THE UNITED STATES AND THE PHILIPPINE BASES

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. military presence in the Philippines, centered at Clark Field for the air force and nearby Subic Bay for the navy, embodies both physically and symbolically many of the more complex and difficult elements of a relationship that has never quite outgrown its colonial origins. For the United States, long-standing and intimate ties with the Philippines are reinforced by the strategic importance of highly developed military facilities centrally located along the Pacific/Indian Ocean arc. Even so, the intimacy of the relationship and the importance of the bases for forward defense and power projection notwithstanding, the Filipinos in and of itself does not normally rank very high in American external preoccupations.

For the Philippines the reverse is true. The tie to the United States plays a central role not only in Manila’s external orientation but also in Philippine domestic politics. The military rights accorded to the United States under the Military Bases Agreement of 1947 (MBA) and its subsequent revisions constitute an important element of the Filipino claim to U.S. support and protection. But the U.S. military presence is also a symbol of persisting inequality and dependence.

Since 1947 the intermittent negotiations over MBA terms have centered on the effort to accommodate the differing requirements of the two countries: that of the United States for unhampered military use of the facilities it occupies; that of the Philippines for concrete evidence of its national sovereignty. Filipinos also question what it is that their country gains from the U.S. presence. Perversely, as the bases have become more important to the global role of the United States, Filipinos have increasingly questioned the bases’ relevance to their own defense and have strengthened their demand for compensation in other forms.

With the U.S. connection deeply embedded in the Philippine political process, the emotions attached to notions of sovereignty and equality (in addition to the assemblage of fractious issues referred to as “base irritants”) have made the MBA prominent in the political forum. Critics, who have pressed for changes in the relationship rather than its abandonment, are numerous and represent dominant elements in the Philippine political power structure. Their pressures...
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Filipinos and tying U.S. interests too closely to the uncertainties of Filipino politics. Concern over human rights issues will also continue, especially in connection with efforts to bring an end to the communist insurgency. But these pressures will be on the margins, as compared with the widespread and potent emotions that produced a 414-to-3 vote for a House of Representatives resolution condemning the Marcos government for Benigno Aquino’s murder and demanding speedy action to identify and punish the culprit.

Negotiations with President Aquino will be less subject to the uncertainties and problems of interpretation that were the product of her predecessor’s devious and grandstanding negotiating style. However, in the new democratic forum a variety of Philippine groups—critics and opponents of the military presence included—will have stronger voices and greater potential impact. Constitutional requirements will give the Philippine congress a greater say than it had even in the pre-Marcos era, and base issues are bound to become vehicles for ambitious politicians jockeying for advantage.

The coincidence of key MABA dates with major political events in both countries could also influence the outcome of the negotiations. The ultimate failure of Ford administration negotiations in 1976 owed much to the fact that apparent agreement was reached close to the end of the U.S. president’s term; in 1988 this could again become a factor. Still another deadline—President Corazon Aquino’s commitment to leave office in 1992—could well affect decisions on both the 1988 revisions and the new options that become available in 1991.

THE ORIGINS OF THE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

The United States began its military role in the Philippines in 1886, first by defeating its Spanish rulers, with the help of Filipinos already in revolt against them, and then by suppressing nationalist resistance to the substitution of American, for Spanish, colonial rule.4 Coping with the nationalist resistance was indeed the more arduous task; the war was a brutal one on both sides and, by the summer of 1899, two-thirds of the U.S. Army was engaged in the Philippines. However, American commitment—unique for its day—to self-government and ultimate independence for its newly acquired colony and the programs put in place to provide the necessary underpinning persuaded large numbers of Filipinos, members of the indigenous elite especially, that they had more to gain than lose from the American colonial connection. What Americans term the Philippine insurrection, and Filipinos prefer to recall as the Philippine-American war, came to an official end in 1902, and civilian government replaced military rule.

By 1907, when the first elected assembly was convened, the size of the U.S. military force in the Philippines had shrunk considerably. With Pearl Harbor soon thereafter designated as the United States’ principal forward base in the Pacific, remaining U.S. military power in the Philippines was seen primarily as a deterrent to possible encroachments by other imperial powers. Even this

purely local defensive mission was poorly supported; no less an advocate of American power than Theodore Roosevelt urged early independence for the Philippines on the grounds that the United States was obviously unwilling and unable to defend the islands.

The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, although setting the date for Philippine independence in 1944 and providing for the establishment of a largely self-governing commonwealth in the interim, left the future U.S. military relationship with the Philippines somewhat uncertain. The act’s base-related provisions toward a postindependence military presence were as ambivalent as the attitudes of both Americans and Filipinos. U.S. Army bases were to be turned over to the Philippines automatically upon its transition from commonwealth status to independence. However, the future of U.S. naval bases was to be negotiated within two years after independence. At the same time, in some contradiction to the acceptance of a possible naval presence, the law also called on the U.S. president to enter into negotiations with other powers to ensure the neutrality of the independent Philippines. Meanwhile, U.S. Army personnel in the Philippines numbered only about 4,600, naval personnel about 200; the American Asiatic Fleet—which included no vessels larger than destroyers—spent most of its time in Chinese waters and only a few months each year in the vicinity of the Philippines.

International events, however, were soon to focus more attention on the defense of the Philippines, as Japan’s expansion in China and its policies in the Pacific aroused new concerns. The Japanese government’s rejection of its obligation not to fortify the nearby Micronesian islands it held under League of Nations mandate was particularly disturbing in the Philippine context. Yet forces and equipment were never provided for full implementation of plans to strengthen both U.S. forces and the newly established Philippine commonwealth forces—a failure vividly highlighted by the speedy Japanese conquest of the islands in 1942.

The experiences of the Pacific war and the Japanese occupation of the Philippines significantly altered U.S. and Filipino views on the desirability of a continued U.S. military presence. Even before the war ended, the Philippine commonwealth government-in-exile had indicated its hopes for postindependence protection, and the U.S. Congress had authorized the president to go beyond the Tydings-McDuffie provisions and negotiate for the retention or establishment of such bases as “might be necessary for the mutual protection of the Philippine Islands and the United States.” In July 1945, not long after the liberation of the Philippines, the commonwealth congress passed a similar resolution defining purposes of the bases as “to ensure the territorial integrity of the Philippines, the mutual protection of the Philippines and the United States, and the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.”

The new Filipino and American interest in a continued U.S. military presence in the Philippines was reinforced for the United States by other, broader considerations as the postwar world took shape. In East Asia the rapidly disappearing West European presence and the beginnings of new and extensive American security commitments were creating requirements that, in due course, would transform the role of U.S. bases in the Philippines from local defense to power projection and forward defense.

The terms of the Military Bases Agreement of 1947, on which the postindependence U.S. military presence has rested, have been highly favorable to U.S. interests. The MBA accorded the United States the use for ninety-nine years, rent free, of sixteen base areas and the option to use seven more on territory extending across more than 600,000 acres and located in thirteen provinces. Operational use and control of the bases were placed entirely in American hands, and U.S. public vessels and vehicles were given free access into the base areas and unrestricted transit between them. Unrestricted rights were also granted for the construction and improvement of base facilities and the introduction and maintenance of weapons systems; supplies imported for use on the bases were to be admitted to the Philippines duty free. The United States was also accorded extensive criminal jurisdiction, not only over U.S. military and civilian personnel but also over Filipinos charged with offenses anywhere in the base areas.

The United States was unique among colonial powers in Southeast Asia in undertaking fixed obligations to self-government and independence. It was again unique in entering into economic as well as military arrangements that could be seen as infringements on the newly acquired sovereignty of a former colony. This did not escape foreign criticism or Philippine resentment. But contrary to Filipinos, continued U.S. protection and help in rehabilitating their devastated country remained a more urgent necessity than assertions of sovereignty. As this view was expressed by Philippine president Manuel Roxas:

It is unfortunate that we live in a world in which force and violence are still unchained. . . . But, while we do, we must hold fast to strongly tested moorings, and avoid being cast adrift on the angry seas which is apparent to the west of us. . . . I prefer the security of our present plight.*

In Philippine eyes, however, the U.S. commitment to the country’s security remained intact and equity remained as high as it did on tradition and assumptions from a high placed government officials rather than on formal treaty guarantees—which, indeed, the United States was unwilling to undertake. Events in Asia, however, were adding weight to Philippine pressures for more specific and binding assurances of American attention and support. The vision of international communism on the march, inspired by Mao Zedong’s victory in China, the Soviet-supported North Korean invasion of the South, and Chinese communist entry into the Korean hostilities, underlined that the U.S. presence in the Philippines—now a logistic base for support of UN forces in Korea—was vital to the American role in the Pacific. Even so, the Philippine-American Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) of August 1951, often mistakenly attributed to the “pactomania” of John Foster Dulles, did not reflect any new conviction that U.S. obligations to Philippine defense needed to be defined more explicitly. It was, in fact, the price the United States had to pay for Manila’s acquiescence to an important element of the new U.S. containment policy in Asia—a peace treaty with Japan and the end of the allied occupation there. The Filipinos bitterly opposed

this new policy toward Japan, arguing that it was premature and provided inadequate guarantees against the revival of Japanese militarism; the peace treaty was particularly offensive in that it failed to require Japanese reparations to the Philippines in specific amounts.

Although the MDT ensured Philippine signature of the peace treaty, from Manila’s perspective it was far from a wholly satisfying guarantee. Indeed, to Filipinos, the large gap between MDT commitments and those of the recently signed NATO agreement exemplified the unwillingness of the United States to accord its former colony equal importance with its European allies. Under NATO the signatories were bound to consider an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America as an attack against them all, requiring each to take such action as it deemed necessary. Manila considered the corresponding MDT article that bound each party “to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes” as weaker and more full of loopholes. Furthermore, unlike the NATO agreement, the MDT failed to provide for consultation or joint security machinery.

THE REVISION PROCESS

Philippine mistrust of the American defense commitment embodied in the MDT has always been coupled with dissatisfaction over the terms on which the United States maintains its military presence under the MBA. Pressures for elaboration of the former and alteration of the latter have been a continuing feature of the Philippine-American relationship. Each country has been moved toward compromise by the strength of its own rational interest in preserving the security relationship. The Philippines has directed negotiating pressures toward rectifying perceived inequities and inadequacies. The United States has sought to mollify the Philippines within the context of a policy that places first priority on operational control and the security of the bases and that seeks to avoid undesirable precedents for negotiations elsewhere.*

In 1955 multilateral negotiations in Manila establishing the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) provided the occasion also for elaborating the MDT commitment. A United States-Philippine Defense Council was established in accordance with Philippine desires for specified consultation arrangements. Its first meeting then provided the occasion for a public pledge by then-secretary of state Dulles that an attack on the Philippines would be regarded as an attack on the United States and bring an immediate response.

Meanwhile, controversy over what came to be known as base irritants was becoming a familiar feature of the Philippine-American landscape. Issues ranged from questions of land title, mineral rights, and taxation to emotion-filled conflicts concerning the exercise of jurisdiction over American personnel accused of crimes against Filipinos.

U.S. forces in Vietnam and the Johnson administration was urging more active allied participation in the defense of the South. When the recently elected president Marcos agreed in 1969 to send an engineering battalion (PHILBAG) to Vietnam, the United States reciprocated with commitments not only to increased economic and military assistance but also to another round of negotiations directed toward expeditious resolution of remaining base issues.

No such results were achieved in the remaining years of the Johnson administration; in fact, even the arrangements necessary for renewing the negotiation process were not in place until late in 1971. Meanwhile, as base irritants continued to fuel dissatisfaction with the MIA, the American defense commitment was again coming under increasing question in the Philippines. All of Southeast Asia's noncommunist countries viewed apprehensively the antiwar movement in the United States; president Johnson's initiation of negotiations with Hanoi, and president Nixon's pledge to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam and his Guam doctrine call on Asian allies to assume greater responsibility for their own defense. Particularly disturbing for the Philippines were statements by such influential senators as Stuart Symington and William Fulbright that questioned both the value of the bases and the obligation of the United States to defend the Philippines unless U.S. forces there came under direct attack.

Although negotiations finally began in 1972, the Watergate political crisis put their utility in question and they were suspended in 1974 at Philippine insistence. When resumption plans were announced in December 1975, the circumstances of both parties had changed markedly. Marcos, who had declared martial law in the Philippines in 1972, had responded to the fall of Saigon with a number of speeches in which he suggested that the time had come to end the base presence. Much of this was posturing. However, even though he soon moved away from a stance that had disturbed his fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as the United States, Mrs. Marcos and her circle remained the source of a good deal of anti-American rhetoric.

This aside, the Philippines was clearly moving away from what had in the past been a very one-sided foreign policy. With Marcos not only responding to new circumstances but also seeking additional leverage on the United States, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and the People's Republic of China in June 1975 was followed in 1976 by diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Vietnam. Philippine attention had also been attracted by the unprecedented January 1976 U.S. commitment to Spain to provide specific amounts and categories of assistance in exchange for a base presence.

Just as Manila seemed likely to increase its demands on the United States, some Americans were arguing that the end of the Vietnam War had eliminated the need for U.S. bases in Southeast Asia. This was not the administration's view, however. For those convinced that the circumstances of Hanoi's victory had dealt a serious blow to American credibility, maintenance of the U.S. military presence in the Philippines was an essential countermeasure. Broader strategic considerations were also in play. It was evident by the mid-1970s that the USSR was not only systematically undertaking a major expansion and modernization of its hitherto neglected Pacific fleet but was also expanding elsewhere. Thus, by 1975 the small naval presence it had established in the

Indian Ocean in 1969 had grown to thirty ships, while in the Horn of Africa it had achieved new access to air, naval, and communication facilities in exchange for substantial military assistance to Somalia.

These developments gave rise to a new appreciation of the importance of facilities in the Philippines for support of U.S. air and naval activities in the Indian Ocean area conducted under the aegis of the Commander in Chief Pacific and the U.S. Seventh Fleet. Meanwhile, the refusal of several European countries during the 1978 Yom Kippur War to permit American planes carrying supplies for Israel to refuel on their territory, as well as the oil embargo, had suggested the potential importance of the Philippines as a back door to the Middle East.

Despite the new factors influencing considerations on both sides, the negotiations began rather dramatically in December 1976 when, on one day, secretary of state Kissinger announced that he and foreign secretary Carlos Romulo had reached tentative agreement and, on the next day, Marcos denied that this was the case. In fact, the 1976 negotiations had ended with a Philippine-compiled list of twenty-five unresolved issues. They nevertheless broke new ground in replacing the implicit linkages of the past with promises of additional U.S. assistance, which, as in the Spanish case, were explicitly linked to the U.S. base presence. The proposed amount, to be disbursed over a period of five years, was set at $1 billion to be composed equally of military and economic assistance.

Marcos's decision to abort the negotiations was widely attributed to his fears that the aid commitments of an outgoing administration would not be honored by a new Congress and to his hopes for a better deal from the incoming Carter administration. However, the future of the base relationship was quite uncertain when the Democrats took office. The human rights abuses of Marcos's New Society had already attracted unfavorable congressional attention; they seemed bound to cast a shadow over Manila's relations with an administration that placed the global protection and advancement of human rights very high on its foreign-policy agenda. The Vietnam syndrome was still manifesting itself on Capitol Hill and elsewhere in an inclination to dismiss Southeast Asia from U.S. foreign policy and strategic concern. As during the Ford administration, however, Middle Eastern volatility, Indian Ocean concerns, and the ever-growing Soviet military presence in the Pacific counteracted arguments linked solely to Southeast Asia. Once again credibility also became a factor. U.S. allies and friends, concerned over Carter administration policies in Asia, looked to the way the Philippine base issue developed to provide some answer to questions about the U.S. commitment.

The political discomforts of a collaborative relationship with president Marcos were both considerable and divisive for the Carter administration, but they were fairly quickly outweighed by strategic considerations. In January 1979 Washington and Manila agreed to new arrangements that showed significantly greater sensitivity to Philippine concerns about sovereignty: The bases were now specifically placed under Philippine commanders and the Philippine flag; access on the bases set aside for use by U.S. forces under American command were now to be designated as U.S. facilities on Philippine bases. In these facilities, however, the United States was to enjoy unhampered operations and full command and control. In addition, much of the land that had formed part
of the base areas was relinquished by the United States: 119,000 acres of the 139,000-acre Clark Field; 14,440 of the 36,000 acres of Subic Bay. Responsibility for perimeter security was assigned to Philippine forces in hopes that this would significantly reduce the number of cases evoking controversy over criminal jurisdiction. In another new departure, a regular five-year MRA review schedule was established, with the first review to take place in 1985.

In a letter accompanying the agreement, President Carter committed the executive branch to making its "best effort" to secure congressional approval for $500 million in military assistance for the Philippines—$50 million in grants, $250 million in Foreign Military Sales credits (FMS), and $200 million in Security Assistance. Also, in another letter, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance referred the U.S. commitment to Philippine defense in terms suggesting to some American observers possible U.S. involvement in hostilities that might be sparked by Philippine pursuit of parcels from the Spratly chain in the South China Sea or claimed by Taipei, Beijing, and Hanoi. Ambassador Pitaet, however, points out that the two areas in the South China Sea where Filipino activity in the late 1970s was drawing a hostile Vietnamese response—Reed Bank and the Kalayan Islands of the Spratly chain—were not included in Philippine "metropolitan territory... or the island territories under its jurisdiction" in the three treaties specified in the Vance letter.*

The required 1983 MRA review proved much less difficult than had earlier negotiations, reflecting in part the accomplishments of 1979. Relations between Washington and Manila at this stage of the Reagan administration were also much more cordial, despite the increasingly unfavorable attention that the abuses of the Marcos regime were attracting in the Congress and elsewhere. The "best effort" commitment for the next five years was increased to $600 million—$125 million in Grant Military Assistance (GMA), $300 million in FMS, and $475 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF).

In the agreement, signed on June 1, 1983, the United States also committed itself to procuring local goods and services to the maximum extent possible and to cooperating with the Philippine government in efforts to improve economic and social conditions in populated areas adjacent to U.S. facilities. Formal procedures were established for carrying out earlier commitments that permitted the access of Philippine base commanders to the U.S. facilities and that required the U.S. commanders to submit information on force levels, equipment, and weapons systems. The sensitivities of both sides were reflected in the reaffirmation, on the one hand, of the U.S. right to unhampered military use of the facilities and on the other, of the U.S. Rolex-Serrano pledge to prior consultation on the deployment of long-range missiles or the use of the facilities for combat operations outside the provisions of the MDT or the SEATO treaty.

Although the negotiations had proceeded with relative ease and dispatch, the executive branch commitment to compensation confronted increasing obstacles in Congress, especially in the wake of the assassination of Benigno Aquino in August 1983. Efforts originating earlier to use American assistance to influence Marcos's behavior, or at least distance the United States from his policies, now became more persistent and widely supported. Generally, they took the form of proposed cuts in administration requests for military assistance balanced by increases in economic assistance. In 1985, for example, Congress reduced the administration proposal for $100 million in military assistance to $70 million, and a concurrent resolution, passed unanimously, tied future assistance to the holding of free, fair, and honest elections. The February 1986 elections met none of these criteria. However, in providing the occasion for Marcos's departure and Corazon Aquino's succession, they inaugurated the new political era in which, in 1988, the United States and the Philippines will once again review the Military Bases Agreement.

**THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT: THE FACILITIES AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES**

As the 1988 MRA review approaches, the strategic rationale for the U.S. military presence in the Philippines has never been more extensive.* This rationale, based as it is on support for far-flung commitments, underlines the extent to which U.S. strategic interest in the Philippines is derivative of a central location serving American purposes elsewhere and of an investment over many years in building up logistic and other facilities there. However, although neither the Philippines nor its ASEAN partners face any immediate external threat requiring their protection via Clark and Subic, the U.S. military presence in the Philippines continues to be important to those countries as an assurance of continued U.S. interest and of American readiness to deal with some possibly threatening future contingency.

Today the American facilities at Subic, Clark, and their smaller associated installations support the operations of the Seventh Fleet and other U.S. forces over an arc that stretches from the Persian Gulf through the narrow straits connecting the Indian and Pacific oceans to the northernmost reaches of the Japanese archipelago. Their central location along this arc is a major asset. Four flying hours or five sea days can bring U.S. forces and supplies from the Philippines to Australia, Guam, Korea, Japan, or Singapore; eight flying hours or nine days at sea can bring them to the American facilities in the Indian Ocean at Diego Garcia. Extensive and sophisticated capabilities for maintenance, repair, supply, and training complement the bases' geographic advantages and contribute greatly to military readiness. Advanced communications capabilities form an important part of the regional network.

Subic Bay provides major support to the Seventh Fleet. Some 60 percent of all of the fleet's required repair is carried out there. Its workshops are the largest and best equipped of their kind west of Hawaii. Its dry docks can handle all types of naval vessels other than battleships and carriers, and its well-protected harbor and deep waters can accommodate several carrier battle groups simultaneously. Subic's Naval Supply Depot, the largest outside the

United States, can stock naval vessels for several months at sea, process more than a million barrels of fuel a month, and store 46,000 tons of ammunition.

Clark, with its outstanding airlift and aircraft maintenance capabilities, is the home base for the Thirteenth Air Force, which includes a tactical fighter wing and a tactical airlift wing. Clark’s runway can be used by virtually all aircraft in the U.S. military inventory, including the largest troop transports; its hangar space also accommodates most types of military aircraft; and its extensive storage areas include space for about 18 million gallons of jet fuel as well as large stockpiles of ammunition and other supplies. More than two-thirds of the material support for U.S. forces in the Indian Ocean is shipped through Clark Field. Clark’s training capabilities are equally important, especially the sophisticated bombing, gunnery, and electronic warfare facilities for live combat training provided by the Crow Valley Weapons Range.

Most American critics of the continued U.S. military presence in the Philippines have rested their case on political considerations; few have challenged it on strategic grounds. One such critic, however, is retired Admiral Gene R. LaRocque.8 Although he has joined others in linking political and military concerns, he places his principal emphasis on what he charges is the outworn concept of forward defense. This, he argues, is invalidated by technological developments—nuclear propulsion and weapons and satellites in particular—as well as by such international developments as the Sino-Soviet split and the diffusion of global military and economic power. U.S. facilities in the Philippines, he contends, are but a vestige of this now outmoded strategy. He accepts the importance of the U.S. role in the Pacific in maintaining the confidence of allies and friends, fulfilling commitments, and protecting lines of communication, but he argues that none of these missions requires the U.S. military presence in the Philippines. Instead, the United States can demonstrate its interest and resolve by developing stronger political and economic ties with Asian and Pacific countries, promoting a widely shared framework for regional cooperation, and ensuring the continued active presence of the Seventh Fleet. Granting that the Philippine facilities are useful for the maintenance of the fleet and convenient for the protection of sea-lanes, the same functions, he argues, could be performed elsewhere, and he cites as alternatives Australia, Guam, Japan, Singapore, and perhaps Malaysia. Similarly, he argues that the United States has no commitments in the area that could not be honored by U.S. forces elsewhere in the Pacific or from the United States.

Critics have also challenged the military value of the facilities for access to areas beyond the western Pacific. For example, sensitivity to possible Arab state pressure affecting Philippine oil supplies or the Muslim insurgency in the southern Philippines might well lead Manila to oppose the use of the U.S. facilities in support of Israel. In the past, it is pointed out, the United States was unable to mount combat operations from the Philippines during the Indo-China hostilities. Moreover, in 1976, when the Philippines and Vietnam established diplomatic relations, Manila pledged that it would not permit any foreign country to use its territory as a base for direct or indirect aggression against Vietnam or other regional countries.

8 See LaRocque’s testimony in 1883 House Hearings, 170-89.

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U.S. officials, while emphasizing the great importance to the United States of military access to the Philippines, have usually stopped short of suggesting that the United States would be incapable of fulfilling its global and regional military responsibilities should this access be terminated. Rather, in response to congressional questioning and in other public statements, they have emphasized the absence of any other available single location combining the geographic advantages of the forward and central location of the Philippines with the space and well-trained, abundant, and low-cost manpower and already highly developed facilities available there; the high cost of replacing the facilities—an estimated $2-4 billion in capital costs plus increased operating costs, which could result from the probable need to increase fleet strength so as to permit U.S. vessels equal time on station from less favorable locations; the long lead time—six to nine years—that replication would require; and the adverse impact of a U.S. departure from the Philippines, whether voluntary or forced, on morale and international outlook in other countries of the region.

Alternative locations that have been examined with varying degrees of interest and detail have included Australia, Japan, Singapore, Hawaii, and such U.S. flag territories as Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and also Palau, now in transition from trust territory to freely associated state.9 Singapore and Japan have excellent although high-price ship repair capabilities. Japan is well located for Northeast Asian contingencies, although not for Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. Singapore is adjacent to the Strait of Malacca and 1,300 miles closer to the Indian Ocean than Subic and Clark but twice as far from Okinawa. Australia’s west coast Cockburn Sound naval base, despite its location on the Indian Ocean, is as far in steaming days from Diego Garcia as is Subic and almost four times as far from Okinawa. Yet, while Australia, Japan, and Singapore all offer a more stable political and insurgent-free environment than the Philippines offers, the willingness of Australia and Japan to add significantly to the existing U.S. military presence on their soil, at least under current circumstances, is notably regional cooperation. Singapore raises the highly questionable issue of face-saving difficulties in this regard; moreover, as its representatives are much given to noting when the question arises, the territory within the boundaries of Clark Field exceeds Singapore’s total land area.

Should the United States be required to leave the Philippines, congressional testimony suggests that the alternative preferred by the U.S. military would be some redistribution on American territory of the functions now performed at Clark and Subic, supplemented perhaps by greater utilization of existing U.S. facilities and of commercial shipyards in the western Pacific. Whatever the political advantages of this course, however, it would involve many practical disadvantages. Of the sites considered, only Hawaii and Guam have well-developed air and naval facilities; in Saipan, Tinian, and Palau any effort would have to proceed virtually from scratch. Hawaii’s location does not really fit it for a forward defense role; it is, for example, twelve more steaming days from the Indian Ocean than is Subic. Guam, 1,300 miles east of Subic, is well located as the Philippines to support operations in Northeast Asia but not in Southeast Asia or the Indian Ocean, and carriers cannot berth in its shallow harbor. Local labor is less plentiful and more expensive than in the

9 The most recent and comprehensive analysis is contained in Bowen, Philippine Bases.
Philippines, and space is in short supply—problems that are many times more acute in the tiny and sparsely populated islands of Micronesia.

Summing up the testimony on alternatives before his House subcommittee in 1986, Congressman Stephen Solarz observed:

"It would appear that if we were to leave Clark and Subic that, while alternatives could be found, they would cost literally billions and billions more than we are spending now. I am not sure too many of my colleagues in Congress are prepared to vote the extra funds. Furthermore, at the end of the day, we would be in a less advantageous position than we are with Clark and Subic, because of some particular geographic and other advantages of those two facilities."

Although political arguments for relocation are now less pressing, cost obstacles loom even larger. However, much more compensation the Philippines may seek in 1986, it is unlikely to come close to the costs of relocation. What probably remains the position of the executive branch on the issue was clearly put by Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Gaston J. Sigur, when he told the Congress in April 1986, "We have no plan to relocate our facilities from the Philippines."†

THE COMING NEGOTIATIONS

For fourteen years—from Marcos’s declaration of martial law in September 1972 until his overthrow in February 1986—MBA issues were dealt with in the context of an authoritarian political environment. Like his predecessors, Marcos used the American connection both as whipping boy and as support for his authority. Base negotiations were complicated by his whipsaw tactics and ultra-nationalist posturing. Yet the power to make final policy decisions undoubtedly rested in his hands, and the importance of his symbiotic relationship with his armed forces reinforced other considerations impelling him to retain the base relationship. For the political opposition, on the other hand, the base relationship became tarnished by its association with Marcos to the point that some among the opposition were transformed from critics of MBA arrangements to outright opponents of the base presence.

The political context today is vastly different. Restored democracy has opened the channels of political influence to a variety of voices and views. President Corazon Aquino’s government represents a mixture of forces—not all of them compatible—and this is reflected in the slow pace and uncertainty of the decisionmaking process. To be sure, Aquino herself has thus far remained able to swing overwhelming popular support in favor of what she champions, be it the new constitution or her candidates for the recently elected senate. But there is no certainty that her personal authority can survive undiminished; the mere passage of time, impatience with existing, difficult problems, and increased political jockeying as the end of her term approaches could all prove erosive.

The no-holds-barred tradition of Filipino politics has reemerged in full force and will be applied to the MBA, as it will to all other issues, in ways that will confuse as much as clarify. In 1991, if not sooner, the base relationship will be thrust into the Philippine legislative arena by a constitutional mandate requiring that, after 1991,

"...foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly conferred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State."

There can be no doubt that the opportunities so provided will be grasped with alacrity both by those seeking change in the present arrangements and by outright opponents of the U.S. military presence—including the Philippine Communist party, with its now significant mass base and its extensive propaganda capabilities—as well as by proponents of a neutralist foreign policy.

Despite changes in the political arena, however, much in the environment in which MBA negotiations will be conducted remains unchanged: most of the issues are also the same. Many problems remain as acute as they were before Marcos departed—a fragile economy operating in an unfavorable global environment; an enormous foreign debt burden; an extraordinarily wide gap between the very few, very rich and the very many, very poor; extensive corruption; vested interest resistance to the reforms necessary if rural and urban poverty are to be reduced; a widespread communist insurgency; and little progress in the counterinsurgency efforts of a poorly equipped military force heavily politicized in its leadership ranks.

Deep-seated ambivalence toward the American connection also remains. To be sure, the United States is no longer tainted by association with Marcos and has gained credibility for its role in his final departure from the scene. Even so, the Philippine-American relationship continues to be uncomfortable in many respects, perpetuating from the colonial period unhealthy feelings of dependency and inferiority. As described by one perceptive observer:

"Emotionalism pervades all aspects of U.S.-Philippine relations from visa transactions to base negotiations. Special treatment is expected, slights and insults are magnified, motives are suspect. There is much warmth and frank talk in the relationship, but they yield quickly and unpredictably to alienation and misunderstanding."*

In this atmosphere, base issues (although not dissimilar from those arising whenever foreign troops are a permanent presence) will continue to be discussed with special intensity. Critics and opponents alike will dwell on familiar complaints about the impact of the U.S. presence on sovereignty, security, and social conditions in the surrounding countryside. But other equally long-standing Philippine attitudes will also come into play: among the general population, an attachment to the American connection combining habit, emotion, and pragmatic recognition of material benefit. Similar attitudes in more sophisticated circles are reinforced by the recognition that the standing of the Philippines among its partners in ASEAN, and with other East Asian nations as well, is enhanced by its role in supporting the generally desired regional U.S. military

Many problems, including a fragile economy and a widespread communist insurgency, remain as acute as they were under Marcos.


† U.S. Department of State, Current Policy, no. 832.
presence. Most long-time American observers remain confident that the Philippine majority continues to support the American connection and military presence; even some of its Filipino opponents will ruefully admit that this is still the case. Even so, it is difficult to measure the extent to which this equation may be altered by generational change, increased nationalism, and a deepening sense of Asian identity that interacts with disappointment over the never-fulfilled expectations of American help and constantly reiterated attacks on the U.S. base presence.

In examining the relationship between the U.S. military connection and Philippine security, critics lean less now on the inadequacies of American guarantees and more on the argument that the facilities are a positive threat, serving both to draw inevitable Soviet attack in the event of superpower hostilities and otherwise to involve the Philippines in conflicts far removed from its own interests. Arguments that the Philippines itself is protected by its contribution to deterrence and to maintaining the regional and global balance of power have little resonance. The Soviet military presence in Cam Ranh Bay, an hour’s flying time west of the Philippines, seems only to have reinforced the views of those who argue that, for the Philippines, the Soviet threat exists only because of the U.S. presence.

Regionally focused arguments contending that the Philippines-American military tie contributes to ASEAN security evokes the counterargument that, if this is the case, the Philippines should not be alone in this role. Instead, some Filipinos argue, ASEAN should adopt the bases collectively and “redistribute the facilities and assume joint political responsibility for their presence.”

More specific contributions to Philippine security provided by the U.S. base—such as the radar screen, training at Crow Valley and elsewhere, and the local defense mission of U.S. tactical aircraft—while of importance to the Philippine armed forces, do not attract general appreciation. This is also true of U.S. military assistance, funds that some critics argue could be better spent for economic and social projects.

Opponents of the base presence also allege that the United States is adding to the dangers threatening the Philippines by storing nuclear weapons at its facilities or at least by feeling free to do so. During his presidency, Marcos repeatedly rejected charges that such was the case, but the United States, because of its “neither confirm nor deny” policy, is unable to follow suit. Instead it must fall back on reminders of U.S. obligations to consult the Philippine government before introducing missiles or new weapons systems—a response often greeted with some skepticism.

Although a number of organizations take a strong antimilitary stance, there is a broad-based antimilitary movement on the West European scale in the Philippines. Nevertheless, the antimilitary views of the noncommunist Left, heavily represented in the constitutional drafting commission, were reflected in an early draft specifically barring “the storing or stockpiling of nuclear weapons, devices, or parts” as finally incorporated in the new approved constitution, however, the nuclear provision is somewhat more flexible. It reads, “The Philippines, consistent with the national interest, adopts and pursues a policy of freedom from nuclear weapons on its territory.”

The social impact of a large alien military presence, especially in the areas adjacent to base facilities, also provides fuel for attacks on the MBA, which probably elicits greater public response than concerns over Soviet retaliation for the U.S. base presence or nuclear dangers. The sharp contrast in life-styles between the American enclaves and their Filipino environments is a constant reminder of inequality. Moreover, this neighboring wealthy presence is a temptation to pilfering and scavenging, which have caused many of the incidents intermittently exacerbating the criminal jurisdiction issue. Bars and prostitution provide vivid evidence for those who cite the corrupting influence of the base presence, while the AIDS virus adds a frightening element to these concerns.

Of recent years, military-sponsored community outreach programs have helped to counteract these problems, as has the concentration of ESP projects, including schools, roads, markets, and public health facilities, in the Clark and Subic areas. The facilities also contribute to local economies, through wages to Filipino employees and local purchases and, indirectly, through their multiplier effect. According to official U.S. figures, in 1985 more than 42,000 Filipinos were employed at the facilities at salaries totaling over $22 million, and these payments together with other direct expenditures (official and private) came to a total of some $830 million. These are very substantial sums, although MBA opponents argue that the same amounts could be earned if the land the facilities occupy was instead employed for commercial purposes.

The most widely shared criticism of the MBA derives from the belief that the deal gives the Philippines the short end of the stick. Filipinos believe, says Ambassador Falsen, that their historical association with the United States itself should constitute a “comparative advantage” and thus give them an edge over others seeking assistance. The use of their territory for purposes they regard as much more important to U.S. interests than to their own may be their sense of entitlement. Yet they see other “special relationship” countries, such as Egypt and Israel and other base-host countries—Egypt, Spain, and Turkey—receiving larger shares of U.S. assistance than the Philippines.

The form of compensation is another consideration. Since the 1978 agreement, Filipinos have referred to the assistance they receive in return for base access as rent, a concept the United States rejects. But regardless of terminology, Filipinos want more than the U.S. “best effort” pledge—they seek an American obligation to provide specified assistance in fixed amounts at stated intervals. Without this specifically, they see themselves at the mercy of a U.S. Congress, influenced by its own concerns in annual deliberations over the executive branch aid commitment, which Filipinos believe should be treated as an unalterable sum to be utilized as Manila—not Washington—sees fit.

* U.S. Information Service, Background on the Bases (Manila, 1980), 23.
‡ In fact, while Greece, Spain, and Turkey all receive larger amounts, only Turkey receives more in grant aid than the Philippines.
Thus, some of the same critics who argued that U.S. military assistance was keeping Marcos in power also charged that congressional attempts to put pressure on Marcos by altering the military/economic assistance mix was unacceptable interference in domestic politics. The Philippines' constitutional requirement that the MFA be replaced by a treaty subject to senate approval may reflect not only the desire to ensure full public ventilation of the issues involved but also the expectation that, through this procedure, the U.S. Congress can be more rigidly bound to respect agreements reached on compensation.

PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS

The survival of the MFA for forty years and the many ways it has been amended testify to the importance it has had for both the Philippines and the United States and to the consequent compulsions on each to adjust their differing claims and interests. Washington seems optimistic that this process of compromise and accommodation will continue; Assistant Secretary of State Sigur has described the prospects "for continued unhindered access to Subic and Clark" as "very good." How the prospects are seen in Manila is not as clear. Consistency is no more prized in Philippines than it is elsewhere. Nevertheless, there is some reason for concern in the fact that the current political leadership includes some who, in the Marcos era, joined in the call for abrogating the MFA.

President Aquino has committed herself only to respecting the MFA until 1991 but otherwise keeping her options open. In fact, however, her options are less open than this statement suggests. No later than 1988 the trade review agreement and the expiration of the U.S. "best effort" pledge will require new decisions, at least about compensation. And 1988 decisions themselves are bound to be affected by the intranscendence of the constitutional deadline that has foreclosed the former MFA option allowing 1991 to pass without any effect on the agreement.

What President Aquino's statement really seems to mean is that she prefers to avoid, as long as she can, entangling emotional and difficult MFA issues with efforts to obtain U.S. support for her government's programs—a prudent tactic for which concerned U.S. officials seem to have considerable sympathy. There is, nevertheless, an implicit link between President Aquino's success in eliciting American help outside the MFA arrangements and her willingness to support the MFA and to work actively to swing the country behind her.

The United States, for its part, has long since committed itself to supporting Aquino government efforts to restore the economy and deal with the insurgent threat. Thus far, in addition to its commitments under the 1983 agreement, it has provided the Aquino government with $850 million in MAP and EXF assistance, supported Philippine requests for World Bank and International Monetary Fund loans, encouraged American private investment, and backed Philippine efforts to reach recheduling agreements on its debts to American banks. There remains a large gap, however, between Filipino expectations that were generated by warm assurances of support from U.S. officials upon the

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**THE UNITED STATES AND THE PHILIPPINE BASES**

restoration of democracy in the Philippines and the actual performance of the U.S. government since then.

While both the extent to which the United States fills this gap and the manner in which it does so will be important in shaping MFA attitudes in 1988, Filipinos will also expect significantly larger benefits in exchange for a continued U.S. military presence. This expectation will not be easy to meet. Given the extensive changes already made, especially those of 1978, it will be difficult to identify ways of giving additional recognition to Philippine sovereignty. Of the 600,000 acres originally set aside for U.S. base use, the facilities now occupy less than 17,000; there may be some room for additional reversion of land to Philippine use, but it is unlikely to be very large. U.S. military authorities may find that they can accept more restrictions on their activities without endangering command and control; they have already done so in treaties with Greece and Spain.

Increased compensation—the central Philippine requirement—will also pose problems. The aid budget, constricted by political unpopularity and Gramm-Rudman legislation, and very heavily drawn down by massive assistance to Egypt and Israel, is unlikely to stretch to provide significantly greater assistance to the Philippines in the next five-year MFA cycle, although something could be gained by increasing the grant aid share. Alternatives could be sought in separating appropriations for base-host countries from the overall aid budget, but, as with other aid appropriations, congressional sympathy for the Philippines and appreciation of the strategic importance of the U.S. facilities could be outweighed by the budget crunch. Other measures might also serve to augment military and economic assistance—trade concessions, especially for sugar and textiles, increased procurement from the Philippines, and more use of Philippine firms in construction on the facilities—although they too confront legislative and regulatory as well as political obstacles.

How to deal with the Philippine view that the "best effort" device—a useful breakthrough in the 1970s—has now outlived its usefulness constitutes another challenge. Will the Congress, for example, be as willing to commit the "full faith and credit of the United States" to the payment of very large obligations to the Philippines as it has been with respect to the much smaller sums provided in recent Micronesian agreements?

Difficult as these problems are, they should not be insuperable. Filipinos are much more deeply and consistently aware of their need for the United States than Americans are of their need for the Philippines. Nevertheless, and changing circumstances notwithstanding, the need remains truly mutual. It is this that has sustained a long and close, even though intermittently fractious, relationship that should help bring about the adjustments on both sides necessary for the survival of the MFA beyond 1991.

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