

CHAPTER 4

Local Resistances and Imperial Reactions

The imperial “way of seeing” described in previous chapters operates in many sites across the Baseworld, and numerous consequences stem from the associated militarization of island communities. First, the decision to locate bases in these places affects the islands’ physical, biological, and social landscapes, with concomitant impacts on the well-being of the inhabitants and the islands’ political statuses. Second, these negative impacts create local resistances that have had some major successes in altering the spatial arrangement of the global network of U.S. bases. Third, the military reacts to these resistances through regional maneuvering that includes the reinforcement of colonialism on Pacific islands. This chapter (along with [chapter 5](#)) presents some of the local geographical detail in order to set the stage for a discussion in the final chapter that examines how groups in these militarized spaces challenge the operation of hegemony and seek affinity in international politics.

Part 1: Repeating Islands of Militarization and Resistance

To begin, we should note that the imperial way of seeing Bikini Atoll described in [chapter 3](#) was not invented there, nor did it stop there. Chronologically, nuclear testing on Bikini was a midpoint in the travels of the U.S. government’s way of seeing its colonized islands. As the United States extended its colonial reach in the 1890s to support its pursuit of global hegemony, it began to establish a template for politically taking over and changing the landscapes of the islands it came to control. The use of similar strategies of appropriation and forced displacement, as well as the imposition of standard building techniques for U.S. bases, means that while islands like Guam, Tinian, Vieques, Diego Garcia, Kwajalein, Okinawa, and O’ahu are geographically isolated from each other—and have very different precolonial histories—there are uncanny similarities among these places. Not only are all of these islands sites of intense military use, they also are all nonsovereign territories that are either still in a direct colonial relationship with a metropolitan power (Diego Garcia and Guam), have been made into quasi-colonial, freely associated states or commonwealths (Kwajalein, Tinian, and Vieques), or have been previously independent nations absorbed by foreign powers (Hawai‘i and Okinawa). Colonialism has stamped many of these places in the same way, and this is hardly surprising given how empires operate.

A useful way of characterizing the similarities across these far-flung islands can be found in Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s (1997) theory of the “repeating island.” In regard to imperial conceptualizations of islands, Benítez-Rojo focused on how Spanish colonialism remade each successive island in the mold of previously conquered islands. In this way, the islands’ precontact landscapes were disregarded, recoded, and materially reproduced to suit imperial

needs by a repeating Spanish colonial military/plantation machine. After the Spanish-American War at the end of the nineteenth century, the United States inherited many of these Spanish colonies and introduced their own pattern of repeating landscapes that suited the needs of their growing military and imperial ambitions. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2007) notes, expanding on Benítez-Rojo's concept, "the use of one archipelago as an ideological and social template for the next reveals the ways in which the colonial discourse of islands repeated itself, rhizomatically, along a westward trajectory" (p. 9).

It was not just colonial discourse that repeated itself, however. It was also the landscapes of militarization and colonial forms of domination that these discourses justified. These repeating landscapes of militarization were produced not just because a discourse demanded it but also because of the perceived threats posed by competing colonial projects. The Spanish Caribbean project was threatened by French, Dutch, and British colonialisms. On the Pacific edge of empires, the landscapes of militarization were shaped in the early part of the twentieth century by American, European, and Japanese colonialisms. The island Pacific has been heavily shaped by the rivalry between U.S. and Japanese power, with World War II arguably the most impactful event in Pacific history (Poyer, Falgout, & Carucci, 2001). While American and Japanese colonialisms are generally seen as competing projects, in many respects the two have worked in concert to construct the militarized and nonsovereign Pacific that we see today. This is because each colonial power tended to paint the islands as in need of defending against the other colonialism (Shigematsu & Camacho, 2010). After the end of World War II, a mutually reinforcing relationship continued to exist between military use and lack of sovereignty in the American-controlled Pacific, justified by the threat of first Soviet power and later Chinese power (Aldrich & Connell, 1998; Baldacchino, 2010). The result of this colonialist view is the repetition from island to island and archipelago to archipelago of a certain kind of militarized landscape dominated by similar types of military activities (i.e., the "Baseworld" described in [chapter 2](#)).

The problem with this repeating landscape of militarization is that it creates local environments full of hazards and annoyances to the people who live on these islands. Thus, many of these U.S. bases are surrounded by a ring of environmental advocates, community development activists, women's groups, health advocates, and others actively resisting the ways in which the violence the bases are meant to project elsewhere "leaks" into the surrounding community. While the various groups and movements resisting the inequities and violence around U.S. bases may have diverse foci such as issues of environmental contamination, sexual violence, or access to resources and land, they share a common concern for the everyday effects of the militarization of their places. In contrast to some organizations in the broader peace movement (Herb, 2005), these groups are born out of resistance to in-place violences to the bodies of activists, their families, and their communities. People living near bases may oppose various types of military operations, but one recurring theme has been local opposition to military training.

Maintaining large numbers of deployed military personnel means having the associated combat training areas. It is often these military training activities, and the large landholdings required for them, that lead to sustained resistance movements against the presence of U.S. bases in these "forward" places such as Japan, Guam, Hawai'i, and Puerto Rico. While

training overseas has been a continually thorny issue for the military, strategic policy documents and proclamations by active duty commanders consistently declare that training areas, and the activities that go on in them, are absolutely essential parts of any large base (Calder, 2007; DOD, 2004; Gillem, 2007; Matthews, 2010). Following such dicta as “Every Marine is, first and foremost, a rifleman,” the military steadfastly professes that military units *must* continue training even when deployed overseas. The military’s insistence on conducting live-fire training, however, has led to lawsuits and some of the largest outpourings of antibase activism. Training at such areas as **Makua Valley in Hawai‘i** and Farallon de Medinilla in the Northern Marianas has been blocked by environmental lawsuits, and other sites around the world have been permanently shut down (Kaho‘olawe, Hawai‘i, and Vieques, Puerto Rico). Others that remain open continue to serve as lightning rods for protest.

Even though the U.S. military has made a concerted effort to continue to represent these military colonies in accordance with the same Western cultural myth of the “deserted isle” that was applied to Bikini Atoll, people living on these islands have deployed counternarratives challenging this labeling of their islands as mere anchored aircraft carriers or repeating cogs in a military-colonizing, sovereignty-violating machine. The activities of the military, and the systems of colonialism put in place to support them, have sparked protest and resistance movements. The central themes in most of these movements are usually quite simple: First, there is the contention that military operations negatively affect the health, security, and well-being of people living on the islands and should be stopped. Second, there is usually a call for sovereignty and local control over politics.

Not only are the themes of this resistance similar across the Baseworld, but so are the strategies and tactics used by these movements. Thus, we can talk about another manner in which these places are “repeating islands”: they are *repeating islands of resistance*. Benítez-Rojo’s work is illustrative for examining this aspect of repeating islands as well. Benítez-Rojo, while looking at how colonial powers changed island landscapes to fit a repeating template, was also looking for explanations for the commonalities he saw among island cultures that seemed so splintered through colonial encounters. He looked at similarities across the Caribbean meta-archipelago and in its diasporas—commonalities shared among individuals despite different languages, colonial histories, ethnicities, politics, and current place of residence. Taking a self-described postmodern approach, he theorized that social life across the Caribbean islands and among its emigrants repeats itself in a fractal way. In other words, wider-scale social patterns are based on local practices that repeat and extend themselves across space, with small variations, from island to island and enclave to enclave. The emphasis here is not just on the repetition of the social patterns, but on the interconnectivity of islands. As the Tongan scholar Epeli Hau‘ofa (1994) emphasizes, island communities are a “sea of islands” rather than islands in the sea. The sea is a connector, not the barrier it is imagined to be in colonial discourse. Islands are connected rhizomatically through the ocean, not despite of it. Or as poet and scholar Kamau Braithwaite puts it, “island unity is submarine” (quoted in DeLoughrey, 2007, p. 25).

This metaphor of the repeating island is illustrative for discussing the nature of antimilitary activism on these colonized islands. Even with very different geographies and histories, the homogenizing processes of militarization and colonialism have created common problems that

are the basis for common solutions and affinity-seeking networks of solidarity. As I explore further in [chapter 6](#), through these international networks activists share strategies and tactics, alert each other during times of crisis, regularly visit each other's communities (over great distances and at great expense), and sustain a decentralized global network of support. Before I delve into this network and the interconnections between these movements, however, I describe more fully the kinds of landscapes that exist on these islands and the local strategies and tactics of resistance they produce. I give examples of the situations on O'ahu, Hawai'i; Okinawa; and Vieques, Puerto Rico to demonstrate not only how "seeing like an empire" has created repeating islands of bases but also how the spirit of resistance repeats from island to island as well. My descriptions of these places are necessarily brief, but numerous other books give fuller accounts of militarization on these islands (see, for example, Ferguson & Turnbull, 1998; McCaffrey, 2002; Lutz, 2009; Shigematsu & Camacho, 2010; Ireland, 2010; McCormack & Norimatsu, 2012).

O'AHU, HAWAI'I

Staring down from the side of Halawa Heights Road next to the Marines' Camp H. M. Smith in Honolulu you get a panoramic view of the naval base at Pearl Harbor (a harbor traditionally known as Pu'uloa and renamed by the Americans). I was traveling around the island of O'ahu with members of a local antimilitarist organization dedicated to fighting both the militarization of the Hawaiian Islands and their political incorporation into the United States—an incorporation that was imposed on the islands in the wake of the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy.¹ While Hawai'i is technically part of the United States and has greater access to the halls of political power than Guam or the Marshall Islands, the historically recent overthrow of its government, its long-term status as an American colony, and its huge military presence make it much more like other overseas military colonies than like the mainland of the United States.

We were touring militarized O'ahu. From the street next to Camp Smith I viewed the expanse of the naval installation that took over the harbor as my hosts pointed out the nearby airfields, the enormous X-band radar on an oil platform about to be shipped to the north Pacific for the missile defense program, and the large bunkers stocked with untold numbers of nuclear weapons. About a third of the island of O'ahu is occupied by military bases of one sort or another. It is a true military colony, and, like other military colonies, Hawai'i owes its political affiliation with the United States not to the riches it holds, but to its location relative to places of economic value. After Hawai'i was made into a U.S. territory, O'ahu became a stopover that allowed the United States to extend its reach to the western Pacific. The annexation of Hawai'i occurred in the late 1800s, when Manifest Destiny was being applied in the Pacific to the doorstep of Asia. In an era when European nations had already divided up the world among themselves, the United States needed a different strategy to bring wealth to its burgeoning capitalist economy once the age of conquest and expansion across the North American continent was coming to a close. American industrialists and politicians realized that to exploit Asia they did not need to possess colonies in Asia; they only needed to accumulate military colonies that enabled *access* to Asia.



FIGURE 6. Pu'uloa Lagoon (aka Pearl Harbor). Photo by author.

This is the crucial difference between older forms of European *colonialism* and American *imperialism*. Colonialism is usually defined as direct control over a territory to enable the extraction of wealth from the area. Imperialism, in contrast, is usually defined as the *indirect* political and economic control over nominally “independent” territories to enable the extraction of wealth. The United States in the late 1800s had no need or ability to colonize the Asian mainland, only the need and ability to ensure access to it. So colonies were made of Hawai‘i, American Samoa, Guam, and the Philippines. The latter two were wrested from the Spanish in the 1898 war when the United States also “freed” Cuba and gained Puerto Rico as a military colony to guard the approaches to Central America and the future Panama Canal. These new colonies were not substantially resource-rich colonies, but rather strategic locations that enabled a coal-using U.S. Navy to maintain a presence in the western Pacific, guard the route across the Pacific to Asian resources and markets, and deny other nations the same access.

The results of imperial decisions made since the late 1800s are littered everywhere across the Hawaiian landscape. Every branch of the military has facilities in Hawai‘i. There are large air bases, such as Hickam Air Force Base and the Marine Corps Air Station at Kaneohe, as well as a huge naval complex at Pearl Harbor. There are also large training areas and bombing ranges around the islands. The whole island of Kaho‘olawe, south of Maui, was bombed for decades until Hawai‘i activists protested and managed to halt its use by the military. **Makua Valley** on O‘ahu was used for live-fire training for over sixty years until forced to close in 2011. Neither **Makua** or Kaho‘olawe, however, has been adequately cleaned or decontaminated. There are also active training areas: Pohakuloa on the Big Island, Schofield Barracks, and other locations. At present, the military footprint is not shrinking but expanding.

In the early years of the twenty-first century the United States brought in new “Stryker Brigades” for training in the islands, a move that required the U.S. military to demand even more land.²

A drive around O‘ahu easily demonstrates the heavy imprint of the military. From the fenced-off entrance to **Makua Valley**, to the giant naval communication antennae at Lualualei, to the Stryker Brigade training areas in the center of the island, to the ships crammed together in the West Loch of the naval base, to the stylish neighborhoods of housing for military families and the giant px where military dependents shop: the military is ever-visible in the landscape (Ferguson & Turnbull, 1998). The military presence in O‘ahu is more integrated into surrounding communities than it is in places like Kwajalein/Ebeye, but this has both positive and negative aspects. While there is less of a sharp disparity between the on-base and off-base landscapes, there is still plenty of difference. Furthermore, the leakage of military activities and personnel off the bases is more noticeable. The military uses civilian highways and roads, military planes abound in the skies, and all of the waters surrounding the Hawaiian Islands are open as areas for military training (even environmentally protected marine preserves like the huge Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument). Military personnel and their families also have a large and obvious presence on island, which, in addition to driving up housing costs, has environmental and cultural impacts. This militarization of Hawai‘i has spawned active and effective resistance. As noted, training ranges in **Makua Valley** and Kaho‘olawe have been closed because of sustained protests. These protests involved tactics ranging from lobbying, to sign holding and public rallies, to occupying and blocking access to the ranges. While such protests are not uncommon—and there is widespread support for antimilitary activism and associated calls for political sovereignty—there is also much support within Hawai‘i for the perceived economic, political, and social benefits that militarization and incorporation into the United States have brought to the islands (Osorio, 2010).

OKINAWA

Like Hawai‘i, Okinawa is a formerly independent place that has been absorbed by a larger power (see [map 2](#) in [chapter 1](#)). Also like Hawai‘i, it has almost a third of its land controlled by the U.S. military. Okinawa, the largest of the islands in the Ryukyu chain, was part of the formerly independent Ryukyu Kingdom, which was absorbed into the Japanese state in 1879. After invading Okinawa near the end of World War II, the United States administered Okinawa and the surrounding Ryukyu Islands until 1972, when the islands were transferred back to Japanese control. This formerly independent chain of islands suffers from what has been referred to as “double-colonization” by both the United States and Japan (Akibayashi & Takazato, 2009). Okinawa, while under Japanese political jurisdiction, hosts most of the American military forces in Japan. Since invading Okinawa at the end of World War II, the United States has kept extensive military assets there. Many members of the community see the numerous bases and training areas as threats to rather than protectors of their health and security. Areas near the bases have experienced helicopter crashes into the local university, pervasive jet noise, pollution, and crime (C. Johnson, 2007; Ueunten, 2010). Particularly tragic

have been a number of well-publicized sexual attacks on Okinawan women and girls by U.S. military personnel, including a 1995 gang rape of a twelve-year-old. As mentioned, one Okinawan women's organization (Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence) catalogued 4,784 reported serious crimes on island by American soldiers and sailors between 1972 and 1995.

Like Hawai'i, Okinawa has been a site of both intense militarization and effective antimilitary activism. The protests that have erupted in Okinawa due to these threats to local security have had an effect on the U.S. military's posture on the island. After protests increased in intensity in the mid-1990s, the U.S. Department of Defense began negotiations with the Japanese government to decrease the U.S. military's footprint in Okinawa by moving Futenma Air Station out of the crowded center of Ginowan City to a more rural area of the island (Henoko) and moving eight thousand Marines off-island. This agreement was signed in 2006 and reaffirmed in 2012, but implementation has met with stiff opposition both in Henoko, Okinawa, where the new base is to be built, and in Guam, where many of the Marines are slated to go. Activists have engaged in civil disobedience, such as chaining themselves to scaffolds being erected in the ocean where the new base is to be built near the shoreline. They have also held vigils, taken part in mass protests, and relied on solidarity from groups on the Japanese mainland and around the region.

In 2009 political developments in Japan appeared to turn in favor of activists in Okinawa. Yukio Hatoyama of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan became Prime Minister after promising in his campaign that the Futenma Air Station would be removed from Okinawa altogether and not just relocated to another part of the island. The United States, however, immediately pressured Hatoyama to keep the U.S. base in Okinawa. After a few tense months he publically capitulated, saying that Japan needed the Marines in Okinawa for reasons of "deterrence" and that he would go back on his campaign promise and allow the base to stay in Okinawa. Because of this action, Hatoyama was forced to resign. He later admitted that the Marines (which are by training an offensive strike force) did not serve as a deterrent and that he used deterrence only as a "pretext" (Satoko, 2011). He candidly admitted that U.S. pressure and bureaucratic obstruction from within his own government made it so that he could not, even as Prime Minister, get the base removed from Okinawa. At the end of December 2013, in a further illustration of politicians' difficulties in stopping bases, Okinawa governor Hirokazu Nakaima reneged on a 2010 campaign position that a replacement for Futenma should not be built in Okinawa, signing an agreement with the Japanese central government to allow construction to begin in Henoko. These experiences in Okinawa have only bolstered the belief of antimilitarization activists that engaging in a "politics of demand" with the state and trying to get "friendly" candidates elected to political office are ineffective strategies compared with direct-action tactics and mass protests.

VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO

Although Puerto Rico is not in the Pacific region, the situation in Vieques, Puerto Rico, is instructive for two reasons. First, it shares a similar militarized history to many of the islands in the Pacific. Second, its case is well known in Pacific activist circles because the island's

citizens succeeded in kicking the U.S. military off their military-dominated, colonial island. Antimilitarization activists in Puerto Rico and Pacific islands have reciprocally shared strategies and tactics, and therefore it is difficult to examine antimilitary activism in the Pacific region without stepping out of the region for a moment to consider the case of Vieques.

The U.S. military acquired most of the island of Vieques during World War II by expropriating the eastern and western thirds of the island and forcing the approximately ten thousand inhabitants into the small central area. In subsequent decades the U.S. Navy used the island for aerial bombardment, shelling from warships, and practice invasions. During a period of heavy use in the 1980s the island was subjected to an average of 3,400 bombs dropped, 158 days of naval bombardment, 200 days of air-to-ground combat exercises, and 21 days of Marines practicing invasions each year (Aldrich & Connell, 1998). As a result, there has long been opposition to the Navy's use of the island. In the 1960s and 1970s, the fishing community was active protesting the military and would sail into the military area to interrupt exercises (McCaffrey, 2002). Protests continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but they expanded tremendously in 1999 after an errant bomb killed local Vieques resident David Sanes. After his death, the protest movement launched a variety of campaigns. In Vieques, activists have used protest tactics similar to those used in Hawai'i, Okinawa, and other militarized islands. Protesters occupied the bombing range and blockaded the gates between the civilian and military areas. These acts of civil disobedience blocked maneuvers in the range between mass arrests. Vieques also benefitted from a wide-ranging solidarity network in other parts of Puerto Rico and the world. In the year 2000, over 150,000 people took part in demonstrations in San Juan to call for an end to the bombing, and six people draped the flags of Puerto Rico and Vieques on the Statue of Liberty's crown to publicize the plight of Vieques.

The coalition of groups that came together to oppose the military use of Vieques was politically quite broad. While there were certainly avowed anti-imperialist and antimilitarist *independentistas* working in solidarity to end the militarization of Vieques, there were also a number of groups involved from decidedly nonradical backgrounds. Eventually health care workers, teachers, students, leaders and members of local Protestant and Catholic churches, the Puerto Rican procommonwealth party (PPD), and even Republican New York governor George Pataki ended up calling for the Navy to leave Vieques (McCaffrey, 2002). Under this intense barrage of local civil disobedience, solidarity actions, and political pressure, the Navy closed the bombing range in Vieques in 2003.

What is to be made of the fact that these politically broad, but geographically local, coalitions were formed against militarization in Vieques alongside an effective international solidarity network? On one hand, many activists in Vieques claim that the broad coalitions were absolutely essential to achieving their victory. While networks at the level of the island and the Puerto Rican archipelago were politically and socially broad, the protest movement also depended on a broad geographical support network from Puerto Rican constituencies in the United States as well as solidarity with anti-imperialist, antimilitarist, and peace groups from around the world. Particularly noteworthy were the connections people on Vieques started making with people from other places who opposed militarization in their home communities. Groups from Japan, South Korea, the Marshall Islands, and Hawai'i came to Vieques, while people from Vieques made visits to militarized islands in the Pacific.

Through the different networks and protest tactics, activists on Vieques were successful in redefining security on their island. Activists emphasized the island as a space for living and not a no-man's-land (gendered language intentional) where practices of destruction are acceptable. They managed to make visible not only the destruction and death caused by militarization but also the life of Vieques. At sites like Vieques, activists have shown that militarized islands are not only places of domination but also important sites from which imperial domination can be unraveled. With the closing of the testing range on Vieques, the large nearby Roosevelt Roads military base on the main island of Puerto Rico also closed.

Part 2: Imperial Reactions to Resistance

The Department of Defense is keenly aware that the structure of their base network can be affected by opposition in the locales in which they want to operate. Former defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld opined that “the presence and activities of our forces grate on local populations and have become an irritant for host governments.” He claimed that “prudent U.S. relocations could reduce frictions with local populations, especially in Okinawa and South Korea” (Critchlow, 2005, p. 10). When deciding how to restructure the network of U.S. bases, the 2004 Defense Posture Review stated: “[W]e gave consideration to the irritants that our overseas military facilities can cause, particularly where such facilities are near host-nation population centers and valued land holdings. Wherever possible we looked to make posture changes that lessen the real and perceived burdens of such situations. Ultimately, these changes should help us to strengthen our alliances and improve our ability to interact with the host nation” (DOD, 2004, p. 7). In terms of frictions caused by military training, however, the military’s reaction was not focused on how to minimize the environmental and social impacts of training, but rather to figure out how best to keep dissent from further interfering with their desired training activities. The military’s view after losing the ability to train in Vieques is exemplified on the navy’s website:

Supporters of the military immediately criticized the Bush Administration’s new plan [to end training on Vieques] on the grounds that it could lead to reduced readiness of U.S. naval forces and complicate the U.S. ability to maintain access to overseas training ranges in places such as Okinawa and South Korea. How might the Bush Administration’s new plan affect the U.S. ability to maintain access to overseas training ranges where there is local opposition to U.S. operations, such as Okinawa or South Korea? Does the plan set a bad precedent for managing disputes over ranges, and will it encourage other local populations to step up their opposition to U.S. training activities?

(<http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/vieques.htm>)

After the loss of Vieques and training stoppages at **Makua Valley** and at Farallon de Medinilla in the Mariana Islands, the military began doing systematic studies aimed at keeping training areas and bases open. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 required the DOD to make regular reports to keep training ranges functional. The two most salient terms that come up in these reports are *sustainability* and *encroachment*. In military training parlance, the “sustainability” of bombing and firing ranges refers to the military’s ability to sustain training activities in the face of opposition. Meanwhile, *encroachment* is defined this way:

The Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Installations and Environment) stated that encroachment is any pressure, both internal and external to test and training ranges, that affects the ability to carry out live testing and training. Encroachment caused by external factors is an increasing threat to military readiness. DoD recognized that encroachment issues were important after local community concerns threatened to interrupt, interrupted, and/or terminated the testing and training activities at ranges on the island of Vieques in Puerto Rico, at Massachusetts Military Reservation, at **Makua Valley Military Reservation** in Hawai'i, and at Farallon de Medinilla in the Pacific Ocean. (DOD, 2002, p. 1)

Encroachment, therefore, is anything—physical, legislative, activist—that stands in the way of sustaining live-fire training. The language used here lays bare the military's view of the lands they occupy. In grand imperial fashion, the land does not belong to any of the former tenants of the land, the island governments on which the ranges are situated, or the populations who live adjacent to them. By referring to other potential land uses as “encroachment,” the military erases the histories of seizure and occupation that brought the training ranges into their jurisdiction in the first place. (To extend the critique, it should be noted that many training ranges, when they were established, were supposed to be temporary or operational only until the end of a particular war or “emergency” of one kind or another.)

To help with the problem of encroachment on “their” ranges, the military hired a consulting firm, SRS Technologies, to develop a Sustainable Ranges Outreach Plan. A key finding of the study is that the military should change the name of their communication strategy. The report states, “DoD uses the word ‘outreach’ when dealing with local communities and writing draft policy; however, local communities and stakeholders consider outreach as one-directional communication. Using the term ‘community involvement’ would convey to the public a positive willingness by DoD to have two-way communication” (DOD, 2002, p. 11). Despite DOD attempts at “community involvement,” people next to bases continue to oppose training activities in their surroundings because of the long list of deleterious effects. Training activities, and the spaces where the military conducts them, are therefore important nodes in military operations where resistance movements are often sparked. To paraphrase the old labor dictum that the “boss is the best organizer,” the military's insistence that training *must* be carried out in proximity to forward bases has been the best organizing tool for activists resisting militarization. This resistance, in turn, continues to restrict the Pentagon's ability to build new bases and even maintain the ones they currently operate.

There are other issues around forward bases besides those dealing with training. While the military seems to have taken a somewhat oblivious position in dealing with opposition to its training activities, there has been recognition within the DOD that the overall impact of their bases in foreign countries is threatening the effective operation (and in some cases the very existence) of the bases. There is, therefore, a desire by the DOD to locate U.S. troops and bases, as Donald Rumsfeld put it in 2005, “Where they are wanted, welcomed, and needed” (Critchlow, 2005, p. 10). This attitude is echoed in more recent publications put out during the Obama Administration, such as the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, which notes that “America's defense posture should provide a stabilizing influence abroad and be welcomed by the host nation. Forward stationing and rotational deployment of U.S. forces are designed to contribute to regional security and will be enhanced, lessened, or reshaped as necessary to reassure allies and partners and strengthen deterrence” (DOD, 2010, p. 87).

Where are these places that welcome militarization? Many U.S. bases and training areas

have been removed from strategic locations from the Philippines to Puerto Rico, and protests, political upheaval, and foreign court rulings currently threaten the status of bases in locations from Kyrgyzstan to Diego Garcia. Furthermore, the U.S. military is concerned that even in places where its bases are fairly secure, their freedom to operate could be hampered by restrictions on training and host nation sensitivities to the types of deployments made from, or through, their territories. Lincoln Bloomfield (2006), former U.S. assistant secretary of state for Political Military Affairs, put it this way:

Senior DoD officials emphasized the “usability” of American forces stationed abroad, referring to political constraints that host countries might place on them in a crisis. ... Governments take an appropriate interest in how their territory is used and accord special political significance to any scenario in which another country’s forces launch combat operations directly from their territory. There is an implied complicity on the part of the host nation in the military objectives of the forces’ mission. Host governments—democracies above all—can be expected to require prior consent. ... Host countries that would impose nettlesome constraints on the out-of-country deployability of U.S. forces should not expect to be significant hubs in the new American defense posture. (pp. 56, 61)

In short, the military is reacting to constraints put on their operations by searching for base sites that not only give global coverage (see [chapter 2](#)) but also enable *operational unilateralism*. In contrast to political unilateralism, a doctrine under the George W. Bush administration of waging war without the political agreement of the United Nations or significant allies, operational unilateralism is the military’s ability to strike quickly without needing consultation with anyone—even the government of the territory from which they are launching the strike. The 2004 Global Posture Review explained the concept in this way: “An important facet of our global posture is our system of legal arrangements with allies and partners. With some countries we will need new legal arrangements, and with others we may need to update existing arrangements. While mindful of sovereignty and country-specific concerns, legal arrangements that enable our global posture should maximize our ability to: Conduct training in host nations; Deploy U.S. forces wherever and whenever they are needed; and Support deployed forces around the world” (DOD, 2004, p. 15).

While most colonial powers throughout history have sought the unfettered ability to operate their militaries wherever they wanted, the current U.S. doctrine attempts to gain this ability while trying to appear to be operating within the principles of the Westphalian system (i.e., respecting the sovereignty of other recognized countries). While paying lip service to other countries’ sovereignty, the United States argues that the speed at which force must be deployed nowadays necessitates operational unilateralism. In the military view of the world, threats do not just potentially emanate from everywhere but also arise at potentially any moment. Therefore, forward military units must be globally deployable and also able to deploy rapidly. Pentagon doctrine holds that in the contemporary security environment of rapid terrorist attacks and “ticking bombs,” consultation with allies (not to mention the U.S. congress) is a *passé*, time-consuming nicety that does not fit in with the speed at which lethal military force needs to be deployed (Hannah, 2006).

While this quest for operational unilateralism arose concurrently with the Bush doctrine of political unilateralism, it is still very much in operation today. Although the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, done under the Obama administration, has extensive rhetoric that clearly tries to distance their administration from Bush-era policies surrounding the Iraq invasion, it does

not mince words about maintaining the military's ability to act unilaterally. The report states, "America's Armed Forces will retain the ability to act unilaterally and decisively when appropriate, maintaining joint, all-domain military capabilities that can prevail across a wide range of contingencies" (DOD, 2010, p. 10). This continued quest for operational unilateralism has serious ramifications for both U.S. constitutional law and international law (see, for instance, C. Johnson, 2007), and it also affects the geography of the base network. As the above quotes suggest, the military is looking for base sites with prearranged permission to train and deploy without negotiation. The problem is that other governments are becoming more reluctant to grant such permissions. Why would an allied government want to host a forward base that, by the Pentagon's own admission, no longer exists to defend the country in which it is placed, but instead is a site for training exercises (that raise the ire of people living adjacent to it) and a site for the projection of force (that the allied government is not going to be consulted about)?

So where do you put bases in the Asia-Pacific region to enable global reach and operational unilateralism? In short: colonies. Carnes Lords (2006), editor of the Naval War College Press, put it this way:

Very recent experience—notably, the Turkish denial of access to U.S. ground forces in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the closing of the American air base at Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan in 2005 after the United States criticized its government's repressive behavior—shows clearly enough that there will always be uncertainties in the conditions attaching to the use of American forces stationed or operating on allied or friendly territory. It is therefore essential to consider other alternatives. There are three such alternatives: basing in the continental United States (CONUS), in sovereign U.S. territories overseas, and at sea. An alternative that has not been discussed as much as it deserves is the use for military purposes of sovereign U.S. territory overseas. There are two prime candidates here, Hawai'i and Guam. (In essentially the same category is the small British-owned island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.) (p. 5)

The U.S. military, it seems, has found a solution for many of the problems it faces in building a global network of bases unfettered by the constraints of allied governments and people: overseas sites like Hawai'i, Diego Garcia, and Guam. The military's intensification of their use of U.S. overseas territories, however, comes with its own set of problems. First, there have been plenty of effective popular protests that have affected military activities in overseas territories like Puerto Rico (Vieques), Hawai'i (Kaho'olawe and Makua Valley), Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands (Farallon de Medinilla). Furthermore, imposing bases on these islands comes with a painfully obvious political irony. The United States is using territories denied basic rights of freedom and self-determination to use military force that, ostensibly, is being used to promote these same values. Increasingly, these islands are becoming fallbacks where the United States is moving bases (and their associated bombing and training areas) that are not tolerated elsewhere in the world.

GUAM AND THE NORTHERN MARIANAS

In this section I focus on Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands because they are currently slated to experience a massive increase in militarization over the coming decade. Guam, an island of 209 square miles and an estimated 160,000 people, has been a colony for close to

five hundred years (see [map 2](#) in [chapter 1](#)). Visited by Magellan, the island was under Spanish rule from the 1500s until it was acquired, along with Puerto Rico and the Philippines, by the United States after the Spanish-American War (Rogers, 1994). During World War II the island was controlled by the Japanese until a successful American reinvasion in July of 1944. After the war, the U.S. military took over 55 percent of the island's land, and a third of the island is under military control today (Herman, 2008). The taking of land was not the only setback to the Chamorro people. Population transfer into the American colony since the end of World War II, together with the departure of Chamorro youths escaping the island's bleak economic opportunities (many, not coincidentally, join the U.S. military), has been responsible for making the Chamorro a minority in their own homeland (Bevacqua, 2010). The indigenous Chamorro people made up over 90 percent of the population of Guam until after World War II, but as of the year 2000 less than half of the population was listed as native (Herman, 2008).

In Guam, the Northern Marianas, and the other surrounding areas of Micronesia there has long been a mutually reinforcing relationship between military use and lack of sovereignty (Herman, 2008). The United States won the Micronesian islands in the western Pacific as prizes in wars: Guam from Spain, and most of the rest of Micronesia from Japan after World War II (including the quasi colonies of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau). There are some differences between the political arrangements different areas of Micronesia have with the United States, but they share the fact that residents of these islands can travel to the United States and can serve in the U.S. armed forces, but they have no voting representatives in the U.S. government. While economic colonialism has been less intensive in these islands than in some other parts of the globe, Guam has turned into a major U.S. military hub, and the rest of Micronesia has become a region plagued by the legacy of nuclear weapons testing (see [chapter 3](#)) and is currently an area of "strategic denial," where other militaries are denied access and the United States maintains an official monopoly on military force. The main reason why these areas have been denied full independence is their strategic value and the fact that they contain U.S. bases (Petersen, 1998). In turn, these islands have been the sites of the intensive military activities that are increasingly hard to conduct in places with political sovereignty.

This denial of rights to people in Micronesia, the erasure of their social histories, and the portrayal of their islands by military planners as "anchored aircraft carriers" lacking any worth beyond locations for power projection and weapons testing has been remarkably consistent from World War II to the present. As noted, Henry Kissinger famously remarked about the region in the wake of American nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s, "There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?" (G. Johnson, 1980). Today, politicians and military commanders continue to discuss the region as if the region's inhabitants did not exist, or at least lack the full agency of other people (existing as "bare life"). Guam's political status as a UN recognized colony is rarely questioned (and of course, neither is the military's complicity in creating and maintaining that colonial status). Dick Cheney's former deputy assistant for national security affairs, Stephan Yates, summed up the position best when he said of the military's ability to use Guam, "When God gives you a gift, it's good to use it" (Weaver, 2010). Of course, Guam did not become a military colony because God gave it to the United States, but rather through a long process of concerted colonization in which many branches of the U.S.

government participated over the past century (Bevacqua, 2010; Herman, 2008; Lutz, 2009; Rogers, 1994).

Still, U.S. military planners speak of Guam as a site of freedom: freedom to train and operate unilaterally in the Asia-Pacific region. Its status as an American colony is appreciated even though the language used to describe it is carefully worded to avoid the word “colony.” It is usually just referred to as “sovereign U.S. territory” with no discussion of the problematic nature of how that has come to be, or how that status is maintained. As U.S. Navy lieutenant commander David Zielinski (2009) noted, “When asked in an interview about the advantages of Guam as a base, former Commanding Officer of Naval Base Guam, Captain Robert A. McNaught[,] reiterated the argument that the island’s primary advantage [lay] in its political status. By being sovereign U.S. territory [*sic*], Captain McNaught indicated that U.S. forces could operate unconstrained from the political requirements of host countries, either in training or during actual conflicts” (p. 3). Other commentators also praise Guam as a site for docile cooperation with military objectives: “America needs a secure airfield from which it cannot be denied access; political area denial could allow China to push American forces out of the region before or during a crisis. Guam has the advantage of being American territory, reducing the political difficulty of building and operating assets there. Furthermore, Guam, with its pro-military population and 7.7 percent unemployment, is unlikely to offer local opposition to increased military infrastructure” (Erickson & Mikolay, 2006, p. 22). When asked in 2007 why the eight thousand Marines from Okinawa were going to be moved to Guam, U.S. Marine lieutenant general John Goodman said, “Why Guam? The answer is because I can’t go to the Philippines. If our alliance with the Philippines would allow us to go there, I would move 8,000 Marines right now to Manila Bay” (quoted in Cole, 2007). In this comment is the “present absence” of what Guam is capable of deciding. The Philippines can say “no,” but colonized Guam has no such option.

As of 2013, the planned increase in military operations for Guam is slightly diminished but still extensive. Guam is now slated to receive only four thousand Marines from Okinawa (and their dependents), while the remaining Marines are expected to rotate to Australia and Hawai‘i. Guam is still expected to host a new wharf for an aircraft carrier, a center for a new Global Hawk UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) program, a missile defense site, and numerous training areas (some requiring the acquisition of more land). The military also plans to use other islands (Tinian and Pagan) in the nearby Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas for bombing and training. Assistant secretary of the Navy B. J. Penn called the increased militarization of Guam the “largest project that the Department of Defense has ever attempted” (Natividad & Kirk, 2010, p. 1). In 2009 the military’s Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) predicted that the island of Guam, which has a population of close to 160,000, would have over 79,000 additional residents by 2014 as a result of the buildup. While these numbers have shifted downward in subsequent years, the predicted consequences still include increased damage to the physical environment through greater pollution, more intensive military use of Guam’s already stretched water supply system, and the intentional destruction of almost eighty acres of live coral reef in Apra Harbor. Social consequences range from overburdened local utilities, schools, and hospitals to increased traffic, sexual assaults, assaults, robberies, and car accidents. Even though the U.S. EPA gave the military’s EIS its lowest possible rating and

said that the plans “should not proceed as proposed,” the military still intends to go ahead with most of its plans, but with lower numbers of Marines and a longer timetable for completion.

Despite the military’s intention to move the buildup of Guam along at the fastest possible speed, and military planners’ descriptions of Guam as an ideal location for operational unilateralism, there is resistance on Guam—particularly from the native Chamorro population (Aguon, 2005, 2006). Many residents claim that the sexual harassment, assault, noise, environmental contamination, and loss of access to traditional land that they have been experiencing on their militarized island are likely to worsen with military expansion. When early plans for the Guam buildup were discussed in 2006, there was not a lot of vocal opposition from residents of Guam, but a protest movement against the buildup surged into prominence during the EIS process in 2009.



FIGURE 7. Protest on Guam. Photo by author.

As at other military sites, a particularly contentious issue has been training. On Guam the military has insisted that it needs to increase its already substantial footprint to conduct live-fire training for Marines. The military EIS calls for taking land in an area called Pagat on the northeast coast of Guam. The land contains many Chamorro historical sites, and resistance has come from community groups, the Guam legislature, and the local historic preservation office. Despite the fact that this desire for new land takings has galvanized opposition to the entire buildup, the military maintains that it is absolutely necessary. The Pacific Division director for the Marine Corps, Bryan H. Wood, is quoted as saying, “The most important thing for the Marine Corps is we do have to have individual firing ranges somewhere here on Guam in order to train the Marines. We simply can’t do it anywhere else—it would ruin our operations here” (Matthews, 2010, p. A-3). The idea of training elsewhere, or changing the way training is

done to have less impact, is not seriously discussed. Rather than being viewed as having some legitimacy, the local resistance ends up being treated as “encroachment.” Regardless, activists on Guam have managed to “encroach” on the new firing range. In late 2011, in response to a lawsuit submitted by activists, the Navy announced they were delaying plans for putting in the firing range at Pagat until they could complete another multiyear environmental impact assessment of the project. But even though the plan for Pagat is stalled, as of 2014, the military is looking to expand training areas in the Northern Marianas on both Tinian and Pagan islands (Camacho, 2013).

To conclude this discussion of the local effects of militarization and colonialism I want to make a few explicit points. First, while faraway power centers may place bases in islands at the imperial margins to bolster a militarized notion of security, the daily operation of these bases and training areas has negative in-place effects that leave residents *less* safe and secure. Second, due to these negative environmental and social effects, resistance movements have arisen to reclaim security through political action aimed at demilitarizing landscapes and reclaiming sovereignty. Third, some of these actions have been successful and caused bases and training areas to close or move, or for military activities to be curtailed. Fourth, demonstrating how militarization and colonialism are *increasingly* mutually reinforcing, the U.S. military has responded to these pressures from social movements (and wary governments) by shifting bases to spaces with less organized civil-society resistance movements and with more blatantly colonial forms of governance. Fifth, this spatial “dance” regarding where bases are going to be located around the region—driven by the contest between social movements and antagonistic military planners—is still very much continuing.

This fifth point is demonstrated by the enormous fluidity of the situation in the western Pacific. As discussed in this chapter, military planners were initially quite confident that increasing the military footprint on Guam would be a simple matter. Due to resistance from residents of Guam, as well as from key U.S. senators and Japanese politicians concerned about its cost, it has proven to be anything but simple. As a further example of the region’s political fluidity, one of the reasons why the U.S. military became so dependent on Guam in 2009 and 2010 was that other countries in the region such as Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, and Australia initially refused to accept any of the military units being moved out of Okinawa. In 2011 and 2012, however, these governments changed tack and have agreed to a greater U.S. military presence on their soil.

Given the U.S. military’s ability to rapidly shift their base posture around the region, activists have employed spatial strategies of their own in an effort to make one island’s demilitarization success not just another island’s burden. Activists have become more explicit that antimilitarization efforts cannot be aimed and performed with only the local scale in mind. To this end, there has been a greater focus on networks of affinity and solidarity that span the region and the globe. In [chapter 6](#) I analyze the regional and global forms of antimilitarization and anticolonial activism as well as the ways in which this affinity-seeking power is arrayed against projects for militarized hegemony. Before that, however, it is necessary to delve into one more theme in order to present a full picture of the context in which this contest between local groups and distant hegemonies is playing out. That theme is the complex and often paradoxical interactions among militarization, colonialism, and island environments, examined

in the next chapter.