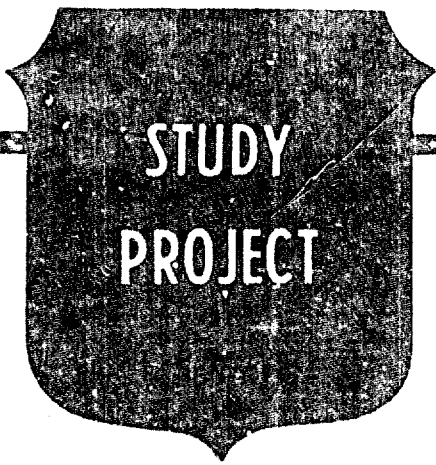


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**CLOSURE OF  
U.S. MILITARY BASES  
IN THE PHILIPPINES:  
IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS**

BY

**COLONEL ROLANDO C. SAN JUAN**  
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The termination of U.S. military basing rights in the Philippines has far-reaching implications to both countries and the Asia-Pacific region. This paper analyzes the utility of the U.S. bases in the Philippines and the implications and repercussions of their closure on the instruments of national power from the regional and national perspective.

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CLOSURE OF U.S. MILITARY BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES  
Impact and Implications

An Individual Study Project

by

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Philippine Army

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ABSTRACT

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The termination of U.S. military basing rights in the Philippines has far-reaching implications to both countries and the Asia-Pacific region. This paper analyzes the utility of the U.S. bases in the Philippines and the implications and repercussions of their closure on the instruments of national power from the regional and national perspective.

## INTRODUCTION

On September 16, 1991 the Philippine Senate rejected the proposed RP-US Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Security by a vote of 12 to 11. The eleven votes supporting the treaty's ratification were five votes short of 16 or two-thirds needed to ratify a treaty, as prescribed by the Philippine Constitution. This development has far-reaching implications to both countries and the Asia-Pacific region. The rejected treaty would have extended the life of the U.S. military bases in the Philippines after the expiration of the 1947 Military Bases Agreement in 1991 and help preserve the status quo of U.S. military capabilities in the region.

This paper will not address the relative merits of the arguments presented for and against the bases but will proceed from the fait accompli that U.S. basing rights have ended, albeit with some misgivings, in accordance with the Philippines' constitutional processes. This is a watershed event which compels reexamination of U.S. security strategies and sets the stage for a new chapter in Philippine-American relations freed from the contentious and divisive issues engendered by the bases' presence.

The object is to assess the utility of the bases from the strategic and operational perspective of national power, consider the probable impact and repercussions of their closure to the United States, the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region, and derive some insights into the issues and concerns that may affect

and shape future policies, strategies and relationships in the region.

## BACKGROUND

### Historical Setting

The origin of the bases goes back to the U.S. decision to occupy and control the Philippines at the turn of the present century. Mahan supplied the rationale for American expansion into the Caribbean and the West Pacific to support America's emerging role in the world's commerce. The expansion of U.S. shipping implied the expansion of its Navy and the search for suitable basing facilities along the major sea routes of the world. In the Pacific, the Philippines would provide coaling stations and support facilities for the principal trade routes to China.<sup>1</sup> It was also seen as an opportunity to fulfill a self-imposed obligation to introduce and disseminate American national values and beliefs to those far-flung corners of the world.

The decline of colonialism fueled by rising nationalism and the U.S.'s own values and beliefs in self-determination inexorably led to the granting of independence to the Philippines in 1946. However, American control of the bases continued as their retention, even then a divisive issue, was made a quid pro quo together with economic parity rights on granting independence.<sup>2</sup> The usefulness of the Philippines as a major security asset in the forward defense perimeter of the U.S. in the Western Pacific was already fully recognized even before World War II.<sup>3</sup> This concept was to be repeatedly validated and

reinforced by succeeding conflicts in Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf as the U.S. pursued its containment and deterrence strategy.

### The Asia-Pacific Region

The Asia-Pacific region, also called Western Pacific or East Asia, is a conflict-ridden, culturally diverse, economically dynamic, security sensitive region which has historically spawned a competitive arena for the major powers and their allies and the clash of opposing ideologies. The region stretches from Northeast Asia down to Southeast Asia and Oceania - encompassing the countries of Russia, Japan, Korea (North and South), China (Mainland and Taiwan), Hongkong, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Australia and New Zealand.

The Asia-Pacific area is a significant meeting place of American, Russian, Chinese and Japanese strategic interests and contains several areas of tension exemplified by the Sino-Vietnamese conflict, the Indian-Pakistani impasse over Kashmir, the ASEAN-Indochina dissonance, Sino-Soviet competition for influence, and political tensions between the two Koreas and the two Chinas.<sup>4</sup> Add to this various unresolved border conflicts, fishing rights issues, and the simmering territorial dispute over the Spratly Islands in the South China sea involving Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines.

The importance of the region to the United States is without question, considering U.S. trade with East Asia accounts for more



than half of all U.S. trade and exceeds trade with Europe by a two-to-one margin. In support of her global interests, the United States has been continuously engaged in the region playing the leading role in World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War and the Cold War.<sup>5</sup>

#### The United States Bases

The U.S. bases in the Philippines consisted of two sprawling base complexes (130,000-acre Clark Air Base and 62,000-acre Subic Naval Base) supplemented by several smaller facilities (Wallace Air Station, San Miguel Naval Communication Station, and John Hay Air Station) used for tactical air control and warning, communication's hub, vacation, recreational and other support facilities.

Subic Naval Base was located about fifty miles northwest of Manila and had its own airfield at Cubi Point which could accommodate 200 aircraft at a time. The base served as the home port for the U.S. Seventh Fleet and the primary staging area for all U.S. naval activities in Southeast Asia. Subic had three major wharves capable of berthing the largest aircraft carrier in the U.S. navy, four floating dry docks that could service ships up to 54,000-ton displacement, huge depot facilities that could store 110 million gallons of petroleum products, hundreds of millions worth of ammunition and other war materiel, and a 200-bed regional medical center. It took about 9,000 sailors, 560 DOD civilians and 23,000 Filipino workers or a total of 32,000 work force to run the base.

Clark Air Base, located 35 miles northeast of Subic Bay, was the largest U.S. military facility outside the continental United States. Clark together with other U.S. bases in Okinawa, Japan, Korea and Guam constituted the total land-based air power of the U.S. in East Asia. It was the home of the U.S. Thirteenth Air Force and the Third Tactical Fighter Wing. The built-up area consisting of the runways and the 2,700 permanent buildings accounted for eight percent of the total base area. The 46,000-acre Crow Valley Weapons Range provided an instrumented target range for live gunnery and aerial bombardment practice. Like Subic Naval Base, Clark was the major logistics hub supporting airlift operations and air power projection, a major north-south and east-west communications hub and training center in the region. Also operated and maintained in Clark was a 370-bed regional hospital. A total of 38,000 personnel were stationed at the base consisting of 7,700 military, 660 DOD civilians, 12,000 US dependents and 17,000 Filipino employees.<sup>6</sup>

Over the years, the base facilities expanded and grew more complex in response to increasing operational and logistical demands of U.S. military presence. Clark and Subic evolved into vital infrastructures for enabling rapid deployment of U.S. armed might into the entire West Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean and sustaining their operations as the major logistics hub for the region.

## Philippine-American Relationship

Philippine-American relations span the whole gamut of political, economic, social, and security interests with the U.S. bases as the linchpin. This relationship has deep historical roots and emotional ties formed by half a century of American rule, shared ideals and experiences.

The uniqueness of the relationship was extolled and romanticized into a "special relationship" which induced each side to seek preferential treatment and extract extraordinary concessions from the other. Thus, the U.S. obtained essentially unhampered, rent-free military basing rights and unprecedented economic parity rights which were so exceptional they required an amendment to the Philippine Constitution. The Philippines, on the other hand, gained many forms of security and economic assistance, including preferential trade quotas in the U.S. market and a sense of security from external threats.

The special relationship between the two countries may have developed out of the perceived strategic significance of the bases and the sentimental bonds surviving from the colonial era.<sup>7</sup> This post-colonial relationship was described by Robert Pringle, a former U.S. foreign service officer who served in Manila, in these words:

The most enduring aspect of the post-colonial relationship is the matrix of reactive, contradictory emotions and unrealistic expectations which it has engendered among both Americans and Filipinos... Both parties want more from the other than reality warrants... emotionalism pervades all aspects of US-Philippines relations, from visa transactions to base

negotiations. Special treatment is expected, slights and insults are magnified, motives are suspect...<sup>8</sup>

That the special relationship was perceived to be unequal is to state the obvious. The frequent, long-drawn and contentious renegotiations and reviews which resulted in numerous revisions to the original agreement attest to this perception. The nature and rationale for the special relationship was targeted by perceptive thinkers from both sides. It was claimed that Washington's preoccupation with the bases' importance overshadowed all other policy concerns and distorted the relationship. In the view of some political leaders in the Philippines, the bases had become "deadly irritants" adversely affecting U.S.- R.P. relations.

Interestingly, as early as 1946, then U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Gen Eisenhower, recommended withdrawal of all U.S. Army forces from the Philippines because he believed that future good relations between the two countries were more important than the strategic value of the U.S. bases.<sup>9</sup> At a conference on "The Philippines and U.S. Policy" in early 1986, shortly after the overthrow of the Marcos regime, a former senior Foreign Service officer, Paul M. Kattenburg, presented a far-reaching proposal for reshaping the U.S.- R.P. relationship by:

- Ending the special relationship through abrogation of the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and a complete end to whatever vestiges still remain of special economic ties.
- Withdrawing from Clark and Subic Bases, which should be closed permanently, along with other major communication facilities in the islands.

- Proclaiming that the US is in no way abjuring its interest in East Asia, but is determined to pursue a radically modified regional strategy appropriate to the changing political conditions which will obviate the need for US bases...while seeking to obtain maximum advantage in terms of global diplomacy from the voluntary relinquishment...<sup>10</sup>

In a related vein, Frank Underhill, a former U.S. ambassador to Malaysia and an old-time Southeast Asian hand, opined that

"the military bases and the huge civilian government presence entailed psychological costs in terms of perpetuating colonial attitudes...poisoned on both sides by love-hate, unreasonable expectations and hypocrisy,...generated among Filipinos a sense of dependency - or resentment - which he described, quoting Pringle, as a 'pathological' relationship, or at least an unhealthy one. Americans tended to treat Filipinos in a patronizing, condescending and proprietary fashion, mixing affection with exasperation and contempt. Filipinos responded by resorting to 'tactics of the weak...devious and indirect, difficult to pin down...their manner swings from engaging friendliness and pliability to prickly sensitivity and stubbornness'." <sup>11</sup>

In the economic sphere, the United States ranks as the top trading partner of the Philippines accounting for 26.3% of the latter's total trade in 1992. Among foreign investors, the United States leads the field with over one billion dollars invested in the country. However, most U.S. investments came into the country since the 1950s while the bulk of new foreign capital in the past six years has come from the Asian dragon economies. <sup>12</sup>

American influence in Philippine society is indelibly stamped in the similarity of government ideals and structure; in the Americanization of its educational system; in the wide acceptance of English as the lingua franca of society, at times

even eclipsing the native Filipino language; in the role and structure of its military; and in the developing culture and lifestyle of the people.

That Americans enjoy a deep reservoir of goodwill and friendship in the Philippines is self-evident, despite occasional anti-American oratory. The typical Filipino is proud to be identified or associated with Americans. American state-side education, as well as goods and services, are much valued and sought after. A large community of Filipinos have made their home in the United States, making them, at over a million strength, the largest Asian American group in the continent, second only to the Mexicans among the large immigrant population in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

#### UTILITY OF THE BASES

##### Utility of the Bases to the United States

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr, a former U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations, succinctly stated the utility of the bases in these words -

Without these bases the United States would be hard-pressed to sustain its operational activities in furtherance of its defense strategies of forward presence and deterrence to guarantee its security and regional stability.<sup>14</sup>

The utility of the U.S. bases in the Philippines sprang from its strategic location in the Asia-Pacific region and the depth and range of crucial support facilities and inexpensive workforce these bases provided. Their proximity to the choke points along the sea lanes of communication that connect Europe and the

Middle East with East Asia provided an ideal location for maintaining a defensive presence in the West Pacific, assuring free passage for ship traffic in the region, and, when necessary, projecting military power into and outside the region.

The bases constituted a vital element in America's Asia-Pacific strategy.<sup>15</sup> Important functions performed by these bases include:

- the provision of a continuous air and naval presence in the Western Pacific
- the capacity to extend U.S. military power into the Indian Ocean
- the provision of comprehensive support for all operating forces in the Western Pacific (including communications, logistics, maintenance and training) and the storage of major war reserve materiel
- the support of U.S. operations in Southeast Asia (including power projection when deemed necessary, protection of the trans-Pacific and Western Pacific sea lanes, and, in wartime, the suppression of Soviet aircraft and submarines and the cutting of Soviet supply lines to Vietnam)
- the support and operations in Northeast Asia (including defense of sea lanes, providing a 'stepping stone' for the long U.S.- Asia southern route if the 'great circle' route is unsafe, and providing a back-up structure removed from the Northeast Asian combat zone)
- the support of operations in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf (including keeping sea lanes open and airlift to Diego Garcia and denying Soviet supply lines to the Gulf via the Pacific in times of conflict)<sup>16</sup>

The military benefits which the U.S. derived from the bases in the Philippines is summarized by areas and operations in the following table:

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## U.S. Military Benefits from the Philippine Facilities<sup>17</sup>

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<u>Area Supported</u>	<u>Operation Supported</u>
Southeast Asia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Offset Soviet* military presence</li><li>2. Threaten Soviet lines of communication to Southeast Asia from Soviet Far East.</li><li>3. Support ground warfare in defence of allies.</li><li>4. Defend Southeast Asian sea and air routes.</li></ol>
Northeast Asia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Defend Northeast Asian sea and air routes.</li><li>2. Defend trans-Pacific sea and air routes.</li><li>3. Threaten sea routes from Europe to the Soviet Far East.</li><li>4. Rear base support of ground warfare in defense of U.S. allies.</li></ol>
Persian Gulf	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Defend Southeast Asian sea and air routes.</li><li>2. Way station on the air route from the United States to Diego Garcia.</li><li>3. Rear base support of combat operations in defense of Persian Gulf oil fields.</li></ol>

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\* Soviet or its successor regime.

The U.S. forward presence afforded by these bases was important not only to deter hostile activities in the region but also as a constraint upon local conflicts. The South China Sea is the site of a jumble of jurisdictional claims and counterclaims. Beijing, Hanoi, Taipei, Manila and other regional actors have asserted their rights to various land fragments, sea and seabed resources, including oil, and many of these claims overlap.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the bases helped provide credibility to U.S. commitments and diplomatic initiatives by creating the perception



of readiness, proximity, and responsiveness to the security needs of the region in both crises and normal peacetime situations. There is also the view that basing arrangements world-wide maybe important not only for what they allow the United States to do, but also for what they could deny to a potential enemy.<sup>19</sup>

#### Utility of the Bases to the Philippines

After the Second World War, Filipino leaders, exemplified by President Roxas, supported the retention of U.S. bases in order to avail themselves of the security umbrella provided by the bases against external threats since the Philippines did not have the resources to provide for its own defense at that time. The retention of the bases was also seen as the country's contribution to the maintenance of security in the Western Pacific and as a means to focus American concern and interest on the Philippines in the light of other competing interests for U.S. resources in other parts of the world.<sup>20</sup>

The presence of the U.S. bases was perceived to have a stabilizing effect on the political as well as economic conditions of the country. The Philippines derived direct economic benefits from the presence of the bases in terms of employment (the bases employed some 70,000 workers which made the U.S. the second biggest employer in the country next to the Philippine government), economic development and security assistance, and the influx of foreign investment.

The presence of the bases also benefitted the country in terms of humanitarian assistance in the form of relief goods,

medicines and health services, evacuation, etc., during emergencies, disasters, and natural calamities.

On the negative side, the presence of the bases entailed some debilitating social and political costs. The bases fostered an unhealthy relationship of dependency which resulted in the neglect of the country's external defense capabilities. Their presence also perpetuated the image of the country as a U.S. colony or satellite in the eyes of the world, particularly to its Asian neighbors. This, in turn, provided a highly visible target and rallying point for the intensely critical and nationalistic elements in the country, which cultivated and magnified resentment against what was perceived to be Washington's undue influence or interference over domestic and internal affairs. Critics insist the bases served only U.S. interests since the Philippines was not under any external threat. Critics further claim the bases work against Philippine interests by serving as a target for any power in conflict with the United States, a conflict which could be irrelevant to the Philippines' national interest. The dangerous proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is further claimed, exposed the Philippines to threats of annihilation for conflicts not of its own making. The bases were also viewed as tools "not of defense of the Philippines or of the United States, but to protect U.S. power in and consolidate U.S. dominance over Asia and the Middle East."<sup>21</sup>

The maintenance of these bases produced harmful social repercussions to Philippine society. For instance, areas around

these military installations became breeding grounds of "sin cities" where prostitution, gambling, smuggling of tax-free goods, blackmarketing, extortion and drug trafficking flourished, eroding the moral fabric of Philippine society. Prostitution and drug-dealing were among the most thriving "industries" created by the bases.<sup>22</sup> Added to these is the problem of Amerasians, Filipino children fathered by U.S. servicemen, which is part of the negative legacies from the bases' presence in the country.

#### Utility of the Bases to Asia-Pacific Region

The U.S. military presence, represented by the bases in the Philippines, was viewed by most countries in the region as a stabilizing factor, a counterbalance to Sino-Soviet strength which discouraged military adventurism by any of the major powers entertaining ambitions of dominating the region. It also served as a constraint for intra-regional conflicts because of U.S. influence and its role as a mediator in peacefully settling differences between nations before violence erupts.

The U.S. maintains strong bilateral relations with several countries in the region, such as Australia, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. The strategy of forward deployment supported by U.S. bases provided credibility to U.S. commitments, continuing interests and leadership in the region.

The U.S. military presence kept open the sea lanes of communication vital to the economy and survival of the region. The major contribution of American bases to regional security was the virtual elimination of external threats, which allowed the

countries in the region to direct their resources, normally allocated to maintaining military capabilities against external attack, towards economic development and internal security.<sup>23</sup>

A significant second-order effect of the U.S. military presence was humanitarian assistance provided by U.S. forces in times of disasters and emergencies. Massive and immediate relief and rehabilitation efforts in Bangladesh and the Philippines in the aftermath of massive floods, droughts, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions in the last couple of years are examples of the contribution made by U.S. forces singly, or in conjunction with other donor countries and organizations.

#### IMPACT & IMPLICATIONS OF THE BASES CLOSURE

##### Security Repercussions

The closure of U.S. bases in the Philippines has security, political, economic, psychological and social repercussions to the U. S., the Philippines, their bilateral relationship, the Asia-Pacific region and, by extension, the rest of the world.

The closure of the bases could degrade the mission-effectiveness of U.S. forces and entails a significant cost penalty in their operational and logistical support because of time and space considerations. Geographic relocation to other existing U.S. bases (in Japan, Guam and Hawaii, for instance) would increase force requirements to perform the same tasks, particularly in Southeast Asia, since time on station for naval and air forces operating 1,500 to 2,000 miles further from bases would be reduced by 15 to 20 per cent.<sup>24</sup> Reduced mission-

effectiveness could lead to degradation in responsiveness, flexibility, and credibility to respond to crises. These risks were addressed by a Congressional Research Study on the consequences of U.S. base withdrawal from the Philippines which concluded that:

The peacetime consequences would include the acceptance of more military risk, particularly regarding U.S. ability to defend the sea and air routes in Southeast Asia that are of vital importance to U.S. security strategy for the Persian Gulf and to U.S. allies and associates in East Asia.

Wartime consequences would depend upon specific circumstances. In some scenarios, the remaining force could be sufficient to meet the challenge, in others consequences could well involve delays and costly battles while acquiring sufficient U.S. forces and viable military staging areas to deal with an initially adverse strategic situation.<sup>25</sup>

The end of the Cold War and superpower confrontation has dissipated the traditional threat of global war into potentially smaller regional-type conflicts. Since the bases were key elements in U.S. containment strategy versus communist hegemony represented by the Soviet Union, the demise of the Soviet Union has in some way reduced the utility and significance of the bases to the security strategy of the United States.

The closure of the bases has significant military impact on the Philippines because of the link to bases-related military assistance, traditionally the major source of support for the modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. It could also put in doubt the credibility of the U.S. security umbrella against external threats which the bases supposedly provided. Thus, despite the standing RP-US Mutual Defense Treaty, the

Philippines will find it prudent to reorient its armed forces toward external defense, heretofore of secondary importance to internal security concerns.

Political considerations and the current military force reduction will probably obviate the need to duplicate Clark and Subic facilities elsewhere in the region. A realistic option could be the transfer of scaled-down facilities and capabilities to existing U.S. bases in Japan and Guam, supplemented with commercial access to port facilities in other regional countries. The bottom line in such arrangements will be reduced military capabilities, responsiveness, and increased risks.

Since the U.S. bases were perceived as contributing to the maintenance of balance of power in the region among the U.S., the Soviet Union and China, their loss, if not compensated elsewhere, could lead to an imbalance in the power equation, notwithstanding the breakup of the Soviet Union. China and Russia (or any future successor to the Soviet Union) will be afforded more incentives to dominate the region unless checked by the U.S. and other powers. This may suggest a greater role for other regional powers like Japan and India. The uncertainty as a result of the emergence of the new world order could also encourage elevated levels of defense spending for the countries in the region.

#### Political Repercussions

The closure of the U.S. bases could be perceived by other Asian countries as a diminution of U.S. power and influence in

the region. It may also be claimed as a moral victory by the nationalist forces in their struggle to achieve "genuine independence" and could encourage others in similar situations in the rest of the world.

On the positive side, the closure of the bases provides opportunities for the U.S. to streamline and restructure its forces in a manner that may not unduly compromise their capabilities. Also, the potential pitfalls which could draw the U.S. into local and regional conflicts where its interests are not directly involved can be avoided. It may also encourage a new basis for a bilateral relationship without the burden of irritants and misgivings associated with the presence of the bases.

Furthermore, the end of the Cold War has ushered in a rethinking of the strategic value of the bases with some quarters contending that the relocation of the bases is no longer a strategic but more of a financial issue. With their closure, the issue of their adverse effects to Philippine-American relations has become moot and academic.

#### Economic Repercussions

The closure of the U.S. bases has near-term unfavorable consequences to both the Philippines and the United States. The Philippines is bound to lose all direct bases-related compensation, employment benefits for some 70,000 local workers, business income and benefits of local enterprises providing supplies and services to the bases, and conceivably some inflow

of capital investments from those who fear the risk of instability with the loss of the assuring military presence symbolized by the bases. Additionally, the need to upgrade the country's military capability for external defense requires some realignment of Philippine priorities and resources.

The economic impact on the U.S. is difficult to quantify. Duplicating the facilities and capabilities of these bases in other locations would be prohibitively costly and unacceptable in the face of current fiscal constraints and more pressing domestic concerns. The pragmatic alternative, which the U.S. has apparently pursued at least for the immediate period, is the distributed and partial redeployment of the bases facilities at existing U.S. bases in the region, augmenting this arrangement with commercial access to base facilities in other Asian countries, and the realistic acceptance of more military risks in its ability to meet possible and future contingencies in the region. In any case, the relocation of the facilities will involve significant costs in terms of the initial upgrading or expansion of facilities in existing bases, higher labor costs compared with the Philippines, and generally higher costs occasioned by the greater distances to be traversed in view of the less advantageous location of the other bases.

The long-term implications are brighter. The Philippines will have the opportunity to convert the base areas and facilities into viable commercial and industrial centers. Success in this undertaking may have tremendous impact on the



country's economy as it would mean more effective and efficient utilization of the expansive base land areas. This land windfall could greatly ease the increasing congestion in the urban centers of Manila and nearby provinces.

#### RELATED ISSUES

##### Changing Value of the Bases

The military value of the bases appears relative and situational. Apart from intrinsic value as a place where command and control and logistics support for American strategic and tactical forces was exercised, its real value was magnified or diminished by environmental factors such as the nature and degree of the threat, the strategies, strengths and capabilities of supported forces, the state of technology in weapons, communications, mobility, and political constraints in the region such as host country policies or regional restrictions, e.g., nuclear-free policies, neutrality zones, etc.

After World War II and throughout the Cold War, the U.S. clearly assigned a very high strategic value to the bases in support of its containment and deterrence strategy. The threat of communism and Soviet expansionism were very real and called for a visible and credible military capability to contain the threat and maintain the balance of power in the region. The operational usefulness of the bases, repeatedly proven in the various limited conflicts in and around the region, e.g., Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, facilitated the deployment and sustainment of military forces. European sensitivities about the

use of bases in Europe to support operations in Southwest Asia added strategic significance to U.S. Pacific bases as an alternate route to Southwest Asia.<sup>26</sup>

#### End of the Cold War

The world-wide decline of communism and the resulting break-up of the Soviet Union into fifteen or so independent republics signalled the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a "New World Order" characterized by elimination of the bipolar pattern of confrontation between the superpowers and their allies and the threat of global war. The dissipation of the threat represented by the Soviet Union and communism suggests U.S. military capability designed to respond to such threats may no longer be required or at least can be reduced radically. Thus, the strategic value of the bases and the negative consequences of their closure have similarly diminished.

It is in this context that the U.S. withdrawal from their bases in the Philippines may be better understood. The U.S. could have minimized the risk of the bases closure, if its vital interests were truly at stake, by responding more flexibly to the compensation issue, among others. That the U.S. chose to be less flexible to R.P. demands was due not only to budgetary difficulties but probably more by the assessment of the reduced strategic value of the bases. In any case, the drawdown in U.S. military deployment world-wide is a fact, regardless of whether the bases were retained or not.

From the regional perspective, A.W. Grazebrook identifies the short-term effects of the end of the Cold War on the Indian Ocean and the West Pacific as:

- Change in ownership of the Soviet Pacific Fleet to Russia;
- Scrapping of large numbers of obsolete former Soviet ships and submarines;
- Reduction in operational efficiency of Russian Pacific Fleet due to reduced sea time and deployments;
- Virtual removal of stabilizing influence of Soviet Union and significant reduction in stabilizing influence of the United States;
- Reduction in size of U.S. defence force presence in the Indian Ocean and West Pacific.<sup>27</sup>

#### Regional Trends

Other factors in the environment which could radically affect the utility of U.S. bases are the growing vigor of nuclear-free movements, the trend for the creation of zones of peace, freedom, and neutrality, and the rising nationalism in many developing countries. The erosion of ANZUS due to New Zealand's nuclear-free policy and the Philippine Constitution's enunciation of a national policy in a similar vein works against the efficacy of the bases and could make irrelevant the "neither confirm nor deny" policy of the U.S. with respect to the presence of nuclear weapons aboard U.S. warships in host country bases and territorial waters.

The growing anti-nuclear sentiment in the region will tend to discourage the establishment of new bases in the region. Malaysia has attempted to rework the ASEAN aspiration for a Zone

of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality into a proposal for a nuclear-free zone.<sup>28</sup> The Treaty of Rarotonga among Pacific Forum States in the summer of 1985 created an agreement to establish a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific.<sup>29</sup>

Rising nationalism in the region would make it more difficult for the U.S. to operate overseas bases in the same unhampered manner.<sup>30</sup> The growing nationalism often seen by Westerners as anti-Americanism will provide strong obstacles to the continuity of U.S. bases not only in the Philippines but in other countries hosting similar bases. This is due to the nationalists' perception that the presence of foreign military bases in their soil is an affront to their sovereignty and independence.

#### Technological Advances

Continuing advances in technology resulting in giant leaps toward increased mobility, range and lethality of weapons, and effectiveness and reliability of telecommunications worldwide could reduce the importance of forward deployment as a critical element of the U.S. global security strategy. The recent Gulf Conflict graphically portrayed, with benefit of full media coverage, the extensive and intensive use of the latest technology in weapons, communications, electronic surveillance, mobility and air power to pursue a nation's military objectives.

## CONCLUSION

The closure of U.S. bases in the Philippines has broad political, economic, and security implications to both the United States and the Philippines. Overall, both countries have lost significant benefits and advantages from the continued operation of the bases - primarily economic benefits for the Philippines and essentially military flexibility for the United States. The negative consequences have not been as ominous as initially feared because of the reduced security threats, the built-in resiliency of U.S. forces and the strong resolve of the U.S. leadership to retain its capability to respond decisively to tomorrow's challenges. The long-term prospects, however, are less gloomy. The bases closure in the Philippines can be viewed as a minor challenge which the U.S. could cope with adequately as it continues to pursue its strategic goals and interests in the region.

## ENDNOTES

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