



underlying stresses as General MacArthur strove to give the Filipino people their independence? How did Philippine leaders balance American-styled liberal democracy against the Marxist ideology of their own guerilla leaders who had fought tenaciously against the Japanese? In the aftermath of that war, what was the nature of the U.S.-Philippine relationship and what tensions continue to this day?

Manila, known as the *Pearl of the Orient*, was a



would exercise almost unlimited power in Tokyo. A commission was sent out from Washington to examine the practices of the landed and banking *ilustrados*, but its critical report was shelved as President Truman focused on a new threat: communism.

Across the Philippines, the Huks—Philippine guerilla fighters who had fought plantat— plantasnhadTJTas P)2(f)20w (ougma'9.9(aitankin armark)12s— plnc ungaitst as Pmas Pd dar ticenot u2ndSenltor Emmanuelkid55oalaez224.9(-1.4 TP)20(sareaty)J pl, Ts yt planr positntas Pbemam(a



medical supplies, construction materials, production equipment, household items, and utensils. Truman recognized the need to contribute handsomely toward post-war reconstruction. The U.S. Congress, however, was less generous in awarding pensions to the Filipino soldiers who had acted as scouts and fought alongside GIs.

The Philippines gained independence on July 4 1946, but, in practice, the former colony remained “neocolonized.” Aside from a few ultra-nationalists, Filipinos generally welcomed the special relationship as proof of America’s concern for their welfare. They had learned and experienced American liberal democracy for a decade or more before the Japanese invaded. Many had also acquired education and professional skills.

The Philippine Trade Act of 1946 confined the Philippines to a subservient position. In exchange for the American payment of \$800 million to rehabilitate war damages, the United States required that the Philippine constitution be amended to give Americans equal rights with Filipinos to own mines, forests, and other resources without giving Filipinos equal rights in the United States. The insult of this so-called ‘parity agreement’ was compounded by the requirement of unlimited free trade for 8 years and the demand that the Philippine peg its currency to the U.S. dollar. Furthermore, Filipinos were prohibited from selling any products that might “come into substantial competition” with articles made in the United States. This meant that manufactured goods such as textiles, rum, and rope were prohibited, thus stunting industrial production and condemning the archipelago to agricultural and raw material production. Heated debate over that trade agreement—also known as the Bell Act—roused questions over the sincerity of independence, but so weak were the citizens of the archipelago in the post war years

that dependence on American financial support became indispensable. Additionally, enduring social inequity forced many of their young to emigrate and work abroad as ‘overseas workers.’

What is the nature of U.S.-Philippine relations today? What leverage can the current president, Rodrigo Duterte, exercise in Philippine relations with both the United States and China? Today, the Philippines is torn between its historical respect for the Americans and its desire to be truly independent. The Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 remains in effect with Article IV providing for collective defense in the event of an attack by outside forces. The treaty was tested when Chinese boats harassed Philippine fishermen around Mischief Reef and other atolls. In 2013, the Philippine government sought arbitration under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, rejecting China’s territorial claims under its nine-dash line. Three years later, it achieved a favorable decision, but the Chinese have rejected the arbitrator’s determination. Later, in 2019, Philippine fishermen and former government officials brought suit before the International Criminal Court (ICC), alleging crimes against humanity in Beijing’s systematic plan to control the South China Sea. As the plaintiffs await judgement, their case is complicated by the Philippine government’s withdrawal from the ICC on March 17, 2018 due to the courts investigation into extra-judicial killings and harassment of Supreme Court justices by the Duterte government.

It is doubtful whether the United States is obligated to protect the Philippines from Chinese actions on uninhabited reefs in Philippine economic waters. However, the visit of Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo to Manila in March 2019 sought to assure the Philippine government that any armed attack on Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China



Sea, would trigger Article IV of the Mutual Defense Treaty. Unanswered is the extent of the maritime area covered by this collective security agreement. Does it include the West Philippine Sea over which the Philippine government claims national sovereignty? Given this uncertainty, Philippine governments have diversified their security relations, developing close economic and political ties with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in 2015 the Asian Economic Community (AEC) to create the largest single market in the world. Membership in these institutions enables the Philippines to confront China at the United Nations, debate U.S. policies and, from its relative weak position, leverage its relationship between two global powers.

The Philippine people continue to prefer close relations with the United States exhibited by the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). Signed in 1998, it permits US forces to carry out training and exercises in the Philippines. But, in a shock to international relations, Duterte announced in February 2020 that the Philippines intended to withdraw from the agreement. Instead, he sought to create distance between the Philippines and the United States, preferring closer ties with Russia and striving to develop stronger economic and diplomatic ties with China despite its encroachment in Philippine's 200 mile economic waters. However, the inability of Philippine forces to succeed against Islamic forces in the southern island motivated Duterte to suspend his withdrawal decision. On June 1, he restored the VFA, demonstrating his need for U.S. support and the high favorability ratings among Filipinos for the United States. Familial ties remain close with over 4 million Filipino-Americans in the US sending significant remittances to their families and generous American aid arriving when super typhoons sweep through the archipelago.

Historical respect and affection for the US remain, but Filipinos understand that the United States is weaker and China grows stronger. As they seek to balance their relations with both super powers, they might strengthen their partnership with ASEAN nations who together stand stronger to resist Chinese expansion and, in so doing, gain greater respect from the United States.

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