conquer, but rescue the Philippines. It was this liberation that,

134 Long, Lozier, Lamneck and Cox.

135 According to Lamneck, “Our mission in the Philippines was one of humanity. They were rescued from Spanish tyranny and a government formed, the purpose of which was to prepare them for control of their own affairs. Our mission there has been performed, and it is our duty now to withdraw in orderly fashion, with all American concessionaries leading the procession. There is no valid reason for further delay in granting them independence. It is up to the American Government to make its word good. The Filipinos had faith in us. We should show faith in them. “Justice delayed is justice denied”, someone has said.” CR, H, 72nd-1st, April 19, 1932, p.8502. Emphasis is mine.

136 For Lozier, “After an age-long carnival of Spanish usurpation and unabating oppression, the United States snatched the Philippines from the savage lordship of Spain.” Ibid, April 5, 1932, p.7517.

according to Lozier, enabled the development of the political capacity for self-government, which in turn allowed independence to be granted to the islands. In other words, the Americans not only rescued the Filipinos, but prepared them for freedom.138 The culmination of America’s liberating and nation-building work in the Philippines had to be the immediate granting of independence.

On the other hand, another group of congressmen used the three hundred years of Spanish presence in the Philippines to justify its independence. They promoted an image of Spain that completely opposed the one just described. Congressmen such as Harlan, Hawes, Colden, King and Nelson expressed a very positive opinion of Spain and of the Spanish work in the Philippines. They did not describe Spain as a tyrannical, medieval power, but as a nation that had played a truly important role in civilizing and Christianizing the Filipinos.139 In 1930, for instance, Nelson argued:

The Filipinos were not savages when America “discovered” them, nor even when the Spaniards discovered them [...] With ages of contact with the enlightenment of eastern civilization in India and China, with 300 years of contact with Spanish culture and civilization, both secular and religious, and 30 years of contact with American economic and political civilization, the Filipino people, 90 percent Christians, have reached the stage of development that demands self-expression and self-government.140

In this quote, Nelson reinvents the Filipinos as a civilized people whose history preceded the arrival of the Spaniards. According to him, Filipinos were not a savage people when the Americans arrived because they had been under the influence of Spain for 300 years. Nelson then adds 30 more years of contact with American civilization and political institutions: the Filipinos had been in contact with western civilization for 330 years. It is

138 According to Lozier, “With a spontaneity, renunciation, self-abnegation and exalted justice that have always characterized the American people, we promptly granted them a generous, humane and benevolent autonomy, promising full and complete independence after they had established a stable government.” CR, H, 72nd-1st, January 4, 1932, p.1240
139 For Harlan, “They (the Filipinos) have Christianity: that was one thing Spain gave them and left with them, and they have assimilated American ideals and methods.” During the 1934 debate, Representative Colden also praised Spain’s work in the Philippines. According to him, the Spaniards created in the Philippines “a culture and love for music that is rare among Orientals.” CR, H, 72nd-1st, June 13, 1932, p.12860 and CR, H, 73rd-2nd, March19, 1934, p.4838.
necessary to point out that Nelson’s representation does not describe Spain as an exploiting colonial power, but one of the sources of Filipino civilization; he thus breaks with earlier references to the failures and limitations of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines in order to justify American control of the archipelago.

Senator Hawes also used Spanish colonialism to justify Philippine independence, highlighting the limitations of American work in the islands:

For over 300 years the Spaniards control them [the Filipinos], and while conditions change, 300 years of Spanish rule did not change their characteristics. We have had 30 years’ control, and their characteristics, according to the best observers, have not changed, will not change. 141

Hawes emphasizes that Americans could not change the nature of the Filipinos; if the Spaniards were not able to change them in 300 years of rule, it was not surprising that Americans had not achieved this goal in only 30 more years. If the Filipinos could not be changed, there was no reason for the United States to keep the archipelago under its control. 142 On the other hand, Hawes’ view of Spain stands out, since he did not depict Spain as a medieval, exploiting and repressive metropolis. On the contrary, one could argue that Hawes equates the colonizing efforts of Spaniards and Americans.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

For over thirty years, the Philippines’ strategic importance was extensively debated in Congress. The growing danger posed by Japan, the problems related to the defense of the Philippines, the islands’ strategic value and other topics dominated the congressional debate over the future of the archipelago. Some legislators justified the American presence in the Philippines with the argument that the islands were of great strategic and commercial value for the United States. Others described the Philippines as the Achilles’ heel of the United States, and demanded the immediate withdrawal from the islands to protect the nation’s security. 143


142 Hawes is very clear: “We cannot remake a race”. Ibid. April 22, 1930, p.7433. Emphasis mine.

143 See Chapters 1 (2), 3, and 4.
The strategic concerns related to American control of the Philippines did not disappear amid the urgent economic problems of the 1930s. On the contrary, the Philippines’ strategic and defensive meaning was central to congressional debates during this period. However, there was a significant change in the way congressmen approached the issue of the islands’ strategic meaning. It began to be used to justify Philippine independence for the sake of American national defense. 144

The Philippines as a liability

The notion that the Philippines were a liability for the United States was tightly linked to the notion that the United States was not capable of defending the archipelago from an outside attack. Elements such as the archipelago’s great distance from the U.S. mainland, its geographic location in Asia, its geographic features and the weak American naval presence in Asia were used to question America’s ability to defend the Philippines. According to those who supported this idea, the Philippines could be easily conquered by another world power, specifically Japan, and the United States would be unable to do anything about it. 145

The problems involved in defending the Philippines were widely discussed in Congress from the beginning of the American presence in the islands. 146 During the 1930s, as in previous years, a group of congressmen used this issue to justify granting the islands independence. 147 They argued that since the Philippines were an American territory, any attack on the archipelago would generate an immediate reaction from the American people. This in turn would force the United States to engage in a costly war of

144 Between 1925 and 1934, I found only one member of Congress representing the Philippines as a strategic asset for the United States: In 1926, Representative Robert L. Bacon (R-NY) argued that American control of the Philippines was necessary for the defense and promotion of American interests in Asia. According to him, without the Philippines, the United States would be at a disadvantage in competing for Asia’s markets. Without the control of the Philippines, the American government would lose power and influence over Asia.

145 See Chapter 1.

146 See Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

147 Jones, Cross, Gilbert, Broussard, Hawes, Cox, Vandenberg and Crail.
re-conquest. For this theory’s proponents, the chances of such attack taking place were quite high because the islands were “the weaker spot in our armor” and, therefore, it was to be expected that any attack on the U.S. would start there. In 1932, Representative Edward Cox (D-GA) warned that

> Delay is dangerous for the United States as it is for the Philippines. The islands constitute our chief military weakness. They bring down upon us world suspicion and the constant dread of war. They are paralyzing American agriculture and impoverishing a quarter of the population of the land. For the Philippines, delay is breaking the hope of the people who trusted us. It is killing the national spirit of a whole race. It is destroying their individual initiative and breaking their faith in the high intentions of this Republic.

Here Cox, combining economic and strategic arguments, showed concern for the Philippines’ impact on American farmers. Cox saw Filipino independence as a matter of economic self-defense, protecting American agricultural interests from alleged Filipino agricultural competition. To him, the Philippines were not only an economic threat, but also a strategic menace since they were the Achilles’ heel of the United States. To postpone independence any further delayed American economic recovery as it exposed the nation to attack.

Other members of Congress used different elements in order to justify the alleged American inability to defend the Philippines. Some of them argued that the Four Powers Treaty (FPT) had dramatically restricted the United States’ defensive capacity in the Philippines. The treaty was signed by the United States, Japan, France and the United Kingdom in 1922 as part of negotiations for the reduction of naval armaments that took

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149 CR, H, 72nd-1st, February 19, 1932, p.4401.

place in Washington. In this treaty, the United States agreed not to build new fortifications in the Philippines.151

Some argued that an effective defense of the Philippines would entail a very high cost, which Americans had not been willing to pay. In other words, although the United States might successfully defend the Philippines, the cost would be exorbitantly high.152

Other congressmen, such as Senator Long, argued simply that the United States was not ready to defend the Philippines because they had not built adequate fortifications and did not have an adequate number of soldiers or warships. Although Representative Leonidas C. Dyer (D-MO) agreed with Long, he also believed that the issue of the defense of the Philippines was complex. To Dyer, the FPT constituted a great obstacle to this defense, since it limited the United States’ capacity to fortify the archipelago. Without such fortifications, a garrison of seventy or eighty thousand soldiers would be necessary “or a body nearly as large as the standing Army of the United States.”153 To Dyer, the Philippines would be a military burden for as long as the Washington treaties stood. However, he believed it was unlikely that the Philippines would lead to a war against another country because, in his opinion, none were interested in the archipelago.154 Dyer was certain that, should the Philippines be taken by a foreign power, the United States would be able to re-conquer them. However, he believed that such re-conquest would require at least two years of fighting and that it would be very costly both in economic and human terms.


152 Gilbert, H. H, 69th-1st, March 5, 1926, p.5088.

153 CR, H, 71st-3rd, vol. 74, January 13, 1931, p.2113-14. According to Dyer, “In their present state of preparedness the Philippine Islands could be useless as a post of defense. The army personnel in the islands at present is limited to some 4,000 Regular Army men and to some 6,400 Philippine Scouts. There is also limited equipment.” Ibid.

154 Ibid p.2113. However, Dyer did not rule out the possibility of a war because of the Philippines. According to him, “there is still a possibility that they may involve us in dispute with a foreign power.” Ibid.
Senator Hawes also mentioned the issue of the costs of re-conquering the Philippines. He believed that the Philippines “could not be held, would be lost.” Like Dyer, Hawes believed the U.S. had the power to retake the islands, but did not want to face the human and economic cost such a fight would entail. Thus, he saw no other solution to the issue than to grant the archipelago independence, as a necessary self-defense measure.

**Independence as a self-defense move**

Hawes was not the only member of Congress to believe a tactical retreat from the Philippines was necessary. There were also others who saw the independence of the islands as the only solution to the dilemmas faced by the United States. To them, the Philippines were the weakest link of American defense. Therefore, they considered the immediate independence of the archipelago as a mechanism for the strengthening of U.S national security. Philippine independence, they believed, would improve the United States’ strategic position by eliminating the vulnerability associated with American control of the islands. Furthermore, they thought it absurd to retain control of a territory it was impossible to defend and which endangered the American nation.

In March 1926, Representative Ralph Gilbert (D-KY) invoked the Japanese spectre when analyzing the strategic meaning of the Philippines. According to Gilbert, the retention of the archipelago exposed the United States to a war against Japan. Should this war start, Americans would have to fight under disadvantageous conditions, since they would have to fight “at Japan’s door and around the world for us.” To Gilbert, the Philippines were a source of weakness for the U.S.

A few days later, Representative John M. Jones (D-TX) made it clear that his main concern was the safety and well being of the United States. According to him,

> My main reason for favoring the granting of Philippine independence is from the standpoint of America. [...] Everyone who has studied the question for a moment must admit that the


156 Cross, Gilbert, Ragon, Knutson, and Robinson.

Philippines are our weakest point. Any nation in the Orient which might attack us would naturally attack us at that point. Of course, they would attack us at the place they considered weakest. If they captured the Philippines that would put us in the attitude either of sending an army twice as far as we sent it in the World War, or of losing the war. If we sent them, we would have a battle line 6,000 miles long, subject to flank attack all along the line. Thus, the war not only would be tremendously expensive but also would necessarily entail great loss of life. From almost every angle, therefore, it would seem to me that the Philippines are a liability rather than an asset.158

This quote integrates some of the most important points analyzed thus far. First, it is clear that Jones saw Philippine independence as the solution to the strategic-defensive dilemmas faced the U.S. faced. Second, the Philippines were the weakest point of American defenses. Third, that a potential enemy of the United States would attack the Philippines because they were so vulnerable. Fourth, that the economic and human cost of a war of re-conquest would be enormous. For these reasons, Jones concluded that the Philippines were a problem that could only be solved granting them independence.

Six years later, Senator Arthur R. Robinson (R-IN) analyzed the strategic situation of the U.S. in the Philippines. According to him, the United States’ ability to fortify the Philippines had been seriously limited by the FPT. The U.S. had only one naval base in Cavite, which Robinson described as pitiful. The garrison of the islands in the islands consisted of 6,000 soldiers, mostly natives, whose responsibility was to protect 7,000 islands stretching 1,000 miles from north to south, and 600 from east to west. Robinson concluded that:

Anyone who has examined the situation over there, or who has made the most cursory investigation, must know that a powerful army –one division, even, of some 30,000 units- could land on the west side of Luzon, the largest island and the northernmost, on which Manila, the capital is situated, and march immediately to Manila, and take the island and take the Archipelago without resistance. Why do we want more reservations there? Why further aggravate the discontent of the Orient in times like these, when we

158 CR, H, 69th-1st, March 10, 1926, p.14435-6
are not in position at all even think of war, much less to engage in war?  

Robinson was also concerned with the situation in Asia. To him, the Philippines’ location in the midst of that conflict-prone unstable region made the islands a dangerous possession for the United States. Robinson was particularly concerned with the possibility of a war against Japan. To him, Americans would breathe more easily if they did not have to face the international complications related to the retention of the Philippines. Therefore, the Philippines had to be granted independence.

Representative Harold Knutson (R-MN) also voiced concern over the possibility that the Philippines would involve the United States in a war, again integrating economic and non-economic arguments in the congressional debates of 1930’s. Knutson championed Philippine independence for economic reasons, but this did not prevent him from approaching the Filipino problem from a non-economic perspective. To him, the Philippines were “a source of weakness as well as danger.” Furthermore, he believed the retention of the Philippines forced the U.S. to keep a powerful naval and military force that cost American taxpayers millions of dollars. In other words, the independence of the Philippines was not only a necessary for self-defense, but also to save taxpayers significant amounts of money.

The Japanese threat

Japan’s alleged threat to the U.S. was a common theme for supporters of American colonialism in the Philippines. According to them, Japanese militarism and imperialism constituted a direct threat to the Philippines. American presence was all that kept the Japanese in check, since they knew that any attack on the Philippines would lead to a war against the United States. Independence of the Philippines, therefore, would open the door to Japanese conquest of the islands. This idea was linked to Filipinos’

159 CR, S, 72nd-1st, July 1, 1932, p.14435-6.

160 Ibid. Robinson argued that it was necessary to focus on the defense of Hawaii, “the final outpost of America in the Pacific.”

alleged inability to defend their country from a foreign aggression. To those who shared this view, American presence in the Philippines was necessary because the Filipinos lacked the resources and military capability to protect their country. This notion, a version of enlightened colonialism, cast America’s colonial presence as a shield protecting the Philippines from other colonial powers, Japan in particular. In other words, without the Americans’ altruistic protection, the Filipinos would be at Japan’s mercy.162

During the 1930s, a remarkable change took place in the use of the Japanese threat in debating American colonialism in the Philippines. Japan’s threat was no longer used in defending the retention of the Philippines. On the contrary, a group of congressmen denied the existence of such a threat in order to justify the independence of the islands. In order to do this, they had to minimize the implications of Japanese action in Asia, in particular the invasion of Manchuria in 1931.163 Their logic was compelling: Japan did not constitute a threat to the Philippines, so there was no reason to further delay the islands’ independence.

In 1929, Senator King denied that Japan would attack the Philippines after independence had been granted. According to the Senator for Utah, the Japanese threat was an excuse that “American capitalists” used in order to justify American control of the Philippines thereby being able to maintain the exploitation of the islands.164 To King, the Philippines did not face a threat from any of the colonial powers, so that there was no reason to delay their independence.165

162 See Chapters 2, 3, and 4.
163 Cross, Wheeler, Hawes, Underhill, Norris, King, Colden, Nelson, and Bacon.
164 According to King, “I regret that there have been no many unjust and wanton attacks in the American press upon Japan. Even in this body I have heard serious charges made against Japan, her good faith, her national honor. I have upon a number of occasions defended Japan against what I believed to be unwarranted and unjust criticism. I have called attention to her problems, to her insular position, to her precarious situation with China and her teeming millions, and Russia with her enormous population and her great resources blocking the way to expansion in perhaps the only direction where it is possible for Japan to go.” Senator Norris agreed with King that Japan was a “friendly nation”. CR, S, 70th-2nd, vol. 70, February 20, 1929, p.3838.
165 According to him, “I failed to discover a scintilla of evidence indicating that if the Filipinos were given their independence they would be molested by any nation or their independence interfered with in the slightest degree”. Ibid. p.3837.
A year later, Senator Burton K. Wheeler (D-MT) agreed with King that “business-minded Americans” used the supposed Japanese threat in order to justify American control of the Philippines. In other words, Wheeler and King argued that Japan’s alleged danger was a ploy by corporate America to manipulate “ethically minded” Americans. According to Wheeler, opponents of Philippine independence knew that American citizens would not support independence if it meant that the archipelago would be exposed to a potential Japanese attack; thus the colonialists used the notion of “yellow peril”: to manipulate American public opinion.

To Wheeler, the accusations against Japan were “wholly groundless” for various reasons. First of all, Wheeler argued that Japan was a “poor colonizer.” According to him, the Philippines’ climate would protect the islands from Japan because the Japanese could not tolerate tropical weather. It was for this reason that Japan faced serious problems when trying to convince its citizens to emigrate to its colonies. Furthermore, Japanese control over Korea and Formosa was tenuous and nationalistic revolts could break out at any time in those two colonies. This threat would keep Japan’s attention on


168 For Wheeler, “For years various unscrupulous groups with motives of mercenary self-interest have, through books, speeches, pamphlets, and particularly through the jingo press, carried on this offensive agitation against Japan”. Thus, Wheeler identified knowledge production about the Philippines as a campaign to manipulate American public opinion. Ibid. p.5121.

169 Ibid. p.5323.
its colonies and, therefore, away from the Philippines. Second, Wheeler believed the League of Nations would protect the Philippines from a potential Japanese attack, since Japan would not expose itself to the international consequences such an action would entail. Third, the balance of power among colonial powers would prevent any Japanese attack against the Philippines. Just as the balance of power guaranteed Siam’s independence, it would guarantee Filipino independence, given that the Dutch, English and French would not tolerate Japan taking over the Philippines and endangering the safety of their colonies. In other words, the strategic location of the Philippines amid valuable European colonial possessions would guarantee Filipino independence. Fourth, the United States’ moral protection of the Philippines could stop the Japanese. Japan needed to maintain good relations with the United States, and knew that any attack on the archipelago would negatively affect such relations. The United States were in no position to defend the Philippines because it was impossible to do so and yet Japan had not attacked the islands because friendship with the United States was more important to Japan than the conquest of the Filipino archipelago. According to Wheeler, this friendship would be vital for Japan once the Philippines were independent and, therefore, the Filipinos had nothing to fear.

Wheeler considered the accusations of those who used Japanese policy regarding Korea, Manchuria and Formosa to denounce Japan as an aggressor, arguing that in each instance, Japan had acted with the permission or consent of the American government:

“We see clearly that in her attitude toward Manchuria, Formosa, and Korea—and I do not defend her—she acted with the consent of American representatives. If she did wrong, how can we defend ourselves for consenting to that wrong? She was only following our own ‘land-grabbing’ example in the Philippines. It is so easy to see and condemn the mote in the eye of Japan, but we do not so

170 Ibid. p.5320. Coming from a staunch isolationist, arguing in favor of Filipino membership in the League of Nations could be seen as a very cynical approach.

171 Ibid.

172 According to Wheeler, “Would not Japan realize that taking them without our consent would be regarded by the American people as an unpardonable affront? Would she be likely to do a thing of this kind to us? Thus we see that there will be no real difference in the protective status of the Philippine Islands. Japan would no more risk our enmity after we have set the Philippines free that she has before setting them free.” Ibid. p.5121.
readily acknowledge the beam in the eye of America. Oh, the hypocrisy of setting up this bugaboo of Japan’s imperialism! Oh, the hypocrisy of this propaganda of a ‘yellow peril’. What about the ‘white peril’ in the Philippines? Who but the white peril has strangled the independence of most of the nations of the Old World and are holding them today as ‘prey’?”  

For the Senator from Montana, Japan was following America’s imperialistic example; therefore, it was hypocritical to criticize Japanese behavior. The United States government was in no position to question Japanese expansionism because of American conquest and colonial control of the Philippines. Interestingly, Wheeler turned the yellow peril idea around: talking of the yellow peril ignored the more dangerous white peril in Asia, reminding his colleagues that Japan was not the biggest imperialistic country in the world, but the Western countries.

To Wheeler, the invocation of the Japanese threat precluded solving the problem the Philippines presented for the United States. According to him,

This absurd bugaboo of Japanese imperialism leads naturally to an absurd conclusion. If the Philippines are to wait for independence until Japan’s power has been taken away from her in the Orient, the people of the Philippines are condemned to be a subject nation forever. When will Japan be removed further from the Philippines that she now is? And when will conditions of international good will be more favorable to protect our wards against a usurping power than at this time of peace parleys and peace conferences?  

For Wheeler, Japan’s alleged threat was absurd, but quite useful for the enemies of independence, since it allowed them to indefinitely prolong American control over the Philippines. Japan would never stop being geographically close to the archipelago, and the international conditions would never be perfect for granting independence. Therefore, it was necessary to forget the absurd image of a Japanese threat and to grant independence to the Philippines.


174 Ibid. p. 5323. Emphasis is mine.
Senator Hawes also paid attention to the issue of the Japanese threat. Unlike Wheeler and King, however, Hawes did not believe that the alleged Japanese threat was part of a conspiracy of American capitalist interests, resorting instead to geographic determinism in order to deny the Japanese threat. According to the Senator from Missouri, the Japanese were not interested in the Philippines because they could not tolerate the islands’ heat and humidity. It was for this reason that only 8,000 Japanese people had emigrated to the Philippines despite the fact that Japanese immigration was not limited.

Like Wheeler, Hawes touched on what was taking place in China. He did not deny Japan’s expansionist policy, but he made it clear that such policy was not “south-bound”, but directed to the north and east. That is, it was aimed at territories with a temperate climate. Therefore, the Philippines would be safe as a sovereign country and the United States would be able to leave the Philippines without fearing for the future:

> The recent conflict between Japan and China, far from corroborating, actually contradicts the prediction that the Japanese will seize the Philippines after independence shall have been granted to them. It proves again that Japan’s expansion is not to the Tropics but to the Temperate Zone; not to the archipelagoes of the eastern Pacific, but to the mainland of Asia; not to the Philippines but away from them.

Of course, not all members of Congress shared Wheeler’s, King’s and Hawes’ optimism. Others worried about Japan’s possible threat to the Philippines. For instance, during the discussion of the bill Tydings-McDuffie, Representative Charles J. Colden (D-CA) used Japan’s actions in Manchuria to justify the retention of the Philippines.

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175 Jones also paid attention to climatic issues arguing that the Filipino tropical weather would protect the islands from an external attack. Because of their hot and humid weather, the Philippines were less attractive and, therefore, safe. CR, H, 69th-1st, Vol. 67, March 10, 1926, pp. 5362-53.


177 CR, S, 72nd-1st, July 1, 1932, p.14477.

178 Colden was born in Illinois, but moved to Missouri when he was ten years old. He was member of the Missouri House of Representatives between 1901 and 1905. In Missouri, he worked as a teacher, an editor, and a realtor. In 1912, he moved to California where he continued
Colden was concerned that the discussion of the future of the Philippines would be limited to economic issues. To him, there were other factors that Congress should consider. One of these factors was the Filipinos’ safety. For the Representative from California, Japan’s actions proved that Japan was a criminal, violent and militaristic nation that did not respect international order. Colden was convinced that after the American exit from the Philippines, they would find themselves at the mercy of Japan.

Conceding that the commercial aspect is of importance and should be considered, yet there are other factors that deserve careful consideration from the Membership of this House. Before we haul down the American flag and set a helpless people adrift in the face of a neighboring empire that is rampant with imperialism and militarism, we should pause and reflect. A nation that is disregarding its solemn treaties as mere scraps of paper, a nation that today is maintaining a mandate over the islands of the Pacific and flaunting the League of Nations, a nation that has invaded the territory of a peaceful neighbor and is taking advantage of China’s chaotic domestic afflictions should not be given a license to override the will of the Filipinos. **We cannot at this moment overlook the conditions that exist in the affairs** and policies of nations whose good will, cooperation and international integrity are necessary to preserve the independence and the Territorial boundaries of the people we profess to protect.179

It is clear that, to Colden, the safety of the Philippines was an American responsibility. The United States should not abandon the Philippines to their fate. Therefore, independence should be postponed. Colden’s comments are particularly interesting given that they come from a congressman from a state where Filipinos were not very popular.

**International repercussions of Filipino independence**

The potential repercussions of Philippine independence at an international level also came up in congressional discussion during the period this chapter analyzes. The pitted those who believed the international impact of the independence would be positive, against and those who believed the opposite was true.


Those who argued most strongly that the Filipino independence would destabilize Asia and negatively affect American interests in the region were Representatives Robert L. Bacon (R-NY) and Colden (D-CA). In 1926, Bacon argued that the independence of the Philippines would negatively affect world peace because it would alter “the military, economic and political equation of the Pacific,” altering the balance of Asian power. Bacon believed that independence would inevitably lead to a period of internal violence in the Philippines that would destabilize the entire region and that might necessitate an American intervention. He also argued that it would threaten the Christian influence related to American presence in the island, an influence that, according to him, was “perhaps our greatest contribution to the civilization of the Pacific.” In his words,

Our presence in the island does not constitute a threat to any other power; it does not endanger the national safety, trade or peace of any foreign country. On the other hand, our history there and elsewhere throughout the world has proved that America is actuated by the thoughts of international justice and concord. By remaining in the Philippines, we make it possible to exercise that beneficent influence over a wider sphere; withdrawal would virtually leave us without a say in matters of the greatest import not only to the United States but also to the peace of the world.

To Bacon, the United States needed the Philippines in order to exercise any influence in Asian affairs: without the Philippines, America would no longer be an Asian power.

Six years later, Representative Colden opposed Philippine independence on the grounds that it would have serious repercussions at an international level. What was at

180 Bacon was a lawyer and a banker from New York, a WWI veteran who was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. The Political Graveyard, http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/bacon.html, and Bioguide http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B000019


182 Ibid.

183 Ibid. p.10353.

184 Representative Carroll L. Beedy (R-ME) agreed with Colden. According to him, “In fixing upon the hour for Philippines independence we must consider the well-being of nations and peoples other than our own or the Filipinos. Indeed, we must look well to the cause of international peace. Today India seethes with revolt. China is rent with international conflict. The whole spirit of the Orient is one of unrest and dangerous uncertainty. The launching of
stake in the Philippines were, according to Colden, “the relations of this country with the nations of the Orient.”\textsuperscript{185} The representative for California’s biggest concern was, no doubt, American trade in Asia. According to him, were the United States to withdraw from the Philippines, Japan would gain access to the Filipino copra, tobacco and oils markets.\textsuperscript{186} Furthermore, the United States would lose its base for trading with China: \textsuperscript{187}

\begin{quote}
Manila is the front door to south China. It is but 400 miles away. An easy step for commercial purposes but far enough for naval defense. French Indo-China is the same distance, and Siam, the Malay States, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies beyond. Under the protection of the United States, Manila occupies a strategic location in regard to the trade of the Orient.\textsuperscript{188}
\end{quote}

Colden rescued the idea of the Philippines as a base for the expansion of American trade in Asia. Like Bacon, he believed independence would end the prevailing Asian balance of power, inviting a war that would negatively affect American commerce in the region. Colden feared the United States would not be able to stay out of such a war:

\begin{quote}
The American flag is a warning for others to keep out and also influence to retard the imperialistic designs of unscrupulous governments […] Mr. Speaker, to haul down the American flag in the Orient is to invite the disgust of every nation hoping to preserve the balance of power and the peace of the world in the Orient. Mr. Speaker, the lowering of our flag in the Philippines and the sound of the bulge of our retreat will not only pain the hearts of
\end{quote}

\textbf{Philippines independence under existing conditions would be but and invitation to disaster.”}

\textsuperscript{185} CR, H, 73rd, 2nd, March 19, 1934, p.4838.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid. p.4839.
\textsuperscript{187} Colden worried about the impact of the impact of Filipino independence on American-Chinese China, reminding his colleagues that “Every fourth person in the world is a Chinese. His has been a friendly people. With America in the Orient, he has a friendly neighbor at his door. Think of the disappointment of the Chinese people when they learn that America has hauled down her flag and is no longer a near and friendly neighbor. What will his respect be for our flag if it is hauled down because of sugar and butter and cottonseed oil? What will be his opinion of this Nation which has heralded its ideals of democracy to every cranny of the globe? What will be his feelings when the unfriendly flag of the ‘rising sun’ supercedes the Stars and Stripes and his ancient enemy with its islands and its ships stretches a screen of guns and hostile implements of war before the doors of every port of the great Chinese Republic?” Ibid. p.4840. Emphasis mine.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
In other words, the American presence in the Philippines was needed to maintain the balance of power in Asia, guaranteeing the peace needed for the development of American trade in the region.

On the other hand, a different group of legislators categorically denied that the independence of the Philippines would destabilize Asia or affect American interests in the region. On the contrary, according to them independence would promote U.S. interests by confirming American altruism and exceptionalism. In freeing the Philippines, the United States would send a clear message to the peoples of Asia, a message that would resonate in the region. Furthermore, they did not believe that the interests of colonial powers should be considered when deciding the future of the Philippines.

In 1926, Representative Jones (D-TX) responded to allegations by Representative Underhill (R-MA) that the American presence in the Philippines was necessary in order to guarantee peace in the Far East. According to Jones, if this argument were true, then “we should permanently retain the islands, and if I thought that position a correct one I should certainly oppose independence either now or in the future, but in undertaking to defend this position, I think the gentleman’s logic breaks down utterly.”

Five years later, Representative Leonidas C. Dyer (R-MO) told Congress that to argue that Filipino independence would destabilize Asia, inspiring the region’s European colonies to seek their own independence, was contrary to the history and nature of the American nation. Dyer reminded his colleagues that the United States were the product of an anti-colonial struggle, and so in the Philippines they had to act in accordance with this past. Dyer believed the colonial powers’ interests should not be Americans’ main

189 Ibid. p.4840.
191 “At this date of our supremacy over the Philippines, 30 years after our occupation of the islands, to assert that our granting their freedom would be unwise because of the stimulus it would give to other nations cherishing like hopes, is to validate a theory (that) will have but little weight with real Americans. We can hardly justify a course which began with the object of establishing a democracy in Orient and which is to end in colonial control. As will be verified by
concern when dealing with the Filipino problem. Americans should be more worried about promoting democracy in Asia than defending the interests of other colonial powers. Furthermore, Dyer believed that the Asian peoples would seek their independence regardless of what the United States did in the Philippines. Therefore, further postponing Filipino independence in order to preserve colonial order in Asia was absurd.

Dyer also responded to allegations that Philippine independence would negatively affect U.S. commercial interests in Asia. He argued that U.S. control of the Philippines did not have “a beneficial effect on our intercourse and trade with the Orient.” On the contrary, to deny that independence would adversely affect American trade in the region by leading the Asians to believe that Americans did not keep their word, and questioning the United States’ altruism in the Philippines.

Senator Hawes also rejected the notion that Philippine independence would destabilize the region. Like Jones, Hawes believed that the United States should not consider the interests of other colonial powers, but only the future of the archipelago. He harshly criticized those who argued “that we should do nothing that might inspire in the hearts of subject races a love and longing for liberty.” Thus, he tacitly admitted that Filipino independence would set a de-colonizing precedent in Asia, a prospect which did not seem to bother him. Like Dyer, Hawes argued that it would be denying the Filipinos independence that would have a negative impact upon the United States’ image in the region, destroying the Asian peoples’ faith in the American nation and damaging American commercial interests:

But our self-interest is inseparable from our self-respect. We cannot prejudice our commercial expansion and security in the Far

current events, there are eastern colonies now endeavoring to assert their aspiration for national identity and moving toward independence wholly without regard to our attitude in the matter of the Philippine islands. Our presence in the orient in these instances has not deterred desires for national self-expression.” CR, H, 71st-3rd, vol. 74, January 13, 1931, p.2113.

192 Ibid. p.2124.

193 Ibid.


195 Ibid. 14475-76.
East if we break faith with a far eastern people. Such conduct would make enemies not only of the Filipinos but also of the Chinese and the people of the East Orient. It would remove the old difference between the European nations and the United States, which has always respected their rights and their integrity. So long as we preserve our self-respect, therefore, we shall serve our self-interest.196

In this quote, Hawes combines economic and ideological elements. The independence of the Philippines would reaffirm the United States exceptionality vis a vis the European countries, and this, in turn, would promote U.S. economic expansion in Asia.

Hawes also rejected the notion that controlling the Philippines had helped expand trade in Asia. According to him, it had added very little trade in the Orient, and Manila had not become “a great international mart.”197 Therefore, commercial interests would not be at all affected by independence.

Representative Lozier also approached this issue, albeit from a different perspective. To him, the Filipinos’ Christianity made independence necessary:198

Eleven million Filipino Christians are holding aloft the banner of the Galilean in a wilderness of pagan and non-Christian religions. […] In the center of this picture of polyglottish, polygamous, and heathenish abominations nestle the Christian Philippines. […] The little brown-skinned Filipino Christian is holding the outpost and battle line in the all-important struggle of Christianity and worldwide supremacy. The Philippines are probably the most important strategic position now held by Christianity in its triumphant march for the mastery over the minds and consciences of mankind.199

Thus, Philippine independence would help promote Christianity in Asia by proving American altruism, and this ought to be considered in deciding the islands’ future.

Lozier also had a messianic vision of the role the Philippine republic would play in Asia. According to him “the Philippine republic will be a new center from which shall

196 Ibid. p.14475.

197 Ibid.


199 Ibid. Emphasis mine.
radiate the forces of western civilization, which, I verily believe, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe has decreed shall quicken and rehabilitate the Far East.” 200 The United States must help the Filipinos fulfill their destiny by granting the islands independence.

Despite his strong ideological-religious analysis, Lozier did not lose sight of the economic implications of Filipino independence. According to him, Asia was a sleeping giant that would wake up and experience “a new birth and a baptism of Americanism, and dedicated her myriad millions and limitless resources to the cause of freedom, enlightened government, and the happiness and well-being of mankind.” 201 In this process, the Filipinos would play an important role because the Republic of the Philippines would rejuvenate, democratize and modernize the region. 202 In granting the Filipinos their independence, the United States would promote American interests and ideals while fulfilling a historic commitment. Lozier presents the future Republic of the Philippines as a kind of Asian beachhead for the entire Western world.

CONCLUSION

The economic crisis that hit the United States during the 1930s revived the national debate around the Philippine issue. Overwhelmed by the consequences of this crisis, agricultural and working sectors found a much-needed scapegoat in the Philippines. For them, the problems faced by American agriculture and American workers became the consequence of unfair competition from Filipino agricultural products and migrant workers. They believed retention of the Philippines allowed or facilitated Filipino products’ and workers’ entry into the United States; the low cost of both of these, in turn, negatively affected American labor and agricultural producers. Therefore, American labor and agricultural interests embarked upon an intense campaign in favor of independence for the archipelago as a mechanism to stop what they saw as a


201 Ibid.

202 According to Lozier “In liberating the Philippines we fulfill a solemn and sacred covenant, benefit ourselves and 13,000,000 Filipinos, the flower of the Malayan race, who yearn for independence and a place in the sun, and by the same token we serve mankind and light the fires of freedom on 10,000 oriental altars”. Ibid.
threat to their own interests. This campaign revived the Filipino issue at the national level, and Congress was one of the spaces where this debate strengthened. However, Congress did not limit itself to the discussion of the real or imaginary problem the Philippines posed for the United States. On the contrary, it took concrete measures seeking to end the U.S. presence in the islands through bills such as Hare-Hawes-Cutting (HHC) and Tydings-McDuffie (Tydings-McDuffie).

The debate over these bills opened a period of intense congressional discussion of the Philippine issue. Although economic concerns dominated the 1930’s discussion, political, ideological and strategic factors played a crucial role. A great number of senators and representatives invoked non-economic arguments during the congressional debates over the Philippines’ political future, while others effectively combined economic and non-economic arguments for Filipino independence.

During the period examined throughout this chapter, knowledge production about the Philippines did not stop: the ideas, images and stereotypes of the Philippines and Filipinos that Americans had created during the first two decades of the 20th century, were re-deployed during the 1930s with some interesting variants.

One of these ideas was the representation of American colonialism in the Philippines as an altruistic enterprise. During the 1930s, congressmen use the notion of enlightened colonialism not to justify the American presence in the Philippines, but to advocate granting the islands’ independence. The senators and representatives whose statements this chapter analyzed saw Philippine independence as the logical and necessary consequence of the United States’ altruistic work in the islands. Very few of them seriously questioned the idea of an enlightened colonialism. Rather, they transformed it into yet another argument in favor of independence.

The Philippines’ threat to American republican institutions also came up in congressional debates during the 1930s, though with less intensity than in previous years. The congressmen analyzed here presented Philippine independence as the affirmation of the United States’ republican, thus anti-imperialistic, character without identifying the islands as a serious threat to the survival of American political institutions. To them, the independence of the islands would close a chapter in the history of the United States and return the nation to its founding principles.
The representation of the Philippines and the Filipinos also underwent interesting changes during the 1930s. Filipinos’ political ability continued to be a topic of great importance, but was not seriously questioned during this decade. On the contrary, most senators and representatives studied in this chapter argued that Filipinos were politically ready for independence, thanks to the educational work and the political training they had received from the Americans. For them, the very success of America’s altruistic colonial rule now made it possible for independence to be granted to the Filipinos.

One issue that was substantially reframed was Filipino history. In the first two decades of the 20th century, the Philippines’ history was used in order to justify the acquisition and retention of the archipelago. During the 1930s, the senators and representatives studied in this chapter revised the history of Filipino-American relations, questioning the justification for American colonialism in the islands and bolstering the case for independence. They condemned the process that made the Philippines an American territory, harshly questioned the actions of American naval officers and diplomats, recognized the role Filipinos played in the 1898 defeat of Spain, transformed Emilio Aguinaldo into a national hero, and acknowledged U.S. troops’ responsibility for the outbreak of the Filipino-American war. In presenting U.S. rule in the Philippines as the result of deceit and lies, this group of congressmen seriously undermined the ideological basis of American colonialism in the islands, particularly the notion of an altruistic colonialism: if the American presence in the Philippines was militarily imposed, it could not be considered altruistic.

The idea of altruistic colonialism was also questioned from a moralistic point of view. As in previous years, the senators and representatives studied in this chapter framed the Philippine issue in moral terms. For many of them, the American presence in the Philippines was immoral because it was not based on Filipino consent. This moral approach intensified during the 1930s, and was accompanied by a strong anti-colonial strain. Philippine independence was not only presented as the morally correct course, and as a right of the Filipinos; some senators and representatives even acknowledged that granting independence would stimulate the de-colonization of Asia. They wanted the United States to stand on the side of the weak, not with the colonial powers, and Philippine independence would be an important step in that direction.
In justifying independence, the strategic issues involved in retaining the Philippines did not disappear beside the unquestionable importance of economic arguments. Congress debated topics such as the defense of the Philippines, the Japanese threat and the strategic meaning of the Philippines during the period analyzed here. However, unlike previous years, emphasis was not on the Philippines’ strategic-commercial value, but on the risks and threats they entailed. The senators and representatives analyzed in this chapter portrayed the islands as a weakness and strategic liability for the United States, and Philippine independence was justified as a defensive move that was needed to strengthen the United States defenses and strategic position. The problem was not only that the United States were not capable of defending the Philippines, but also that the archipelago was located in an unstable region. Therefore, it was necessary to eliminate the menace they posed for the United States by granting them independence.