

# Securing the U.S.-Philippine Military Bases Agreement of 1947

by Stephen R. Shalom<sup>1</sup>

Negotiations are currently underway on a new military bases agreement between the United States and the Philippines. The present agreement, which expires in 1991, was originally signed in 1947, and although the world is very different today from what it was just after World War II, a look back at how the United States secured base rights some four decades ago provides many insights into the current U.S. effort to obtain a new agreement.

The issue of military bases was a crucial one in the Philippines even before World War II. In 1933 the U.S. Congress—responding to Depression-era protectionist sentiment, hostility to Filipino immigration, and isolationism—passed the Hare-Hawes-Cutting (HHC) Act that provided for Philippine independence after a ten-year commonwealth period. Sections 5 and 10 of this act gave the U.S. president unilateral authority within two years of Philippine independence to retain military and naval bases for the United States. (In the jargon of the day, “military” included the army and the air force, but not the navy.) Lame-duck president Herbert Hoover vetoed the bill, but Congress passed it over his veto.

The HHC Act specified that it would take effect only if approved by the Philippine legislature. That body, however, rejected the act, and chief among its objections was the provision on military and naval bases. The sincerity of the act’s opponents is difficult to gauge. Manuel Quezon, the senate president who led the “Antis,” had a long history of opposing Philippine independence in private while proclaiming his undying commitment to independence in public, a stance common to the Philippine elite, who greatly benefited from colonial trade relations. Two of Quezon’s leading political rivals—Sergio Osmeña and Manuel Roxas—were the Philippine politicians credited with securing U.S. passage of the HHC Act, and Quezon

may well have objected to the act simply because he could not claim the credit for himself.<sup>2</sup> Be that as it may, the Antis denounced the bases provisions as denying the Philippines genuine independence, and their criticisms touched a responsive chord among informed Filipinos.

Quezon explained that his opposition to the HHC Act did not mean that he was “absolutely and unqualifiedly opposed to all kinds of United States reservations in the Philippine Islands after independence shall have been granted. But it does mean that I will never give my consent to any law that gives this discretionary power to the President of the United States.”<sup>3</sup> On other occasions, he indicated that he objected to military (as opposed to naval) bases with or without Philippine consent; thus on the eve of Pearl Harbor he cabled a U.S. newspaper: “It is not true that I have ever objected to having American naval stations in the Philippines after independence. All I wanted was that their establishment should be with the consent of the Government of the Philippines. I did object to military reservations and still do object now because your having military reservations everywhere in the Philippines after independence would in effect nullify independence.”<sup>4</sup>

When the Philippine legislature turned down the HHC Act, Quezon traveled to Washington to try to obtain an improved independence bill. The Philippine leader spoke to the new U.S. president, Franklin Roosevelt, who, according to Quezon, agreed with him that a country could not be truly independent

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1. I would like to thank Henry Gerald P. Ysaac, Jr., for invaluable research assistance.

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2. See Theodore Friend, *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929–1946* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 109–35.

3. Quezon statement, 5 July 1933, Manuel L. Quezon Papers, series 8, box 60, National Library, Manila. (Papers hereafter referred to as Quezon Papers.)

4. Quezon to William Philip Simms, Scripps-Howard Newspapers, 4 Dec. 1941, Quezon Papers, series 5, box 114.



*U.S. president Roosevelt signing the Tydings-McDuffie Act in 1934. This act granted the Philippines independence but left an opening for U.S. bases to remain there. Manuel Quezon is at Roosevelt's left, and Manuel Roxas is third from the right in the rear. This photo and the third and the fourth ones in this article are from the U.S. National Archives, courtesy of Stephen Shalom.*

with foreign military bases on its soil.<sup>5</sup> In March 1934 a new bill was passed by the U.S. Congress, the Tydings-McDuffie Act, more or less identical to the earlier independence act except that it stated that the United States would have no military bases in the Philippines after independence, but that naval reservations held by the United States would be retained until negotiations between Washington and Manila within two years of independence settled all questions relating to such facilities.

The Tydings-McDuffie Act did not offer the Philippines the "real and complete" independence that Quezon claimed for it,<sup>6</sup> given that the failure of postindependence negotiations to reach agreement on naval bases would leave the United States in possession of any naval reservations previously retained. Nevertheless, the Philippine legislature accepted the act, and a Philippine commonwealth was soon inaugurated, with Quezon as its president and independence scheduled to follow a decade hence.

Before that date was reached, however, the Japanese invaded the Philippines. During the course of the war, U.S. policy makers determined that the United States would emerge as the dominant world power and that a network of bases would

be needed for the United States to enforce its preeminent position.

Quezon, in exile in Washington, saw an opportunity to hitch his fortunes to the rising U.S. star. At the end of 1942, in a draft memorandum to Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, Quezon wrote: "I am ready to be on record as advocating that the United States assume leadership and full responsibility for the maintenance of peace in the Pacific in the years to come after the war." Other nations may try to interfere with U.S. rights and markets in Asia, as Japan did in China, Quezon advised, and the United States would have to be strong in order to serve notice that such interference "will meet instant and effective punishment." Quezon noted that he favored the establishment of an international police force, but only if "Uncle Sam were, in effect, the Chief of Police." The United States, he asserted, should have air and naval bases in the Philippines "from where you can strike against any country that may try to impinge on your rights." And, to be secure in the Philippines, the United States should take all the Japanese-mandated islands.<sup>7</sup>

Now there is nothing wrong when someone changes his or her mind, and certainly the devastation of World War II changed a lot of minds on a lot of questions relating to war and peace.

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5. Manuel Quezon, *The Good Fight* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1946 [reprint Manila: Cacho Hermanos, Inc., 1985]), p. 151.

6. "Press Statement of Senate President Manuel L. Quezon," Washington, D.C., 22 Mar. 1934, Quezon Papers, series 8, box 67.

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7. Quezon to Sumner Welles, undated draft, in Nov. 1942 folder, Quezon Papers, series 5, box 116.

Quezon claimed that the war had taught everyone the lesson that the only security for small nations was foreign military bases. Other approaches to national defense, such as neutralization or civilian-based defense, were purportedly refuted by the Philippines' own experience, for, according to Quezon, his country had sought to follow a defense policy before the war based on that of Switzerland, with grim results. In fact, however, Philippine prewar defense policy departed from the Swiss approach in many crucial respects, most notably in that the Philippines housed foreign military bases with offensive potential while it was supposedly seeking neutralization.<sup>8</sup> That the United States had rushed massive amounts of military equipment to its bases in the Philippines in the six months before Pearl Harbor to no avail or that the impregnable British base at Singapore was quickly overrun by the Japanese Imperial Army might have suggested that foreign bases were hardly a guarantee against invasion and conquest.

To Quezon there were surely other considerations leading him to favor U.S. bases aside from reasons of national security. By tying Philippine fortunes to those of the United States, Quezon hoped to obtain a continuation of the trade relations that had proved so profitable to the Philippine elite: U.S. bases in the Philippines, Quezon wrote Welles, "must of necessity require that in our trade relations you place the Philippines in at least the same plane as you would place, say, Cuba."<sup>9</sup>

Apologists for the Philippine upper class always refer to the colonial trade relationship with the United States as being of benefit to the entire Philippine people. The facts, however, were quite the opposite. A U.S. Department of Agriculture expert, for example, reported in 1939 that "Sugar favors may be injuring the Philippines far more than they help them. First, they have taken much of the best land out of the production of rice (almost the sole food) and put it into an export commodity which benefits the people only through beggarly wages. . . . We are increasing the wealth of a handful of people by tens of millions a year." U.S. trade policy "has enriched a few hundred, or at most a few thousand, people beyond any wealth enjoyed in the Orient."<sup>10</sup>

Independence threatened to disrupt this trade bonanza for the Philippine elite: U.S. military bases in the Philippines after the war would serve to bind Washington to those in the Philippines who provided the bases. The relationship between the



*Who actually benefits from the U.S. bases in the Philippines? Some feel that rather than advancing national security and peace they imperil the peoples of both the Philippines and the United States. Magnets for nuclear holocaust, they serve only the interests of U.S. investors and the Philippine elite. This cartoon and the above sentiments were part of an editorial in the Philippine Human Rights UPDATE (Manila, the Philippines), vol. 3, no. 8 (15 April-14 May 1988) and are reproduced here courtesy of the Philippine Human Rights UPDATE.*

United States and the Philippines following the war, Quezon wrote Roosevelt, "should be as close, if not closer" than before; this would be important for peace and "also necessary in the interest of occidental civilization and occidental influence in the Far East."<sup>11</sup>

In May 1943 Quezon formally called for the conclusion of a tentative bases agreement between the United States and the Philippines. This might seem, he wrote, as though it violated the spirit of the United Nations, with nations making private agreements behind the backs of other countries; but since the Philippines was not yet independent, there was no legal reason why the United States and the Philippines could not agree as to their future relationship.<sup>12</sup> Filipinos, opined Quezon, would be glad to offer bases to the United States at no cost for fifty years.<sup>13</sup>

In June 1944 the U.S. Congress passed Joint Resolution 93 authorizing the U.S. president to negotiate with Philippine authorities and then, at his own discretion, to retain naval, air, and army bases in the Philippines. The resolution was endorsed by Quezon and his vice-president in exile, Sergio Osmeña,<sup>14</sup> and signed by Roosevelt. Some members of Congress had favored

11. Quezon to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 26 Oct. 1943, Quezon Papers, series 5, box 118.

12. Quezon, draft of memo, 5 May 1943, Quezon Papers, series 5, box 117.

13. Quezon, "Some recommendations on the Dec. 41 proclamation of the U.S. President to the Filipino People," 29 Apr. 1943, Quezon Papers, series 8, box 99.

14. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), vol. 6, p. 1204. (Series hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations* plus the year, volume, and page number.)

8. For further discussion, see Stephen R. Shalom, "The Implications of the Philippine Pre-War Experience for Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1988).

9. Quezon to Welles (see note 6 above).

10. Frederic C. Howe to Francis B. Sayre, 16 May 1939, p. 4, U.S. National Archives, Record Group 126, Independence, Political, 1940 file. (Records hereafter cited as Records 126.)



*U.S. president Truman, Philippine president Osmeña, and U.S. high commissioner to the Philippines Paul McNutt in Washington in 1945. Osmeña supported U.S. rights to bases in his country by backing them publicly and by signing a secret agreement.*

deleting the requirement for negotiations, but Secretary of War Stimson, formerly high commissioner to the Philippines, dissuaded them, confiding that while the requirement “to us is meaningless,” since the U.S. president had the authority to acquire whatever bases he wanted, negotiations were to the Filipino a great source of face and courtesy.<sup>15</sup> Either way, however, the joint resolution was overkill: There was no need to leave final authority in the hands of the U.S. president because Quezon and Osmeña had frequently assured U.S. officials that “the United States may confidently expect from us full cooperation” in obtaining bases.<sup>16</sup>

This, indeed, was the pattern throughout the years of colonial rule: Whatever their public stance, Quezon and Osmeña had privately assured the United States of their cooperation and they had delivered on their assurances: from 1907 when Osmeña and Quezon got the Philippine National Assembly as its first official act to express its gratitude to the United States,<sup>17</sup> to Quezon’s private offer in 1909 to approve any legislative

measure the U.S. wanted,<sup>18</sup> to Quezon’s protection of U.S. interests during the commonwealth period.<sup>19</sup> In return for this service to U.S. interests, Quezon, Osmeña, and the other elite politicians were able to use their public positions for the aggrandizement of themselves and their class, while the majority of the population remained unrepresented and impoverished.<sup>20</sup>

During World War II the Japanese occupied the Philippines, and most of the Philippine elite shifted their allegiance to Tokyo, at least as long as it seemed that the Japanese might win.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. military reconquered the islands beginning in October 1944, and by the end of the fighting the country lay in ruins. In 1945 the commonwealth government was reestablished under

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15. Telephone conversation, Henry L. Stimson and James W. Wadsworth, 13 June 1944, Stimson Papers, Yale University, box 172.

16. Sergio Osmeña, “Philippine-American Collaboration in War and Peace,” speech delivered 2 Jan. 1944, in Quezon Papers, series 8, box 104.

17. Peter W. Stanley, *A Nation in the Making: The Philippines and the United States, 1899–1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 135–36.

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18. W. Cameron Forbes to William H. Taft, 13 Nov. 1909, W. Cameron Forbes Papers, Harvard University, fms am 1366.1, vol. 1.

19. R.R. Ely, “Memorandum on Protection of American Interests in the Philippines during and subsequent to the Commonwealth Period,” 8 Feb. 1938, Records 126, box 45, File: Protection of American Interests in Phil[ippines]—1944.

20. Joseph Ralston Hayden refers to the have-nots in Philippine society as the unrepresented *minority* (*The Philippines: A Study in National Development* [New York: Macmillan, 1942], pp. 376–400), but even if one assumes that the right to vote was enough to assure representation, the Philippine constitution restricted suffrage to those able to read and write, a skill held by only 48 percent of the population over ten years of age in 1939 (Hayden, p. 204).

21. See David J. Steinberg *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967) for details.

the leadership of Sergio Osmeña, who had succeeded to the presidency upon Quezon's death in August 1944. At U.S. insistence, the prewar Congress was called into session even though many of its members were awaiting trial for collaboration. Manuel Roxas, who had served the Japanese in a number of capacities, was elected senate president. With a selflessness characteristic of the elite, one of the Congress's first acts was to vote its members three years' back pay, even though the only service many had performed during the occupation was collaboration with the Japanese; low-level government employees, on the other hand, were only to receive three months' back pay.<sup>22</sup>

On 28 July 1945 this Congress voted unanimously in favor of a resolution authorizing the Philippine president to negotiate with the U.S. chief executive to establish military bases in the Philippines.<sup>23</sup> The representatives were eager to erase any doubts there might be regarding their loyalty to the cause of the United States. Said the resolution's sponsor, "The United Nations. . . [has] a formula for the perpetuation of peace, but to me. . . I would rather put my whole faith in the United States of America because I am convinced that it is the only nation that has proven that it is the true lover of freedom, unselfish and ready to give to others their right to be free, and to respect that freedom once that freedom is granted by her."<sup>24</sup> Another noted that there was no reason to worry that foreign bases might detract from Philippine sovereignty, as proven by the examples of British bases in Egypt and U.S. bases in Panama.<sup>25</sup>

Before this authorization by the prewar Congress, however, a secret agreement was signed in Washington in May 1945 between Osmeña and Truman, secret from the people of the United States and the Philippines, and secret as well from the Philippine Congress.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. government sought to keep it secret until after the Military Bases Agreement was signed in 1947.<sup>27</sup>

In April the State Department had privately advised that it anticipated no objections to U.S. bases from the commonwealth government, given the fact that Quezon and Osmeña had approved in advance the joint resolution of the U.S. Congress. "If this assumption is correct," the State Department continued, "it would probably not be advisable to suggest a quid pro quo in connection with negotiations on this subject. Such a course could be left to be utilized later if any serious opposition should arise on the part of Philippine officials."<sup>28</sup>

Some U.S. officials, like Senator Millard Tydings, wanted the United States to finalize a bases agreement with the Philippines before independence since there was no guarantee that Osmeña would maintain his support for the bases once U.S. sovereignty was withdrawn. Secretary of State Edward R.

Stettinius, Jr., on the other hand, was convinced that Osmeña's commitment to the bases was firm,<sup>29</sup> and on 22 April he reported to the White House that in a conversation the day before Osmeña had definitely and specifically stated that whatever suggestions the United States had regarding bases would be agreeable to him.<sup>30</sup> Stettinius was right. The War and Navy departments drew up a "Preliminary Statement of Principles" pertaining to U.S. bases in the Philippines, and on 14 May Osmeña and Truman signed it.<sup>31</sup>

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***A comparison of the Philippine military bases agreement and the status of forces agreements reached with the NATO allies "provides ample evidence that Filipinos were justified in their belief that they received unequal treatment from the United States."***

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The statement of principles gave the United States the right, pending development of a detailed plan, to retain all military bases it held under the commonwealth or developed during the course of the war, and the right to acquire any additional sites it might need. Movement between the bases was to be unrestricted, and the number of personnel assigned was to be unlimited. No other nation was to be permitted to obtain base rights in the Philippines without prior agreement of both the U.S. and Philippine governments. In October 1945, the United States indicated that it was not yet prepared to negotiate on the details of a bases agreement, but the War and Navy departments believed that the secret agreement "adequately safeguards U.S. Military interests" in the meantime.<sup>32</sup>

In April 1946 a presidential election was held in the Philippines between Osmeña and Manuel Roxas. As was typical in Philippine politics, both candidates were part of the rapacious prewar elite. A prominent politician, Roxas had also been a lawyer tied to some of the wealthiest individuals in the country. His papers reveal that on at least one occasion he bought "several thousand" shares of stock on the basis of insider information and passed on the information to a rich client.<sup>33</sup> In 1933 both Roxas and Osmeña had urged Philippine acceptance of the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act that gave the United States the right to retain whatever bases it wanted, and now in 1946 both again endorsed

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22. See the sources cited in Stephen R. Shalom, *The United States and the Philippines: A Study of Neocolonialism* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), p. 196, n. 63.

23. The text is given in the Philippine *Congressional Record*, House of Representatives, 15 June 1945, p. 16.

24. Philippine *Cong. Rec.*, HR, 15 June 1945, p. 16.

25. Philippine *Cong. Rec.*, HR, 14 June 1945, pp. 12-13.

26. Roxas message, Philippine *Cong. Rec.*, Senate, 17 Mar. 1947, p. 169.

27. *Foreign Relations 1946*, vol. 8, p. 926-99.

28. *Foreign Relations 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1204.

29. William E. Berry, Jr., *U.S. Bases in the Philippines: The Evolution of the Special Relationship* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989), p. 14.

30. *Foreign Relations 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1204, n. 39; see also p. 1199.

31. *Foreign Relations 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 1208-9.

32. *Foreign Relations 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1211.

33. Roxas to Cesar Ledesma, 20 July 1936, Manuel Roxas Papers, National Library, Manila, series 1, box 1. (Papers hereafter cited as Roxas Papers.)

U.S. bases in the Philippines. Osmeña's platform declared that his party favored U.S. bases as a means to "keep alive the interest of this great nation in our land after independence."<sup>34</sup>

Roxas won the election and promptly assured U.S. officials that they could write their own ticket as to the size and location of military bases.<sup>35</sup> But when the United States presented its draft of a proposed bases agreement, even Roxas had to balk. Roxas had no objection to many of the extraordinary demands: that the United States would acquire the bases for ninety-nine years (article 29),<sup>36</sup> that Clark Air Base alone was to cover 130,000 acres, that the city of Olongapo was to be totally part of Subic Naval Base, that U.S. authority would extend to the "vicinity of the bases" (article 3),<sup>37</sup> that the United States would be permitted to use public utilities and all other facilities under conditions no worse than those applicable to the Philippine armed forces (article 7), that the Philippines could not give third nations base rights without U.S. approval (article 25), or that Filipinos were to be permitted to volunteer to serve in the U.S. armed forces (article 27). But on two matters Roxas felt politically unable to accept the U.S. position.

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***What mattered to the elite was that the United States would give them access to its high-priced sugar market and the military aid to make sure they didn't have to share with the majority of Filipinos the immense wealth this access created.***

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First, the United States was insisting on having extensive military facilities within Manila, which would not only interfere with the growth of the city, but also inevitably lead to serious friction between U.S. soldiers and local citizens. Already in the aftermath of the war, U.S. military personnel stationed in the capital city had been involved in many altercations with Filipinos.<sup>38</sup> Second, the criminal jurisdiction provisions proposed by the United States were essentially a revival of extraterritoriality, giving the United States authority over all offenses committed by members of the U.S. armed forces regardless of who the victim was and whether the offense was com-

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34. Berry, *U.S. Bases*, p. 14.

35. R.B.W[arren, U.S. Army], Memorandum for the Record, 12 May 1946, U.S. National Archives, Modern Military Records, record group 319, ABC 686 Phil (8 Nov. 1943), sec. 1-C. (Records hereafter cited as Records 319.)

36. The U.S. demand for a ninety-nine-year term was actually quite modest compared to what the navy really wanted: "perpetual rights." *Foreign Relations 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1205.

37. Berry (*U.S. Bases*, p. 128, n. 142) notes that the agreement gave implicit authority to the United States to conduct operations outside the bases.

mitted on or off base, on or off duty.<sup>39</sup>

Washington was eager to conclude the bases agreement before the date set for Philippine independence, 4 July 1946. But these two issues could not be easily resolved, and the Roxas administration was overwhelmed with other work, particularly the task of securing congressional approval on the U.S.-Philippine Trade Agreement, which, if not passed before independence, would need a two-thirds vote as a treaty, instead of a simple majority.<sup>40</sup>

Talks continued after 4 July, but then Roxas faced an even more pressing legislative challenge: obtaining an affirmative vote in the Congress on an amendment to the Philippine Constitution to allow U.S. citizens special investment rights in the newly independent nation. The Philippine public was enraged by this so called "parity" amendment, and particularly resented the fact that the U.S. Congress had expressly made rehabilitation funds partly dependent on Philippine acceptance of "parity." Roxas found that he had to expend a tremendous amount of political capital to get this amendment through the Congress, and indeed it would not have passed without blatant illegal maneuvering by Roxas's supporters in the House and Senate.<sup>41</sup>

In this situation, Roxas decided that in order to protect himself politically he needed to get the Senate involved in the bases issue, and he appointed a negotiating committee that included a bipartisan group of senators.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, he decided that he would not submit the bases agreement to the Senate in September, but rather wait until the following session. U.S. ambassador Paul V. McNutt reported from Manila that for Roxas to have tried to rush a bases agreement through would smack of coercion "which he could ill afford after" the "parity" battle.<sup>43</sup>

The War Department, however, was growing impatient, and proposed using U.S. aid as leverage. The State Department, which frankly viewed the military's demands as excessive and Philippine objections as having considerable merit, recommended against using ongoing loan negotiations or other aid as explicit pressure.<sup>44</sup> A few months earlier, however, McNutt, in recommending favorable U.S. action on Roxas's loan request, had already made the implicit link clear: The loan should be

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38. Roxas got a letter from one Filipino complaining about the behavior of U.S. GIs, but particularly black GIs. Justo N. Lopez to Roxas, 7 Oct. 46, Roxas Papers series 1, box 26. For documentation on U.S.-Filipino incidents, see Violet E. Wurfel, "American Implementation of Philippine Independence" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1951), pp. 245-48.

39. U.S. Department of State, Office of Public Affairs, Division of Historical Policy Research, "The Negotiation of the United States-Philippines Military Bases Agreement of 1947," Research Project no. 319, Feb. 1953, confidential (declassified), appendix B, contains the various drafts of the bases agreement. (Document hereafter cited as Department of State, "Negotiation.")

40. Department of State, "Negotiation," p. 40. On the passage of the trade agreement, see Stephen R. Shalom, "Philippine Acceptance of the Bell Trade Act of 1946: A Study of Manipulatory Democracy," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 49, no. 3 (Aug. 1980).

41. See Shalom, "Acceptance of the Bell Trade Act."

42. Dept. of State, "Negotiation," p. 42.

43. *Foreign Relations 1946*, vol. 8, p. 920.

44. *Foreign Relations 1946*, vol. 8, p. 922.



*The U.S. attack aircraft carrier Midway at Subic Bay in 1945. The United States has been able to maintain a major military presence in the Philippines for almost a century.*

approved, McNutt argued, because “Roxas has indicated by word and deed his desire to follow [the] American pattern of government and retain closest ties with us in all matters including military bases deemed essential to mutual security but involving great political risks on Roxas[’s] part.”<sup>45</sup> (Although in theory the loan, like other U.S. aid, could be used for improving the lot of the impoverished majority, in practice it went to further enrich the elite—which only served to tie the elite more closely to the United States.)<sup>46</sup>

Roxas, too, well appreciated the implicit link between U.S. aid and cooperation on the bases. As he informed his ambassador in Washington: “My own fundamental attitude is that the bases are desirable from a Filipino viewpoint, both for the sake of security and for the sake of furnishing [a] link between the United States and the Philippines. Nor am I unaware of the material benefits in the form of dollar expenditures and employment. . . .” “But even more important” than previous Philip-

pine commitments and “the desirability of security attained through the existence of bases, is the maintenance of intimate and collaborative Philippine-American relations.” The basic objectives of the foreign policy of the Philippines, said Roxas, “are the protection of our national sovereignty and the maintenance of strong and indissoluble ties of friendship and cooperation for mutual interest, with the United States.”<sup>47</sup>

These priorities in Philippine foreign policy were clearly illustrated the next month when the Philippine delegate to the United Nations, Carlos P. Romulo, informed Roxas that the United States seemed intent on keeping the Japanese Mandated Islands as its own strategic territories, in contradiction to the principles of the world body. Romulo indicated that his own view was that for the Philippines to support the United States in this would be a reversal of Manila’s well-known position in favor of self-determination, but since he had been directed to follow U.S. policy, he awaited further instructions.<sup>48</sup> Roxas replied that the Philippines should follow the United States, since that country

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45. *Foreign Relations 1946*, vol. 8, p. 884.

46. Thus, while “the standard of living of the mass of people has not reached the pre-war level,” the “profits of businessmen and the incomes of large land owners have risen considerably.” *Foreign Relations 1950*, vol. 6, pp. 1514–20, paragraph 19.

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47. Roxas to J. M. Elizalde, 30 Oct. 46, Roxas Papers, series 1, subseries B, box 5.

48. Romulo to Roxas, 13 Nov 46, Roxas Papers, series 1, box 27.



*Will rights to the bases continue in exchange for rent, trade, and aid from the United States? "The ongoing bases review will test the Cory government's true colors. Will it uphold the national interest, or will it bow to the U.S. government's whims, proving that it is just another puppet regime?" This cartoon and the above quote are from the Philippine Human Rights UPDATE, vol. 3, no. 8 (15 April–14 June 1988), and are reproduced here courtesy of the Philippine Human Rights UPDATE.*

had no aggressive or imperialist designs and U.S. control of the islands would help Philippine security. Roxas instructed Romulo more generally that, "I wish especially to be consulted on matters where your opinion is contrary to American policy in view [of] pending negotiations on vital matters with American government."<sup>49</sup>

Roxas still resisted U.S. bases within the capital city. He told McNutt that even though he might agree to some bases in the Manila area, the Congress would never do so.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, McNutt reported a "growing impression in articulate Philippine circles that [the] U.S. is demanding base rights and other special privileges and that [the] Philippine Government is yielding, although unwillingly, to U.S. demands."<sup>51</sup> Roxas summarized for his ambassador to Washington the objections to bases in the capital: They would be a "constant source of friction" and a "convenient object of attack by individuals and groups interested in

49. Roxas to Romulo, 16 Nov 46, Roxas Papers, series 1, box 27; Roxas to Romulo, 4 Dec. 46, Roxas Papers, series 1, box 28; Roxas to Romulo, 5 Dec. 1946, Roxas Papers, series 1, subseries B, box 10.

50. Dept. of State, "Negotiation," p. 52.

51. *Foreign Relations 1946*, vol. 8, p. 924.

maligning the nature of our relationship with the United States." Such bases, he noted, were "politically unpalatable," "strategically unnecessary," and a "source of fear that in case of a war, the national capital will be subjected to attack and destruction."<sup>52</sup>

In the face of Philippine resistance, which Washington admitted was "understandable," the State Department urged the War and Navy departments to reconsider their military needs in the Philippines. Given the U.S. determination to garrison Japan and Korea as well as Europe, the War Department concluded it could ill afford to construct new army bases in the Philippines outside of Manila. Accordingly, the U.S. government decided to seek only navy and air force bases in the Philippines, thus eliminating the need for facilities within the capital city.<sup>53</sup>

Negotiations continued on the issue of criminal jurisdiction, and agreement was reached in late February 1947; the final resolution, in the words of a U.S. military specialist on the Philippine bases, "went a long way" in meeting the U.S. military's demands.<sup>54</sup> A comparison of the Philippine military bases agreement and the status-of-forces agreements reached with the NATO allies "provides ample evidence that Filipinos were justified in their belief that they received unequal treatment from the United States."<sup>55</sup>

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***Other nations may try to interfere with U.S. rights and markets in Asia, as Japan did in China, Quezon advised, and the United States would have to be strong in order to serve notice that such interference "will meet instant and effective punishment."***

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Late in the negotiations a new issue was introduced by the U.S. Navy, which insisted on a clause stating that title to all real property on naval reservations should be held by the United States. The Philippine negotiators objected to such a clause, and so the State Department proposed that the agreement not mention title rights to property, but that instead an exchange of notes would provide for subsequent negotiations regarding these rights. The text of the notes was to be kept secret until after the bases agreement was approved by the Philippine Congress.<sup>56</sup>

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52. Roxas to Elizalde, 30 Oct. 46, Roxas Papers, series 1, subseries B, box 5.

53. *Foreign Relations 1946*, vol. 8, p. 934.

54. Berry, *U.S. Bases*, p. 55.

55. Berry, *U.S. Bases*, p. 57.

56. Acheson to U.S. Embassy, Manila, no. 301, 12 Mar. 1947, 811.24596/3-1247; McNutt to Secretary of State, no. 430, 13 Mar. 1947, 811.24596/3-1347, both in U.S. National Archives, Diplomatic Records. (Records hereafter cited as Diplomatic Records.)

One final snag held up the signing of the bases agreement: U.S. approval of military assistance to the Philippines. Though there was no explicit quid pro quo, the relation between the bases agreement and U.S. military assistance was obvious to all. On the U.S. side, “negotiations for concluding a U.S.-Philippine military assistance agreement have been held in abeyance by the State Department pending outcome” of the bases talks.<sup>57</sup> On the Philippine side, the deputy chief of staff privately advised: “We feel and know that strategic-economic position and policy of the United States, especially as regards to oil, demand that she maintain military, naval and air bases in the Philippines, which is the key to the great oil reserves of the Indies.” He urged Roxas “to use the base talks as the bargaining instrument it really is in getting the military assistance we actually need and want, for use as we want it, and under the terms we wish to impose.”<sup>58</sup> Roxas at first refused to sign the bases agreement until the military assistance agreement was approved, and only relented when McNutt assured him of his continued support on the military aid pact.<sup>59</sup>

That Philippine officials were willing to use the bases as a bargaining instrument demonstrates that they did not consider the military bases essential to their security; after all, in 1947 there was no plausible external threat to the Philippines. The military assistance Philippine leaders sought in return for giving the United States base rights was, like the free trade relations, a benefit to the elite, not to the Philippine population as a whole. The military aid was to be used against the internal threat to the status quo, coming primarily from the radicalized peasantry of Central Luzon. No one at this time was trying to overthrow the government, but the effort by the elite to restore by force and terror its prewar domination of the countryside that had been disrupted by the Japanese occupation was provoking peasant resistance.<sup>60</sup> A small-scale civil war was thus raging in the provinces of Central Luzon, and U.S. military aid would help the elite maintain its power. As Roxas told U.S. chargé d'affaires Nathaniel Davis, the Philippines wanted U.S. military aid “not only for a short, limited period but for as long as American military and naval bases are maintained in the Philippines”<sup>61</sup>—which is to say, for ninety-nine years.

Roxas signed the bases agreement on 14 March, declaring that on every major matter the essential interests of the United States and the Philippines were “identical.”<sup>62</sup> Three days later Roxas submitted the agreement to the Senate for its approval. He told the senators that U.S. policy toward the Philippines had been

“high-minded,” and that the U.S. negotiators had met every Philippine objection on the bases “either totally or by a reasonable compromise.” He praised the United States for agreeing with his insistence that there be no bases in Manila. Residents of areas where there were to be bases, he reported, had been consulted and favored the presence of the facilities, and, in fact, “the residents of a number of areas which the American Army and Navy are abandoning as military installations have petitioned the Government to induce the U.S. Army and Navy to stay on.” The fundamental purpose of the bases, he asserted, was the protection of the Philippines. By this agreement, “We have defined the community of interests which will bind our two peoples for almost a century.”<sup>63</sup>

Most members of the Senate shared Roxas’s effusive view of the United States. Senator Pedro C. Hernaez admitted that if one were to examine the bases agreement article by article, one might conclude that the United States would abuse the Philippines. Nevertheless, he claimed, “if we examine the events and historical record of our country under American rule, we can conclude with certainty that there is no reason that could justify these fears about the future.”<sup>64</sup> To Hernaez and most of his elite colleagues, the belief in U.S. benevolence was not dampened by the facts, that for example the United States had tied rehabilitation funds to Philippine acceptance of special rights for U.S. investors, that the trade act gave the U.S. president control over Philippine currency,<sup>65</sup> or that the United States had insisted upon and obtained criminal jurisdiction rights for its military personnel that would be unacceptable to any independent nation. What mattered to the elite was that the United States would give them access to its high-priced sugar market and the military aid to make sure they didn’t have to share with the majority of Filipinos the immense wealth this access created.

Supporting the bases served a further objective of the elite. So many of them had collaborated in one way or another with the Japanese that endorsing the bases would be a way of affirming their loyalty to the United States. Unfortunately, for many Filipinos the problem with collaboration was disloyalty to the United States, the colonial ruler, rather than to the self-determination of the Philippines,<sup>66</sup> and so the way to clear one’s reputation was to pledge allegiance to the United States, even at the expense of Philippine sovereignty. Better a puppet of the United States than of another country like Japan, Senator Hernaez declared in supporting the U.S. bases.<sup>67</sup>

A few senators raised sharp objections to the bases pact. Tomas Confesor declared that the bases were “established here by the United States, not so much for the benefit of the Philippines as for their own.” He warned his colleagues that “We are within the orbit of expansion of the American empire. Imperialism is not yet dead.” “Parity” and the bases agreement,

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57. Joint Staff Planners, JPS 822/1, 31 Jan. 1947, Records 319, ABC 686 Phil (8 Nov. 1943), sec 1-D, Appendix “B,” p. 9.

58. Brigadier General Calixto Duque, Deputy Chief of Staff, to Quirino, 24 Feb. 1947, Elpidio Quirino Papers, Ayala Museum, Manila, Pre-Presidential Papers, U.S.-RP Military Agreements 1946—Mar. 48 folder. Duque is reporting to Quirino what he earlier told Roxas.

59. McNutt to Secretary of State, no. 444, 14 Mar. 1947, Diplomatic Records, 811.24596/3-1447.

60. See Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

61. Roxas to Nathaniel P. Davis, Acting Ambassador, Apr. 1947 Roxas Papers, series 1, subseries B, box 4.

62. *Foreign Relations 1947*, vol. 6, p. 1109.

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63. Philippine Cong. Rec., Senate, 17 Mar. 1947, pp. 168–72.

64. Philippine Cong. Rec., Senate, 26 Mar. 1947, p. 236.

65. On trade act provisions, see Shalom, *United States and the Philippines*, pp. 43–51.

66. See Renato and Letizia R. Constantino, *The Philippines: The Continuing Past* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978), pp. 106–131.

67. Philippine Cong. Rec., Senate, 26 Mar. 1947, p. 236.

Confesor charged, “complement one another. In the first, we deliver into the hands of the nationals of the United States the natural resources of the country. In the second, we relinquish our sovereign rights over practically every portion of the Philippines, to the end that the United States may properly protect the investments of her citizens in this country.”<sup>68</sup>

Senator Alejo Mabanag stated: “Fundamentally and in principle, I am opposed to the establishment of bases in our country because it constitutes an encroachment on our sovereignty. Not only that, while years ago military bases were considered good defenses, [in] this age of the atomic bomb, such bases are no longer sufficient defense. On the contrary, they are an invitation to attack.”<sup>69</sup>

These minority views were to no avail. On 26 March the Senate approved the bases treaty by a vote of eighteen in favor and none opposed.<sup>70</sup> Even Confesor voted yes.<sup>71</sup> Three senators were recorded as absent for the vote, presumably as a small protest. Three other senators had been barred from the body on the grounds of vote fraud, a concocted charge engineered by the Roxas forces back in September to ensure the passage of the “parity” amendment.<sup>72</sup> Their votes were neither counted nor recorded.

In the United States, the administration decided to consider the bases pact an executive agreement, thus requiring no Senate approval. There is no reason to expect, however, that the Senate would have voted any differently from the way it had on the Joint Resolution of 1944; there was a consensus of Democrats and Republicans favoring the bases, and favoring as well the active foreign policy that the bases would facilitate.

The Military Bases Agreement was thus approved in both countries, and it has been in effect ever since. The specific provisions of the agreement have undergone considerable modification, most notably in that the term of the agreement was shortened to run until 1991 instead of 2046. Most of the revisions, however, have been purely cosmetic, and the central U.S. concern—to be unhampered in its military operations from the bases—has never been threatened.

The Philippine elite, whatever their doubts about the agreement, opted for the U.S. alliance in 1947, for it assured them of the continued economic, military, and political support that would enable them to maintain their power and privilege. Washington had to resort to some explicit leverage and the occasional secret understanding, but by and large it could count on the pressure implicit in its relationship with the Philippine elite to secure its bases.

Negotiations for a new military bases agreement began in 1990. The Philippines has changed a great deal since 1947: Popular revulsion at nuclear weapons has become widespread, and nationalism is a powerful public force. But the economic situation is as desperate today as it was at the end of World War

II, giving the United States tremendous influence in the country. Moreover, the class system remains intact, and the rich who still run the country are as dependent as ever upon the economic and military backing of the United States; thus, despite their protestations to the contrary, most of them will be inclined to give Washington what it wants on the bases. In 1947 public opinion prevented the Philippine government from permitting military bases in Manila, but otherwise was irrelevant. Whether the much stronger popular movement for Philippine sovereignty today can prevent the elite from signing a new bases agreement with Washington will be the crucial question for 1991.



*In recent years there have been not only more street protests against the U.S. bases in the Philippines but also substantial opposition from establishment politicians in and out of the Philippine Congress. This photo is by Robert Gumbert and is from Joseph Collins's *The Philippines: Fire on the Rim* (San Francisco, CA: The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1989), p. 238. It is reproduced here courtesy of Robert Gumbert and the Institute for Food and Development Policy.* ★

68. Philippine Cong. Rec., Senate, 25 Mar. 1947, p. 219.

69. Philippine Cong. Rec., Senate, 26 Mar. 1947, p. 226.

70. Philippine Cong. Rec., Senate, 26 Mar. 1947, pp. 243–44.

71. Berry, *U.S. Bases*, p. 36, says Confesor was absent, but the *Congressional Record* has him voting yes, with explanation.

72. See Shalom, “Acceptance of the Bell Trade Act.”