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**THIRD INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM**

**Pacific regional seminar on the implementation of the Third International  
Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: commitments and actions for  
decolonization in the Non-Self-Governing Territories**

**Managua, Nicaragua  
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**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**PRESENTATION**

**BY**

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Updates on Guam's Quest for Decolonization  
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Si Yu'os Ma'ase na makombibida yu' mągi ta'lo para bai hu saonao gi este na dinanña'. Gi tinstigu-hu pą'go, bai hu sangani hamyo put i halacha na hiniyong gi isla-ku yan i kinalamten-mami para in gi'ot i direchon-mami komo taotao.

Your Excellency Chairman Carreño, distinguished delegates and representatives from fellow Non-Self-Governing Territories, I am honored to be here again speaking before you on the topic of Guam and its continuing quest for decolonization. In my statements today I will be providing updates on recent activities related to the issue of Guam's decolonization. I offer these updates and my commentary through a combinations of the many hats I wear in Guam, first as a scholar who studies this issue, second as the co-chair for the Independence for Guam Task Force and finally as a member of Guam's Commission on Decolonization.

In November of last year, there was a surprising revelation from one of Guam's neighbors in the Pacific, the Federated States of Micronesia or FSM. The FSM has been in free association with the United States since 1986. The compact between these nations is set to expire in 2023 and currently their governments are discussing the possibilities for a renewal. A resolution was submitted to their Congress by a number of its members requesting that the FSM terminate early (in 2018) their compact with the United States.

The resolution acknowledges that the compact has allowed the two nations to maintain a "close and mutually beneficial relationship" and that the "United States derives many benefits from the amended Compact, not least of which is its exclusive control over the military use of the FSM's extensive territorial waters and airspace."

But the desire to terminate the Compact between the nations is due to the fact that "recent words and deeds of United States policymakers suggest they view the amended Compact as an act of charity by the United States rather than a treaty between two sovereign nations." This desire of some leaders in the FSM to revisit their international relationships is partially due to the rise of China and its attempts to increase its sphere of influence in Micronesia, and the feeling that it may offer more economic support than the United States. This resolution was not adopted by the Congress of Micronesia, but the issue persists.

This possibility of a political shifts and upheaval is reminiscent of the political status change negotiations that took place in Micronesia in the 1970s and 1980s that led to the formation of three nation-states that currently have seats at the United Nations; the Republic of Belau (Palau), the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia.

But the United States did not allow Guam to participate in similar negotiations as its strategic value to the United States as a base, has consistently led to a denial of this basic human right. This stance of the United States is in conflict with numerous United Nations resolutions that make clear that the presence of bases or the strategic military value of a colony must not impede movements towards self-governance and decolonization.

Guam did spend several decades unsuccessfully negotiating with the United States over a possible political status change, from unincorporated to the ambiguous "Commonwealth" status. This push died in 1997, when the US government and local Guam government deadlocked and refused to compromise on basic issues of the self-determination proposal. Subsequent attempts to reignite the issue at the level of the US Congress have failed.

The United States has long ignored its obligation to Guam with regards to educating the people on their political status and enhancing their understanding of self-determination with the intent of pushing them towards greater self-government. This past year represented the first instance in recent memory of the US accepted this obligation, as the Department of Interior has provided a grant of \$300,000 to the Government of Guam to be used for political status education. This money is promising, however most likely unique. This is the final year of the administration of President Obama and it will be up to subsequent presidents to determine if more support should be provided.

Robert Underwood, a former territorial delegate to the United States Congress and current President of the University of Guam has called for a shifting of the political terrain with regards to future negotiations with the administering power over Guam's decolonization. I recently edited with my colleague Victoria Leon-Guerrero, a special edition of the academic journal *Micronesian Educator* titled "New Perspectives on Chamorro Self-Determination." Underwood was included in the edition and he reflected back on his decades of experience on this issue and also provided insights into future possibilities. He wrote,

In the 1970s, Washington DC decided that Congress should deal with the territories while the Old Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia) would be negotiated directly by the Executive Branch. It could be argued that this sealed the fate of inaction for the next three decades.

At a conference in Washington DC organized by, he suggested that current and future political leaders of Guam take note of this and focus their engagement on the issue of Guam's decolonization at the Executive level, with the Office of the President of the US and his cabinet agencies. His argument is that as a legislative body, the US Congress is too diverse and divided in its opinions and cannot be counted on as a consistent and coherent body through which the future of the US's territories can be negotiated. I agree with Underwood's assessment, although

Guam's current Governor Eddie Calvo, has yet to respond to this suggestion for a change in strategy.

Even if this change is implemented, it will be heavily dependent upon the commitment and even intellectual comprehension of whoever replaces President Obama next year. Three presidential candidates that are still running for the office have spoken out providing some insight into their positions on self-determination for the non-self-governing territories of the United States. Hillary Clinton has visited Guam several times, first as a First Lady and later as US Secretary of State, and has claimed to have an intimacy with Guam's people that the other candidates do not. In a press release from the Guam Democratic Party, the party chairman indicated that he felt that Hillary would "put at the forefront of our struggle for the right to self-determination and try to resolve the unresolved relationship we have with the United States government." Despite these portrayals, in terms of explicit commitments to Guam, her platform has been fairly vague.

Her Democratic opponent Bernie Sanders has been more direct in terms of his support for Guam's self-determination. From his current platform he has acknowledged that the people of Guam have the right to self-determination and that the US government should not interfere with that,

Bernie believes that the people of Guam have the right to self-determination. As president, Bernie will support the efforts of the people of Guam to hold a binding referendum on their desired future political status. This is a decision that should be made by the people of Guam without interference from the federal government.

From their rival party, the Republicans Donald Trump is currently unopposed and has released a number of interesting statements on how his administration would treat its non-self-governing territories. Although it can be difficult to understand the policy platform of Donald Trump as it shifts quite regularly, he has offered no explicit support for Guam's self-determination although he has maintained that if he is elected he will "restore equality and fairness to all citizens, especially those who have been ignored for too long." Despite his lack of support for self-determination he has proposed the developing of a "Territory and Commonwealth Advisory Committee" which will be part of his presidential transition team and "be tasked with performing a holistic review of all federal regulations affecting the territories and Commonwealths."