

## Political Reviews

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*Micronesia in Review: Issues and Events, 1 July 2013  
to 30 June 2014*

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## GUAM

Three out of the seventeen remaining entities (20%) recognized by the United Nations as non-self-governing are unincorporated territories within the US political system (UN 2014). Two of these are in the Pacific: American Sāmoa and Guåhan (Guam). Even mainstream media recognized Guam’s colonial condition in 2014 in a tourist-focused CNN story dubbing the island a “colonial holdout” (Crossan 2014), despite 115 years under the rule of a nation often called “the Greatest Democracy on Earth.”

Guam decolonization efforts can be viewed as occurring in three overlapping sets of activities to decolonize both the mindset and the political status of its peoples. Each had a sizable presence this last year—local empowerment through cultural strengthening and reconnecting the community to traditional practices and worldviews, advocacy, and local government actions.

Numerous efforts across virtually all sectors of Guam’s community continued to strengthen indigenous Chamorro culture and local identity, including e-books documenting Chamorro family clan names; the revival of the ancestral procession to the Chamorro “creation point”; the development of a television show called *Nihi!* for Guam’s *nenes* (children); the first-ever offering of Chamorro dance classes at the University of Guam (UOG); numerous locally produced films about island issues; and digital interactive applications bringing Guam’s traditional oral narratives to life. The horizons of cultural programs were also broadened by strengthen-

ing ties to Chamorros living in other US areas and showcasing Chamorro culture internationally, the latter evidenced by Inetnon Gefpaa'go's cultural arts program tour of Europe in 2014. The new UOG Chamorro Studies program was highlighted in October 2013 when the governor of Guam signed a proclamation declaring it "I Sakkan I Inestudian Chamorro" (The Year of Chamorro Studies) (PNC, 15 Oct 2013). The program's first year was extremely active with its coordinator, Dr Michael Bevacqua, traveling off-island in early 2014 to visit Chamorros located elsewhere. One of the trip's successes was to sign up hundreds of people in support of an online Chamorro Studies certificate program. Also ongoing was construction of the new Guam Museum, with a projected completion date of December 2014.

Other cultural endeavors reached noteworthy milestones, demonstrating community interest and viability. Examples of this were the 6th Annual Gupot Fanha'aniyan Pulan CHamoru: Chamorro Lunar Calendar Festival; the 10th annual Chamorro dance competition, Dinanna Pa'a Taotao Tano'; the 2nd Marianas History Conference; and the conferring of another Honorary Master of Micronesian Traditional Knowledge degree on indigenous musician Candido Babauta Taman.

Guampedia, Guam's online resource since 2008, completed its website restructuring with a new comprehensive section, "Chamorro Quest for Self-Determination," that details the self-determination efforts of the people of Guam. Guampedia also embarked on new initiatives to capture and share voices of island

elders as well as involve island youth in documenting Guam's history and issues, the latter to be launched in August 2014 with a student film on self-determination (Rita Nauta, Managing Director, Guampedia, pers comm, 11 July 2014).

On the research front, Guam benefitted from the efforts of cultural groups and academics working together, such as I Fanlalai'an (Chamorro chant group) and Dr Carlos Madrid. They examined an item from 1798, believed to be the first official government document written in Chamorro and featuring archaic Chamorro words (PNC, 27 March 2014). New understandings about Chamorro settlement and subsequent migrations came to light from a National Geographic Geographic Project and an effort by local researcher Jillette Leon-Guerrero. The former validated and fine-tuned earlier theories about Chamorro origins, while the latter traced the ancestry of a family from Hawai'i to Guam (PDN, 14 Oct 2013; *Across the Water in Time* 2013).

Preparations for hosting the Festival of Pacific Arts in 2016 continued during the year under review. During workshops and meetings, Guam community members noted the growth in island cultural revitalization since Guam's first participation in the Festival in 1972 (Guampedia 2014).

While the Commission on Decolonization was relaunched in 2011 after several years of inactivity, it continued to lack an operating budget for fiscal years 2013 and 2014. However, Executive Director Edward Alvarez, commission members, and political status task force chairs found creative

ways to move decolonization forward (Alvarez, pers comm, 14 July 2014). The executive director has focused on two main activities for the commission. One has been raising awareness by talking to island youth as well as rotary clubs and civic organizations. The purpose of much of this has been to provide people with accurate information, to correct misconceptions, and to help people envision the possibilities of a decolonized future. Current misconceptions and fears range from thinking that Guam is already sovereign as part of the United States to assuming that the island cannot “make it” economically under a different political status (Alvarez, pers comm, 14 July 2014). The commission’s second focus has been standardizing and rewriting position papers on the three political status options recognized by the United Nations as ways of exercising a full measure of self-government: independence, free association with an independent state, and full integration with an independent state. Both of the commission’s efforts are ongoing, with some task forces, such as that for independence, also active at the grassroots level (Bevacqua, pers comm, 18 July 2014).

The commission has continued to look for funding from the local government, through various types of support from the community, and through grants (Alvarez, pers comm, 14 July 2014). The commission is helping Southern Christian Academy to prepare for an upcoming forensic debate for island high school students wherein teams will deliberate Guam’s three decolonization political status options (Bevacqua, pers comm, 18 July 2014).

Further, Guam has been working across boundaries within the region and among other territories including those of the United States to further the decolonization cause. The commission’s executive director gave interviews to Radio Australia and to news programs in Japan in 2013 and provided presentations to Japanese high school and university students, among other networking activities (Alvarez, pers comm, 14 July 2014).

However, some have noted that real awareness, education, and progress toward self-determination suffer from the government’s lack of prioritization as well as inadequate funding. As such, a heavier burden has been borne by advocacy groups within the period under review, including the Guåhan Coalition for Peace and Justice, Nasion CHamoru, Our Islands Are Sacred, We Are Guåhan, and others that have worked to empower, educate, and mobilize indigenous Chamorros and others of Guam. It was these groups, for example, that provided the only non-federal government forum to present findings to the general public concerning the 2014 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Draft SEIS) concerning “Guam and CNMI Military Relocation; Relocating Marines from Okinawa, Japan to Guam,” for which community input was being sought (PNC, 27 June 2014).

Another effort addressing the political rights of the people of Guam during the period under review was the “We The People Project” founded by former resident and civil rights attorney Neil Weare. By mid-2014, the project’s Right to Vote Survey circulated among Guam residents as a

means to “help us make the case that the right to vote [for US president] shouldn’t depend on where you live.” While some question the appropriateness of addressing political status-related issues piecemeal because of possible impacts on Guam’s self-determination process, Weare and attorney Leevin Camacho see value in tackling issues through “impact litigation to drive broader political and social change” (*Marianas Business Journal* 12 (5): 1 [14 July–27 July 2014]).

The year under review posed heavy demands on the community to provide input regarding expanded militarization in Guam. Two of these demands were the public meeting that was held in November 2013 regarding the 1,760-page, two-volume Mariana Islands Training and Testing Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement and the three public forums concerning the 1,448-page Draft SEIS in May 2014. Guam’s community does want and should have the opportunity for comment. However, some have expressed the views that a community of approximately 170,000 people can only consider so much in a year’s period of time while having to meet many other pressing community demands and that the comment periods were extremely short for the consideration of such lengthy and complex proposals written by teams of specialists (a sixty-day comment period is not uncommon). Moreover, public forums have long been noted as culturally inappropriate ways to gather real community input from indigenous Oceanic societies.

Some of the key differences that were noted between the Final EIS

of 2010 and the Draft SEIS of 2014 included decreasing the number of marines and dependents to be relocated to Guam; spreading out the intensity of construction over several more years; decreasing the amount of locally held land acquired (note, however, that this did not mean that federally administered land will not be requested to shift from being held in trust for the community of Guam); fewer infrastructural demands; and the addition of alternative sites to consider for proposed activities (Draft SEIS 2014, ES-3). While some in the community have pointed to the hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on the buildup and have predicted economic growth for the island, others have noted that Guam’s educational, social, and health services and infrastructure are already stressed in meeting current demands and that any increase would be too much. They remind the community that the Government of Guam (GovGuam) will be largely financially responsible for the costly increase in services and improved infrastructure; that buildup contracts will largely be awarded to non-local companies; and that, according to the Draft SEIS itself, economic growth will be minimal. A major point of controversy has been the shift in the preferred location for the Live-Fire Training Range Complex from a site that impacted the *i manmofo’na* (ancestral) village of Pâgat (which has not been eliminated as an alternative) to one that impacts an *i manmofo’na* village at Litekyan (Ritidian), which has innumerable sacred sites and is also an area that has been designated by the US federal government as a crucial component of the Guam

National Wildlife Refuge, the island's only critical-habitat recovery area.

Added to these difficulties have been assertions that the local government has placed gag orders on government offices from speaking out against the buildup; that professionals are reticent to get involved in matters on which their jobs or consultancies rely; and that people may be reluctant to take a stand that may or may not be in line with the wishes of the island's indigenous community. Further, some have noted the striking coincidence that at the same time that opposition to increased militarization in the Marianas has developed a strong UOG faculty and student component, both the original deadline and the extended deadline for the latest of the public comments fell during their finals weeks.

Much discussed within many circles on Guam has been the challenge of being indigenous in one's homeland and dealing with people holding differing cultural values and worldviews about issues such as the significance of ancestral lands and pristine island environments. These differences are often in evidence whether the person be one of the high number of non-indigenous, and at times quite vocal, Guam community members or a representative of the US military. From the indigenous perspective, islands constitute an irreplaceable heritage handed down over hundreds or thousands of years, while others may see them as commodities and places for recreational activities. Thousands of acres of sacred or otherwise highly valued ancestral areas are in danger of being taken, destroyed, forever altered, or otherwise made inaccessible.

Some have pointed out contradictions in federal government assessments for the Mariana Islands and its neighbors. US military plans to increase their usage of and impact on resources in the Mariana Islands are directly at odds with the designation of the Guam National Wildlife Refuge decades ago, the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument in 2009, and the expressed interest by the US federal government in vastly increasing the size of a Pacific Ocean's marine sanctuary because "the United States is leading the fight to protect our oceans" (Eilperin 2014).

August saw a fierce battle between the Democratic Party-controlled legislature and Republican Governor Edward J "Eddie" Baza Calvo, who opposed Democratic initiatives to restore supplemental annuities, implement pay adjustments for government employees, and provide a larger reserve for income tax refunds than recommended by the Calvo administration (*PDN*, 21 Aug 2013; *MV*, 29 Aug 2013). After several attempts, a compromise version was unanimously adopted that funded Hay Study pay raises for GovGuam employees; restored cost of living allowances for GovGuam retirees to the level they were at a decade ago; and provided \$7 million more than the governor proposed to be held in reserve for the payment of tax refunds (*PNC*, 20 Aug 2013).

The issue of tax refunds was a source of conflict between the Calvo administration and the legislature as senators criticized the governor for using \$50 million in tax refund money for operations and effectively keeping 19,000 taxpayers waiting for refunds

even though the law prohibited him from doing so (*MV*, 12 June 2014). Senators sought a declaratory judgment from Governor Calvo on the matter, and in June the Guam Supreme Court unanimously ruled that it was illegal for the governor to use money that is reserved for refunds for other purposes (*PDN*, 18 June 2014). While losing in the Supreme Court, the Calvo administration was fighting another court order in federal court that would require the governor to pay tax refunds within six months. The court order had been issued in response to a taxpayers' class-action lawsuit against the Government of Guam. The legislature's appropriations chair, Senator Vicente "Ben" Pangelinan, labeled the governor's appeal as "completely absurd" and "a complete waste of taxpayer money" (*PNC*, 3 March 2013). In June, the administration was ordered by the court to post a \$2.2 million bond to cover the attorneys' fees of the taxpayers who filed the lawsuit, pending the outcome of the appeal (*MV*, 12 June 2014). There were also other concerns regarding Gov-Guam finances, as the public auditor reported in July that long-term debt for the Government of Guam had increased by 44 percent in fiscal year 2012 (*AP* 2013).

On taking office in 2011, the Calvo Administration halted implementation of the comprehensive government pay adjustment plan known as the Hay Study. However, by 2014 Governor Calvo was interested in implementing it (*KUAM*, 12 Jan 2011). Acting on authority granted in the Budget Act for fiscal year 2014, the administration submitted a plan that not only adjusted the pay of classified

employees but also that of elected officials such as the governor, lieutenant governor, senators, and mayors, as well as unclassified employees, including the governor's office staff and agency directors. Democratic senators conveyed their opposition to pay raises for the governor, lieutenant governor, senators, and political appointees in the executive branch (*PNC*, 21 Jan 2014). Eventually the administration's Hay Plan took effect, but senators later passed legislation eliminating the raises for the governor, lieutenant governor, senators, cabinet directors, and other political appointees (*PNC*, 3 Feb 2014). For those workers affected by the Hay Study, there was considerable disappointment in its implementation, as in the case of a number of public school educators who had served for twenty years yet received as little as 46 cents more in their biweekly paycheck (*PNC*, 19 Feb 2014). Almost a quarter of the Department of Education's employees filed grievances challenging the plan (*PDN*, 14 May 2014).

Another issue tackled by Guam legislators was a bill introduced by Vice Speaker Benjamin JF "BJ" Cruz to raise the minimum wage. After strong opposition from the Guam Chamber of Commerce, Cruz's bill was amended, passed unanimously, and signed into law by Governor Calvo. Originally proposed to incrementally increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour by 2017, the measure was reduced to a single dollar increase, from \$7.25 to \$8.25 an hour effective 1 January 2015. Seventeen percent of private-sector workers and 14 percent of Guam's total labor force earn less than \$8.20 an hour, accord-



ing to data from the Guam Bureau of Labor and Statistics. An estimated 7,000 workers will be affected by the increase (PNC, 12 July 2014).

As the 2014 elections approached, the community was transfixed by developments in the Democratic Party as many wondered whether the party would put forth an opponent to incumbent Republican Governor Eddie Calvo (PNC, 11 April 2014). In November 2013, the Democrats held their elections for party officers, selecting the Legislature's Majority Leader Senator Rory Respicio as chairman and former Department of Education Superintendent Dr Nerissa Bretania Underwood as vice chair (KUAM, 5 Nov 2014). Also elected were John Paul Manuel as secretary, Coy Torres as treasurer, and members of the Central Executive Committee, representing the island's villages. Democrats were encouraged when the turnout for the party election was triple that of the previous one. Senator Respicio and Bretania Underwood set as their goals to strengthen the Democratic Party over the next six months and to help launch a strong gubernatorial team "to take on the current administration" (MV, 11 Nov 2013).

In April, to foster discussion about the party's future and potential Democratic candidates for governor and other offices, party officers embarked on a "listening tour" of the island's villages. The tour began in Agat and was deemed a success by Democratic leaders as residents voiced their concerns about crime, the state of education, and the need to provide an alternative to the Calvo administration (*Saipan Tribune*, 26 April 2014). Respicio noted that the party was

succeeding in uniting all factions and surmounting past problems of factionalism (PNC, 10 April 2014).

By June, the pace of meetings of Democratic leaders stepped up, and, at Democrats' urging, former Governor Carl TC Gutierrez and attorney Gary Gumataotao announced they were running for governor and lieutenant governor, respectively (PNC, 23 June 2014). The day before the filing deadline, the Gutierrez-Gumataotao team filed for the Democratic primary, to be held 30 August 2014, setting the stage for a November contest with the Calvo/Tenorio team. On that same day, incumbent US Congresswoman Madeleine Z Bordallo also filed her election papers. She will face challenger and first-time candidate Matthew "Matt" P Artero in the Democratic primary, and the winner of that contest will be pitted against Margaret McDonald Glover Metcalfe, who was the sole candidate for the Republican nomination for that post.

Two days before the filing deadline, incumbent Senator Vicente "Ben" C Pangelinan surprised many when he announced that he would not be seeking reelection (KUAM, 29 June 2014). Pangelinan had been hospitalized, and little more than a week later the former Speaker and ten-term lawmaker passed away from cancer (PDN, 8 July 2014). In addition to Pangelinan, the year saw the passing of former senators James Underwood, G Ricardo Salas, and Leonardo San Nicolas Paulino; former Mayor Pedro Iriarte Borja (Guam Legislature website); and former US Congressman and Marine Brigadier General Vicente "Ben" T Garrido Blaz. The latter four individuals were survivors of the Japanese



occupation of Guam in World War II (See the list of Guam survivors in the Asan Bay Overlook Memorial Wall of Names, downloadable from the US National Park Service website for the War in the Pacific National Park [US NPS 2014].).

The loss of Pangelinan shook up the Democratic slate for the 15-seat Guam Legislature, but by the primary election filing date, 15 candidates had filed. In addition to the 8 Democratic incumbent senators, 3 former senators—Adolpho B Palacios Sr, Judith P Guthertz, and Hope Alvarez Cristobal—also filed their candidacies. Trying for their first time in elective office were Rodney A Cruz Jr, Derick Baza Hills, and Frank Taitano Ungacta Jr. For the remaining slot, Democratic Party Vice Chair Dr Nerissa Bretania Underwood was drafted by Democratic leaders. Underwood, who is the wife of former US Congressman Robert A Underwood, subsequently accepted the draft (GEC website).

On the Republican side, a contest for the Senatorial slate was set in motion as 16 candidates vied for the 15 Legislative seats. Along with incumbents Vicente Anthony “Tony” Ada, Thomas “Tommy” A Morrison, Aline A Yamashita, Christopher “Chris” M Duenas, and Brant T McCreddie were former senators James “Jim” V Espaldon and Frank F Blas Jr, as well as hopefuls Mary Camacho Torres, Glenn A Leon Guerrero, Roland Blas, Adonis Mendiola, William M Castro, Felix C Benavente, Valentino Perez, Michelle Hope Taitano, and Carl Gross (known as “Romeo Carlos”) vying for their party’s nomination in the August primary (GEC website).

For the nonpartisan race for attorney general, retired Judge Elizabeth Barrett-Anderson, who is also a former attorney general and senator, filed her candidacy to challenge incumbent Leonardo “Lenny” M Rapadas (GEC website).

One referendum that may be placed before voters in the November 2014 election concerns the issue of medical marijuana. The legislature had approved a bill sponsored by Senator Tina Muña Barnes to place legalization of medical marijuana on the ballot (*PDN*, 28 Jan 2014). However, the Guam Election Commission (GEC) refused to follow the statute, citing a conflict with the Organic Act of Guam. The election commission contended that lawmakers do not have the authority to place bills on a ballot but only the authority to pass bills into law. To resolve the issue, the legislature went to the Guam Supreme Court seeking a declaratory judgment. The court’s decision was expected in August 2014 (*PNC*, 10 April 2014).

The year saw a renewed drive by Guam lawmakers to enforce a provision of the Compacts of Free Association with the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Marshall Islands (known as Freely Associated States or FAS). The compacts, while allowing for unlimited travel to the United States for purposes of employment and education, also provide for the deportation of criminals from a US territory back to their native countries. According to a 2012 report, FAS residents incarcerated in the local prison increased from 873 in 2010 to 1,132 in 2012 with a cost of \$5.38 million to the Department of Corrections. Seeking action, Vice Speaker

Cruz met with the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Enforcement and Removal Operations office in San Francisco on this issue (PNC, 14 Jan 2014). Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Chairman Senator Respicio held a roundtable discussion with attorneys from the Calvo administration and the attorney general's office seeking a legal pathway for local officials to move on deporting FAS citizens currently held at the Department of Corrections (PNC, 15 Oct 2013).

Guam's delegate to Congress Madeleine Bordallo faced difficulties on two fronts this year with respect to long-standing controversies: land issues related to the planned military buildup and war reparations for those who suffered Guam's World War II Japanese occupation. The US Department of Defense is in the process of selecting a site for a new live-fire training range complex (LFTRC) and has stated that its preferred site is in the Ritidian Unit of the Guam National Wildlife Refuge. Construction of the LFTRC would not begin until 2017 at the earliest, but Bordallo has said that if the range complex is not constructed the planned buildup may be in jeopardy. To pave the way for the LFTRC, Bordallo, at the US Navy's request, introduced a bill to establish a safety buffer over a portion of the refuge when the ranges are in use and to close any part of the refuge for safety or national security reasons. However, critics in Guam pointed out that Bordallo did not consult with them before introducing her measure (PDN, 9 May 2014). Legislative Speaker Judith Won Pat criticized Bordallo primarily because the community was not properly informed or consulted about

the bill. Won Pat also noted that the measure preempts and hinders other processes designed to provide community input on the LFTRC decision, including the ongoing consideration of the Draft SEIS and processes such as those required under the National Environmental Process Act (MV, 16 May 2014). Aside from environmental impacts, concerns were also raised that Bordallo's bill would foreclose any chance of the return of the land in Ritidian to its original landowners. Despite the criticism, Bordallo's efforts received the full backing of Governor Calvo (Governor's Office website, 9 May 2014). In May, an amended version of Bordallo's bill passed the US House of Representatives as part of a larger defense authorization measure (PNC, 24 May 2014).

In June, news that the provision for Guam's World War II war reparations was stripped from the Senate's Omnibus Territories Act caused considerable dissatisfaction in the community (PNC, 19 June 2014). Governor Calvo spoke for many when he said, "The people of Guam should get the recognition we deserve as a result of the atrocities our families suffered in World War II. Unfortunately, there is still no resolution for the Chamorros who haven't been compensated for their suffering—as other Americans have been" (PNC, 20 June 2014). This negated the minority view, later stated by a vocal non-indigenous journalist, that Guam should "give up on war reparations," calling it "a waste of time and effort" (PNC, 27 June 2014).

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### KIRIBATI

This review focuses on the debate on climate change and its implications for