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Building Empire's Archipelago: The Imperial Politics of Filipino Labor in the Pacific

Colleen Woods

On May 21, 1947, the *Manila Chronicle* ran an article titled “Men Wanted for Guam Jobs” on the front page of its daily, English-language newspaper. Only twenty lines in length, the article reported that the Morrison Knudsen Company, a “U.S. Army Contractor,” sought to hire “approximately five hundred carpenters and twenty-five male laundry workers.” For those hired by the company, Morrison Knudsen offered a twelve-month contract that promised to pay employees a wage 25 percent above existing wage rates in the Philippines, “plus free meals and quarters.” The article informed “anyone interested in these employment opportunities on Guam” to apply in person at “the old Eighth Concor camp at Highway 54.”¹ Prior to Philippine independence in July 1946, the US Army’s Eighth Construction Corps of the Philippines, or CONCOR, camp served as an employment hub for nearly thirty-eight thousand Filipino civilians employed by the US military.² Morrison Knudsen’s use of the Army’s civilian labor camp was not simply a matter of convenience or coincidence. The US Army had only recently decided that CONCOR’s work “could be done by civilian contractors at less cost” and dismissed thousands of Filipino laborers.³ When Morrison Knudsen set up shop in 1947, they not only repurposed the infrastructure—buildings and land—of the US Army’s occupation of the Philippines, but they also repurposed the occupation’s low-wage labor force.⁴

1. “Men Wanted for Guam Jobs,” *Manila Chronicle*, May 21, 1947.

2. Casey, *Engineers of the Southwest Pacific*, 194.

3. *President’s Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program*, 135.

4. US forces continued to employ Filipino civilians on US military bases. In July the US Navy reported employing nearly ten thousand Filipinos in the Philippines. Commander US Naval Forces Philippines to Military Attaché Philippine Embassy, August 5, 1947, box 10, General Classified Records, 1946–1961, Philippine Islands, US Embassy, Manila, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the State Department, record group (RG) 84, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA).

Within one year, nearly five hundred laborers traveled to Guam each week, and, by the end of 1948, an estimated twenty-eight thousand Filipinos labored in varied jobs on the island.⁵ Filipino workers traveled not only to Guam but to US military sites around the Pacific, including Wake Island, Okinawa, and Saipan. Even though the US military and US military contractors promised, though did not always deliver, wage rates 25 percent higher than those in the Philippines, Filipino civilians labored at wages far lower than the military's wage rate for US citizens.

In the postwar Pacific, the US military's "network of bases" linked people and places throughout the region in new ways.⁶ A shared history of Spanish, American, and Japanese colonization connected the Philippine archipelago to Guam, and travel between the two sites originated centuries prior to the post-World War II influx of Filipino migrant labor. Yet the hundreds of billions of dollars that flooded the region as US military projects expanded in the postwar Pacific produced new and accelerated circulations of labor and capital. Private construction companies, eager to turn a profit off government contracts, rushed into the area, offering a range of services for nearly every possible task, from laundering to laying drainage pipes. The ability to profit from military spending demanded highly mobile corporations with institutional and bureaucratic structures flexible and coordinated enough to stretch across thousands of miles. These new routes of labor and capital linked the breakwaters of Guam's Apra Harbor to the offices of Morrison-Knudsen in Boise, Idaho, J. H. Pomeroy in San Francisco, and Brown & Root in Texas. Yet the opportunity for investment relied upon procuring an inexpensive labor force whose mobility corporations could both make possible and limit.

This article illustrates how the US military's presence and power in the Pacific depended on the ability of military officials and private contractors to exploit and extend an imperial system of global inequality. The hiring of Filipino laborers for work on US military installations deepened an existing transpacific migration pattern whereby state and capital interests collaborated to control, and ultimately exploit, the labor of Filipinos. I argue that the US military and its private military contractors required the Pacific-wide circulation of Filipino laborers that reproduced an imperial system based on deep wage inequalities, revealing how the geographic expansion of US national security and US capital were mutually constituted in the early postwar period.⁷

5. Monthly Progress Report, Office of Civilian Personnel, January 1, 1948, box 103, General Correspondence Files: 1944-52, Marianas Bonins Command, Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command, Supreme Commander Allied Powers, and UN Command (hereafter GHQ), RG 554, NARA. The Office of Personnel reported hiring one hundred Filipino employees per week to work for the Marianas Bonins Command. This did not include numbers for employees of private contractors. For estimates of the total number of employees, see Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall*, 195-200.

6. Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea*; Monnig, 'Proving Chamorro'; Diaz, *Repositioning the Missionary*.

7. My understanding of global capitalism is informed by Gindin and Panitch, *Making of Global Capitalism*.

Over the last thirty years, scholars have tended to analyze the Philippine state's role in institutionalizing labor-export processes as part of a neoliberal global economy.⁸ Studies of the Philippine state's role in labor migration underscored the continued importance of state institutions against a globalization discourse laden with an uncritical and ambiguous language of migrant "flows." Scholars' careful delineations of state policy also importantly undercut a prominent and state-promoted discourse that explained labor migration as a product of a Philippine "culture of migration."⁹ To be sure, these largely sociological studies of Philippine labor migration connect contemporary patterns of Filipino labor migration to Spanish and US colonial rule in the Philippines. However, despite the acknowledgment of a longer history of migration, the majority of studies center largely on the migration of Filipinos after Ferdinand Marcos's 1974 Presidential Decree 442, a law that established an office, the Overseas Employment Development Board, within the Philippine government whose specific mandate was to facilitate and regulate Filipino migration. While I agree with studies that focus on the fundamental role of the state in facilitating the migration of Filipino laborers and the ways in which the 1974 act accelerated and institutionalized the flow of migrant laborers, I demonstrate here that as early as 1947, the Philippine state partnered with the US military and private companies to export labor for US military projects in the postwar Pacific.

Certainly, as scholars of Philippine migration have made clear, Filipinos labored for US corporations for most of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Prior to Philippine independence in 1946, Filipino laborers were largely free from legal immigration restrictions and traveled in large numbers to work in the United States. Though designated as US nationals, not US citizens, Filipinos' ability to travel freely into the United States provided American business interests with an abundant source of inexpensive labor on Hawaiian sugar plantations, California agricultural fields, and canneries in the Pacific Northwest. American businesspeople also generated capital by transporting laborers; steamship companies earned profit every time a new migrant crossed the Pacific. And, specific colonial training programs, particularly in the realm of public health, facilitated the movement—and sometimes the return to the Philippines—of Filipino migrants during the American colonial period.¹¹

8. Examples include but are not limited to Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*; Aguilar, *Migration Revolution*; Battistella and Paganoni, *Philippine Labor Migration*; Acacio, "Managing Labor Migration"; Lindio-McGovern, "Alienation and Labor Export in the Context of Globalization"; Stalker, *Workers without Frontiers*; Gonzalez, *Philippine Labour Migration*; Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization*; Gueverra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*; Cheng, *Serving the Household and the Nation*.

9. Gueverra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes*.

10. During the colonial period, Filipino men also labored in the US Army. According to Christopher Capozzola, fifteen thousand Filipino men (ten thousand Philippine Scouts and five thousand constabularies) served in the US Army. Capozzola, "Secret Soldiers' Union."

11. For recent studies of Filipino migration to the United States, see Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire*; Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power*; Mabalon, *Little Manila Is in the Heart*; Baldoz, *Third Asiatic Invasion*; and Choy, *Empire of Care*.

In this essay, I show how private companies drew upon the historic connection, developed through the course of the colonial period, between the US military and Filipino laborers. Using imperialism as an analytic frame for understanding relations of power, I argue, allows us to see how the late twentieth-century Philippine export-labor industry developed in the late 1940s as the US empire, altered by Philippine independence and rising decolonization movements, adapted and produced new imperial formations.¹² While the US military used the logic of “national security” in order to justify the fortification of the US military presence in the Pacific, it was the efforts of private contractors that transformed Filipino laborers into workers for American capital expansion in the Pacific. This article demonstrates how in the postwar Pacific, national security was linked to the privatization of work—the outsourcing of military jobs to privately owned companies—and the proliferation of corporate-military partnerships. The mass migration of Filipino laborers to Guam (fig. 1) beginning in the late 1940s reflects the adaptive abilities of US imperialism as well as the mutually constitutive relationship between imperialism and mid-twentieth-century global capitalism.

In May 1947, Nathaniel Davis of the US embassy wrote to Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Bernabe Africa indicating that the US military “foresaw a need for about 8,000 laborers to be employed directly by the United States outside of the Philippines including the Marianas-Bonins, Okinawa, and elsewhere in the Pacific.” The Philippine Department of Labor and Foreign Affairs Secretary had already approved individual requests from the US Army to “recruit Philippine labor for assistance in the repatriation of WWII dead and for duty with the Guam Air Material Area” and from the Philippine-Ryukyus Command (PHILRYCOM), a subordinate command under the authority of the Commander in Chief of the Far East (CINCFE), to recruit Filipinos for employment in “the construction, operation, and maintenance of military installations” on Okinawa.¹³ In addition to requests from the US military, Morrison-Knudsen—a civil engineering and construction company that, before the war, won contracts to build and fortify US military sites in the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island—secured permission from the Philippine Department of Labor to hire and transport six thousand Filipino laborers.¹⁴ Due to their prewar contracts in the Philippines, Morrison-Knudsen already had connec-

12. My concepts of imperial formations and imperial power are informed by Stoler and McGranahan, “Introduction: Refiguring Imperial Terrains”; Stoler, “On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty”; Coronil, “After Empire”; and Kramer, “Power and Connection.” For recent scholarship on US imperialism and labor, see Bender and Lipman, *Making the Empire Work*; Lipman, *Guantanamo*; Greene, *Canal Builders*; Fink, *Workers across the Americas*; and Greene, “Movable Empire.”

13. Embassy of the US in Manila to Philippine Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs, May 13, 1947, file 00006–002, Administrative Files, Labor Department, Records of the US Civil Administration of the Ryuku Islands (hereafter USCAR), Records of the US Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260, Okinawa Prefecture Library, Naha, Okinawa. CINCFE was the unified command that oversaw the entire US Army, Navy, and Air Forces in the Far East, headed by Douglas MacArthur. Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, 144.

14. PHILRYCOM to CINCFE, April 24, 1947, box 24, Correspondence Files: 1944–1952, Adjutant General Section, Marianas-Bonins Command (hereafter MARBO), GHQ, RG 554, NARA.



Figure 1. Guam. Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

tions to political leaders in the Philippines. However, because of Philippine independence, Morrison-Knudsen contacted the US embassy hoping that an agreement could be struck between the United States and the Philippines that would expedite the export of recruited laborers across newly established international boundaries. Thus in May the US embassy in Manila negotiated an agreement with Secretary Africa that allowed the US military or military contractors to “process and ship” employees to “desired areas without further contact with the Philippine authorities.” Within three days, Africa also granted the US Army permission to recruit and ship laborers to locations outside the Philippines.¹⁵ The exchange of notes did not include a salary figure but indicated that employees would be paid based on wages in the Philippines

15. Instead of providing free housing for hires, as Morrison-Knudsen advertised in their May 1947 *Manila Chronicle* employment ad, the US embassy agreed to the request of the Philippine secretary of foreign affairs that all future hires be paid an extra 15 centavos per hour. Charges for “quarters and subsistence” were then taken out of each laborer’s paycheck at the rate of 2 pesos per month for quarters and between 90 centavos and 1 peso, 50 centavos for US Army rations. “Recruitment of Filipino Laborers and Employees by the United States Army,” May 13, 1947, box 1, Significant Documents to Airgram, Records of the Assistant Secretary for Manpower relating to the Alien Labor Policy for Guam, 1947–1971, General Records of the Department of Labor, RG 174, NARA.

with an additional “25 percent overseas differential.” Laborers were also promised free laundry, medical and dental care, and “guaranteed transportation to and from the point of hire.” Though the Philippine foreign secretary requested a “duplicate list” that contained the name, birth date, next of kin, and address of each employee, he allowed the US military and military contractors to transport laborers without visas or passports. The “set of notes” between the embassy and the secretary of foreign affairs acted as a treaty, or agreement, between the United States and the Philippines and dictated the terms of employment for “labor recruited in the Philippines either by the Army or Navy or by contractors under the jurisdiction of the Army or Navy.”¹⁶

The newly granted sovereignty of the Philippine state compelled US military and private contractors to work through the US embassy in order to prevent delays in exporting Philippine laborers to work sites. Philippine independence and the altered status of Filipinos in relation to the United States made it easier for military contractors to justify the lower wages paid to Filipino laborers working on Guam, as the nationality of laborers was one of the ways the US military and military contractors categorized labor and determined wages. For Filipinos traveling to Guam, the contract negotiated by the Philippine state was based on an estimated “Philippine island wage,” of “twenty six cents per hour plus 25% overseas differential.”¹⁷ Chamorro employees, who were natives of Guam and were not granted US citizenship until 1950, earned \$0.75, while US citizens earned \$1.25 per hour.¹⁸ On Guam, Filipinos earned less than both citizens from the continental United States and Guam natives, yet on the island of Okinawa, Filipinos earned higher wages than their Ryukyuan counterparts.¹⁹

16. A diplomatic “exchange of notes” is an agreement generally concurred upon by a US diplomat and a foreign minister or secretary. The US State Department has a long-standing practice of establishing bilateral or multilateral agreements through diplomatic notes, though their statuses as treaties have been the subject of international legal debates. On the State Department, see Plischke, *US Department of State*. On diplomatic notes as treaties, see Corten and Klein, *Vienna Conventions on the Law of Treaties*.

17. According to Department of Defense (DOD) records, the “Philippine island wage” remained relatively static from 1947 to 1957. In 1957 the Department of the Navy sent a “competitive pay rate” chart to the US Army and Air Force. According to the Navy’s chart, the average pay for a laborer from the Philippine provinces was \$0.25 per hour. Box 1, Records of the Assistant Secretary for Manpower Relating to the Alien Labor Policy, Guam, 1947–1971, General Records of the Department of Labor, RG 174, NARA.

18. MARBO to CINCFE, August 1, 1947, box 101, Correspondence Files: 1944–1952, Adjutant General Section, MARBO, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

19. Though outside the scope of this article, the political, economic, and social conditions in the Ryukyuan islands, which were incorporated into the Japanese nation-state in 1879, posed a different set of problems than those faced by the US military on the island of Guam. Beginning in 1949, the US occupation in Okinawa began instituting English-language training and technical training in order to eventually replace Filipino laborers with less costly Ryukyuan laborers. This was particularly important to occupation officials who recognized the impact that the US military’s expropriation of land had on the Okinawa labor market. According to a 1955 study, seventy-five thousand Okinawans labored for the US military, 80 percent of whom had “been driven out from the rural communities through land expropriations.” Army-Airforce Wage Survey, 1955, file 015002-882, Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands, Records of USCAR, Records of the US Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260, Okinawa Prefectural Archive,

To be sure, despite Philippine independence from formal colonial rule, the circulation of Filipino labor did not indicate a complete break from the colonial past but rather an adaptation of US imperial formations in the Pacific. During the colonial period, the US military had maintained a separate pay scale for Filipinos in the US military, and since 1915, Filipino politicians were able, with varying levels of influence, to negotiate the working conditions of Filipino migrant workers.²⁰ However, unlike in the colonial period, the formal labor agreement between the US and Philippine governments allowed US officials and contractors to continually argue that Philippine politicians had agreed to the current relationship through diplomacy rather than imperial coercion.²¹ Furthermore, because wages and other working conditions were established through diplomatic negotiations, any alteration to the pay scale for Filipinos required the Philippine government to request a new round of diplomatic negotiations. Demonstrating what Fernando Coronil has described as the coevolution of imperialism and capitalism, when the US military and private contractors integrated Filipino laborers into the postwar Pacific labor market, they built upon and adapted the uneven political and economic relationship between the United States, the Pacific islands, and the Philippines.²²

This point is made strikingly clear in a series of 1956 congressional hearings regarding the application of the "Fair Labor and Standards Act in Certain Territories, Possessions, and Oversea Areas of the United States." Speaking on behalf of the Department of Defense (DOD), which lobbied to ensure that the US military and US military contractors remained exempt from the act, Rear Admiral Joel D. Parks stated that the DOD was interested in "stretching the defense dollars as far as they will go," noting that "the amount of money which can be spent for national defense [was] limited." Parks then went on to define this limit as "the amount of money this country can afford or the national economy can afford." Paying higher wages to Filipino laborers on Guam, a topic on which he spoke directly during his testimony, meant that "something else [was] going to have to be cut out of defense." Though he did not say so explicitly, Parks described how the enormous presence of the US military around the world in the 1950s depended on low-wage labor and the continued exploitation of Filipino workers.²³ The US military learned how to exploit a global political and economic system based on deep wage inequalities, and from Park's testimony it is clear that military officials understood that their efforts to maintain wage inequalities were connected to the extension of US military power.

Naha, Okinawa. On the political economy of Okinawa's relationship to Japan, see Matsumara, *Limits of Okinawa*. On the US occupation's manipulation of the Ryukyuan economy in the immediate postwar period, see Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands*, 122–53.

20. Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire*, 95–121.

21. Capozzola, "Secret Soldiers' Union."

22. Coronil, "After Empire."

23. United States House Committee on Education and Labor, *Minimum Wages in Certain Territories*, 115.

Filipino migration to Guam was, of course, embedded in a variety of political and economic contexts. First and perhaps most important, the dominance of agriculture in the prewar Philippine economy and the utter devastation wrought by the Pacific war on human and natural resources in the Philippines not only created a condition of surplus labor but also inclined the leadership of the commonwealth and independent republic to further bend the Philippine economy to US political and economic interests.²⁴ Problems with adequate access to food, medicine, and housing plagued relief organizations, military civil affairs units, and the Philippine Commonwealth in the months preceding Philippine independence. In March 1946, five months before the United States relinquished sovereignty over the islands, the American Red Cross reported that in addition to a widespread famine in the Mountain Province of Luzon, “indications point to other famine possibilities in islands over the next ten months.”²⁵ Relief workers estimated a 40 percent reduction in the planting of staple crops—the harvest of which would have to both feed the population and be sold to finance future agricultural production.²⁶

The high level of unemployment and the change to the Philippine agricultural economy factored into the limited options individuals faced in the mid- to late 1940s. Estimates of the destruction to agriculture, the primary source of employment for most Filipino laborers, revealed a dire picture. For example, a 1945 agricultural survey commissioned by the United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Agency (UNRRA) described the city of Iloilo, in the Visayan Islands, as having fared better than Manila during the war. Yet W. H. Pawley, the agronomist hired to conduct the study, described the agricultural economy of the Visayans—including the islands of Negros, Leyte, and Panay—as nearly decimated. In the province of Capiz, home to two significant sugar centrals, UNRRA estimated that nearly half of the crops were destroyed as well as half of all working animals. Pawley predicted that the devastation the war had wrought on the agricultural system meant that foreign aid would have to extend beyond simply providing immediate relief to the region’s population.²⁷ Short-term emergency aid, such as food, water, and clothing, saved the lives of individuals

24. US and Philippine state officials faced a challenge in assessing the depths of the economic problem in the islands. A commercial attaché at the US embassy reported 1.5 million unemployed in a population of close to 20 million, while admitting the difficulty of any such statistical accounting. Report 209, October 27, 1947, box 26, 842–850.03, General Records: 1947, US Embassy, Manila, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the State Department, RG 84, NARA. There are varied estimates of the total costs of the war in the Philippines. In June 1945, the US War Damage Corporation’s special investigative team estimated \$800 million in damages; the Philippine Census Bureau reported \$1.3 billion. See Jenkins, *American Economic Policy towards the Philippines*; and Cullather, *Illusions of Influence*.

25. AmCross Manila to AmCross Washington, March 19, 1946, box 101, Classified General Records: 1946 to 1948, US Embassy, Manila, Philippine Islands, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, RG 84, NARA.

26. United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, *UNRRA in the Philippines*.

27. Report on Field Trip in Visayas Region, Philippines, W. H. Pawley to General Briggs, Chief Agricultural Rehabilitation Officer, UNRRA, November 24, 1945, box 1, UNRRA–Philippines Mission, United Nations Archive, New York City.

dislocated by the war, but without a functioning agricultural economy these same individuals would continue to suffer from a lack of employment opportunities. When faced with criticism over Philippine wage discrimination, Philippine officials continually referenced high unemployment as a reason that Filipinos should simply accept their terms of labor. In fact, as late as 1957, twelve years after the end of the war, DOD officials continued to use the economic displacements of the war as an explanation for the wage differentials between Filipinos and other workers on Guam.²⁸

The devastation of the war and its effect on the Philippine economy provided military contractors with a large pool of workers desperate for employment long after the end of the war.²⁹ Undoubtedly, the enormous war damage sustained in the islands and the nation's shattered economy put pressure on leaders of the newly independent Philippine Republic to compromise in exchange for US foreign aid and international loans.³⁰ In 1947, the Philippine state also agreed to allow the United States to retain possession and expand the capacity of military sites in the Philippines. The controversial Military Bases Agreement, signed in March 1947, established a ninety-nine-year lease period for twenty-three American military sites in the archipelago, cementing the Philippine Republic to US military politics. The military sites in the islands also absorbed large pools of unemployed Filipinos, with the US Navy employing 9,267 Filipino laborers, half of whom worked on the US Naval Base at Subic Bay.³¹ While Filipinos working for the US military or US military contractors also faced wage inequalities, and in fact in the aftermath of World War II waged large-scale strikes in the islands, the exploitation of Filipino labor overseas took on new forms as the political geography of the region shifted and the US expanded its military presence in the region.

Prior to the Japanese invasion in early December 1941, and as early as 1908, influential US Navy strategists, including Alfred Thayer Mahan and Admiral George Dewey, advocated a plan to turn Guam into the American "Gibraltar" in the Pacific.³² Prewar naval planners had failed to secure the congressional appropriations needed to transform Guam into the US military fortress they desired. However, during the last year of the Pacific war, the admiral of the US Navy, Chester Nimitz, appropriated Mahan and Dewey's early twentieth-century vision for US Pacific power and

28. "Philippines Government Negotiations in Relation to 1947 Employment Agreement," box 1, Records of the Assistant Secretary for Manpower Relating to the Alien Labor Policy, Guam, 1947-1971, General Records of the Department of Labor, RG 174, NARA.

29. "Labor Dep't Probers Find No Discrimination in Guam," *Manila Chronicle*, February 3, 1948. The war's destruction was spread unevenly across the archipelago. Areas where fighting had been more intense, including Manila, faced higher levels of damage. In addition, prior to the war, the Philippine economy was deeply regional, a factor that helps to explain the preponderance of Filipinos from the Visayan Islands on Guam. McCoy and De Jesus, *Philippine Social History*.

30. US officials believed maintaining military bases in the Philippines was crucial to securing a Middle Eastern transport route. McMahon, *Limits of Empire*.

31. Commander US Naval Forces Philippines to Naval Attaché US Embassy, box 10, General Records, US Embassy, Manila, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, RG 84, NARA.

32. On the Guam lobby, see Miller, *War Plan Orange*.

argued for the fortification of the US military's position on Guam.³³ Given the US Navy's long-standing interest in turning the island into a citadel of US Pacific power, it is unsurprising that, even before World War II came to a close, US military officials testified before Congress on the importance of Guam for US security in the Pacific. In June 1945, during the final two months of the war, the Subcommittee on Pacific Bases informed the US House of Representatives' Naval Affairs Committee that "from a strategic standpoint" Guam was "the key to the Pacific."³⁴ In fact, US military forces had already appropriated vast acres of land on the island and spent \$275 million on military construction, including \$90 million on the construction of airfields alone.³⁵ Despite the substantial dollar outlays that the US military had already invested in the island, a peacetime Congress was far less willing to disburse huge appropriations to military planners. Thus, once the perceived necessity for a capacious wartime defense budget passed, Congress and the Truman administration capped spending on defense at less than \$13 billion a year, down from \$90 billion in 1945. By the middle of 1946, as part of a worldwide demobilization of US forces, the number of US military personnel stationed on Guam had been cut by more than 80 percent.

Yet despite popular pressure to cut peacetime military spending, US military officials continued to lobby for a Pacific security system in which Guam would serve as the "hub" in a chain of Pacific island bases. In 1947, when the United Nations (UN) sanctioned the creation of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) and the US took control of the Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall Islands, the US government's demobilization plans in the Pacific shifted in favor of military officials. The TTPI was one of eleven UN trusteeships established over former Axis power territories; however, the TTPI was the only UN "strategic trust," a designation that allowed the US to circumscribe UN oversight and exercise greater authority over the islands.³⁶ The Truman Administration granted the US Navy, whose officials had sought to use the islands for military bases, administrative control of the TTPI.³⁷ Although Guam did not fall under the TTPI, the US command over the Pacific Trust islands helped reverse the trend toward demilitarization and demobilization in the Pacific.³⁸ After securing unrestrained access to 2,100 islands across a territory that equaled the size of the continental United States, the US military rapidly expanded its presence on Guam. By 1950, the *New York Times* reported that 40 percent of Guam's land had been "pre-empted for military purposes."³⁹

33. According to this vision, the US military would need more than seventy-five thousand acres of land for development of new military installations, amounting to nearly 55 percent of the total land area on the island. Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall*, 198.

34. US Congress, House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Pacific Bases of the Committee on Naval Affairs, 1947, *Study of Pacific Bases* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office).

35. Ibid. See also Friedman, *Creating an American Lake*.

36. Hirshberg, "Targeting Kwajalein," 86–87.

37. Pach, *Arming the Free World*; Hogan, *Cross of Iron*.

38. Guam remained a US territory and continued to be administered by the US Navy until the passage of the 1950 Organic Act turned the island over to civilian control.

39. "Guam Is Vital Hub of Pacific Defense," *New York Times*, July 20, 1950.

While the TTPI ensured the US military's exclusive access to the Pacific Islands, the Korean War and the Truman administration's acceptance of two National Security Council (NSC) policy initiatives provided both the ideological justifications as well as the financial resources needed to expand US military projects in the Pacific. As historian Bruce Cumings has argued, NSC-48/1, or the NSC's report on "The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia," and the more famous "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," or NSC-68, committed the US to a robust military presence in Asia and wedded US military and foreign policy to high-cost "containment" programs.⁴⁰ The US military's budget rapidly tripled in size. Within just a few years after the end of World War II, US military leaders successfully transformed the militarized geography of the wartime Pacific into a peacetime "network of bases."⁴¹

Not dissimilar from the experience of the Philippines, from the viewpoint of Apra Harbor on the western coast of Guam—the largest deepwater port in the Western Pacific—the American militarization that accompanied the Pacific war never truly ended.⁴² NSC-48/1 and NSC-68 tripled US Defense Department allocations and stemmed the tide of demobilization, solving one problem for US military officials. However, the peacetime budget remained significantly lower than World War II-era allocations, and US military officials searched for ways to cut costs while maintaining and expanding the US imperial position in the Pacific.

In May 1947, the office of Douglas MacArthur issued a statement to PHILRYCOM and Marianas-Bonins Command (MARBO) that offered a potential strategy to stretch US military allocations. MacArthur's headquarters informed lower commands that it was "desirable that Filipino labor be provided as soon as possible to permit contract work" in order to "eliminate costly importation of United States labor in lower grade positions."⁴³ MacArthur's headquarters explicitly recommended hiring Filipino laborers in place of "continentals" or civilians from the United States in order to save money. While the hiring of Filipino laborers at lower wages was one way that the US military would exploit and confirm wage inequality, the decorated general explained the logic behind his plan as simply a commonsense solution to what Army and Navy officials perceived as an era of tightened budgets.

Military officials recognized, however, that the newly independent Philippine Republic had gained sovereignty over decisions about who could exit and enter Philippine territory. In short, Philippine independence imposed limitations on the legal mobility of Filipino laborers. The US military could, and indeed did, request use of

40. Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War*, 160–63.

41. Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea*, 393.

42. In the United States, September 2 marks the date when representatives signed the instrument of surrender aboard the USS *Missouri*, though Japan had announced its surrender two weeks earlier in mid-August 1945. Liberation day, now a national holiday, is celebrated on July 21, marking the day when, in 1944, US forces returned to the island after three years of Japanese occupation. See Diaz, "Deliberating Liberation Day."

43. CINCFE to MARBO, PHILRYCOM, May 7, 1947, box 103, General Correspondence Files: 1944–52, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

Philippine soldiers in postwar occupations, including nearly six thousand troops on the island of Okinawa.⁴⁴ To employ Filipino civilians as laborers, however, private contractors and the US military first had to figure out how to move them across international boundaries. Moreover, the military exercised complete power over migration and labor recruitment patterns into Guam as well as other islands in the Pacific; even if individuals procured all the legally required travel documents, they could not set foot on Guam without first gaining security clearance from the US Navy.⁴⁵ While the US government's decision to support the military's construction of a network of bases created new opportunities for capital and labor, these same decisions also erected a new set of barriers to capital and labor mobility. But, ultimately, private contractors and the US military successfully devised new methods to procure a steady, large pool of inexpensive labor.⁴⁶

The geography of the militarized postwar Pacific presented challenges in the form of new territorial boundaries as well as the high costs of transporting resources across such vast expanses of territory. At the same time, the US military and a handful of private contractors already had strong political connections with prominent Philippine politicians and recent experiences with the Philippine labor market. In fact, at the end of the Pacific war, as US forces in the islands dwindled, many reconstruction tasks in the Philippines that had initially been performed by US service members were transferred to private companies in the form of exclusive military contracts. For example, stevedoring tasks, performed by the US Army since the end of the war, were handed over to the Luzon Stevedore Company and its army of low-wage Filipino employees.⁴⁷ Thus, when in the fall of 1947, after receiving a message from the Engineering Division of CINCFE urging that the "importation of Filipino labor be expedited," PHILRYCOM was able to report back that six hundred laborers were ready for transport to Guam. PHILRYCOM also informed CINCFE that "laborers [were] recruited and placed in a camp, while awaiting shipment" as "the greater part" of the six hundred laborers were "brought to Manila from outlying provinces."⁴⁸ Migrants from provinces in the Visayan Islands, a clustering of islands between the two larger Philippine islands of Luzon and Mindanao, comprised the vast majority of laborers traveling to Guam in the late 1940s.

The fact that many migrants originated from the Visayan Islands can in part be explained by the role of Charles Parsons and Luzon Stevedore, a corporation formed during the American colonial period. In fact, a 1948 memo from the US

44. For a thorough treatment of the first ten years of the US occupation of Okinawa, see Obermiller, "The US Military Occupation of Okinawa"; and Swenson-Wright, *Unequal Allies?*

45. Campbell, "Filipino Community of Guam."

46. Massey, *Spatial Division of Labor*.

47. Seventh and final report of High Commissioner to the Philippine Islands Covering the Period from September 14, 1945, to July 4, 1946, box 10, General Administrative Records, US Embassy, Manila, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, RG 84, NARA.

48. CINCFE to PHILRYCOM, box 103, General Correspondence Files: 1944-52, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

embassy in Manila to the US secretary of state reported that Luzon Stevedore “was responsible for 80 percent of the labor done by Filipinos on Guam.”⁴⁹ Parsons, owner of Luzon Stevedore and the individual who claimed to have developed the plan to recruit Filipinos for employment on Guam, was a friend of the Philippine president, Manuel Roxas, and had won the president’s approval for his plan “because of its salutary effects on employment and the balance of payments.”⁵⁰

Parsons’s experience in the business and political culture of the Philippines undoubtedly gave his corporation an edge in navigating the deeply regional and contested politics of the islands. Parsons delegated the task of recruiting laborers from the Visayan Islands to Pascual Espinosa, head of the Consolidated Labor Union (CLU). Espinosa reportedly earned 6,000 pesos per month for recruiting laborers who themselves earned less than 2 pesos per day.⁵¹ In the eyes of the US military, Espinosa’s CLU, based in the Visayan Islands in the city of Iloilo, functioned as a hiring hall for individuals seeking employment in the region. The CLU was, in fact, the company union of Luzon Stevedore and its subsidiary in the Visayan Islands, the Visayan Stevedore Company, or VISTRANCO.⁵² During the previous two decades, the CLU had waged pitched battles with another union, the Federacion Obrera de Filipinas, over control of the Iloilo waterfront, a once prominent port for shipping sugar. Though the shipping of sugar from the Port of Iloilo began to decline in the 1930s, prior to the destruction of the port during the war, the CLU remained a financially powerful union, in part through the recruitment of laborers for work on Guam. By 1949, Espinosa had risen to prominence in city politics and “won strong allies among the city’s conservative commercial interests.”⁵³

The financial prospects of Parsons’s and Espinosa’s labor recruitment and shipping businesses looked increasingly bright as the US military in the Pacific rapidly increased their demands for Filipino labor. In the same month as PHILRYCOM prepared to ship six hundred workers to Guam, CINCFE reported to the US War Department that to meet the demands of just one of CINCFE’s seven operational commands required a “projected total [of] 11,164 Filipino laborers.”⁵⁴ MARBO and PHILRYCOM hired Filipino laborers in much higher numbers than CINCFE’s other commands; however, a memo sent across the Pacific in the late summer revealed that MacArthur’s headquarters had instructed all commands in the Pacific to use

49. US Embassy to Secretary of State, February 8, 1948, box 10, General Administrative Records, US Embassy, Manila, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, RG 84, NARA.

50. Ibid.

51. Bell, *Economic Survey Mission to the Philippines*.

52. Numerous reports on the “labor situation” issued by the US embassy in the late 1940s fail to mention Espinosa’s CLU, despite the extensive detail given to numerous labor unions and movements throughout the islands.

53. McCoy, *Philippine Social History*, 345.

54. The 1947 National Security Act created the role of secretary of defense. However, the War Department was not renamed the Department of Defense until the National Security Act was amended in August 1949. CINCFE to War Department, September 30, 1947, box 103, General Correspondence Files: 1944–52, MARBO, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

Filipino labor. “Filipino Nationals,” Lieutenant General Whitehead, commander of Far East Air Forces, wrote to all of the commanding generals in the Pacific, would “provide an immediate supply of skilled and semi-skilled labor” and in areas other than Japan or Korea, Filipinos could be employed “at minimum cost as compared to the operational cost when utilizing American personnel.”⁵⁵ The “notes of exchange” between the US and Philippine governments established the terms of labor for Filipinos hired either directly by the US military or through a private military contractor. Yet Whitehead only communicated the cost-saving benefits of hiring Filipino laborers. As a result, at least one communication between military commands indicated that Filipinos were being paid only \$.075 per hour, significantly lower than the wage established in the 1947 labor agreement.⁵⁶ In addition to omitting the contract terms, Whitehead failed to provide instructions for how Filipino labor recruits could legally secure passage or gain security clearance to military sites.

Even though Filipino laborers traveled across an international boundary and into US territory, *and* despite the fact that the US military determined wage rates based on nationality, the US military used a separate labor classification for Filipino laborers that distinguished them from another category of laborers identified as “foreign nationals.”⁵⁷ Indeed, from the beginning of Philippine labor migration to Guam in 1947, the US military tested the gray areas of US immigration law. The 1947 Philippine labor contract had detailed how Filipino laborers could leave sovereign Philippine territory without passports or visas; it did not, however specify the immigration status of laborers once they arrived at their work site. The US Navy, relying upon an executive order issued under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, controlled all movement to and from Guam and determined that migrant workers fell outside the purview of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service. Even after the passage of the 1951 Organic Act, which conferred citizenship status to Guam residents and compelled the Department of Labor to ensure that “[Guam’s residents] enjoy the same protections as residents of the mainland,” the Department of Labor complained that it had “no jurisdiction” over the “admittance of temporary alien labor to Guam.”⁵⁸ To be sure, the Department of Labor’s concern lay in protecting the rights of Guam’s residents, not those of Filipino laborers. Even after the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) established authority over Guam in 1952, the DOD argued that the 1947 Philippine labor agreement granted the US military governing authority

55. Recruitment of personnel for R and U Activities, August 30, 1947, box 24, General Correspondence Files: 1944–52, Adjutant General, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

56. PHILRYCOM to CINCFE, February 3, 1948, box 115, Classified Correspondence Files: 1944–1952, Adjutant General Section, MARBO, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

57. Yearly Progress Report, 1947, box 75, Adjutant General Section, Classified Correspondence Files: 1944–1952, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

58. Alien Labor on Guam, box 1, Records of the Assistant Secretary for Manpower Relating to the Alien Labor Policy, Guam, 1947–1971, General Records of the Department of Labor, RG 174, NARA. In 1965, the US Department of Labor sought the end of the DOD’s immigration scheme in response to complaints lodged by the governor of Guam, who contended that migrant Filipino labor drove down the wages of non-Filipino workers.

over Filipino labor migration. Though the DOD eventually acquiesced and agreed to share responsibility over immigration with the INS, the US military continued to resist any alteration in the status of Filipino laborers that would compel the US military to dispense with its tiered wage system that pegged worker salaries to their home country or territory.⁵⁹

In 1947, when the US military began importing Filipino workers to Guam, it deliberately crafted a labor regime that would keep Filipino migrant laborers from having to undergo processing by the INS. In place of INS screening, the US military relied upon its own policies in the Pacific that required individuals, including Americans, to gain security clearance into or out of Guam or islands in the TTPI. Therefore, prior to arrival, the US Navy and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had to grant security clearance to each Filipino laborer before they were allowed to step off a boat in Apra Harbor.⁶⁰ In addition to requiring security clearance, the US military ordered its commanders to implement a registration system to ensure the location and duration of employment of each worker. CINCFE ordered that it was the “responsibility of all commanders to see” that, within five days of arrival, each employee underwent a series of medical tests, received a registration number, and submitted fingerprints, a photograph, and a “personal history.”⁶¹ In September 1947, MARBO printed an “initial run of fifteen thousand Marianas Identification Cards,” and within a few weeks, Filipino laborers were unloading tens of thousands of tons of US military cargo, cleaning dishes in mess hall kitchens, and pouring concrete floors in the military’s newest buildings on Guam.⁶²

The initial print run of fifteen thousand labor ID cards in the MARBO command alone speaks to the human scale of the US military’s labor regime; imagining where each worker registration sheet would be filed, how each step of the registration process would be certified, and what would happen when the inevitable problems of a fifteen-thousand-person workforce emerged reveals something about the enormous scope of US military bureaucracy in the Pacific. Without a doubt, the complex bureaucratic structure of the DOD, the hierarchical organization of military joint commands, and the consistent friction between the Navy, Army, and eventually Air Force resulted in an inflexible labor regime. Even if local military officials sympathized with worker grievances, the only way they could change military policy was by appealing to policy makers higher up the chain of command who often responded with hostile indifference. For example, W. A. Davis, a lieutenant in the Engineering Division stationed on Guam, received notice from CINCFE’s director of civilian personnel warning him that he had violated a US military policy that prohibited hiring

59. Ibid. See also Summary of Meetings Held in Washington to Discuss Philippine Off-Shore Labor Agreement, April 7, 1969, box 1, Records of the Assistant Secretary for Manpower Relating to the Alien Labor Policy Guam, 1947–1971, General Records of the Department of Labor, RG 174, NARA.

60. Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall*, 195.

61. United States Pacific Fleet Commander, November 13, 1950, box 115, Adjutant General Section, Classified Correspondence Files: 1944–1952, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

62. Annex 6 to Circular No. 102, MARBO, September 12, 1947, box 24, Adjutant General Section, Classified Correspondence Files: 1944–1952, GHQ, RG 554, NARA.

married couples. In response, Davis wrote to CINCFE seeking exemption from a policy that prohibited hiring married couples. Filipino laborers, he wrote, consistently complained about a lack of recreation and coed housing in part because they lived in “total absence of a city” in an “isolated location on the island.” Using examples from within his command, Davis attempted to convince his superiors that married couples acted as a “stabilizing influence” for the entire community and ultimately saved the military time and money. The turnover for working couples, Davis reasoned, was only 2.2 percent per month—3 percent lower than the 5.3 percent for single men and 4.7 percent for single women. Davis also reported that single men and women were more likely to voluntarily end their contracts citing “personal reasons,” while married couples reported being “more satisfied” with their working conditions. Appealing to economic rationale, Davis claimed that hiring married couples “would pay for itself in reduced turnover, training costs, and transportation costs.”⁶³ Despite Davis’s efforts to adapt military policy to fit the experiences of Filipino laborers on Guam, proposed changes to the US military’s labor policies in the Pacific became quickly mired in bureaucratic interservice rivalries in which Army and Navy commanders fought fiercely over territory, influence, and, most important, budget appropriations.⁶⁴ The intensity of interservice rivalries and the dilatory pace of bureaucratic change did not impede what was ultimately a joint effort by the US Navy, Army, and the private contractors that each branch hired to recruit and circulate a low-wage Filipino workforce around the Pacific.

Work on US military bases undeniably provided employment opportunities to a Philippine population desperate to earn incomes. But the steady employment offered by the US military and military contractors meant leaving loved ones in the Philippines which, for some, resulted in a lower standard of living as well as strained family relationships. In 1948, Leonora Siblanc, an employee at the Central Azucarera de Pilar, a sugar central in the Visayan province of Capiz, wrote a letter to MARBO headquarters, hoping to reach her son, Jose. In prose translated from Visayan to English, Siblanc explained that she sought help from MARBO officials because she

63. Office of District Engineer to Commanding General Marianas Bonnings Command, September 10, 1947, RG 554, GHQ, MARBO, Adjutant General Section, Correspondence Files: 1944–1952, box 24.

64. The Army and Navy waged a fierce battle for control in the postwar Pacific as both branches fought over territory, budgets, and political influence. For example, the office of PHILRYCOM, an Army command, objected to the contract that had already “been approved by Navy-War Agencies on Guam” because of the 25 percent overseas differential. According to PHILRYCOM, the “payment of such allowances to Filipinos does not appear to be legal” because “ordinarily the differential is granted to offset additional living costs required by assignment away from home.” Since Navy contractors included food and lodging in their contracts, PHILRYCOM argued that the extra 25 percent amounted to a “dual allowance” prohibited by military policy. In effect, PHILRYCOM appealed to higher authorities in order to enforce the same wages for all employees, mainly out of concern that the “6000 employees for the Air Corps and MARBO who are to be paid directly on appropriate funds on govt rolls” would drain their budget. PHILRYCOM to CINCFE, April 17, 1947, Classified General Correspondence: 230–30.36, Engineer Section, GHQ, RG 554, NARA. For a thorough treatment of the bureaucratic battle over the Pacific, see Friedman, *Arguing over the American Lake*.

believed her son was “working or serving under the U.S. government.” With no other way to reach him, Siblang hoped headquarters could pass the letter. In the note to her son, Siblang explained, “Jose I have written you for no other purpose than to ask you for help and to tell you the expenses I have to pay.” She explained how a birth in the family, a debt to a local doctor, and the cost of sending children to school amounted to expenses that she and Jose’s father could not meet. She requested that Jose send her “the amount of two hundred pesos,” as the family “[needed] them very badly.” Siblang conveyed her dismay that her son had lost touch with the family and wrote that she could not understand why he did not “write nor send money for the support of your family.” In the end, Siblang invoked her motherly authority, telling Jose that if he could not “send money to support them,” then, “you better come home.”⁶⁵ While Siblang’s mother clearly believed that Jose was earning enough money to support family expenses at home, reports from workers delivered to the *Manila Chronicle* revealed that workers on Guam struggled to pay for goods on the island, let alone save enough to send money to family members in the Philippines.

In mid-January 1948, a group of thirteen workers returned to the Philippines and filed a complaint with the Philippine Department of Labor over working conditions on Guam. The group’s spokesperson, Bonifacio Madridano, a manager in one of the Filipino labor camps, complained that the US military and military contractors discriminated against Filipinos by establishing separate wage scales for Filipinos, Chamorros, and US citizens. In response, Philippine secretary of labor Pedro Mag-salin sent two investigators—a public defender, Cecillo Lim, and Inspector General of the Department of Labor Felicisimo Lauzon—to the island. The *Guam Daily News*, an official publication of the US Navy, reported that “in recent talks both men state that the conditions they found were for the most part satisfactory,” though they acknowledged “there was some basis for the serious contentions made,” including the wage scale differentials. The newspaper concluded its coverage of the visit by simply calling the issue a “sore spot” in what was otherwise a serene island.⁶⁶

In contrast to the treatment Filipino workers received in the US Navy’s *Guam Daily News*, in late January and early February the *Manila Chronicle* ran a series of more critical articles on the labor conditions of Filipinos working on Guam. According to one article, published on February 8, 1948, Juan Camiloza, a restaurant worker, was “forced to return to the Philippines by his employers so that he could not testify to investigators” just days before they arrived.⁶⁷ Even though Camiloza wanted the opportunity to speak to the Philippine investigators and not return to Manila, he described Guam as a “hellish place” where “common laborers” could not afford to

65. Leonora Siblang to MARBO, July 21, 1948, box 24, Correspondence Files: 1944–1952, Adjutant General Section, GHQ, MARBO, RG 554, NARA.

66. “Investigators Probe Guam Working Conditions,” *Guam Daily News*, February 9, 1948; also see “Filipino Inspectors Leave Guam with Reports,” *Guam Daily News*, February 8, 1948.

67. Mauricio, “US Employers Seek to Thwart Labor Probe of Guam Workers”; *Manilla Chronicle*, January 31, 1958.

purchase “non-Army goods for sale outside of the camps.” Camiloza also complained that military contractors “keep an efficient squad of spies” and that “if a Filipino is found complaining against the treatment received by his countryman he is forcibly eased out.”⁶⁸ Like Camiloza and the thirteen workers who filed a complaint with the Philippine Department of Labor, another worker, Isabelo R. Regua, complained about the wage differential between Filipinos, Americans, and Chamorros to the *Manila Chronicle*. Regua reported being hired by the Brown-Pacific-Maxon Company at a recruiting office in Subic Bay, a large US naval base in the Zambales province north of Manila. According to Regua, Filipinos hired by Brown-Pacific-Maxon “only discover the disparity in wages once in Guam.” Filipinos “have the same nature of work” as Americans and Chamorros, and after realizing that they were paid at much lower wages, many Filipinos, according to Regua, “feel discriminated upon.” He also conveyed to the newspaper that the conditions in the camp were poor, and, although their labor contracts guaranteed medical care, Regua reported that “for four thousand Filipino laborers in Camp Quezon there is only one doctor and a nurse.” His decision to tell his story in public was, for Regua, derived from a pervasive sense among laborers that on Guam there was “no one to turn to.”⁶⁹

Despite the growing discontent detailed in the Manila press, the *Manila Chronicle* reported that the Philippine Department of Labor ultimately found the claim that American private contractors racially discriminated against Filipino laborers to be “without foundation.” In response to the claims of poor working conditions and discriminatory wages, Parsons, of Luzon Stevedore, argued that the complaints aired in the press were simply “malicious reports circulated by disgruntled Filipino laborers.” Parsons did not elucidate as to why laborers would become disgruntled in the first place, even if there were only a handful of them, as he claimed. Not only did Parsons dismiss accounts of discrimination, but he also argued that reports of atrocious working conditions had the effect of “neutralizing the kindness and aid offered to thousands of unemployed Filipinos.” Luzon Stevedore was, according to Parsons, not only nondiscriminatory; employment with the company was akin to charity. With a softer though still condescending tone, Magsalin took the position that workers had agreed to work for a specific compensation and that “the contracts between the laborers and the contractors were purely voluntary.”⁷⁰ According to Magsalin and Parsons, Philippine workers *chose* to work for discriminatory wages, and if they disliked their wages then they should quit and allow another worker to benefit from the “kindness and aid” of the US military and its private contractors.

Magsalin’s and Parsons’s comments revealingly illustrate how Philippine politicians and American businesspersons believed that the employment opportunities created by the expansion of the US military in the Pacific benefited everyone involved.

68. Ibid.

69. “Worker Charges Discrimination,” *Manila Chronicle*, February 14, 1948.

70. “Labor Dep’t Probers Find No Discrimination in Guam,” *Manila Chronicle*, February 3, 1948.

Their comments also reveal how a free market labor regime, created through an international agreement between two sovereign states and enforced through contracts with individual workers, obscure relations of power; in this case, the power that the US military, American corporations, the Philippine state, and Filipino laborers could exercise in relation to one another.⁷¹ By exploiting a global political and economic system based on deep wage inequalities, the US military, military contractors, and Philippine politicians contributed to the remaking of imperial power in the age of Philippine independence. At the same time, the experience of working for the US military or US military contractors politicized workers in new ways, leading some to demand more rights and protections from the Philippine state, the United States, and even the United Nations.⁷² Just as imperialism had adapted, so too had the empire's workforce.

In surveying the current deployment of Filipino labor across the globe, recent studies have emphasized 1974 and the establishment of the Overseas Employment Development Board as a critical point of departure. Yet by locating the Philippine state's role in exporting Philippine labor in 1974, studies of Filipino labor migration have tended to rely on economic neoliberalism as the chief explanation for why the Philippine state turned toward exporting labor. In uncovering the alliance between states, the US military, and private corporations, I have sought here to reorient our understandings of migration with an emphasis on transnational imperial collaboration rather than late capitalism or neoliberalism. While the political economy of the 1970s is undeniably a crucial context for understanding post-1974 Philippine labor migration, I have argued that beginning in the late 1940s, the US military, private military contractors, and the Philippine government helped to produce a political and economic system that confirmed and entrenched wage inequalities. Beginning in 1947, the US Navy and Army stretched the defense budget, and private companies increased their profits, by recruiting and circulating Filipino laborers around the Pacific. The work of low-wage Filipino laborers fortified the US military's imperial

71. A 1957 DOD position paper on the renegotiation of the 1947 labor agreement makes clear the kind of pressure the US military was willing to put on the Philippine state in order to maintain its access to low-wage workers. Reminding Philippine political leaders that any adaptation to the wage scale of Filipino laborers would result in increased rates of "unemployment and loss of dollar exchange," the DOD also urged negotiators to emphasize the fact that "US bases surrounding the Philippine islands" afford "protection to the Philippine Islands proper." Department of Defense, United States-Philippines Government Negotiations in Relation to 1947 Employment Agreement, February 2, 1957, box 1, Records of the Assistant Secretary for Manpower Relating to the Alien Labor Policy Guam, 1947-1971, General Records of the Department of Labor, RG 174, NARA.

72. Filipino laborers who were forcibly repatriated from Okinawa as part of an effort to replace foreign workers with Ryukyuan laborers placed additional pressure on the Philippine government to renegotiate the labor contract with the US embassy. By 1957, after receiving complaints from Philippine workers around the Pacific, the Philippine government issued a request to the US State Department regarding migrant labor. Citing "discriminatory wage differentials" as a central concern, the Philippine government demanded to renegotiate the 1947 labor agreement. US Embassy, Manila, to US Secretary of State, February 7, 1957, file 000006-002, Okinawa Prefectural Library, Naha, Okinawa.

grasp on the Pacific and generated profit for American businesses. In this way, I suggest that the late 1940s set an important precedent in the development of the relationship between states, capital, and labor migration—a relationship that neoliberal state policies would, nearly thirty years later, accelerate. ■

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